

64% polling in Odisha

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 13: The first phase of Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha Monday was peaceful barring some sporadic incidents of violence, with a voter turnout of over 64 per cent, officials said.

The electoral fate of 280 candidates contesting in four Lok Sabha seats and 28 Assembly segments in the first phase was sealed in the EVM.

The polling was by and large peaceful barring some sporadic incidents in Ganjam and Nabarangpur districts, while two persons were injured in a clash between rival groups during polling in Chikiti Assembly segment, a police official said.

Voting started at 7am in 7,303 polling stations in Berhampur, Koraput, Nabarangpur, and Kalahandi Parliamentary constituencies along with 28 Assembly segments within the jurisdiction of these Lok Sabha seats. Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are being held simultaneously in Odisha.

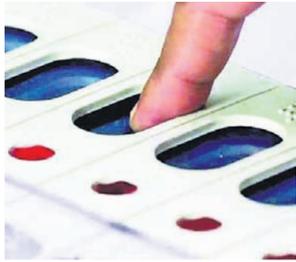
Officials said that 64.81 per cent of voters exercised their franchise. The highest voter turnout was recorded in tribal-majority Nabarangpur LS seat at 68.74 per cent followed by Kalahandi (68.50), Koraput (61.43) and Berhampur (60.26).

For Assembly segments, the highest 71.30 per cent of voting was recorded at Dabugam and the lowest 47.90 per cent in Chhatrapur.

"The voter turnout could increase as the polling continued in certain booths even after the end of voting time at 6pm," an official said.

There was no major law and order issue and the voting was peaceful in the Left Wing Extremism hit places like Swabhimani Anchal (earlier known as cut off area) in Malkangiri district and Sunabeda sanctuary area in Nuapada district.

The polling officials and election



equipment were airdropped in Nuapada in view of the situation there, a senior official said. Chief Electoral Officer Nikunja Bhiari Dhal said that EVM glitches were detected in several places and the machines were replaced within 30 minutes.

"People of Kotia area under Koraput LS seat also participated in large numbers," Dhal said. Kotia area is located bordering Andhra Pradesh. The CEO also said that the Election Commission received reports of poll boycott from some places over local issues.

Meanwhile, both the ruling BJD and the Opposition BJP have claimed that they performed exceptionally well in the first phase of the elections.

"We will win all the four LS seats

Cuffs for 2 poll officials

Bhubaneswar: Chief Electoral Officer Nikunja Bhiari Dhal Monday suspended three polling officials and directed the police to arrest two of them for serious dereliction of duty.

Speaking to reporters, Dhal said, "We have directed the Ganjam Collector to suspend three presiding officers of three polling booths and arrest two of them for serious dereliction of duty." The presiding officer of polling booth number 193 in Gopalpur Assembly constituency has been put under suspension while the presiding officers of booth numbers 27 and 163 in Chhatrapur Assembly segment in Ganjam district have been suspended and police were directed to arrest them, he said. Earlier in the day, the CEO suspended one polling official in Narla Assembly constituency in Kalahandi district and another in Chikiti Assembly seat in Ganjam district. So far, five polling officials have been suspended after they were engaged in serious misconduct during the election, officials said.

and 90 per cent of the 28 Assembly segments," BJD leader Amar Patnaik said in a press conference.

BJP state unit president Manmohan Samal also made a similar claim and said that the party candidates will spring surprise in the first phase of elections.

4th phase turnout at 64%

NEW DELHI: A voter turnout of over 64 per cent was recorded Monday in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections covering 96 constituencies spread over 10 states and Union territories, with scattered incidents of violence reported in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.

West Bengal, where polling was held in eight constituencies, again recorded an impressive turnout at 76.56 per cent, the highest among states/UTs in this phase.

Srinagar constituency in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed 37.93 per cent voting in the first Lok Sabha election in the Valley since the scrapping of Article 370, with the EC stating that it was the highest turnout in decades.

According to the EC's voter turnout app at 10 pm, the overall voting in this phase was 64.05 per cent. However, it said that this was an approximate trend as data from polling stations was still being collated. **P9**



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STATE TOPPER



RONIT KUMAR ROUT
SCIENCE - XII (MARKS - 496/500)
99.2%
(100/100 in 3 Subjects)

Class X Achievers



AYUSH PATTANAYAK (MARKS - 495/500) **99%**
ANKIT SAMANTARAY (MARKS - 495/500) **99%**

Class XII Achievers



SWAYAMSHREE (MARKS - 493/500) **98.6%**
SOURAV KHANDELWAL (MARKS - 493/500) **97%**

97% Above 13 Students
95% Above 31 Students
90% Above 84 Students
82.5% School Average

97% Above 10 Students
95% Above 44 Students
90% Above 153 Students
81% School Average

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JULIA FOX CELEBRATES 2.5 YEARS OF CELIBACY

Uncut Gems star Julia Fox has abstained from sex for two and a half years and has no complaints. The 34-year-old actress, fashion muse and model famously dated Kanye West, 46, for just six weeks in 2022, and she revealed the pair did not have sex in that time.

MARKLE WEARS DIANA'S NECKLACE IN NIGERIA

The Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle wore a sentimental necklace that belonged to Princess Diana to honour her during her trip to Nigeria. Meghan wore the neckpiece to a reception for military families in Abuja, Nigeria.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You may get all nostalgic and wistful today, predicts Ganesh. You will go out of your way to improve your relationships. To you, your commitment is an investment for the future. The result is loving life-long bonds.

TAURUS
Financial gains are on the cards today, predicts Ganesh. Happiness will fly in as you receive some good news from an overseas friend. If you have feelings that you haven't expressed to someone you dearly love, today is a good day to go ahead and let them know. The evening promises rejoicing and relaxation, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
Some of your personal belongings are very dear to you. You may have to grudgingly share them with someone else. A mild pang of jealousy may kick in. But, you are merely being protective of something very personal, so there is nothing wrong with that, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will be in high spirits today, foretells Ganesh. It is a favourable day to engage in household activities, like gardening, cooking or even washing laundry. In the evening, work will be eclipsed by the pleasures of love.

LEO
Time is one thing that you have in short change today, says Ganesh. There is every possibility that you shall remain extremely busy. The tasks may be small – like writing a letter to revive old contacts – but it is important that you do them. Chances are that you may also end up giving a few interviews over the phone. Just remember that your ability to make things work and do your best make you the prime candidate for organising and conducting urgent meetings. In short, buckle up as Ganesh predicts a busy day.

VIRGO
Family matters will matter today. They hold more weight in your thoughts than everything else, says Ganesh. Business will be good today. Spend the evening relaxing and chilling out. On the cards is a visit to a place of worship.

LIBRA
Your concern for your family surmounts all else, that much Ganesh knows. Today, you will fulfil your filial duties in all that you undertake. As Ganesh rightly points out: All good things begin at home, including your fortune and good luck.

SCORPIO
A healthy and hectic day is in store for you today. You are likely to finish your pending tasks with new zeal. But the chaotic day will blossom into a fabulous evening when you hang out with your sweetheart, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Chances of you hitting a roadblock today are high. But remember the saying, 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going.' So don't succumb to pressure, advises Ganesh, but rise up to the occasion and show who's the boss.

CAPRICORN
The achievements of the day may make you feel like you were born to succeed in life. Yes, you will be successful in whatever you do today, even if you don't try too hard for it, says Ganesh. But it's important that you at least take an initiative and not expect rewards to come for no reason. Make the most of the day for fortune may not be as favourable tomorrow. Your friends and those you socialise with will praise you for your sterling quality and powerful personality.

AQUARIUS
You will prove yourself today by staying ahead of your rivals in all ways. You will conquer your frustrations, and will soon be raring to go. Your pleasing demeanour endears you to others and you win admiration from all quarters, says Ganesh.

PISCES
You probably jumped out of bed this morning itching to talk to someone. And why not, since all your latent power of expression will spring out like a jack-in-the-box today. The pearls of wisdom you shower on people who are down-in-the-dumps today will make them feel good about their bluesy, taciturn selves, says Ganesh.

Saiyami wants to leave comfort zone

Mumbai, May 13: Actress Saiyami Kher, who is gearing up for her upcoming film *Agni*, has shared that she likes to do roles that challenge her and push her out of her comfort zone.

In *Agni*, she portrays the character of a firefighter. The actress, who is known for *Mirzya*, *Ghoomer*, *Special OPS*, and *Breathe*, expressed her contentment with being recognised as an actor capable of handling rugged and challenging roles in the Hindi film industry.

Elaborating on the subject, she said: "I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities I've had to portray strong characters in the work I have done so far. It's immensely fulfilling to be recognised for my ability to take on roles that push me out of my comfort zone and demand physical and emotional dedication. I've always been drawn to roles that demand everything from me because, in return, they give me so much. My attempt has always been to lose myself in the character."

"So when someone says, 'Oh, the 'Ghoomer' girl' is the same girl from 'Choked'? I take it as a compliment because, as an actor, it feels great not to find the same person in every character. My journey as an actor has been one of constant learning, growth, and I am grateful for every opportunity to challenge myself and inspire and touch people's lives," she added.

Asked Deepak about how he looks back on his journey in Hindi cinema, he told *IANS*: "I don't look back. This is what I learnt from the legendary Dev Saab. He was an adorable man who taught me this."

The actor added: "I used to often stop by for chai, with him, and just chit chat. I had some great times with him, that's why you might see me in his last couple of films, doing anything and everything for him, even if it was just a song, which I did in *Gangster*, you may see me in other films too, that was my love for him, and respect for his craft, and being our legend."

Recalling an anecdote from their meeting, he said: "I remember asking him, 'Dev saab, you have made so many super hit films, back in the 1960's, so why do you want to write new stories? Why don't you just remake, *Guide*, or *Hum Dono*, which were my favourites too.'"

"He promptly stopped me and said, 'Deepak, I never look back, *jo gaya wo kal tha, jo aaj hai I live in that*,' he added.

His lines lingered, shared Deepak. "That's what I learnt which I still apply," said the *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikander* actor.

Deepak shares life lesson learned from Dev Anand

Mumbai, May 13: Actor Deepak Tijori recalled one life lesson he learned from legendary actor and filmmaker Dev Anand, which was never to look back.



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Trolled, Sharmin keeps comments disabled

Mumbai, May 13: Sanjay Leela Bhansali's niece and *Heeramandi* actress Sharmin Segal Monday posted BTS pictures of her tucking into a slice of pizza on the set of the opulent musical.

Her Comments section, though, continues to be disabled. She had done it after being attacked for her indifferent acting in the OTT series, where she played Manisha Koirala's screen daughter Alamzeb.

In the BTS pictures, Sharmin is seen gorging on a pizza, vibing with her co-stars and playing with a puppy. She wrote in her caption: "1+2: Pizza is the best food. @alsisona 3: Farida ma'am always rocking 4. Sisterhood @aditiraohydari 5. Motherhood @m_koirala 6. The best person I know @segalsimran 7. Music is essential 8. Rani the Best Heera Puppy 9. Once a costume AD, always a costume AD 10. Fida fan for life!! @fardeenkhan @hemachoudhary"

Looking back at the three years she spent working on the series, Sharmin added, "So many memories made in the last 3 years! It is impossible to fit it all into one post! So many people that have been so supportive and kind."

Her followers, however, will have to hold back their views, for Sharmin has still disabled comments on her Instagram posts. Shortly, after the release of the series, she had to contend with a barrage of criticism of her performance.

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Indian movies to make mark at Cannes

Mumbai, May 13: The 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival is set to be held in the French Riviera from May 14 with India set to make its mark on the canvas of the prestigious film festival, considered to be one of the biggest film festivals in the world.

Seven films from India will be a part of the festival. One of the films, and India's big hopes comes in the form of the Malayalam film *All We Imagine As Light*.

The film, directed by Payal Kapadia, will be screened at the festival May 23.

All We Imagine As Light follows the story of two roommates who serve as nurses at a hospital. How love and self-discovery bring about a change in their perspectives forms the crux of the story.

Another film to be screened at the festival is *Santosh*. The film is directed by British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri and will be screened at the Un Certain Regard section of 2024



Santosh stars Shahana Goswami in the lead role and follows the story of a newly widowed woman who inherits her husband's job as a police constable in rural northern India.

Then there's the Kannada short film *Sunflowers Were The First Ones To Know* which will be screened under the Cinéfondation or La Cinq section of the Cannes Film Festival. The film is directed by FTII student Chidanand Naik.

The Smita Patil and Naseeruddin Shah-starrer *Manthan*, which was released in 1976, is set to be screened under the Cannes Classics selection.

The film also starred Girish Karnad and Kulbhushan Kharbanda.

Actress Radhika Apte's film *Sister Midnight* too has been selected under the Directors' Fortnight category at the Cannes Film Festival, this year.

The film, directed by Karan

Kandhari, is about a wife who navigates the challenges of married life in a slum. Having suffered oppression, she aims to seek revenge.

In *Retreat*, directed by Syed Maisam Ali Shah, tells the story of a man who returns to his hometown after many years. The film is set to be screened under the Association for the Distribution of Independent Cinema Section.

The final film on the list is *The Shameless* directed by Bulgarian director Konstantin Bojanov.

The film's story is set in India, and it has been shot across Nepal and India.

The Shameless follows the story of Rani, an Indian sex worker, who goes on a pilgrimage to a remote temple, where she confronts her past, including a love affair, who is imprisoned for murder in Bangalore.

The film will be screened under the Un Certain Regard section.

PEANUTS



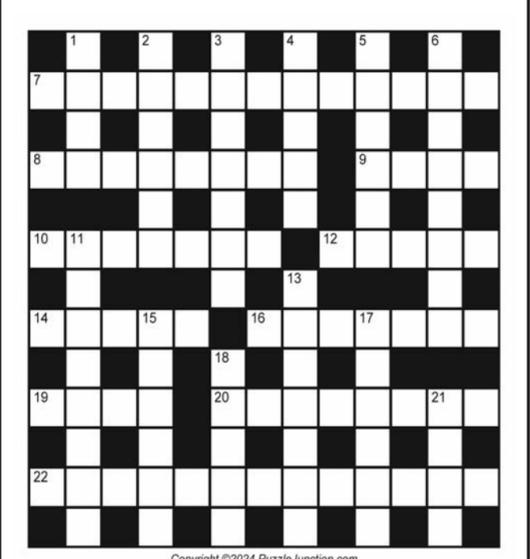
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



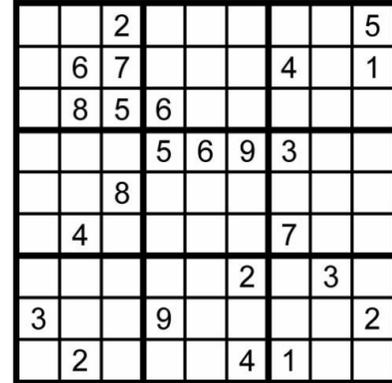
FUN post CROSSWORD



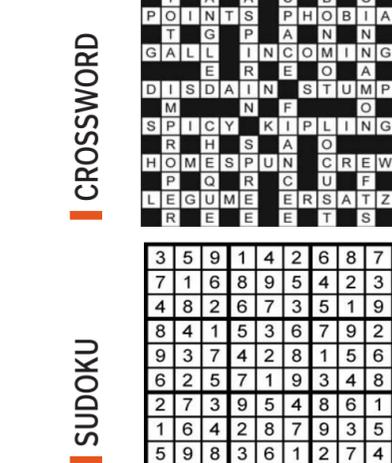
- Across**
- 7 Equipment
 - 8 Bill of fare decision (1,2,5)
 - 9 Effervesce
 - 10 Rough shelters (4-3)
 - 12 Necklace item
 - 14 Squalid
 - 16 Type of cheese
 - 19 Lulus
 - 20 Off-road motorcycle (4,4)
 - 22 Domino effect (5,8)
- Down**
- 1 Rampart
 - 2 French dance
 - 3 Horse-drawn vehicle
 - 4 Attempted
 - 5 Confound
 - 6 Trattoria, of sorts
 - 11 Vision
 - 13 Like some underwear
 - 15 Occult
 - 17 Argue
 - 18 Dig deeply
 - 21 Nautical mile

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



Turtle protection
Forest department staff release hatchlings of 253 Olive Ridley turtles into the sea at Dagara under Baliapal block in Balasore district

STATE | P5



Unrest in PoK
The situation remained tense in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the total strike entered its fourth day

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Retail inflation eases
India's retail inflation rate eases slightly in April, partly due to lower fuel prices, although food prices remained elevated

BUSINESS | P11



Disappointing show
Novak Djokovic puts on one of his worst displays at Italian Open as he was stunned by Alejandro Tabilo in the 3rd round

SPORTS | P12

P3

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BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY MAY 14 2024

Girls outshine boys again



ON CLOUD NINE: Students of BJEM School in Bhubaneswar celebrate their success after declaration of CBSE Class X and XII results Monday

OP PHOTO

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 13: Girls continued to outperform boys yet again in the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class X and XII exams the results of which were announced, Monday.

While the pass percentage in Class X stood at 93.6 – a rise of 0.48 percentage points from last year, Class XII pass percentage stood at 87.98 – a marginal increase of 0.65 percentage points from last year.

In the Class X exams, girls have performed better than boys by 2.04 percentage points. While 94.75 per cent girls cleared the exams, 92.71 per cent boys managed to pass the exams.

In Class XII, girls have done better than boys by 6.4 percentage points. The pass percentage for girls stood at 91.5 while that of boys was 85.12.

CBSE officials attributed the rise in the pass percentage to the increase in the number of competency-based questions in the exams this year. The CBSE revamped its assessment practices for the academic session 2023-24 by introducing more competency-based questions in the papers and reducing the weightage given to short and long answer-type questions.

A similar trend was witnessed in the number of students who scored above 90 per cent and 95 per cent marks.

In Class XII, a total of 1.16

CBSE RESULTS OUT

- While the pass percentage in Class X stood at 93.6, for Class XII, it was 87.98
- 47,000 students scored above 95 per cent in Class X, while 24,068 students secured more than 95 per cent in Class XII examinations

lakh students scored above 90 per cent and 24,068 above 95 per cent. Among the students who scored above 90 per cent, 262 are from the 'children with special needs' category. This apart, 43 students from the category scored above 95 per cent.

Last year, 1.12 lakh students scored above 90 per cent and 22,622 above 95 per cent.

In Class X, more than 47,000

students scored above 95 per cent and over 2.12 lakh above 90 per cent. Last year, 1.95 lakh students scored above 90 per cent and 44,297 above 95 per cent.

In category-wise performance, the overall pass percentage among general students in Class XII was 90.06, for students in the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, it was 85.51, for Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, it was 77.73 and for

Other Backward Classes (OBC), it was 86.1.

In Class X, the overall pass percentage of general category students was recorded at 94.74, for SC students, it was 91.21, for ST students, it was 81.43 and for OBC students, it was 93.92.

The CBSE has announced that there will be no merit list to 'avoid unhealthy competition'. Officials said the board has also decided to scrap awarding first, second and third divisions based on the students' scores.

The CBSE also announced that it will conduct the board exams for Class X and XII for the 2024-25 academic session from February 15 next year. The 2024 board exams for Class X and XII also began February 15.

MUMBAI DUST STORM

8 killed, 70 hurt as billboard collapses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 13: A 100-foot tall illegal billboard fell on a petrol pump at the Cheddanager Junction in Ghatkopar area amid unseasonal rains, accompanied by a dust storm Monday, killing at least eight persons and injuring 70 others, even as a search and rescue operation was still underway.

"78 people have been pulled out so far from under the hoarding, of which eight are declared dead, while 70 others were injured. They were rushed to various hospitals," a senior police officer said.

Meanwhile in Bandra, a branch of a tree fell on a shop, trapping two persons. "Of them, a 38-year-old man died while another person was seriously injured," a civic official said.

In Wadala, an under-construction metal parking tower collapsed on a road amid gusty winds, injuring three persons and damaging vehicles.

Of the total injured persons, 56 were admitted to Rajawadi Hospital and others at three separate hospitals.

The unseasonal rain and dust storms led to the suspension of flight operations at Mumbai airport for an hour in the evening due to low visibility, services of local trains were delayed while traffic snarls were seen in several areas.

As many as 15 flights were diverted to different airports and

the runways operation resumed at 5.03 pm, the airport operator said.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde visited the spot of the hoarding collapse incident in Ghatkopar late in the evening and ordered a structural audit of all hoardings in Mumbai city.

"The hoardings, if found illegal and dangerous, would be removed immediately," he said.

"It is a very unfortunate incident. The government will probe it, and the people responsible will face action. I have also asked the BMC commissioner to conduct a structural audit of all the hoardings in the city. Those found illegal and dangerous will be removed," Shinde told reporters.

He announced aid of ₹5 lakh to the kin of each person killed in the hoarding collapse.

Speaking to media persons after visiting the disaster control room at the civic headquarters, Mumbai Municipal Corporation Commissioner Bhushan Gagrani said the hoarding was illegal as the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had not given permission. "The Railways has permitted to erect the hoarding," Gagrani claimed.

According to BMC officials, the hoarding measuring 120 x 120 feet crashed on the petrol pump at around 4:30pm. An official said the civic body doesn't permit any hoarding measuring above 40 x 40 feet.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'm not here to report MCC violations. I want to file a missing person report over the EC's disappearance

SHORT TAKES

SUSHIL MODI LOSES BATTLE TO CANCER

New Delhi: Veteran BJP leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi passed away at the AIIMS here Monday evening a little over a month after he revealed he had cancer. He was 72. Modi, who was a Rajya Sabha member, had declined to contest the ongoing LS elections on account of his health after he revealed the deadly disease he was suffering from in a post on X April 3. Spanning 11 years between 2005 and 2020, Modi had served as the Deputy of CM Nitish Kumar in two stints. Leaders across party lines condoled his demise.

ARREST WARRANT AGAINST ANUBHAV

Cuttack: A court here in Cuttack district Monday issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against actor-turned-Lok Sabha MP Anubhav Mohanty in connection with a four-year-old domestic violence case registered against him by his now-divorced wife. The judicial magistrate's court issued the warrant after Mohanty failed to appear before it for the second time and asked the police to execute the NBW by May 23. The cine star who was the Kendrapara MP of BJD joined the BJP April 1.

ABDO's body found on rly track

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 13: Government Railway Police (GRP) in Bhadrak Monday recovered the mutilated body of Assistant Block Development Officer (ABDO) of Harichandanpur from the railway track near Harichandanpur railway station in Keonjhar district.

The deceased ABDO was identified as Bidhubhushan Jena, 50, a native of Nisankhapur village under Hatadihi block of Keonjhar district.

The matter came to the fore when locals spotted the body

lying on the railway track near the railway over-bridge about 1 km from the railway station and informed the Harichandanpur police. His head and body bore injury marks when recovered.

Though the exact cause of death is not known, locals and Jena's wife Jyotsna Rani suspect that he was killed and the body dumped on the track. They believed that a proper investigation will unravel the exact cause of death.

On being informed, Harichandanpur police reached the spot and informed the GRP in Bhadrak after noticing the

body lying on the railway track. Later railway police arrived and seized the body in presence of local teshildar and launched an investigation.

The mobile phone and sandals found near the body established the identity as that of the ABDO of Harichandanpur block, sources said.

Prafulla Barla, IIC Harichandanpur police station, said, "The body with severe injury marks was found on the railway track. We informed the matter to the railway police, who are investigating the incident."

After Delhi, over 50 Jaipur schools get bomb threat; turns out hoax

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, May 13: Over 50 schools here received bomb threats via email Monday morning, triggering panic among students and their parents, police said.

However, no explosive or anything suspicious has been found so far in these schools, they added.

The threatening emails to schools came 12 days after a similar scare in Delhi-NCR where 150 schools received bomb threat emails from a Russia-based mailing service May 1, triggering massive evacuations and searches. On Sunday, 20 hospitals, including the IGI Airport and the Northern Railways' CPRO office, in Delhi received similar emails. The authorities declared both the incidents as hoax.

The emails to schools in Jaipur also happen to come on the 16th anniversary of the serial bomb blast incident in the Rajasthan capital. A series of blasts had rocked the city on this day in 2008 claiming 71 lives and injuring 180 people.

According to the police, 56 schools in Jaipur received emails stating explosives were planted on their premises. On being informed, squads were rushed to these locations to check for suspicious objects or devices.

No suspicious objects were found wherever the checks have been completed, the police said.

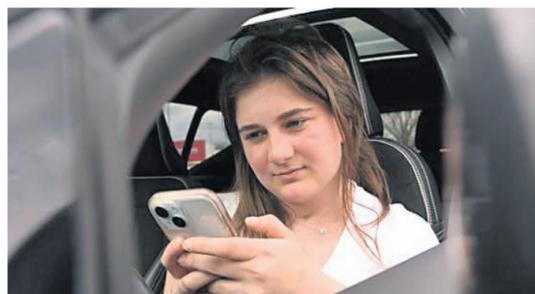
Illness took away her voice; AI brings it back!

Rapidly improving AI voice-cloning technology can amplify phone scams, disrupt democratic elections and violate the dignity of people — living or dead — who never consented to having their voice recreated to say things they never spoke. But Bogan and a team of doctors at Rhode Island's Lifespan hospital group believe they've found a use that justifies the risks

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Providence, May 13: The voice Alexis "Lexi" Bogan had before last summer was exuberant. She loved to belt out Taylor Swift and Zach Bryan ballads in the car. She laughed all the time — even while corralling misbehaving preschoolers or debating politics with friends over a backyard fire pit. In high school, she was a soprano in the chorus.

Then that voice was gone. Doctors in August removed a life-threatening tumour lodged near the back of her brain. When the breathing tube came out a month later, Bogan had trouble swallowing and strained to say "hi" to her parents. Months of rehabilitation aided her recovery,



but her speech is still impaired. Friends, strangers and her own family members struggle to understand what she is trying to tell them.

In April, the 21-year-old got her

old voice back. Not the real one, but a voice clone generated by artificial intelligence that she can summon from a phone app. Trained on a 15-second time capsule of her teenage voice — sourced from a

cooking demonstration video she recorded for a high school project — her synthetic but remarkably real-sounding AI voice can now say almost anything she wants. She types a few words or sentences into her phone and the app instantly reads it aloud.

"Hi, can I please get a grande iced brown sugar oat milk shaken espresso," said Bogan's AI voice as she held the phone out her car's window at a Starbucks drive-thru. One of her first experiments was to speak to the kids at the preschool where she works as a teaching assistant. She typed in "ha ha ha ha" expecting a robotic response. To her surprise, it sounded like her old laugh.

"I get so emotional every time

I hear her voice," said her mother, Pamela Bogan, tears in her eyes.

"I think it's awesome that I can have that sound again," added Lexi Bogan, saying it helped "boost my confidence to somewhat where it was before all this happened." Bogan is one of the first people — the only one with her condition — who have been able to recreate a lost voice with OpenAI's new Voice Engine.

She's less sure about what will happen as she grows older and her AI voice continues to sound like she did as a teenager. Maybe the technology could "age" her AI voice, she said. For now, "even though I don't have my voice fully back, I have something that helps me find my voice again," she said.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.8°C	36.5°C
Min Temp	23.6°C	21.4°C
Humidity	79%	83%
Rainfall	Nil	5.2mm

FORECAST
PARTLY CLOUDY SKY

City schools shine in Class X, XII exams

ODISHA RECORDS PASS PERCENTAGE OF 80.85 IN CLASS XII AND 91.53 IN CLASS X

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 13: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exam results for Class X and XII were announced Monday. The state registered a pass percentage of 80.85 in Class XII and 91.53 in Class X. City schools recorded good results this year as well.

In the Class XII results, BJEM School students both in Science and Commerce streams performed overwhelmingly. Out of 145 students, who appeared in the Science stream, six secured 95 per cent marks and above, 23 secured 90 per cent and above with 100 students clearing the exam. Ashutosh Kar with 99 per cent is the school topper in Science, while Saikh Haamid Razaa with 93 per cent is the school topper in Commerce. In total, 25 students have secured 90 per cent and above marks in aggregate.

Similarly, in Class X, BJEM students of BJEM School scored cent percent results. While 69 students secured 90 per cent and above, 90 per cent students cleared the exams with first division marks. Shreya Rath got the top rank with 99.4 per cent, securing 497 out of 500 marks.

Students of SAI International School also upheld the premier institution's reputation with outstanding achievements in All India Senior School Certificate Examination (AISCE) 2024 and All India Secondary School Examination (AISSE) 2024.

Sashwat Panigrahi emerged



SAI International School

topper in Commerce with a total of 99.2 per cent. Adyasha Syam, with 99 per cent stood first Humanities stream, while Himanshu Agarwal with 98.6 per cent topped in Science stream.

In the CBSE Class XII, 100 per cent students at SAI International School secured more than 60 per cent, while 21.4 per cent of students secured more than 95 per cent of marks, 46.2 per cent of students secured more than 90 per cent and 92.7 per cent got more than 75 per cent taking the school average to 88.76 per cent, with the average per cent in Science (88.69 per cent), Commerce (88.01 per cent)

and Humanities (89.96 per cent).

The result of Class X also reaffirmed the commitment of the school in creating achievers and justified its purpose of excellence in education. 100 per cent of students secured more than 60 per cent, while 36.12 per cent of students secured more than 95 per cent of marks, 67.22 per cent of students got more than 90 per cent and 94.18 per cent obtained more than 75 per cent, taking the school average to 90.48 per cent. Shagun Samantrai emerged as topper with 99.4 per cent.

DAV Public School Unit VIII students passed CBSE Class X exam with 86.14 per cent as school

average in aggregate in which all 269 students cleared the exam. While 131 students secured more than 90 per cent, 202 students secured more than 80 per cent and 261 students obtained more than 60 per cent.

Amrit Bhal, Payel Panda, Sampreeti Roy and Shivani Rout brought laurels to school by being the toppers with 493 marks (98.6 per cent).

In Senior School Certificate Examination (Class XII), Sthiti Samantaray scored the highest percentage of 97.6 in Science. All 337 students cleared the exam with 331 students securing first division marks. 20 students secured more than 95 per cent and



CBSE RESULTS OUT

ODM Public School

92 students scored more than 90 per cent.

ODM Public School also achieved remarkable success in the AISCE (Class-XII) Science and Commerce conducted by the CBSE. In Science, Ronit Kumar Rout scored 99.2 per cent while scoring cent per cent marks in three subjects. Similarly, in Class X, Master Ayush Pattnayak along with Master Ankit Samantaray achieved first position with 99 per cent marks.

In Mother's Public School, 50 per cent students scored 90 per cent and above marks with 100 per cent overall result in Class X. Sanjana Padhi scored 98.0 per cent becoming the school topper.

In Class XII CBSE exam, more than 115 students obtained 90 per cent and above marks in Science, Humanities and Commerce streams. Snehasish Mohanty topped the Science stream with 97.60 per cent while Nikhil Sahoo stood first in Commerce stream scoring 97.20 per cent. KIIT International School reported a 100 per cent results in both Class X and Class XII, with a significant number of students achieving top scores.

Adyasha Dash of Class X became the school topper scoring 98 per cent marks, while in the Class XII, Sneha Kumari scored the highest 97 per cent marks in Science.

NBW against Anubhav

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, May 13: A court in Cuttack district Monday issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against actor-turned-Lok Sabha MP Anubhav Mohanty in connection with a four-year-old domestic violence case registered against him by his now-divorced wife.

The judicial magistrate's court issued the warrant after Mohanty failed to appear before it for the second time and asked the police to execute the NBW by May 23.

The Orissa High Court in December last year granted divorce to Mohanty from his wife Varsha Priyadarshini.

The film actor who was the Kendrapara MP of BJP joined the BJP April 1. The court had fixed May 10 for framing charges against Mohanty but later gave him time to appear before it May 13 when he sought some more time citing personal reasons.

However, he did not appear during the day.

Priyadarshini filed a complaint with the police in December 2020 alleging that Mohanty and two of his aides had locked her in a room in his parental house located in the City. Police went there and rescued her. On the basis of her complaint, a case was registered against the MP under several sections of the IPC and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005.



Aryan selected in nat'l handball team



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 13: Aryan Brahmin, a handball player from the state, was recently selected in the national team for Central Asian Men's Handball competition to be held in Uzbekistan's Tashkent from May 14 to May 21.

Expressing his joy, Aryan said, "I am thrilled to get selected for the tournament. I would like to thank my father and coach for the selection. I am looking forward to giving my level best in the tournament."

Reacting to his son's selection, Gouri Sankar Mishra said, "His dedication and hard work resulted in his selection in the tournament. I am sure he will do his best in the tournament as he participated in a few national and international events before."

Odisha Handball Association president Biplab Choudhury, general secretary Manash Kumar Singh and treasurer Sitendranath Das expressed their best wishes to Aryan. Notably, Aryan had participated in the ninth Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship 2022.

Pan-India probe on e-mail threats

New Delhi: The Delhi Police is likely to conduct a pan-India investigation with its counterparts in other states to crack the conspiracy behind e-mail threats sent to various installations, including schools, hospitals and airports, in other states, officials said Monday. According to a Delhi Police officer, the officers here are analysing the pattern of the e-mails and planning to approach the police forces of other states. In the last two weeks, schools and hospitals in cities like Delhi, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Lucknow, and airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Nagpur and Kolkata, besides various government buildings received the threats from foreign-based mailing service companies that have advanced data encryption. Investigations in these cities are underway, police said. Twenty hospitals, the Delhi airport and the Northern Railway's chief public relations officer's (CPRO) office received the e-mails warning about the "placement of explosive devices inside the buildings" on Sunday. The Delhi Police carried out searches but nothing suspicious was found. The officer said Sunday's threat was sent from Europe-based mailing service company beebble.com. Police will soon write to Interpol to get information about the IP (internet protocol) address of the device from which the e-mail was sent, he added.

Bakul organises int'l children's film festival

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 13: Eminent director Majid Majidi's multi-award-winning film "The Colours of Paradise" was screened at the third edition of International Children's Films Festival in the Bakul Library here Monday. The festival which began May 12 will continue till May 17.

The films from around the world including Europe (Italy), West Asia (Iran), East Asia (Japan and Korea), North America (Canada) and India are screened for children and adults alike at 5 pm.

All the foreign films have English subtitles and will appeal to children of eight years and above, young adults and adults. The films have diversity of style from animation to social drama and comedy.

This time, tickets are needed to watch the films but people can get them free by spending



around 30 minutes in the library reading books.

The founder of Bakul Foundation, Sujit Mahapatra said, "We have always strived to give children a multicultural exposure that will expose children to diversities and make them more inclusive and appreciative of diverse cultures in the process."

"When children are exposed to different aesthetics of cinema coming from different cultures, their imagination opens up, and they know that there is no one way to imagine things or to create things," he added.

Dr Manash Ranjan Sahoo appointed as VC of OUHS

Bhubaneswar: Governor Raghuraj Das appointed Dr Manash Ranjan Sahoo as vice-chancellor (VC) of Odisha University of Health Sciences (OUHS) here, Monday. Sahoo, who is the HoD of General Surgery, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, was appointed to the VC post for a period of four years from the date on which he enters upon office or till he attains the age of 70 years under sub-section (1) of section 9 of OUHS Act, 2021 until further orders whichever is earlier, a release issued by the Governor's office said. Sahoo has done fellowship in surgical gastroenterology from Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute (SRMCRI), Chennai, after completing post graduation in surgery. He has a teaching experience of more than 26 years and six years in professor and equivalent post. He also has administrative experience as professor and HoD of General Surgery in AIIMS-Bhubaneswar and as Chairman of its Medical Board, the release added.

Rahul, Kharge to visit state May 15, 16: Ajoy

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 13: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge will visit Odisha May 15 and May 16, respectively to address election rallies.

Briefing media persons here, AICC in-charge of Odisha, Ajoy Kumar Monday said Gandhi is scheduled to address an election rally in Bolangir May 15.

He will land at Biju Patnaik International Airport here at around 11 am and then directly proceed to Bolangir to address a public meeting at around 11.30 am, Kumar said.

Kharge would address a public meeting in Kandhamal Lok Sabha constituency May 16. The Congress president is also scheduled to address a press conference on the same day in the Capital City here, he said.

Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Jairam Ramesh is also scheduled to address a press conference here



Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Jairam Ramesh is scheduled to address a press conference in Bhubaneswar Tuesday

Tuesday (May 14).

This will be the second visit of Gandhi to the state during the current elections. Earlier, he had launched an election campaign for Congress in Odisha from Salipur in Cuttack district April 28. On May 3, Rahul addressed an election rally in Rayagada district under Koraput Lok Sabha constituency through a video message.

New exoplanet displays volcanic activity like Jupiter's Io

Researchers have discovered a new 'fiery, glowing red' exoplanet displaying intense volcanic activity similar to Jupiter's moon Io.

Further, the many active volcanoes on the exoplanet could be making its surface hotter than some stars, they said.

In a known star system about 66 light years away from Sun, the astrophysicists discovered signals for a new rocky planet about a third larger than Earth. The signals were captured by NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), which searches for exoplanets or planets outside our solar system, orbiting the brightest stars in the sky.

The team, including researchers from the University of California Riverside, US, said that the star system, called HD

104067, was already known to harbour a giant planet. While gathering data on the planet, Stephen Kane, a professor of Planetary Astrophysics, "unexpectedly" found another "fiery" one, taking the count of planets in the star system to three.

"At optical wavelengths, you would be able to see a glowing, red-hot planet with a molten lava surface," Kane, lead author of the study published in The Astronomical Journal, said.

The newly discovered rocky exoplanet, named TOI-6713.01, has a lot in common with Jupiter's rocky innermost moon, Io, and is known to be the most volcanically active body in our solar system, Kane said.

The researchers explained that gravitational forces exerted by the other two planets in the system force this rocky planet into an elliptical or "eccentric"



The newly discovered rocky exoplanet, named TOI-6713.01, has a lot in common with Jupiter's rocky innermost moon, Io, and is known to be the most volcanically active body in our solar system orbit around their star.

The star, to which TOI-6713.01 is closer than the other planets,

According to researchers, the intense volcanic activity on Jupiter's Io is also due to the gravity exerted by the other moons of the solar system's biggest planet, which itself has a strong gravitational pull

"squeezes" the rocky planet as it orbits and rotates because of gravity, thereby causing tides

on the planet's surface in the form of volcanoes.

Likening the scenario to "racquetball", Kane explained that the rocky inner planet gets hotter as it is constantly bounced around by the other two planets and squeezed by the star.

"It's been forced into a situation where it's constantly exploding with volcanoes," he said.

The extreme volcanic activity could be making the surface of TOI-6713.01 hotter than some stars, Kane said, as he calculated the surface temperature to be 2,600 degrees Kelvin or 2,330 degrees Celsius.

The intense volcanic activity on Jupiter's Io is also due to the gravity exerted by the other moons of the solar system's biggest planet, which itself has a strong gravitational pull, the researchers said.

Io is thus "forced" into an ec-

centric orbit around the planet, Kane explained.

"If the other moons weren't there, Io would be in a circular orbit around the planet and it would be quiet on the surface. Instead, Jupiter's gravity squeezes Io so much that it erupts in volcanoes constantly," Kane said. On Earth, tides are the effect of moon's gravity on our oceans.

The researchers said the findings reveal a lot about the extremes in amounts of energy that can be pumped into a rocky planet, such as TOI-6713.01.

Further, tidal effects on planets haven't historically been a focus of exoplanet research, which Kane hopes might change with this discovery.

"While we know that stars contribute to the heat of a planet, the vast majority of the energy here is tidal and that cannot be ignored," he said.

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Kendrapara villages face extinction

Inhabitants blame admin for not taking proper measures to tackle natural calamities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 13: Absence of a long-term plan in preventing natural calamities is posing serious threats to several villages under Mahakalapada block of this district. Locals alleged that every year the administration holds meetings to tackle the situation in the aftermath of natural calamities. However, no concrete steps have ever been taken to prevent impending danger. "The effort is always to act after destruction, but not to prevent it," pointed out a local.

The frequent ingress of seawater into residences located in villages under Satabhaya, Lanjuda, Suniti and Babar panchayats is giving sleepless nights to the inhabitants. They stated that unless preventive measures are implemented quickly the sea will gobble up the villages in these panchayats within the next four to five years. They added that even a slight increase in the speed of wind gives rise to tidal waves at many places of the 48 kilometres long coastline resulting in rapid soil erosion.

Environmentalists and scientists pointed out that if soil erosion continues in the manner it is happening now, the day is not far when many villages will be swallowed up by the sea. They blamed the district administration for the current state of affairs. "We have been harping on



FILE PHOTO

development of mangrove plantations in a planned manner to stop soil erosion, but nothing has been done to combat the situation," they stated. The environmentalists warned that 90 per cent of land under Satabhaya panchayat has disappeared into the sea and other panchayats will face the same fate.

Bhuban Mohan Jena, president of 'Zilla Jana Adhikar Manch', local intellectual Ganesh Chandra Samal, farmer leader Gayadhar Dhal, educationist Khitish Kumar Singh and environmentalist Hemant Kumar Rout pointed out that this district is always prone to natural disasters due to its long coastline and seven major rivers and scores of other water bod-

ies flowing through it.

However, instead of turning into a blessing, this factor has turned into a curse for this district. The rivers and water bodies are responsible for the devastating floods that plague the district every year. Locals said that as preventive measures to tackle floods have not been put in place, they have to suffer huge losses. Moreover the district has also been identified as Tsunami-prone, they added.

When contacted, ADM Pitambar Samal said the river embankments are being strengthened on the downstream to control floods, while mangrove plantations are being created to prevent erosion. He added that results will soon be seen.

Healthcare services hit as hosp staff sent for poll duty



Pandemonium at CHC and PHCs in Jharigaon due to major shortage of staff

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharigaon, May 13: Healthcare services at the community and all the primary health centres here in Nabarangpur district have been badly hit as more than 30 per cent of the staff working in these places have been entrusted with election duties. Polls to the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituency and the seven Assembly segments including Jharigaon were held Monday. Sources informed that due to the lack of qualified staff, patients at the community health centre (CHC) and the five primary health centres, are suffering. Officials informed that it will take 4-5 days for restoration of normalcy.

The matter came to the fore when 18 persons suffered injuries, some of them seriously, in an accident on the Jharigaon-Chandahandi road when an auto-rickshaw collided with a car, Sunday. All of them were rushed to the CHC here, but treatment got delayed due to the absence of doctors and other qualified staff in the Emergency department. The situation sparked tension

among the relatives of the victims and the locals who had brought them to the CHC. Hospital authorities expressed helplessness as they pointed out that staff had been asked to attend poll duties.

There are five primary health centres (PHC) and one CHC in this block. A total of 105 people, including doctors and pharmacists, are employed in these six centres. Officials informed Monday that eight employees have been sent on deputation to other hospitals. They added that out of the remaining 97 employees, 31 have been entrusted with election duties.

Officials pointed out that all the seven pharmacists in the CHC and PHCs have been pulled out for poll duties. Others who have been put in the election roster include 15 multi-purpose health workers (male), one senior helper, three attendants, three sweepers and two laboratory technicians.

Such is the situation that at times nurses are providing emergency healthcare services to patients. Doctors after checking patients are distributing medicines themselves due to the shortage of staff. Even medical officers working at the CHC and PHCs are doing elementary jobs that have nothing to do with the treatment. They informed that the situation will turn normal once those who have been sent on election duty return.

Gross irregularities surface at RGH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 13: With allegations of rampant corruption doing the rounds at the Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) here, the medical superintendent and acting director of the medical facility, Dr Ganesh Dash had ordered a probe. A number of sub-committees were formed March 28 to examine 'inflated' bills submitted by various companies. The reports of the panels dated May 8, 2024, submitted to Dr Dash proves beyond doubt, there is indeed rampant corruption at the RGH. Based on the report, the top doctor has stopped payments to three agencies for the months of March and April. The reports of the various sub-committees in possession of Orissa POST prove beyond doubt that large-scale irregularities do exist in RGH. One of the agencies, M/S Sarala Security Services had been engaged to provide security personnel for RGH. While examining the bills, it has come to notice, that the company was billing the hospital for the months of March and April for 84 persons. In reality however, the company was providing 68 security personnel to the hospital in place of the 104 agreed upon.

Another panel found that M/S Paritosh Services was supplying 62 persons for housekeeping but was raising the bill for 74 workers. Similar gross irregularities were noticed in the bills raised by the company engaged in laundry services.

Dr Dash meanwhile informed that other than stopping payments to the three organisations, he has sent the reports to higher ups for action.

253 Olive Ridley hatchlings released at Dagara beach



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliapal, May 13: Forest department staff released Monday hatchlings of 253 Olive Ridley turtles into the sea at Dagara under this block in Balasora district. It should be stated here that the stretch of the sea beach from Chaumukh to Haskara has turned into a favourite and mass nesting place for Olive Ridley turtles.

Officials said that every year hundreds of turtles arrive at the beach to lay eggs and then return to the sea. The hatchlings are usually born two-three months later. This year also was no exception. After the hatchlings emerged on the surface, the Forest de-

partment officials facilitated their passage into the sea.

Officials informed that this year, the number of adult turtles visiting the beach had decreased substantially. Only 400 eggs were laid by the turtles, of which 253 hatchlings were born, they added.

It was indeed pleasing to the eye to see employees of the Forest department, namely Hrushikesh Pradhan, Durjaya Karan, Manmath Dalai and Amulya Jena escorting the baby turtles safely back into the sea. Who knows some of these hatchlings may visit the same beach again when they become adults to lay eggs and continue the natural process.

BJP candidate alleges assault by BJD workers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, May 13: BJP candidate from the Jharigaon Assembly constituency in this district, Narsingh Bhatra alleged Monday that he was assaulted by BJD workers and supporters when he tried to prevent the casting of false votes in a polling booth.

Bhatra said that while he was going around his Assembly constituency, he received news that some anti-socials had entered a booth in Deulakana village. He promptly arrived at the spot. However, he alleged that he was prevented from entering the polling station by BJD workers who also assaulted him. "When I protested, they attacked me

physically," Bhatra alleged.

Bhatra informed that he has already lodged an FIR with the police regarding the incident. "However, those who attacked me are yet to be arrested even though they are well-known faces," Bhatra said.

Bhatra is contesting the elections against BJD nominee Ramesh Chandra Majhi and Congress candidate Herabati Gond.



In another incident, two BJP agents were attacked near booths (Nos 79 and 80) in Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency. The incident sparked tension in the area leading to a clash between BJP and BJD workers. Police had to resort to a mild lathicharge to disperse the two warring groups. Officials however, assured that polling in the two booths were not affected and went on smoothly.

Format C-1

(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **NARASINGHA MINZ, AT/PO- LAING, PS- RAJGANGPUR, DIST- SUNDARGARH, PIN- 770034**

Name of political party: **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2024 (ODISHA)**

*Name of Constituency: **13-RAJGANGPUR (ST) AC**

I **NARASINGHA MINZ** (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases			
Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)
1	Special Judge Vigilance Court Sundargarh	VGR-10/2019 Arising out of Sambalpur Vigilance Ps Case No. 33 of 2019	Pending Awaiting for Charge Sheet

Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)

U/s 13(2) read with Sec. 13(1) (a) of the P.C act and Sec. 409/34 IPC.
(1) A public servant is said to commit the offence of criminal misconduct, (a) if he dishonestly or fraudulently misappropriates or otherwise converts for his own use any property entrusted to him or any property under his control as a public servant or allows any other person so to do, or (b) if he intentionally
(2) Any public servant who commits criminal misconduct shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall be not less than one year but which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine.
Punishment under Section 409 IPC. As per Section 409 of the IPC, if public servants, bankers, merchants, factors, attorneys, or agents commit a criminal breach of trust, they are punishable with the following: Life imprisonment, or Imprisonment of up to 10 years along with a fine.
*34. Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention. - Where two or more persons, with a common intention to commit a criminal act, do any acts in furtherance of such common intention, each of them is liable for the criminal act done as if it were done by him alone." 1.

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences			
Sl. No. & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence (s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed	
1	NIL	NIL	NIL

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

FORMAT C-1/Declaration about Criminal cases

(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors, Vs. Union of India and Anr.)

Name and Address of Candidate: **LAXMAN MUNDA**
AT-Sarasposh, Po-Gopana, PS-K.Balang, Dist-Sundargarh, Odisha, Pin-770040

Name of Political Party: **COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (Marxist)**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **GENERAL ELECTION-2024**

Name of Constituency: **14-BONAI (S.T) CONSTITUENCY, SUNDARGARH, ODISHA**

I **LAXMAN MUNDA** (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election; declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

Sl No	FIR No. with name & address of Police station concerned	Case No. with name of the Court	Section(s) of concerned Acts/ Codes involved (give no. of the Section, e.g. Section..... of IPC, etc.)	Brief description of offence	Whether charges have been named (mention Yes or NO)	If answer against (e) above is YES, then give the date on which charges were framed	Whether any Appeal/ Application for revision has been filed against the proceedings (mention YES or NO)
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	PS Case No. 10 of 2018, Koida PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 49 of 2018, SDJM, Bonai	U/s, 143, 448, 341, 294, 427, 186, 353, 506, 149 of IPC, 3 P.D.P.P, Act. 7 Cr.L.A. Act.	Demonstration at DDM, Koida for opening of Closed Mines.	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
2	PS Case No. 11 of 2018, Koida PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 50 of 2018, Sri.U.K.Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s, 143, 448, 341, 294, 427, 186, 353, 506 & 34 of IPC	Demonstration at DDM, Koida for opening of Closed Mines.	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
3	PS Case No. 135 of 2017, Lahunpara PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 560 of 2017, SDJM, Bonai	U/s 143, 149, 186, 283, 294 & 34 of IPC	Demonstration in front of Bhaskar Steel, Tumkela against pollution and local employment	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
4	PS Case No. 68 of 2021, Koida PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 488 of 2021, SDJM, Bonai	U/s 188, 269 & 34 of IPC	Demonstration in front of DDM Office, Koida	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
5	PS Case No. 69 of 2021, Koida PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 489 of 2021, SDJM, Bonai	U/s 147, 448, 341, 353, 149 of IPC	Demonstration in front of DDM Office, Koida for worker issue & employment	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
6	PS Case No. 124 of 2017, Lahunpara PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 522 of 2017, SDJM, Bonai	U/s 143, 149, 283, 341 of IPC	Demonstration at Bhaskar Steel, Tumkela against Pollution & for employment for local youth	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
7	PS Case No. 117 of 2018, Lahunpara PS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 454 of 2018, SDJM, Bonai	U/s 143, 149, 186, 283, 341 of IPC	Demonstration on Pulic Issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
8	PS Case No. 3 of 2017, BNDM GRPS, District Sundargarh	G.R. No 91 of 2017, J.M.F.C.(R), Rourkela	U/s 147, 148, 149, 294, 307, 341, 323, 324, 325, 427, 506, & 120-Bof IPC.	Demonstration at Bimlagarh Rly Siding for demanding employment for local youth	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
9	PS Case No. 11 of 2016, BNDM GRPS, District Sundargarh	PS Case No. 11 of 2016, BNDM GRPS, District Sundargarh	U/s 143, 149 & 34 of IPC, and 174 of I.R. Act	Demonstration for Talcher Bimlagarh Rail Line	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
10	PS Case No. 21 of 2014, BNDM GRPS, District Sundargarh	PS Case No. 21 of 2014, BNDM GRPS, District Sundargarh	U/s 143, 341, 283, 149, 146, 147 of IPC, and 174 of Rly. Act	Demonstration for Talcher Bimlagarh Rail Line	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
11	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 456 of 2017, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 3/2017 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 174-A, 147, 145 of Railway Act.	Agitation at P.S.J. Railway Station for repairing of NH-215/520	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
12	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 457 of 2017, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 4/2017 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 174-A, 147, 145 of Railway Act.	Agitation at P.S.J. Railway Station for repairing of NH-215/520	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
13	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 458 of 2017, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 5/2017 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 174-A, 147, 145 of Railway Act.	Agitation at Roxy Railway Station for repairing of NH-215/520	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
14	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 484 of 2017, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 8/2017 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 145, 147, 174-A of Railway Act.	Agitation at BUF Railway Station against loading of Intend No. 154 by Rashi Steel & Power	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
15	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 283 of 2018, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 3/2018 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 145-A, 147, 174-A of Railway Act.	Agitation regarding public Railway issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
16	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 450 of 2018, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 9/2018 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 145-B, 147, 147-A of Railway Act.	Demonstration on public Railway issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
17	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No. 2/2019 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	RMC Case No. 1/2019 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 145, 147, 174-A of Railway Act.	Demonstration on public Railway issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
18	RMC Case No. 2/2019 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	RMC Case No. 2/2019 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 145-B, 147 of Railway Act.	Demonstration on public Railway issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
19	RMC Case No. 1/2020 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	RMC Case No. 1/2020 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 145, 147, 174-A of Railway Act.	Demonstration on public Railway issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO
20	RPF/Post/BNDM Case No 176 of 2019, District Sundargarh.	RMC Case No. 8/2013 of U.K. Behera, JMFC, RKL	U/s 174-A of Railway Act.	Demonstration on public Railway issue	Under Trial	Under Trial	NO

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, Mention the election concerned In the place of name of constituency.

Sd/-(Laxman Munda)

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Letter No. S&T/OT/AMC VOICE LOGGER/ CAR FESTIVAL/2024, Dt. 06.05.2024

01) Tender Notice No. ST-OT-AMC-VOICELGGER-377, Dt. 06.05.2024

NAME OF WORK: COMPREHENSIVE ON SITE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF 12 CHANNEL DIGITAL VOICE LOGGER SYSTEM WITH ALL ACCESSORIES INSTALLED AT TEST ROOM / KHURDA ROAD OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION ON SINGLE TENDER BASIS WITH OEM FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS.

Tender Value in (₹) : 10,05,420.65, EMD (₹) : 20,100.00, Tender Document Cost (₹) : 2,360.00

02) Tender Notice No. ST-OT-CAR-FESTIVAL-378, Dt. 06.05.2024

NAME OF WORK: ARRANGEMENT OF TEMPORARY TELECOM INSTALLATIONS AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS WORKS AT PURI STATION IN CONNECTION WITH CAR FESTIVAL - 2024.

Tender Value in (₹) : 66,26,816.53, EMD (₹) : 1,32,500.00

Bidding Start Date : 14.05.2024 (For both the tender).

Data and Time of Closing of Tender (For both the tender): At 11:00 Hrs. of 28.05.2024

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : <https://www.irps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) / PR-107/P/24-25 / Khurda Road

FOCUS ECONOMY

SURGE IN REMITTANCES



India's international economic migrants have a stellar record. For nearly three decades, they have been sending their hard-earned earnings home, making India by far the highest receiver of remittances

from states like Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha to make up for the shortfall. The huge influx of Gulf dollars also led to high inflation in the local real estate market in Kerala. So, a strong and unlimited inflow of remittances whether at the state-level or at an all-India level is a mixed blessing. Unless the remittance money goes into productive investments and in manufacturing and high-tech industries, and instead of going only into real estate, it can cause long-term problems. For India, there is also a gender angle, in that more than two-third of economic migrants from India are males. So, the females are left behind to care for the children and the elderly, as is the social norm. This gender skew is not there for economic migrants from Sri Lanka and Philippines.

India is the world's most populated country, with a paucity of high-quality jobs, and its per capita income is low. So, it is natural to expect it to be a leader in economic migration. Domestically too, one-third of the population are internal migrants, in search of jobs and livelihoods. Much of the internal migration tends to be seasonal, circular and often intrastate too. International migration of Indians is a totally different matter. There is much more vulnerability, possibility of exploitation and discrimination, especially since the migrants are mostly in blue-collar work. It requires proactive intervention from our consular staff.

India has also been advocating for a special WTO work permit system, which allows people to travel for work, and not get treated as potential immigrants every time they stand in line for a visa. In these times of fierce anti-immigrant sentiment, it will take time to push for freer movement of economic migrants and service providers. Till then we can cherish the strong remittance earnings.

The writer is a noted Pune-based economist.
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The International Organisation for Migration, an agency of the United Nations, has released its World Migration Report for 2024. This report, which is rich in data, is released along with many data tools that help researchers, policymakers and media. That data dominates discourse, especially in these times of rising anti-immigrant sentiment across the world. Is migration a human right? The Indian Constitution gives a right to every citizen to move freely to any part of the country. But moving across borders is not the same. The United Nations while not explicitly recognising the right to migrate as a human right, does have the right to leave any country, including your own, as a fundamental right. This might sound contradictory but is not. You have the negative right to not be coerced, or persecuted, and hence can migrate. But you may not have the right to be automatically allowed entry into any other country. The UN also recognises the right to seek asylum and the right to not be forced to return to one's country. These are recognised because of the risk of persecution, torture or serious harm. The UN estimates that during 2022, there were 281 million international migrants representing 3.6% of the world's population. These include migrants fleeing conflict or persecution, violence, political instability and also those seeking economic opportunities.

Migrating for economic reasons is certainly not a human right. But once an economic migrant is in a foreign country, there are international agreements and laws that seek to protect workers from exploitation and safeguard some basic rights. India's international economic migrants have a stellar record. For nearly three decades, they have been sending their hard-earned earnings home, making India by far the highest receiver of remittances. During 2022, India received \$111 billion which

was nearly half of the merchandise trade deficit of the country. It was also more than twice as much as the second and third remittance recipients, Mexico and China.

India's inward remittances keep growing, having more than doubled since 2010, and showing a growth of 6% plus per year, ahead of the GDP growth. By comparison, China's inbound remittances have been falling. Pakistan and Bangladesh get about one-fourth of what India gets. The bulk of India's inbound remittance comes in from the Gulf states, which are home to blue collar workers in fields like construction, retail, security, transport and semi-skilled work. More granular data will reveal that the average remittance from a blue-collar worker is a few thousand dollars, which forms a significant portion of his or her income and helps the family back in India. Such remittances face hurdles of high transaction cost, as high as 6% and also exchange rate risk.

By contrast India's outbound remittance has also been growing. Under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the RBI the latest data shows that it might have crossed \$32 billion during 2023-24, with a growth rate of 25% over the previous year. Unlike inbound remittances which come from

blue-collar workers, the outbound is typically from the rich segment, supporting the education of their children or maintenance costs of loved ones, or buying foreign assets. There is thus a stark divide in the profile of inbound and outbound remitters. It would of course be imprudent to put any restriction on outbound remittances, on the suspicion that precious foreign exchange is leaving India. One has to examine the root cause, rather than clamp the outflow in a knee-jerk fashion.

India's reputation as number one recipient of inward remittance is not without its worrying aspect. On one hand, it shows the loyalty and diligence of those remitting money home. It brings some macro-economic stability to the trade deficit and foreign exchange fluctuations. It is a natural corollary that India is de facto exporting surplus labour. The troubling aspect is that this is relatively low productivity labour. Should not these labourers have found jobs in India? Is it leading to a dependency syndrome? Kerala used to get 25% of the state's income from remittances (now reduced to below 20%). That made Kerala one of the richest states in per capita consumption, but it was also a state with notorious labour shortages. Workers have to be imported



Ajit Ranade

THE BULK OF INDIA'S INBOUND REMITTANCE COMES IN FROM THE GULF STATES WHICH ARE HOME TO BLUE COLLAR WORKERS IN FIELDS LIKE CONSTRUCTION, RETAIL, SECURITY, TRANSPORT AND SEMI-SKILLED WORK

Xi In Europe

Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent tour of Europe - first in five years - is being regarded as an opportunity to reaffirm Beijing's economic and geopolitical ambitions. Xi used it to the hilt and sent strong messages to Europe and NATO about China's keenness to build bridges with Europe while expressing solidarity with his ally, Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The trip took Xi to France, Serbia and Hungary and helped him mainly to showcase the commercial and geopolitical objectives of Chinese power. He seems to have played his cards well and operated from a position of advantage without virtually offering any concessions to the leaders of the European Union. The itinerary itself was chosen by Xi in a shrewd manner which itself had a message. For, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban are both no easy partners for European leaders and they make no secret of their hobnobbing with the Kremlin. Xi used this political climate consciously and chose Belgrade and Budapest after Paris. This left no one in doubt about his intent to highlight Europe's divisions.

In Paris, President Emmanuel Macron had accordingly planned his strategy in advance and included European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in his first talks with Xi. Macron wanted to show to Xi that he was no lone voice and he had the backing of other European nations. However, he failed to win over German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in this endeavour. But, this was predictable, given Scholz's policy toward China that is dictated by the interests of his country's industrialists. The decision of the German Chancellor to stay away from the meeting in Paris weakened the firm stand made by von der Leyen and Macron on the serious trade disputes between China and the EU. This was one of the two big issues discussed in Paris with the Chinese President. Chinese producers of electric cars in particular have, for some time, been flooding European markets with their low cost products, thereby hurting the interests of automobile manufacturers of Europe. Brussels sought to raise the issue with Xi in earnest. But the latter virtually poured water on it by denying that the manufacturers of his country had stepped up normal production.

Similarly, Xi astutely handled the issue of Russia's war with Ukraine which constituted the second priority for Paris and Brussels. When asked not to support Russia's war effort, Xi, it was reported, was noncommittal during private discussions with European leaders. But, in public he went on the offensive and said that such a stance of China could be used to "blacken" its image and even trigger "a new Cold War." This is only natural and in keeping with China's pro-Russia policy. Incidentally, the Chinese President will roll out a red carpet welcome to Russian President Putin in Beijing later this month.

In sharp contrast to Xi's trip to France, his engagements with Serbia and Hungary were more cordial and economically more fruitful. The visit to Belgrade coincided with the anniversary of the bombing of the Chinese embassy by NATO during the Kosovo war on 7 May, 1999. This does not seem to be a coincidence. For, Beijing has never accepted Washington's claim that the bombing was a mistake. It believes the bombing was a way of perpetuating NATO's image as an aggressor. At this time when a major reason for Russia's war with Ukraine is the latter's attempt to join NATO, Xi's Serbian visit on the anniversary of NATO bombing assumes added geopolitical significance.

Xi amply rewarded Hungary for its "independent" foreign policy by signing 18 economic cooperation agreements with it. Hungary was also promoted to one of the highest ranks in the qualification of its strategic partnership with Beijing. It is also significant that Xi has chosen autocratic rulers of Europe to provide assistance and pump in more investment.

Many experts thought Xi would try to consolidate Chinese ties with European powers so as to drive a wedge with the United States and reinforce his idea of a multi-polar world with Chinese features. But, obviously, they have been proved wrong. Xi, it seems, is quite happy with his closeness to Putin and wants to bring more autocrats in Europe into the China-Russia axis.

WISDOM CORNER

- Seek not the favor of the multitude; it is seldom got by honest and lawful means. But seek the testimony of few; and number not voices, but weigh them. **IMMANUEL KANT**
- Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. **BERTRAND RUSSELL**
- People sacrifice the present for the future. But life is available only in the present. That is why we should walk in such a way that every step can bring us to the here and the now. **THICH NHAT HANH**

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1607:** The first permanent British settlement in North America was founded at Jamestown, Virginia.
- 1796:** The first smallpox vaccination is administered. The British physician, Edward Jenner, successfully inoculated an 8-year-old smallpox patient using material from a cowpox lesion. The word "vaccine" is derived from the Latin word for cow (vacca).
- 1804:** Meriwether Lewis and William Clark embarked from the American Midwest on their famous expedition to the Pacific coast of North America.
- 1948:** Israel becomes an independent state. The announcement by Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, triggered a 10-month armed conflict known as the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. It started the day after the proclamation as troops of Egypt, Syria, Transjordan and Iraq invaded the young nation.
- 1955:** The Warsaw Pact is established. Eight communist bloc countries signed the mutual defense treaty, which played an important role during the Cold War as an antagonist of NATO.
- 1970:** The Red Army Faction (RAF) begins operations. The German left-wing activist group grew out of the peace and anti-imperialist movement of the 1960s. In reaction to the violent oppression by the German state, they later began operating as a terrorist cell and are responsible for several murders.
- 1973:** Skylab blasts off into orbit. The United States' first space station crashed back to Earth on July 11, 1979, four years ahead of schedule. In its six years of service, the laboratory was used for many biomedical and technological experiments.

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Work & life: Navigating the tightrope

As the cost of living continues its upward trajectory, individuals find themselves caught in a delicate dance between financial stability and the demands of their employers. This phenomenon is not isolated to one region or demographic but resonates globally, presenting a pressing issue that requires thoughtful examination and proactive solutions.

The relentless surge in the cost of living encompasses housing, healthcare, education, and necessities, outpacing the growth of wages in many sectors. As a result, individuals are compelled to allocate a significant portion of their income to cover these essential expenses, leaving little room for discretionary spending or savings for future. Housing, once a cornerstone of stability, now presents a formidable challenge. Rent consumes a significant portion of their income, leaving little leftover for other essentials. Healthcare, another pillar of security, is a constant source of worry. Despite efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the spectre of illness or injury looms large. The cost of insurance premiums, deductibles and out-of-pocket expenses chip away at the already stretched budget,

forcing individuals to make difficult choices between medical care and other pressing needs. This precarious financial situation creates a palpable sense of anxiety and vulnerability among workers, who often feel the strain of stretching their paychecks to meet their needs.

Simultaneously, employers maintain high expectations for their employees, demanding increased productivity, longer hours and unwavering dedication to the company's objectives. In the pursuit of efficiency and profitability, organisations often place a premium on output, sometimes at the expense of their employees' well-being. The lack of support for work-life balance and inadequate benefits such as paid time off, parental leave, and healthcare coverage further aggravate employees' challenges. The prevalence of an "always-on" work culture, fueled by technological advancement, blurs the boundaries between professional and personal life, further exacerbating the strain on individuals grappling with the rising cost of living.

This juxtaposition of escalating expenses and heightened company expectations underscores the need to recalibrate

and reevaluate the employer-employee dynamics. Companies must recognise the inherent value of their workforce, not merely as a means to an end but as individuals with holistic needs and aspirations. Investing in employee well-being and offering competitive wages, flexible work arrangements, and avenues for professional development are both ethically sound and strategically beneficial, fostering loyalty, innovation and long-term sustainability. By promoting a culture of care and compassion, employers can improve their employees' lives and enhance productivity, morale, and overall organisational success.

Moreover, policymakers play a crucial role in addressing the systematic issues contributing to the rising cost of living. Policymakers can establish and enforce minimum wages and salaries laws that provide employees with a living wage. By indexing the minimum pay to inflation and periodically adjusting it based on regional cost-of-living differences, policymakers can ensure that employees can afford the necessities of life without experiencing financial hardship. Policymakers also play a crucial role in promoting eco-

economic stability through monetary and fiscal policies. By implementing measures to control inflation, regulating financial markets, and stimulating economic growth, policymakers can create an environment conducive to job creation, wage growth and overall prosperity. Implementing measures to provide affordable housing, accessible healthcare, quality education, and fair wages are essential steps towards creating an environment where individuals can thrive economically and contribute meaningfully to society.

Collaboration between employers, employees, policymakers, and other stakeholders is imperative in this complex landscape. Open dialogue, empathy, and a shared commitment to finding equitable solutions are vital for navigating the challenges posed by the rise in the cost of living while meeting companies' expectations. By working together, we can strive towards a future where financial security and professional fulfilment are not mutually exclusive but complementary elements of a fulfilling life.

The writer is a Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Berhampur University



Ashyashree Praharaj

THE PREVALENCE OF AN 'ALWAYS-ON' WORK CULTURE, FUELED BY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT, BLURS THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIFE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

The tech gap

Sir, This refers to "US aims to stay ahead of China in using AI," **OrissaPOST**, May 13. Late to the game, China is seeking to catch the lead of OpenAI in a wider US AI market shaped by US technological titans Microsoft, Alphabet's Google and Amazon, and well-financed startups including Anthropic, which received a \$2.7 billion infusion of cash from Amazon. In the fast-moving field, the gap between the US and its tech rival China is seen as wide. The leading Chinese companies are benchmarking against ChatGPT, which indicates how far behind they are. The US is home to 60% of top AI institutions, and the US remains by far the leading destination for elite AI talent at 57% of the total, compared with China at 12%. While China has accelerated development of its homegrown chip industry and advanced AI, its AI development has been limited in part by US restrictions on exporting high-end AI chips, a market cornered by Nvidia, as part of a new battleground for tech supremacy between the US and China. Despite efforts to develop indigenous solutions, Chinese AI developers still largely rely on foreign hardware, particularly from US companies, which is a vulnerability in the current geopolitical climate. Within China, there is another factor that could slow AI acceleration maintaining control of gen AI applications, especially in areas sensitive to state interests.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Platform power

Sir, The role of social media is huge because the users of this platform are growing constantly. Social media is one of the largest public spheres existing in the world right now. The impact of social media can be seen in every field. Politics is no different. Indian elections are nowadays not just restricted to the ground rather they are fought on social media as well. Every party uses its resources to leave a mark on social media platforms. This digital platform is used to manipulate and convince people. Memes, campaigns, and AI-generated content are circulated through social media to gain attention of the audience. From the last three general elections, social media has taken centre-stage during election campaigns.

Deba Prasad Nayak, DELHI

Mid-segment biz hit hard in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, May 13: Businessmen, traders and contractors in Assam are keeping their fingers crossed as they hope that crucial issues such as high taxes, exclusion from financial schemes and inflationary pressure that are affecting the mid-segment businesses will be resolved by the new dispensation at the Centre after the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

They felt that there would be an adverse impact on the economy if the mid-segment businesses continued to reel under pressure, despite being one of the biggest employment-generating sectors after the railways.

While interacting with PTI, businessmen and traders, who are from Marwari and Bengali communities in the state, also alleged that the government has "totally neglected" the medium segment of businesses across sectors.

"In the present scenario, the government is focussing on industrialisation. But the medium size businesses are not progressing. The government has not rolled out any scheme targeting the medium scale units," Sivasagar-based garment trader Rupchand Karnani said.

The government claims that many schemes are launched,

High tax, inflation, absence of schemes major hurdles



The government also imposed a lot of taxes on us and every year, the rates are increasing. Municipality tax, property tax, licence fee -- all are rising. Rents are also skyrocketing. Staff wages are rising along with the prices of goods. Where from will we pay for these?

RUPCHAND KARNANI | GARMENT TRADER

but when traders go to banks and financial institutions to avail of these facilities, too many documents are sought and finally, they become a failure, he said.

Karnani, also the Sivasagar District Secretary of All India Marwari Federation, claimed that the sales of every trader were down, as compared to the previous years, during the recent Rongali Bihu, which is the main festival of Assam.

With voting for Lok Sabha elections in Assam coming to an end, the mid-segment businesses community is optimistic that a new government at the

Centre will look into their problems for long-lasting solutions.

Stating that the outgoing government was "only concerned about the rich and small businesses", Karnani hoped that the new government at the Centre would encourage all sections of businessmen and only then India progress.

"You have to look after the middle-class citizens as well as the business community. The highest sale is in this middle segment. All people do not go to high-end malls for shopping," he said, adding that online businesses have also impacted the traders to a large extent.

Telecom contractor Suresh Kumar Berlia seconded him and claimed that the mid-segment businesses are "deprived" of a beneficiary scheme.

"When we go for a loan, they (financial institutions) ask for more collateral than the borrowing amount. If they give us a ₹50 lakh loan, collateral or mortgage worth ₹1 crore is needed," he claimed.

Expressing disappointment over the current situation, Berlia alleged that the government waived loans amounting to crores of rupees for big industrialists, but "loan accounts of mid-segment businesses are

termed as non-performing assets (NPA) even if a single instalment is misused".

"Trading by the mid-segment businesses is the biggest industry after the railways as per my estimation. If the segment gets weakened, everything surrounding these businesses will suffer. Unfortunately, we have never got the due recognition and respect for our service," he added.

However, Berlia does not have much expectation from the new dispensation at the Centre as "all governments go for populist schemes and ignore the mid-segment business community".

Gopal Ghosh, who runs a sweet-meat shop at Borjuri in Golaghat district of Assam, lamented that he has applied to several state-sponsored schemes to expand his eatery but has not received any positive response.

"High inflation is affecting my business. With prices of all raw materials rising regularly in the last few years, the rates of tea and sweets have also increased accordingly. Sales are also affected," he said.

Guwahati-based hardware trader Sandeep Sharma said online businesses are creating hurdles, which, in a way, are weakening the trade prospect as his shop does not sell products through digital platforms.

Apex court junks plea for Kejriwal's removal as CM

Earlier, hearing a similar plea, the Delhi HC had pulled up petitioner Sandeep Kumar, a former AAP MLA, for trying to involve the court in a "political thicket" and said it will impose costs of ₹50,000 on him

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: The Supreme Court Monday dismissed a plea seeking removal of Arvind Kejriwal as the Delhi chief minister after his arrest in a money laundering case, holding that the petitioner had no legal right to seek his ouster.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said resignation in such circumstances is a matter of propriety but there is no legal right to seek removal of Kejriwal as the chief minister following his arrest.

"What is the legal right? On propriety you may certainly have something to say, but there is no legal right. It's up to the LG (Lieutenant Governor) to take action if he wants to. We are not inclined to entertain this (petition)," the bench told petitioner Kant Bhati's counsel.

The bench, while dismissing the appeal challenging the April 10 order of the Delhi High Court said, "When the matter (Kejriwal's petition against ar-



rest) was being heard, we had posed the same question to them. Ultimately, it is a matter of propriety and there is no legal right."

It pointed out that several petitions on the issue have been dismissed by the high court.

On April 10, the high court had expressed its displeasure over repeated filing of petitions seeking Kejriwal's removal.

The court said once it had dealt with the issue and opined that it fell within the executive domain, there should not be any "repeat litigation" as it was not a "James Bond movie that will have sequels".

It had pulled up petitioner Sandeep Kumar, a former AAP MLA, who sought Kejriwal's ouster from the office, for trying to involve the court in a "political thicket" and said it will impose costs of ₹50,000 on him.



A herd of elephants crossing a road near a village at Boko, in Kamrup district of Assam

PTI PHOTO

Horrible, says SC about solid waste management situation in Delhi

A bench of Justices AS Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan directs Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs secretary, GOI to convene a meeting of all authorities concerned to find a solution to 3,800 tonnes of untreated garbage in the national capital and place it before the court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: The Supreme Court Monday termed as "horrible" the situation where 3,800 tonnes of solid waste in Delhi and its surrounding areas go untreated every day, and observed it violated the fundamental right of citizens to live in a pollution-free environment.

Referring to data on generation of solid waste per day and the capacity to treat them in areas like Gurugram, Faridabad and Greater Noida, the top court observed that considering the development work which was taking place in Delhi and the surrounding areas, it was obvious that it would increase.

A bench of Justices AS Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said immediate measures should be undertaken to ensure that the quantity of untreated solid waste does not increase till proper facilities are



put in place to treat them. The authorities will have to consider various methods to do that, including putting restraints on construction activity in these areas, it said. It directed the secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of the Government of India to convene a meeting of all authorities concerned to find a solution and place it before the court.

"In the event the authorities fail to come out with any concrete proposals, we will have to consider passing drastic order with a view to take care of the environment in the capital city of Delhi and surrounding areas," the bench said.

"We hope and trust that all the authorities will take the issue with great seriousness as prima facie impression which we gather is that none of the authorities have bothered to consider the drastic consequences of not having adequate capacity to deal with solid waste generated every day," it said. The bench said a report

shall be prepared by the secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and placed before the court by July 19.

The apex court noted it was an admitted position by all concerned that within the limits of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), every day 3,800 tonnes of solid waste was generated which cannot be treated as the existing plants do not have the capacity to treat them.

"This is a sorry state of affairs in the capital city of Delhi," it said. Calling it a "very vital issue" for Delhi, the bench observed there should be no politics over it.

It noted that the MCD's counsel has apprised the court that it will be possible to treat such excess waste only by June 2027 when an additional facility will come into existence.

It said this means that for a period of more than three years from now, Delhi will have 3,800 tonnes of untreated solid waste accumulating in some place every day.

Referring to an affidavit filed by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the bench said "something more shocking" has been brought on record.

It noted that as per the affidavit, 1,200 tonnes of solid waste was generated in Gurugram daily while the capacity of processing was only 150 tonnes per day.

"Everywhere the situation is horrible," the court said, while posting the matter for hearing July 26.

143 toilets built for transgenders: Delhi govt to HC

THE GOVT ALSO SAID THERE ARE 1,584 TOILETS MEANT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES THAT ARE DESIGNATED FOR THE USE OF TRANSGENDER PERSONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: The Delhi government has informed the high court here that 143 toilets have been constructed in the national capital for exclusive use by transgender persons.

Delhi government's Social Welfare department, in a status report, told a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora that 223 toilets are under construction and the work for 30 more is yet to begin.

The government also said there are 1,584 toilets meant for persons with disabilities that are designated for the use of transgender persons.

The Delhi High Court took on record the government's January status report and closed the proceedings in a PIL filed by Jasmine Kaur Chhabra, seeking direction for constructing separate washrooms for the third gender on the ground that their absence makes transgender population prone to sexual assault and harassment.

"Making the respondents

bound by the statement and undertaking given in the status report and action taken reports, the present writ petition is closed," the bench said.

During the hearing, advocate Rupinder Pal Singh, representing petitioner Kaur, submitted that he has no objection to the PIL being closed. He said that the Delhi government is bound by the undertaking and statements given in the status report and action taken reports.

The counsel for the Social



Welfare department had earlier said that a total of 102 such toilets were built and 194 more were under construction.

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, had informed the court that 12 toilets for transgender persons were operational in the area under its jurisdiction and tenders for constructing 79 more were awarded.

The area under the NDMC is commonly referred to as Lutyens' The high court had earlier told the government wherever new public spaces were being developed, there should be separate toilets for transgenders.

Central Ridge 'green heritage', can't allow degeneration: HC

New Delhi: Calling the Central Ridge the national capital's "green heritage", the Delhi High Court has said it cannot be allowed to degenerate when the city is already grappling with rising pollution levels that have attained "dangerous proportions". The court took a "serious view" of the Central Ridge being used as a garbage dumping ground as well as the felling of trees and removal of the shrubs there, and sought an explanation from the Forest department on these lapses. The court, while hearing a case concerning the well-being of the ridge, directed Forest department and other local authorities to ensure that no dumping of garbage or any other waste material is carried out in the Central Ridge. It also ordered that no further felling of trees or removal of shrubs and other bushes will be allowed in the area without its permission. The court, in an order passed May 6, noted that certain photographs showed large scale dumping of garbage in the Central Ridge as well as presence of black soil, indicating that the area was burnt down which led to trees and shrubs being destroyed.

Anti-witch hunting crusader Birubala Rabha passes away

RECOGNISING HER WORK TO PROTECT LIVES IN RURAL INDIA, RABHA WAS CONFERRED WITH THE FOURTH HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD OF THE COUNTRY 'PADMA SHRI' IN 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, May 13: Padma Shri awardee Birubala Rabha, renowned for her fight against witch hunting, passed away at a hospital here Monday after a long battle with cancer, doctors said.

Survived by two sons, a daughter, and other relatives, Rabha, 75, was admitted to the State Cancer Institute of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) April 22 due to severe weakness, GMCH superintendent Abhijit Sarma said.

"She has been a patient of advanced stage carcinoma oesophagus since 2021 and was undergoing treatment at our hospital. She was put on a metallic stent because of difficulty in swallowing six months ago," he added.

As Rabha's condition deteri-

orated, she was admitted to the hospital last month and was shifted to ICU May 4, followed by mechanical ventilator support Sunday as she developed respiratory distress, Sarma said.

"After all possible intensive care, she breathed her last at 9:23 am due to multi-organ failure," he added.

Rabha, whose son and brother were victims of witch hunting, had fearlessly led her NGO 'Mission Birubala' amidst extreme hostility in remote areas. Despite facing numerous attempts on her life by superstitious villagers branding her a witch,



I am deeply distressed to learn about the passing away of Padma Shri Smt Birubala Rabha. Through her untiring efforts to end social evils she illuminated the paths of scores of women with hope and confidence. Rising through a challenging life, she epitomised courage against all odds. Assam will forever remain grateful for her leadership in serving society

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CM, ASSAM

she continued her courageous work.

Representing

the Assam government, Environment and

Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary reached the GMCH and offered his condolences.

"It is a big loss to the state and the country. We will never get another person like Birubala Rabha, who defied all odds and

stood up for humanity," he added. Her mortal remains will be taken to her home in Goalpara district and the last rites will be performed with full state honours, Patowary said.

Born in remote Thakurvila village in Goalpara in 1949, she had a struggling childhood. Her father died when she was six, forcing her to drop out of school after class 5 and help her mother run the household. Rabha was just 15 years old when she was

married to a farmer with whom she had three children.

Rabha was instrumental in enactment of the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Act, 2015, which made every offence related to witch hunting as cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable, making provisions for imprisonment up to seven years along with a fine of up to ₹5 lakh for identifying and calling a person witch.

Her struggle against the menace began when her son was branded a 'witch' and diagnosed to die within three days because he was mentally not sound. Her family was isolated for three years after she started raising her voice against witch hunting.

Rabha formed 'Mission Birubala' in 2012 to create awareness among people against the social evil and all forms of superstitious beliefs, besides providing rehabilitation to the victims of witch hunting menace. The organisation has saved lives of 55 victims so far in Majuli, Kokrajhar, Goalpara and Tinsukia districts.



BJD's Anandapur Assembly nominee Abhimanyu Sethy participates in a bike rally during campaigning at Chhenapada Square in the area, in Keonjhar district, Monday



BJP's Sambalpur Lok Sabha nominee and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and party's Athamallik Assembly nominee Sanjeeb Sahoo, participate in a road show in Handapa area under Kishorenagar block in Angul district, Monday



Congress Aul Assembly nominee Debasmita Sharma filing her nomination papers before ADM-cum-returning officer Pitambar Samal in Kendrapara, Monday

Parl committee to decide CM face of BJP: Samal

BJD MP AND PARTY NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON SASMIT PATRA SAYS THE SAFFRON PARTY COULD NOT ANNOUNCE ITS CHIEF MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE DUE TO DISPUTE AMONG ASPIRANTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 13: Amidst speculation surrounding the announcement of BJP's chief ministerial candidate, the party's Odisha unit chief, Manmohan Samal, Monday said the party's parliamentary committee will take a decision on the matter. Samal made the remark during a press conference, attended by senior leaders including Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, former Union minister and Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi, Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi, and the party's national vice-president Baijyant Panda. Earlier in the day, the ruling BJD leaders came up with several posts in social media forecasting that the BJP will announce its CM face Monday. Samal said, "They (BJD) should think about their own party rather than focusing on us. The BJD lacks a proper leader while an agent is running the regional party. Our parliamentary committee will decide the BJP's CM candidate." On the other hand, BJD MP and party's national spokesperson Sasmit Patra said the BJP could not announce its CM can-



didate due to dispute among aspirants. "All of us had heard that Odisha BJP will declare their CM candidate today, but there was so much quarrelling among aspirants that they could not announce it. Odisha BJP cannot announce the CM candidate because if they do, their party in Odisha will break into four parts," Patra posted on X. BJD leader and CM's close aide Kartik Pandian had also asked the BJP to announce its CM face before elections and claimed that the saffron party would not get even 10 per cent of votes if they make such a declaration. "They are not admitting to the

fact that they (BJD) are losing. All the four Lok Sabha constituencies and majority of the Assembly seats that went to polls today will be bagged by BJP. All the phases in Odisha will go in favour of BJP," Samal added. Referring to a recent statement of Pandian on the 2008 Kandhamal riots, Balasore MP Pratap Sarangi urged people to dethrone the BJD government and blamed Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for the murder of VHP leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati. A communal riot had erupted in Kandhamal following Saraswati's murder in 2008. "Security personnel were not there when criminals opened

fire on Saraswati killing him and his four associates," Sarangi alleged. Referring to the BJD government's flagship Puri Heritage Corridor project, Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi questioned the state government over entrusting the work to 'Bhoomi Putra', which according to her is a south Indian firm with no prior expertise. "I want to ask 'Sana babu' (referring to Pandian), who is desperate to become the 'bada babu', what was the motive behind handing over the ₹4,200 crore project to this firm. We urge people to check the company's credentials," she said. Aparajita also alleged that the Tamil Nadu Generation

Thematic polling stations in Berhampur Lok Sabha seat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, May 13: Theme-based polling stations, modelled on train coaches to bus ticket counters, welcomed voters in Odisha's Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency, which went to polls Monday, officials said. As many as 272 out of 1,131 polling stations in five assembly segments in Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency were modelled on various themes, they said. "These polling stations were modelled on themes to attract voters to exercise their franchise," Diba Jyoti Parida, Ganjam's District Electoral Officer cum Collector said. Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) praised the administration for the initiative. "Booths were adorned with various themes to captivate voters, offering a unique experience. From train bogies to eco-friendly setups and vibrant rainbow decorations, every booth tells a story. Let's celebrate diversity in democracy," the CEO stated on his official X handle. The "green" or eco-friendly polling stations were established without the use of any plastic material, while a "waste-to-wealth" model polling station was set up using scrap materials, officials



said. Apart from attracting voters, the theme-based polling stations also aimed at creating awareness on different themes such as minimising plastic use and planting more trees to protect the environment. There were also polling stations managed entirely by women, and also those that were managed by young personnel aged below 30 years. Besides, some polling stations in Digapahandi, one of the Assembly segments under Berhampur Lok Sabha constituency, were modelled on train coaches and bus ticket counters, they added. Sudhir Rout, an environmental activist, said he was impressed by the concept of eco-friendly polling stations. "More such initiatives should be taken to spread awareness on the impact of climate change," he added.

Kashmiri Pandits flock to vote for safe return to valley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jagti (Jammu), May 13: Despite a hot weather, Kashmiri Pandits from the Srinagar constituency flocked to special polling stations in Jammu Monday and voted for the rehabilitation of their community on "social, economic, and political" fronts. The community which was forced to flee from the valley in the early 90s under fear of militancy demanded their permanent return and rehabilitation with guarantee of peace and security. Kashmiri Pandits lined up in long queues amid tight security to cast their ballots in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections. "I have voted for our permanent return to Kashmir valley in an atmosphere of peace and security. We have been waiting for the past 34 years to live in the valley. We hope this dream of ours will materialise now," Om Prakash, who was carried on a wheelchair from his quarters in the Jagti migrant camp, said. Forced to migrate with his family from the Pulwama area at the age of 47, Om Prakash said a return is needed to preserve the ancient civilization of Pandits in the valley. "It is a human issue, not a political issue." Surinder Dhar, who cast his vote along with his wife at the Jagti polling station, said the community votes every time for a return to the valley but there has been no justice yet. While Joyti Bhat said, "Every



time, we vote with the hope of returning to our Kashmiri homes ... This time too we voted demanding justice. We want our township in Kashmir." Anurodh Kaul, a first-time voter, expressed concern over the brain drain in the region and demanded restoration of peace in the valley so that youths don't feel the need to escape. "We voted to urge the government to take such steps promptly so that the community returns and grows back with peace and our civilization is saved. They should also ensure economic and political empowerment and create job opportunities in the valley," Anurodh said. Most of the Kashmiri Pandits said they have seen a change for good in the valley, which is seeing less militants and more tourists now. "We have not received much from this government as a community. But we are happy to see Kashmir changing from the home of terrorism to a paradise for tourism for some time now. We hope that terrorism will be completely eradicated," said Karan Zutshi. Meanwhile, scores of Kashmiri Pandits were unable to vote due to their names missing from the electoral rolls.

However, scores of them were unable to vote as their names were missing from the electoral rolls

Climate change hardly a burning issue for Indian voters

CSDS-Lokniti 2024 pre-poll survey indicates that Indian voters are primarily concerned with unemployment and inflation

A DETAILED REVIEW OF THE ELECTION MANIFESTOS REVEALS THAT, EXCEPT FOR THE REGIONAL PARTY DMK, NONE OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA HAVE CONCRETE GRASSROOTS-LEVEL PLANS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 13: Unprecedented climate change disasters — prolonged heatwaves, flash floods, drought, agricultural devastation and landslides — are affecting people in India. As 968 million people head to polling booths across the nation, the Election Commission of India (ECI) is going to great lengths to ensure that a 'green election' is conducted. In the southern state of Kerala, for instance, the commission collaborated with the Local Self Government Department to ensure plastic-free polling, with election officials served tea in steel mugs instead of the standard paper cups with a thin plastic coating. However, this attention to detail isn't matched by political parties contesting the election. Or by voters, who don't seem to care about climate change. The CSDS-Lokniti 2024 pre-poll survey indicates that Indian voters are primarily concerned with unemployment and inflation. A detailed review of the election manifestos revealed that, except for the regional party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), none of the major political parties in India have con-

crete grassroots-level plans to mitigate the impact of climate change. India's electoral scene features only a modest and oblique reflection of issues related to climate change. In forest-adjointing areas throughout the country, it's increasingly common for wild animals to enter human settlements and cause damage. This is mostly caused by food and water shortages in summer and alterations in wildlife habitats because of climate change. In the Wayanad constituency where Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is contesting, human-wildlife conflicts have already become a hot electoral issue. A poster on a street wall in a village on the Kerala-Tamil Nadu border reads, "It is the people who vote in elections, not the animals that are encroaching into human settlements. Stop animal rule!" Such sentiment arises from a prevalent anthropocentric worldview, where the state forest and wildlife departments are criticised for prioritising animals over human beings. In Lok Sabha constituencies in the Western Ghats, the authors observed that environmental concerns hardly influ-



ence electoral politics, despite the fact that the daily lives of people in those regions are closely intertwined with nature. Perhaps the best illustration of this would be the popular protests a decade ago against the Madhav Gadgil-K. Kasturirangan committee reports. These reports aimed at safeguarding the ecologically fragile Western Ghats, a 1,600km-long mountain range from Gujarat to Tamil Nadu, by restricting human construction and certain types of agriculture. The inhabitants of the Western Ghats, which is identified as one of the world's eight 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity, managed to win a Lok Sabha seat in the 2014 election with the support of Left parties and succeeded in stopping the committee's pro-environment recommendations from being im-

plemented. Even though the Western Ghats are one of the worst-hit areas in terms of climate change-triggered casualties, especially from landslides and agricultural loss, the electoral politics of the region largely revolve around conventional issues. The attitude in the Western Ghats is in stark contrast to Europe, which votes in early June to elect the next European Parliament. A poll conducted by Euronews and Ipsos in 18 countries found that 52 per cent of voters prioritise the fight against climate change over other issues. The so-called 'climate voters' in Europe are mostly young people. One of the hot topics during elections is the European Green Deal, which aims to make the continent climate-neutral by 2050.

A World Wildlife Fund survey showed that European political parties are particularly focused on combating climate change, as they "shared support for ending fossil fuel use, transitioning to 100 per cent renewable energy, and adopting nature-based solutions to tackle climate change". In Europe, green parties have been actively pushing environmental issues since the 1970s, now holding a major share of the vote in many countries and are putting the climate agenda at the forefront of elections. However, Indian democracy is yet to breed a new category of 'climate voters' as its electoral landscape is still conservative with practically very little space for environmental politics or green agendas. (360Info)



The Congress 'Mahalakshmi' scheme guarantees that we will give ₹1 lakh every year to a woman from a poor family
SONIA GANDHI | CONGRESS PARLIAMENTARY PARTY CHAIRPERSON

PROTECT JOURNALISTS: EDITORS GUILD TO EC

The Editors Guild of India urged the Election Commission Monday to direct law enforcement agencies in states to ensure protection of journalists covering the ongoing polls so that they can discharge their professional duties in a free and fair manner. The guild also urged the commission to instruct all officers and personnel on election duty to be vigilant and take appropriate steps to ensure that journalists can freely report on this most important of all democratic exercises



of the day quote

If Pakistan does not wear bangles, we will make the country wear them. I knew they did not have foodgrains. Now, I come to know they do not even have adequate supply of bangles



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

The Constitution and democracy are in danger, and people are in danger. If you don't have fundamental rights, you will be slaves. No elections will be held in the future if Modi wins this time



MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | PRESIDENT, CONGRESS

The BJP is warned not to come in the way of the public. Preventing voters from casting their votes is also a crime. The public has come to know about the conspiracy hatched by the BJP to prevent people from casting their votes by misusing power. BJP supporters are bent on violence



Akhilesh Yadav | CHIEF, SAMAJWADI PARTY

SHORT TAKES

No bail for Soren

Ranchi: A special PMLA court here Monday rejected former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren's bail plea in an alleged land grab linked money laundering case in which he was arrested January 31, official sources said. In a linked development, the Supreme Court Monday sought the Enforcement Directorate's response by May 17 on Soren's plea, challenging his arrest in this money laundering case. Soren, in his plea before the apex court, had challenged the May 3 order of the Jharkhand High Court dismissing his petition against the arrest. He had also sought interim bail to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections till the court delivered its verdict on his plea against arrest. A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act court in Ranchi dismissed Soren's bail plea Monday.

MP alleges assault

New Delhi: The NCW will be sending an inquiry team to look into the alleged assault of Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal. The NCW said it will also send a formal letter to the Delhi Police to send an action taken report (ATR) in the matter. "MP Rajya Sabha Smt Swati Maliwal reportedly assaulted at Delhi CM's residence. The National Commission for Women (NCW) vows action, demanding justice from Delhi Police and sending an inquiry team. Perpetrators must be held accountable. NCW will be sending a formal letter to Delhi Police to send an ATR in this matter in 3 days," the NCW said in a post. AAP's Rajya Sabha MP and former chairperson of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), Swati Maliwal, Monday went to the Civil Lines police station and alleged that a member of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal staff "assaulted" her at the chief minister's official residence, the police officials said.

Journo shot dead

Jaunpur: A 43-year-old journalist was shot dead in the Shahganj area of this Uttar Pradesh district Monday, police said. Ashutosh Srivastava of Sabarhad village was on his way to Imrananj market around 9.30 am when unidentified assailants shot him at the intersection near Jaunpur-Shahganj Road, Circle Officer (Shahganj) Ajit Singh Chauhan said. Family sources said Srivastava had written to officers at the Shahganj police station a month ago and requested protection but the cops did not pay heed to his request.

LS POLLS 4TH PHASE

Over 64% turnout

Scattered incidents of violence mar 4th phase polling in Bengal, Andhra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: A voter turnout of over 64 per cent was recorded Monday in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections covering 96 constituencies spread over 10 states and Union territories, with scattered incidents of violence reported in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.

West Bengal, where polling was held in eight constituencies, again recorded an impressive turnout at 76.56 per cent, the highest among states/UTs in this phase.

Srinagar constituency in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed 37.93 per cent voting in the first Lok Sabha election in the Valley since the scrapping of Article 370, with the EC stating that it was the "highest turnout in decades".

According to the EC's voter turnout app at 10pm, the overall voting in this phase was 64.05 per cent. However, it said that this was an "approximate" trend as data from polling stations was still being collated.

A large number of voters were in the queue at polling stations even after the fixed time of polling ended at 6pm, the Election Commission said in a statement at 8pm.

Among other states, Andhra Pradesh (25 seats) recorded 68.20 per cent polling, Bihar (five seats) 56.75 per cent, Jharkhand (four seats) 64.59 per cent, Maharashtra (11 seats) 57.58 per cent, Odisha (four seats) 64.81 per cent, Telangana (17 seats) 62.28 per cent and Uttar Pradesh (13) 58.05



per cent. A provisional voter turnout of 71.72 per cent was recorded in Madhya Pradesh (eight seats).

The overall voter turnout in the first three phases of the Lok Sabha elections was 66.14 per cent, 66.71 per cent and 65.68 per cent, respectively.

With the conclusion of Phase 4, polling for general elections has crossed the halfway mark as it has been completed in 23 states/UTs and 379 Lok Sabha constituencies out of 543.

Also, assembly elections were held in Andhra Pradesh Monday, apart from polling in 28 assembly seats in Odisha.

BJP candidate in Telangana's Hyderabad Lok Sabha seat K Madhavi Latha, who is contesting against AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, was booked by election authorities after a video clip surfaced online in which she was purportedly seen asking burqa-clad women voters to show their faces to compare with the photo identity cards.

In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP

and YSRCP accused each other of indulging in violence, especially in Palnadu, Kadapa and Annamayya districts.

YSRCP also wrote to the EC, alleging poll code violations by rival TDP in several assembly segments, including Vemuru, Darsi, Icchapuram, Kuppam, Macherla, Markapuram, Palakonda and Pedakurapaudu.

Polling for 175 Assembly seats and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the coastal state occurred simultaneously Monday.

The YSRCP alleged that TDP leaders captured five polling booths in the Vemuru constituency.

YSRCP leader and Tenali MLA A Shiva Kumar allegedly manhandled a voter in Tenali fol-

lowing an argument, police said, adding the voter also retaliated.

At Dalavaipalli village in Railway Kodur constituency, an EVM was destroyed while cars belonging to the ruling party and TDP were damaged, a police official said.

A TDP agent was attacked at Nakkaladinne village in Myduruku constituency, leading to his hospitalisation.

The YSRCP alleged that party agent Suresh Reddy was stabbed at Mandi Krishnapuram village in Chittoor's Gudipala mandal. It also alleged that TDP supporters attacked party member B Anji Reddy at Aravallipadu in the Darsi constituency.

TDP MLC Mohammed Ahmed Shariff wrote to Chief Electoral Officer Mukesh Kumar Meena, complaining about alleged attacks by YSRCP cadres on TDP supporters at Rental village in Renticintala mandal of Palnadu district. TDP activists allegedly damaged the vehicle of senior YSRCP leader Nandigam Suresh, the YSRCP said in a statement.

It further alleged that TDP supporters attacked party member B Anji Reddy at Aravallipadu in the Darsi constituency, resulting in a head injury.

Meanwhile, TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu alleged that there was "no peaceful atmosphere in the state for people to exercise their franchise".

"I severely condemn the violence reported since morning. YSRCP is implementing its plots in a concerted manner. Local police officials failed in averting

violence in Macherla constituency," he said in a post on X.

Sporadic incidents of violence marred the fourth phase of Lok Sabha polls in the eight parliamentary constituencies of West Bengal as TMC and BJP workers clashed in various areas under Birbhum and Bardhaman-Durgapur Lok Sabha seats.

Around 1,700 complaints of EVM malfunction and obstruction of agents entering booths were recorded till 1pm, the EC said, adding the TMC, Congress, and BJP filed hundreds of complaints related to poll violence, voter intimidation, and assaults on agents.

Two security personnel of the CISF deployed to protect West Bengal BJP leader Dilip Ghosh were injured in a stone-pelting incident at Bardhaman.

"An incident of stone-pelting on CISF SSG protectee and attack on his vehicle by some miscreants occurred at Bardhaman (WB) in which two CISF personnel sustained head injuries. The protectee was safely evacuated without the use of force," the central paramilitary force said in a post on X.

Ghosh (59) is a 'Y' category protectee of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) VIP security wing called the Special Security Group (SSG).

In Jharkhand, security forces thwarted an attempt by Maoists to obstruct voter access to polling booths by felling a tree and blocking a road leading to remote Sonapi and Morangponga areas of West Singhbhum district.

JD(S) MLA HD Revanna gets bail in kidnap case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 13: A Special Court for Elected Representatives Monday granted bail to JD(S) MLA HD Revanna in connection with a kidnap case.

The 66-year-old former Minister was arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in an alleged case of abduction of a woman, linked to the allegations of sexual abuse of women by his son and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, May 4.

The special court judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat heard the matter and granted conditional bail to Revanna.

While granting the bail, the court invoked conditions, as per which Revanna will be given bail upon executing ₹5 lakh bond, he shouldn't be allowed to leave the country, and he should not try to influence the victim or other related parties to the case.

According to sources, he is likely to be released from prison Tuesday.

Revanna's three-day police custody ended May 8, following which he was produced in the XVII Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court, which remanded him to seven days' judicial custody, till May 14.

The case was registered following a complaint by the woman's son, who alleged that his mother was sexually abused by Revanna's son Prajwal. The woman was allegedly abducted to prevent her from testifying against Prajwal, police sources have said. The SIT has also secured the custody of Revanna's confidant Sathish Babanna in connection with the case.

HOAX BOMB E-MAIL THREAT

Delhi Police may conduct pan-India investigation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: The Delhi Police is likely to conduct a pan-India investigation with its counterparts in other states to crack the conspiracy behind e-mail threats sent to various installations, including schools, hospitals and airports, in other states, officials said Monday.

According to a Delhi Police officer, the officers here are analysing the pattern of the e-mails and planning to approach the police forces of other states.

In the last two weeks, schools and hospitals in cities like Delhi, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Lucknow, and airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Nagpur and Kolkata, besides various government buildings received the threats from foreign-based mailing service companies that have advanced data encryption. Investigations in these cities are

underway, police said.

Twenty hospitals, the Delhi airport and the Northern Railway's chief public relations officer's (CPRO) office received the e-mails warning about the "placing of explosive devices inside the buildings" Sunday. The Delhi Police carried out searches but nothing suspicious was found.

The officer said Sunday's threat was sent from Europe-based mailing service company beebble.com. Police will soon write to Interpol to get information about the IP (internet protocol) address of the device from which the e-mail was sent, he added.

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police is conducting the investigation, he said.

The officer further said the sender had used a similar domain name provider while sending the threats to 70 schools in Bangalore a few days ago.

PM to file nomination from Varanasi today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi, May 13: A day before filing his nomination papers from the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a six-kilometre-long roadshow Monday evening and said the warmth and affection of people is "unbelievable".

People lined the barricaded roads, some of them holding saffron flags, balloons and small "trishuls". Small stages were set up along the route where cultural performances were held. Cutouts of famous people from Kashi were installed in many places.

People from different communities, including Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Maheshwari, Marwari, Tamil and Punjabi, welcomed Modi at 100 points in 11 zones marked out on the route of the roadshow.

Two hours after the roadshow began from the Malviya Chauraha in Varanasi's Lanka area, the prime minister reached the Kashi Vishwanath temple and offered prayers.

If INDIA bloc comes to power after June 4, I will be back next day: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday claimed he will be back from the Bihar jail June 5 if the INDIA bloc comes to power after the election results are announced even as he alleged that efforts were made to break and humiliate him during his prison stay.

Arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, Kejriwal has been granted interim bail by the Supreme Court till June 1 to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. He will have to surrender and go back to jail June 2.

June 1 is the last day of the seven-phase elections and the votes will be counted June 4.

Addressing his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillors, Kejriwal said he was under CCTV surveillance and 13 officers were monitoring the feed.

Talking about the election campaigning of the INDIA bloc,



I do not know what hatred Modi has harboured against me and the Aam Aadmi Party that he is hell-bent on crushing the Aam Aadmi Party. But Narendra Modi is no God, and God is with us in this fight

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI

he said for the past few days, he has received plenty of invitations from various parties and candidates of the opposition bloc from all over the country.

"I will try and go to most of the places in the next 21 days to campaign for the INDIA bloc. I have been receiving invitations from individual candidates as well, from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and so on. I will try and go to as many places as possible and work hard for election campaigning," he said.

Asking them to work hard, he said, "I have to go back to

jail on 2nd June. I will be watching the results on June 4 from the jail. If you work hard and make the INDIA bloc win, I will come back on June 5. If there is any lack of effort, then let's see when we will meet," he said.

The Delhi chief minister, sharing the ordeal of his days in jail, said two CCTV cameras were installed in his cell, "to see what time I wake up, what time I go to bed, what time I eat food, which TV channels I watch, what time I wake up at night and what time I go to the bathroom".

Over 9,600 children wrongly jailed in adult prisons: Study

PRISONS IN ODISHA AND TAMIL NADU DEMONSTRATED EXTREMELY LOW RESPONSE RATES TO THE QUERIES, WITH NO CHILDREN REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM PRISONS TO JUVENILE HOMES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: More than 9,600 children were wrongly incarcerated in adult prisons across India between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2021, a new study has found.

The data for the study - "Incarceration of Children in Prisons in India" - was obtained under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The study by legal rights body iProbono sheds light on a deeply concerning issue affecting the juvenile justice system in India.

The data indicates that at least 9,681 children were wrongly incarcerated in adult prisons between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2021.

"This means an average of

over 1,600 children were transferred out of prisons across the country every year," the study said, referring to the children identified by Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB) and moved to juvenile homes from adult jails.

This figure was ascertained on the basis of responses to RTI requests by 285 district and central prisons out of a total of 570.

"This also does not include the 749 other prisons from which we did not request data, including sub jails, women's prisons, open prisons, special prisons, borstal schools and other prisons. It also, as previously mentioned, only includes those who were successfully identified and transferred, not all those who were juveniles at the time of their alleged offence, including those



identified by prison visitors, families or through self-identification," it said.

Several states failed to adequately respond to enquiries, with notable non-compliance from Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Ladakh.

Among the states that responded, the study said the figures reveal alarming patterns.

With a response rate -- jails that provided data -- of 71 per cent, Uttar Pradesh reported that 2,914 children were transferred

from prisons to juvenile homes.

However, the data indicates discrepancies, with some prisons showing high numbers of detained children despite no visits from JJBs.

In Bihar, where 34 per cent of prisons responded, 1,518 children were transferred out of adult jails. Instances were noted of more children being identified by JJBs than those transferred.

Madhya Pradesh provided no data despite repeated appeals under the RTI Act. West Bengal also provided no data.

Responses from 35 per cent of prisons in Maharashtra revealed that only 34 children were transferred, significantly lower than those identified by JJBs.

The study found that Delhi demonstrated a highly organised approach to juvenile justice, with clear directives from Delhi High Court aimed at preventing the incarceration of children in adult facilities.

Haryana -- where data was provided by 90 per cent of prisons -- transferred 1,621 children, correlating well with the number identified during JJB visits.

In Rajasthan, 108 children were transferred, according to data from 51 per cent of its prisons, with a notable lack of information on children identified during JJB visits.

Chhattisgarh transferred 159 children, data from 44 per cent of its jails showed, revealing disparities in JJB visitation patterns across prisons.

Jharkhand transferred 1,115 children, also highlighting discrepancies in JJB visitations and identification practices, with

60 per cent of its prisons responding to RTI queries for the study.

Prisons in Odisha and Tamil Nadu demonstrated extremely low response rates to the queries, with no children reported to have been transferred from prisons to juvenile homes.

The report relied on data obtained under Section 6 of the RTI Act, which pertains to the Request for Obtaining Information.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, 124 RTI applications were filed across 28 states and two Union Territories, primarily directed to Prison Headquarters, except for Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, where applications were filed in each district and central jail at the directions of the Prison Headquarters.

The data excludes the Union Territory jurisdictions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Lakshadweep due to the absence of district and central jails there.

international



The United States believes Israeli forces should get out of Gaza
ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

REPLASTERING MOSQUE

Thousands of Malians carrying buckets and jugs of mud joined the annual replastering of the world's largest mud-brick building this weekend, a key ritual that maintains the integrity of the Great Mosque of Djenne in the centre of the country



of the day quote

Defensive battles are ongoing, fierce battles, on a large part of our border area



VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

The people are troubled by price hikes, unemployment, and poverty. In addition to these, terrorism is also an issue for the country and the people. If politicians do not talk to each other, how these issues could be resolved



BILAWAL BHUTTO-ZARDARI | CHAIRMAN, PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY

Recently, the Philippine side has repeatedly spread rumours, deliberately smeared China and attempted to mislead the international community, which is futile



WANG WENBIN | SPOKESPERSON, CHINA

SHORT TAKES

Flood toll rises

Tanah Datar: Flash floods and mud slides in Indonesia's West Sumatra province killed at least 43 people over the weekend while a search for 15 missing people continued, authorities said Monday. Torrential rain Saturday evening triggered flash floods, landslides, and cold lava flow - a mud-like mixture of volcanic ash, rock debris and water - in three districts in West Sumatra province, Abdul Malik, chief of the provincial rescue team, told Reuters. The cold lava flow, known in Indonesia as a lahar, came from Mount Marapi, one of Sumatra's most active volcanoes. Footage shared by BNPB showed roads and rice fields covered by mud. Video also showed the wreckage of damaged homes and buildings, while the floods brought logs and large rocks into settlements.

151 detained

Yerevan: Armenian police said Monday they had detained dozens of people attempting to block streets in the capital Yerevan as part of protests against government plans to concede land to Azerbaijan. Armenia has agreed to hand over territory it has controlled since the 1990s and has started border delimitation efforts, in a bid to secure an elusive peace deal with Baku and avoid another bloody conflict. The territorial concessions have sparked weeks of protests by demonstrators, who have blocked major roads in an attempt to force Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to change course. The interior ministry said that a total of 151 people had been detained so far Monday but that protesters had failed to close off any streets in Yerevan.

Tensions simmer in PoK

STRIKE ENTERS 4TH DAY; PAK PM ALLOCATES ₹23 BILLION GRANT TO QUELL PROTESTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, May 13: The situation remained tense in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the total strike against high prices of wheat flour and inflated electricity bills and taxes entered its fourth day Monday, forcing the Pakistan government to allocate ₹23 billion for immediate release to the region to quell a simmering unrest.

The disputed region witnessed clashes Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement, leaving at least one police officer dead and injuring over 100 people, mostly policemen. A complete strike has also been observed in the territory since Friday, bringing life to a halt.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who said he was "deeply concerned" about the situation, Monday approved ₹23 billion for immediate release to the region after the negotiations between the protesters and the regional government ended in a deadlock.

Ruffled by the unexpected protest and its sensitivity, Prime Minister Sharif chaired a special meeting here Monday which was attended by PoK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, local ministers, and top political leadership, the PM's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Prime Minister Sharif approved the immediate provision of ₹23 billion to solve the problems of the people of PoK, it said.

Federal ministers and leaders of the coalition parties also took part in the meeting, where a detailed review of the situation



was taken, it added. Kashmiri leaders and all participants appreciated Shehbaz for his decision, the PMO said.

The protest is led by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), which has traders at the forefront in most parts of the region, who have been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class.

A long march led by the JAAC left for Muzaffarabad, the capitals of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir Monday as the wheel-jam strike entered its fourth day.

The movement announced its march on Muzaffarabad after the talks between the JAAC core

committee and Chief Secretary of the region Dawood Bareach ended in a stalemate.

A protest leader from Rawalakot accused the government of resorting to evasive tactics. Protestors have already staged sit-ins, closing

Kohala-Muzaffarabad Road at several locations, the Dawn newspaper reported. The road stretches 40 kilometres and links Kohala town with Muzaffarabad in PoK. Heavy contingents of police have been posted at roundabouts and sensitive locations, Markets, trade centres and educational institutes remain closed, while transport is suspended, reports said.

The so-called government called in the Rangers after clashes between the police and protesters erupted in Mirpur during demonstrations Saturday. Expressing deep concern over the violent clashes between the police and the protesters, Prime Minister Sharif Sunday said that there should be "absolutely no tolerance for taking the law into one's own hands".

The protesters are seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class

As part of his efforts to calm down tensions, President Asif Ali Zardari urged all the stakeholders to exercise restraint and resolve the issues through dialogue and mutual consultation.

He stressed that the political parties, state institutions and the people of the region should act responsibly so that hostile elements could not exploit the situation to their benefit.

The president highlighted that the demands of the people in the region should be addressed as per law, adding that he would take up their grievances with Prime Minister Sharif to find a way out of the current situation.

I urge all parties to resort to a peaceful course of action for resolution of their demands. Despite the best efforts of detractors, the matter will hopefully be settled soon

SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PM, PAKISTAN

The president regretted the current situation and offered condolences over the unfortunate death of the police officer and prayed for the swift recovery of all those who were injured in recent clashes.

On Saturday, the violent protesters damaged multiple vehicles, including a magistrate's car on the Poonch-Kotli road. Moreover, markets, trade centres, offices, schools, and restaurants remained closed across the region. Police also launched a crackdown against the protesters after the violence, arresting dozens of individuals in Muzaffarabad.

A day earlier, the government also suspended mobile phone and internet services in different parts of the region.

According to a report by Dawn, May 9 and 10, around 70 activists were arrested by police in a bid to prevent a long march - announced by the JAAC to press the government to comply with an agreement reached between the two in February this year - triggering serious clashes in Dadyal and a "shutter-down strike" call.

In light of the protests, government offices and educational institutions remained closed Monday.

CABINET SHAKEUP

Putin replaces Shoigu as defence minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, May 13: Russian President Vladimir Putin Sunday replaced Sergei Shoigu as defence minister in a Cabinet shakeup that comes as he begins his fifth term in office.

In line with Russian law, the entire Russian Cabinet resigned Tuesday following Putin's glittering inauguration in the Kremlin, and most members have been widely expected to keep their jobs, while Shoigu's fate had appeared uncertain.

Putin signed a decree Sunday appointing Shoigu as secretary of Russia's Security Council, the Kremlin said. The appointment was announced shortly after Putin proposed Andrei Belousov to become the country's defence minister in place of Shoigu.

The announcement of Shoigu's new role came as 13 people were reported dead and 20 more wounded in Russia's border city of Belgorod, where a 10-story apartment building partially collapsed after what Russian officials said was Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine hasn't commented on the incident.

Belousov's candidacy will need to be approved by Russia's upper house in parliament, the Federation Council. It reported Sunday that Putin introduced proposals for other Cabinet positions as well but Shoigu is the only minister on that list who is being replaced. Several other new candidates for federal ministers were proposed Saturday by Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, reappointed by Putin Friday.

Belousov, 65, held leading positions in the finances and economic department of the prime minister's office and the Ministry of Economic Development.

India extends budgetary support to Maldives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

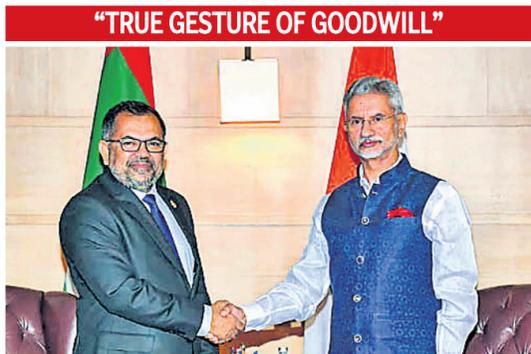
Male, May 13: In a goodwill gesture, India has decided to extend vital budgetary support to the Maldives government with the rollover of a \$50 million Treasury Bill for another year on the Maldivian government's special request, it was announced Monday.

The State Bank of India has subscribed for one more year to the \$50 million Government Treasury Bill, issued by the Ministry of Finance of Maldives, upon maturity of the previous subscription, the High Commission of India said in a brief statement Monday.

The Indian government took this decision despite the bilateral ties experiencing turbulence since Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader, assumed office six months back.

These Government Treasury Bills are subscribed by SBI under government-to-government, a unique arrangement at zero cost (interest-free) to the Government of Maldives.

The continuation of subscription has been made at the special request of the Government of Maldives to secure budgetary support from



the Government of India, the statement said.

The Maldivian government Monday thanked India for its support.

"I thank EAM @DrSJaishankar and the Government of #India for extending vital budgetary support to the Maldives with the rollover of \$50 million Treasury Bill. This is a true gesture of goodwill which signifies the long-standing friendship between #Maldives and #India." Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer tweeted.

The Government of India has provided budget support of \$50 million to the Maldives. The support was in the form of a rollover of \$50 million Treasury Bill, for

an additional year, through the State Bank of India, Male, from May 13, 2024, the Maldivian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

"Government of India's decision to rollover the T-Bill came following a request to that effect made by Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer to India's External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, during the official bilateral visit to India from May 8-10," the statement said.

The Government of Maldives is highly appreciative of the generous support that the Government of India has been providing to the Maldives in the form of budgetary support. A

large number of infrastructural developmental projects and High Impact Community Developmental projects are underway with assistance from the Government of India, which consists of a notable part as grant assistance, the statement said.

The Government of Maldives looks forward to continuing this collaborative partnership for the mutual benefit and prosperity of their people, it said.

Zameer after coming back from the visit said that significant strides have been made in expediting India-assisted projects in the Maldives, as he underscored the government's commitment to prioritising the resumption and completion of these projects.

It comes amid a downturn in the bilateral ties between the two countries since President Muizzu assumed office in November and immediately asked India to withdraw some 89 Indian military personnel from the country by May 10. The Indian military personnel were operating three aviation platforms in the island nation.

However, the Maldives government has no intention of removing the doctors from India at Senahiya.

Political dissent: China targeting overseas citizens

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Beijing, May 13: China is targeting citizens studying abroad for their political activism, rights group Amnesty International said Monday, with some students reporting harassment of family members back home.

China does not tolerate political dissent and has used sophisticated tech tools as well as intimidation to crack down on domestic protestors and activists.

And Beijing's curbs on political activism are increasingly expanding abroad in the form of "transnational repression", Amnesty International said in a report, citing interviews with dozens of students in eight European and North American countries.

Overseas students reported that family members in China re-



ceived threats after they attended events abroad including commemorations of the bloody 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, according to the group.

"Threats made to family members in mainland China included to revoke their passports, get them fired from their jobs, prevent them from receiving promotions and retirement benefits, or even limiting their physical freedom," it claimed.

Students also said they had been blocked from posting and surveilled on Chinese social apps

-- often the only way to communicate with family members due to Beijing's internet firewall.

Students said they actively self-censored during classes and social interactions and complained of mental health problems caused by the feeling of pervasive surveillance, "ranging from stress and trauma to paranoia and depression".

"I would really want to publish my thesis... but I'm worried, so I chose not to," one student told Amnesty.

Beijing has not yet responded to Monday's report, but has previously rejected mounting criticism in recent years that it targets citizens living abroad, insisting that it respects other countries' sovereignty and that any law enforcement operations are conducted in accordance with the law.

Nepal President's economic advisor quits after row

Kathmandu: The economic advisor to Nepal's President Ram Chandra Paudel has resigned after his controversial remarks on the government's decision to issue new hundred-rupee notes with a map that includes three Indian territories, a move already rejected by India.

The President approved Chiranjivi Nepal's resignation Sunday, according to a press release issued by the Office of the President. "I made the remarks as an economist and a former governor of the central bank but some news media have twisted it in an attempt to unnecessarily drag the respectful institution of the president into controversy, which made me feel sad," Chiranjivi Nepal told PTI Monday. The new map includes territories such as Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura. India maintains Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura belong to it.



INDIA MATTERS

PIO Pillai named state minister in Singapore PM cabinet

Singapore: Indian-origin Member of Parliament Murali Pillai will be appointed the Minister of State for Law and Transport in the new incoming cabinet of Singapore's new Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, it was announced Monday. Pillai, 56, will be appointed and sworn in July 1, according to a report by The Straits Times newspaper while others will be sworn in May 15. Pillai, a member of the ruling People's Action Party, is a lawyer. Among other Indian-origin politicians, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan will remain as Foreign Affairs Minister, K Shanmugam will continue as Minister of Home Affairs and Law, and Indraneel Rajah as the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office. The new cabinet line-up was announced by the Singapore Prime Minister's Office Monday.



Visa support for Indians hosting weddings in Abu Dhabi

Dubai: To establish Abu Dhabi as a premier wedding destination, the Abu Dhabi Convention and Exhibition Bureau (ADCEB) has announced an initiative to extend visa support to Indian nationals hosting weddings across the Emirates. The ADCEB, which is a part of the Department of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi, is undertaking this initiative to establish the UAE capital as a premier wedding destination, a statement released here said. The recently announced new visa initiative contributes to Abu Dhabi's tourism strategy 2030, which aims to boost visitor numbers to 39.3 million by 2030. The destination wedding segment is among the newest verticals to join the ADCEB as part of an overarching objective to attract domestic and international visitors and increase the sector's contribution to the GDP to AED 90 billion as per the 2030 strategy, the statement said. India is recognised as one of the largest markets for destination weddings globally, making it a key target market for Abu Dhabi.

of the day quote

No corporate person should be able to decide what will be banned. Data should be owned by the creators instead of being owned by the corporates who make money using our data and then lecture us on 'community guidelines'

BHAVISH AGGARWAL | OLA CEO

...With ONDC Network, we have pioneered the automotive taxonomy for the auto industry, making it easier for customers to find vehicle parts and accessories to begin with

NIRANJAN GUPTA | HERO MOTOCORP CEO

We remain committed to bringing in latest innovations in drones and enable Dhaksha to become a drone manufacturing major in the country

ARUN ALAGAPPAN | COROMANDEL INTERNATIONAL LTD EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

SHORT TAKES

Tata Motors shares tank over 8%

New Delhi: Shares of Tata Motors Monday tanked more than 8 per cent after the company's March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. The stock plummeted 8.32 per cent to settle at ₹959.80 apiece on the BSE. During the day, it plunged 9.44 per cent to ₹948. On the NSE, it tanked 8.33 per cent to ₹959.40 per piece. The company's market capitalisation (mcap) was wiped out by ₹29,016.23 crore to ₹3,19,012.47 crore. Tata Motors Friday reported an over three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at ₹17,528.59 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024, riding with all its three auto businesses delivering a strong performance, especially the British arm Jaguar Land Rover.

Varun Beverages PAT rises 25%

New Delhi: Varun Beverages Ltd, a franchise partner of PepsiCo, Monday reported a 25 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax at ₹547.98 crore in the first quarter ended March 2024. The company, which follows a calendar year (January-December) of reporting, had posted consolidated profit after tax (PAT) of ₹438.57 crore in the same quarter last year. Varun Beverages said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the first quarter stood at ₹4,397.98 crore as against ₹3,952.59 crore in the year-ago period, it added. Total expenses were higher in the quarter at ₹3,609.76 crore compared to ₹3,329.7 crore in the year-ago period.

Zomato net profit at ₹175 crore

New Delhi: Online food delivery firm Zomato Ltd Monday reported a consolidated net profit of ₹175 crore in the March quarter on the back of higher revenue. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of ₹188 crore in the same quarter last fiscal, Zomato Ltd said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations stood at ₹3,562 crore. It was ₹2,056 crore in the year-ago period, it added. Total expenses were at ₹3,636 crore. The company posted its total expenses at ₹2,431 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, it said. For the fiscal ended March 31, 2024, the consolidated net profit was ₹351 crore. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of ₹971 crore in the previous fiscal ended March 31, 2023, the filing said.



Due to the rigorous implementation of DBT, we have saved ₹3.5 lakh crore from leakages and corruption

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

AI-VISTARA MERGER

More than 7,000 employees of Air India and Vistara have been assessed and their fitment will be complete in June as the merger process of two Tata Group-owned airlines progresses, sources said Monday. Air India CEO and MD Campbell Wilson along with Vistara CEO Vinod Kannan Monday held a one-and-a-half-hour long townhall meeting with the employees of both carriers about the proposed merger.



Retail inflation eases slightly

REUTERS

New Delhi, May 13: India's retail inflation rate eased slightly in April, partly due to lower fuel prices, although food prices remained elevated, government data showed Monday.

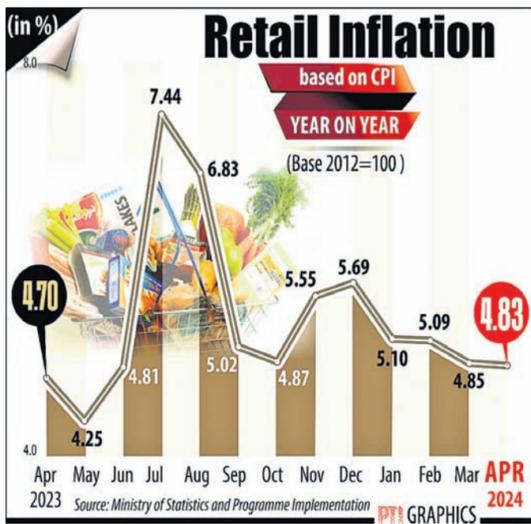
Annual retail inflation in April was 4.83%, down from 4.85% in March. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast April retail inflation at 4.80%.

The inflation rate for cereals was 8.63%, compared with 8.37% in the previous month and pulses rose 16.84%, compared with 17.71% in March. Vegetable prices rose 27.8% in the month of April. With parts of the country experiencing a heatwave, food prices continue to pose an additional risk to India's inflation trajectory, according to the latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin.

"The anticipated threat from a severe heatwave has so far not played out in a disruptive manner, food price pressures need to be on close watch due to their inherent volatility," said Vivek Kumar, economist at QuantEco Research.

In April, fuel and power prices

SURGE IN FOOD PRICES CONTINUES



fell 4.24% compared with a fall of 3.24% in the previous month.

Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, is estimated at 3.23% in April, compared with 3.3%-3.4%

in March, according to two economists.

The Indian government does not release core inflation figures. Even though core inflation has been benign, the RBI

kept its key interest rate steady for the seventh straight policy meeting last month, as it wants inflation to fall to 4% on a durable basis before cutting rates.

"We do not expect much change to RBI's narrative for now as a prolonged pause in policy rates remains the base case," said Upasna Bhardwaj, economist at Kotak Mahindra Bank.

High food inflation and rural stress have been two key policy planks in the ongoing national election for the country's main Opposition Congress, which has promised several cash handouts to alleviate the situation.

To contain food inflation Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is chasing a rare third term in power, has banned exports of wheat, rice and onions when prices rose to contain domestic inflation.

Earlier this month, India lifted its ban on onion exports ahead of voting in key onion-growing areas.

Last week, the government's Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said he did not see any "nasty" upside at the moment to the inflation and expected it to ease towards 4%.

INDO-ASIAN NEW SERVICE

New Delhi, May 13: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Monday that India has fared relatively well compared with other countries as far as the government debt to GDP ratio is concerned and the country is the third least indebted nation among low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

India had a debt to GDP ratio of 81 per cent in 2022. This is significantly lower than economies like Japan (260.1 per cent), Italy (140.5 per cent), the USA (121.3 per cent), and the UK (101.9 per cent) in the same period. On the other hand, several countries have faced the risk of sovereign default in recent years. The number of countries facing high debt levels increased from 22 in 2011 to almost 60 in 2022, she said.

The Finance Minister said that in a comparative analysis with other LMICs, India's external debt scenario is robust. Considering the ratio of total external debt to Gross National Income (GNI), India emerges as the 3rd least indebted country among all LMICs. This is a vital

indicator of a country's ability to handle its external debt. The ratio of India's total external debt to its exports is 91.9 per cent, positioning it as the fifth least indebted country among LMICs in this aspect. India's share of short-term debt in the total external debt is 18.7 per cent. This is lower than that of other LMICs like China, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, South Africa, and Bangladesh, which have higher percentages, she added.

A lower proportion of short-term debt is beneficial as it implies less immediate repayment pressure. Regarding Central government debt, it is also important to note that it is overwhelmingly rupee-denominated, with external borrowings (from bilateral & multilateral sources) contributing a minimal amount (less than 5 per cent of total debt), which signifies that exposure to volatility in exchange rates tend to be on the lower end.

Domestically issued debt of the Central government, which is mostly raised through government securities, has a weighted average maturity of roughly 12 years, which indicates low rollover risk.

Indian banks' underwriting standards at risk: Fitch

REUTERS

Mumbai, May 13: Asset quality of Indian banks' consumer loans has held up well so far, but an accumulation of 'untested risks' due to rapid growth may challenge lenders' underwriting standards and risk controls, Fitch Ratings said Monday.

"Fitch's assessment of Indian banks' risk profiles also factors in lower transparency in terms of data disclosures on retail underwriting, such as loan-to-value ratio, borrower debt serviceability, credit bureau scores, and recovery rates, than most Asian banking systems," the rating agency said in a statement.

Indian banks have reported strong loan growth over the last few quarters, boosted by consumer spending amid firm economic growth.

Banks' loans rose 19% in the two weeks to April 19 from a year earlier, latest data from the central bank showed.

Retail loans, or loans given to consumers, which constitute about 10% of all bank loans, have grown at an annual rate of 20% since 2020-21, Fitch estimates.

Most lenders have reported an improvement in their asset quality, but have banked on unsecured credit to expand margins.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in November, increased risk-weights on certain loan categories to improve buffers against the potential for build-up of risks. It has also applied business restrictions on certain entities in case of supervisory concerns, and is proposing to increase provisioning on project finance.

While the RBI's measures can foster greater caution towards risk-taking, their effectiveness 'through the cycle' is not yet proven, Fitch said.

Asset quality pressures from the previous credit cycle are subsiding, creating a favorable business environment. Still, loss absorption buffers, particularly at state-run banks, remain 'moderate' against high concentration risks and renewed interest towards sectors such as infrastructure and construction, Fitch said.

Banks' risk appetite through higher loan growth will remain a key consideration for their intrinsic creditworthiness despite improved financial performance, it said.

EPFO settles 4.45cr claims in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: Retirement fund body EPFO has settled 4.45 crore claims during 2023-24, with 2.84 crore of these being advance claims (for withdrawal of funds).

To facilitate 'ease of living', the auto claim solution has been extended for all claims under para 68K - education & marriage purpose - and 68B - housing purpose - of EPF Scheme, 1952, a labour ministry statement said.

In addition, it stated that the limit has been doubled from earlier ₹50,000 to ₹1,00,000. This move is expected to benefit lakhs of EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) members.

According to the statement, during the financial year 2023-24, the EPFO settled around 4.45 crore claims, of which more than 60 per cent (2.84 crore) claims were advance claims (for withdrawal of funds on grounds like illness, marriage, education).

Of total advance claims settled during the year, about 89.52 lakh claims were settled using auto-mode.

The entire process in auto-settlement is IT system driven, eliminating human intervention. As a result, the periodicity of claim settlement is reduced significantly from 10 days to 3-4 days for such advances.

The claims that are not validated by system are not returned or rejected. They are further undertaken for second level of scrutiny and approvals.

Shares rebound on last-hour buying

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 13: Benchmark Sensex and Nifty staged a dramatic rebound Monday to settle higher following buying in HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Tata Consultancy Services.

Helped by buying at the fag-end, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 111.66 points or 0.15 per cent at 72,776.13. The index opened lower and plummeted further 798.46 points or 1.09 per cent to hit a low of 71,866.01 in day trade.

The NSE Nifty rose by 48.85 points or 0.22 per cent to 22,104.05. The 50-issue rebounded around 310 points from the day's low of 21,821.05 and hit a high of 22,131.65.

From the Sensex basket, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Axis Bank, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Larsen & Toubro, ICICI Bank and Power Grid were the major gainers.

Tata Motors dropped over 8 per cent despite reporting over three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at ₹17,528.59 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024.

NTPC, Bharti Airtel, Titan, State Bank of India and Nestle were the other major laggards.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said, "Though the market reversed from the day's low and ended up with a marginal gain, investors remain concerned over the progressing general election and high valuation."



An absence of major positive triggers and the flight of FIIs from the domestic market will keep the short-term trend weak, Nair added.

"The week kicked off with market volatility, but by the end, it managed to eke out marginal gains. Initially bearish sentiments gave way to a recovery, particularly among key heavyweights, which not only erased losses but also propelled the index to close near the day's peak," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Experts said that market volatility was high amid the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. As many as 96 seats went to polls in the fourth phase of elections Monday.

"VIX" rise from record lows to above 20 now, has unfolded in just a fortnight's time. So, while recent history points to more room for upside in VIX and thereby volatility, the abruptness in the rate of change of

VIX, may lead to a cool off, perhaps even before the electoral results," Anand James, Chief Market Strategist, Geojit Financial Services said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.36 per cent while smallcap index dipped 0.23 per cent.

Among the indices, services climbed 1.41 per cent while realty (1.32 per cent), healthcare (1.15 per cent), industrials (1.03 per cent), commodities (0.79 per cent) and bankex (0.65 per cent) also advanced.

Consumer Discretionary, telecommunication, utilities and auto were among the laggards.

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

European markets were trading mostly lower.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.28 per cent to USD 83.02 a barrel.

India inks 10-year deal to operate Iran's Chabahar port

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: India and Iran Monday signed a 10-year contract for the operation of a terminal at the strategically important Chabahar port in Iran, a move that will boost regional connectivity as well as trade ties.

This is the first time India will take over the management of an overseas port that will also have a multiplier effect on trade among India, Iran and Afghanistan as efforts continue to directly tap the potential in Central Asia, bypassing neighbouring Pakistan.

According to an official statement, the contract was signed by India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) and Iran's Port & Maritime Organisation (PMO), in the presence of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

"The long-term bilateral contract on Chabahar Port Operation was signed between Indian Ports Global Limited (IPGL) of India and the Port & Maritime Organisation (PMO) of Iran, en-

abling operation of Shahid Beheshti in Chabahar Port Development Project for a period of 10 years," the statement said.

This is the first time India will take over the management of an overseas port. "This agreement aims to enhance regional connectivity and facilitate trade, particularly between India, Iran and Afghanistan," the statement said.

The India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ), a subsidiary of IPGL, facilitated the first consignment of exports from Afghanistan to India in 2019.

The statement said the operations continued through short-term contracts while negotiations on the long-term agreement picked pace with the visit of Sonowal to Chabahar in August 2022.

"This 10 years long term lease agreement further strengthens the bilateral ties between the two countries while bolstering confidence and boosting trust of trading communities from the region," the statement said.



As part of the agreement, the statement said India will procure MHCs, RMQCs, RTGCs, Reach Stackers, Forklifts, Pneumatic Unloaders etc at Chabahar Port. "The agreement paves the way for enhanced trade and investment opportunities which will potentially boost India's economic development,"

it added. Speaking at the occasion, Sonowal said, "With the signature of this contract, we have laid the foundations of India's long-term involvement at Chabahar."

Sonowal added that the signing of this contract will have a multiplier effect on the viability

and visibility of Chabahar port. According to him, Chabahar is not only the closest Iranian port to India but it is also an excellent port from nautical point of view.

Sonowal also held a meeting with Iranian Minister of Roads & Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.

Located in Sistan-Balochistan province on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast, the Chabahar port is being developed by India and Iran to boost connectivity and trade ties.

India has been pushing for the Chabahar port project to boost regional trade, especially for its connectivity to Afghanistan.

India and Iran have projected the port as a key hub for the INSTC project. The INSTC is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project for moving freight among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

India has been developing a part of Chabahar Port and discussions on the development of the port dates back to 2003 during Iranian President

Muhammad Khatami's visit to India.

In 2013, India committed to investing \$100 million towards the development of Chabahar Port.

Earlier, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for development of Chabahar Port by India was signed in May 2015. Thereafter, the contract was executed May 23, 2016, at Tehran (Iran) during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Iran.

Chabahar is an oceanic port. By leveraging Chabahar Port, India aims to bypass Pakistan and establish direct access to Afghanistan and beyond, into Central Asia. Kandla port in Gujarat is the closest to the Chabahar port at 550 Nautical Miles while the distance between Chabahar and Mumbai is 786 Nautical Miles.

Since 2019, it has handled container traffic of more than 80,000 TEUs and bulk and general cargo of more than 8 million tonnes.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had allocated ₹100 crore for Chabahar Port for 2024-25, underlining India's focus on connectivity projects with Iran.

Chopra, Jena in finals

Javelin duo to directly compete in Federation Cup finals thanks to AFI's qualification rules



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 13: Star Indian javelin throwers Neeraj Chopra and Kishore Jena have been given direct entry into the Federation Cup finals here May 15, having already bettered the minimum qualification mark of 75m multiple times in their careers.

Olympic and World Champion Chopra is coming off a fairly good outing at the Doha Diamond League last week where he finished second with a throw of 88.38m. Asian Games silver-winner Jena's Diamond League debut, however, ended in disappointment as he was eliminated after three rounds with 76.31m being his best.

DP Manu, who finished sixth in the 2023 World Championships and who is looking to qualify for the upcoming Paris Olympics by breaching the 85.50m mark, will also compete directly in the finals. "All those who have crossed

75m will not compete in the qualifying round Tuesday. There are nine of them from among those who had made entries, including Neeraj and Jena. They will directly compete in the final, Wednesday," Indian athletics head coach Radhakrishnan Nair said, quoting the Athletics Federation of India's qualification rules.

"The remaining participants who have below 75m mark will compete in the qualifying round and the top three will join the nine above-75m throwers in the final."

The AFI is quite looking forward to 26-year-old Chopra's first home competitive outing in three years. "The AFI is not at all surprised at Neeraj taking part in the Federation Cup. His participation in domestic event is no doubt a very good thing for Indian athletics," a top official of the AFI told PTI.

It is learnt that the AFI wanted Chopra to compete in a domestic event after he won gold in



Tokyo Olympics and before the Paris Games. He did not take part in any domestic event in 2022 and 2023 as he was training or competing abroad. His last domestic event was the Federation Cup in March 2021.

It is learnt that Chopra has reached India from Doha but will land here only Tuesday. Asian Games medallist Jena was scheduled to arrive Monday.

Nair played down the injury to men's 4x400m relay squad member Rajesh Ramesh who pulled out midway during the second leg of the first round qualifying heat in Bahamas earlier this month.

Ramesh was replaced by Arokia Rajiv, who was also not fully fit, in the second round of the Olympic qualifying heat and the Indian team booked a Paris ticket.

"Ramesh's injury is not a hamstring pull, it's related to tendon in thigh. So, it is not a major injury. He is expected to start training in 10-15 days. Rajiv will

also be alright soon," Nair said. "There should not be any problem in Olympics preparation."

A total of 19 track and field athletes have qualified for Paris and Nair said the team will train in Spala in Poland for four weeks before travelling to Paris for the Olympics. Track and field events starting August 1.

Nair also said the AFI is still hopeful of the mixed 4x400m relay team's Paris qualification despite its failure in Bahamas during the World Relays. Only two slots remain up for grabs.

"Our mixed 4x400m team will take part in the Asian Relays (May 20-21 in Bangkok) and we can qualify for Paris if we run below 3 minutes 14 seconds and we feel can do that."

Meanwhile, it is learnt that the AFI will shortly come out with a strategic plan with the target of winning multiple medals in the 2036 Olympics. The target is irrespective of India winning the right to host the Games.

Animesh misses nat'l record

PROMISING ODISHA SPRINTER BAGS GOLD IN MEN'S 200M, WHILE SRABANI, SWADHIN MISS OUT ON YELLOW METALS BY A WHISKER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 13: Promising Odisha sprinter Animesh Kujur was impressive on the second day of the National Federation Cup athletics competition at the Kalinga Stadium here winning the gold medal in the men's 200m Monday, but he narrowly missed the national record in the event.

Animesh's gold winning time of 20.62 seconds fell short of the national and meet record of 20.52 seconds which are in the name of Amlan Borgohain set in 2022. It was after Animesh topped Heat 3 with a timing of 20.81 seconds.

Nalubothu Shanumaga S of Andhra Pradesh and Jay Shah of Maharashtra clinched the silver and bronze medals, respectively. Nalubothu clocked 20.97 seconds, while Shah finished the race with a timing of 21.31s.

"I'm happy that I came so close to improving the national record," the Odisha sprinter said. He was confident of further improving his performance during upcoming international exposure in Europe. "I will be competing in two-three quality races in Europe, which will be a good chance to break the national record."

It was, however, a disappointing day for state star Srabani Nanda, who had to settle for silver in the women's 200m losing the top position of the podium by a whisker. She was edged past by Karnataka's promising sprinter Unnati Aiyappa Bolland in the last five meters of an exciting race. Gujarat's Devyaniba Mahendrasinh (24.14s) completed the podium in the event.

Swadhin Kumar Majhi too missed out on the gold by a



Animesh Kujur was delighted after winning the men's 200m, while Srabani Nanda (inset) reacts with victory sign after her event

whisker as he too settled for silver in the men's high jump with an effort of 2.09 metres. Karnataka's Chetan Balasubramanyam (2.09m) bagged the yellow metal, while Andhra Pradesh's Shaik Mohiddin (2.05m) claimed bronze.

Pragyan Prasanti Sahu, also from Odisha, claimed the silver medal in the women's 100m hurdles event with a time of 13.40 seconds. Tamil Nadu's Nithya Ramraj (13.14s) clinched the yellow metal, while Moumita Mondal (13.64s) of West Bengal completed the podium.

Abha improves NR

Maharashtra's Asian silver medalist, Abha Khatua, hogged the limelight on the second day as the 28-year-old improved women's shot put record to 18.41m. The experienced thrower started her Olympic year with a throw of 17.56m at Patiala in

An interesting tale

BHUBANESWAR: Sprinter Animesh Kujur, who won the men's 200m gold at the Federation Cup here Monday, has an interesting story to tell when in 2022 he had requested his current coach Martin Owens to take him under his wings without even knowing his credentials. Owens is currently the head coach of Odisha Reliance Foundation Athletics High Performance Centre here since 2022. "After I competed at an event in Bilaspur (in Chhattisgarh) in 2022, I saw a foreigner with a lot of athletes by his side. So, I knew he was a coach. I straightaway requested him to take me under him. I even didn't know his name," recalled Kujur. "He said all right and took some tests after a few months and he agreed to coach me. That is how I am currently training under Martin Owens at the Reliance Foundation HPC."

March. She bettered the national record (NR) of 18.06m in her fifth attempt (18.41m).

Focus on Rahul as LSG face DC in playoff fight



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 13: Focus will be on skipper KL Rahul as a struggling Lucknow Super Giants look to keep their slim IPL playoff chances alive when they face an equally desperate Delhi Capitals in a must-win game here Tuesday.

There has been a lot of speculations about Rahul's future as LSG skipper after his "public reprimand" by team owner Sanjiv Goenka following their 10-wicket hammering by Sunrisers Hyderabad last Wednesday.

Speculations are rife that Rahul may step down as captain or perhaps he will do his duties for the remaining two games before leaving LSG. In either case, the India batter would look to answer with his bat and end things on a high.

Rahul hasn't been in the best of form and it's not only cost him a place in India's T20 squad but also left LSG at the seventh spot with 12 points with RCB and DC, who are fifth and sixth respectively.

Five days is a lot of time to introspect and Rahul and Co. will look to come out all guns blazing when they face DC, who are also on 12 points and are coming into the match after a loss against RCB Sunday night.

Besides Rahul, Quinton De Kock's poor form this season has left LSG struggling in the powerplay, putting pressure on the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran, who haven't got the freedom to unleash their big shots.

Their bowlers failed miserably against the formidable SRH pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, who racked up 167 in 9.4 overs, a T20I record by any team.

The loss of tearaway pacer Mayank Yadav to injury has left a big hole which Yash Thakur and Naveen-ul-Haq haven't been able to fill. Also Mohsin Khan picked up an injury and didn't



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rain dashes GT's playoff hopes

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Titans' hopes of qualifying for the IPL playoffs was dashed Monday as rain washed out their must-win match against Kolkata Knight Riders here without a ball being bowled. It meant KKR were assured of a top two finish with 19 points from 13 games and a place in the Qualifier 1. The last year's runners-up and 2022 champions, GT, on the other hand, are out of the playoff race, garnering 11 points from 13 matches. The toss didn't happen at scheduled time of 7 pm due to incessant lightning, which was followed by slight drizzle that became heavier as time passed by. The cut-off time was 10:56 pm for a five-over contest but the official decided to abandon the match, a first in this IPL, because of the consistently intensifying rain and wet outfield.

play last match. The spin duo of Krunal Pandya and Ravi Bishnoi too has been to do a lot of soul searching after being punished by SRH.

Delhi Capitals, on the other hand, will hope the return of skipper Rishabh Pant after a one-match suspension due to slow overrate against Rajasthan Royals will help them to end things on a high.

Delhi sans Pant paid the price for their fielding lapses as those drop catches and misfields came back to haunt them against RCB, Sunday. They will have to find their mark in their last game to salvage any slim hopes of a top four.

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

Jyothika opens up on her journey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 13: An academically-inclined child is a dream realised in most Indian households and that's why Olympic-bound runner Jyothika Sri Dandi aspired to be a doctor before she realised that her father would be happier seeing her excel in sports.

The 23-year-old from Tanuku town in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, secured 97 per cent in Class X while studying at the Montessori School at her home town.

But, her father Srinivasa Rao, a body-builder in his younger days, nudged her into taking interest in sports as he wanted to see her in the Olympics some day. That dream is going to be a reality in less than three months' time.

Jyothika was part of the Indian women's 4x400m relay team that qualified for the Paris Olympics during the World Relays in Bahamas earlier this month.

"I got 97 per cent in class X and when I was in school I actually wanted to be a doctor. But, once I started doing sports, I



could not go back and think about becoming a doctor," Jyothika, who is taking part in the Federation Cup here, told PTI in an interview.

"My father felt I have the talent to do well in athletics and bring laurels for the country in the Olympics. Seeing his sacrifice and passion to mould me into a successful athlete, I decided to follow his dreams."

"I did not tell him that I wanted to be a doctor because

I want to make him happy. Till 2017, I did not have interest in sports but around 2020 I began taking interest."

Her mother is a home-maker and she has an elder sister who got married recently. "My father was a bodybuilder when he was young but stopped as there was no support from family. Now he is a businessman. He is very much interested in sports and he pushed me a lot and he wants me to be in the Olympics.

"Because of him, I did not have to struggle much. He takes care of everything. So, now I want to fulfill his dream of seeing me do well in the Olympics," said Jyothika who has a personal best of 52.73 seconds in individual 400m.

It all started after Jyothika won races in school meets and that was when her father realised the talent of his daughter. "I used to finish first in annual school sports competitions in 200m and 400m and even in some races organised by clubs."

"He took me to the school PET teacher when I was in seventh class (around 12 years of age). I ran on the mud tracks at a college ground in my place. I started taking part in district and state meets when I was in ninth class in 2014."

Between 2014 and 2021, Jyothika trained under Sports Authority of India coach Vinayak Prasad in Vijaywada. In 2021, she trained under Ramesh Nagpuri, current national junior team head coach, in Hyderabad for one year during which she ran her then personal best of 53.05 seconds after which she was called for the national camp.

Mbappe gets mixed reception from fans in last PSG home tie

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, May 13: Kylian Mbappe got a mixed reception from Paris Saint-Germain fans in his last home game for the club before scoring in a 1-3 home defeat against Toulouse in the French league.

Mbappe grabbed his league-leading 27th goal of the season in the eighth minute. But defensive errors followed as the French champions slipped to only their second league defeat of the season.

As the lineups were announced at Parc des Princes, there were loud jeers from sections of the crowd when Mbappe's name was read out. But shortly after, ultra supporters from the CUP — Paris Ultras Collective — unfurled a banner in his honour behind one of the goals.

Mbappe publicly confirmed Friday that he is leaving at the end of the season. Although he has yet to announce his destination, Mbappe is widely expected to join the 14-time Champions League winners Real Madrid.

Djoko follows Nadal's early exit



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, May 13: Novak Djokovic's performance was so poor that even the 24-time Grand Slam champion admitted it was "concerning."

Djokovic put on one of his worst displays at one of his favorite tournaments as he was upset by 29th-seeded Alejandro Tabilo in the third round of the

Italian Open. It was Djokovic's first match since accidentally getting knocked on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs after his opening win Friday.

Djokovic started off with a double-fault and it didn't get much better for the six-time Rome champion. The top-ranked Djokovic lost his first two service games and went on to lose the match 6-2, 6-

3 in just 68 minutes, handing Tabilo the victory when he double-faulted — his fifth of the match — amid boos at the Foro Italo. Tabilo next faces 16th-seeded Karen Khachanov, who beat Francisco Cerundolo 6-2, 6-4.

Djokovic followed Rafael Nadal to an early exit after the record 10-time Rome champion lost his third-round match to Hubert Hurkacz 1-6, 3-6 Saturday.

Third-seeded Alexander Zverev advanced after the 2017 Rome champion beat Luciano Darderi of Italy 7-6(7-3), 6-2. Grigor Dimitrov and Thiago Monteiro also advanced, while Taylor Fritz beat American compatriot Sebastian Korda 6-3, 6-4. Another American, Ben Shelton, lost to Zhang Zhizhen.

In the women's tournament, second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka eased through to the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Dayana Yastremska. American Sofia Kenin was upset by Slovakian qualifier Rebecca Sramkova 6-4, 4-6, 6-4.

American Danielle Collins is safely through after beating Caroline Garcia 6-3, 6-3. Also advancing in third-round matches were Maria Sakkari, Irina-Camelia Begu, Jelena Ostapenko, Victoria Azarenka and Elina Svitolina.

Winning starts for Nikhat, two others at Elorda Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Astana (Kazakhstan), May 13: Reigning World Champion Nikhat Zareen (52kg) made a rampaging start to her campaign with a convincing 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Rakhymberdi Zhansaya on the opening day of the Elorda Cup boxing tournament here Monday.

Minakshi (48kg) and Anamika (50kg) also made winning starts to their campaign. While Minakshi progressed to the next round with a 4-1 victory over Gassymova Roxana of Kazakhstan, Anamika defeated

Zhumabayeva Arailym with a referee stop the contest (RSC) win in the first round.

Fellow Indians Ishmeet Singh (75kg) and Sonia (54kg), however, bowed out after losing 0-5 against Kazakhstan's Armanuly Armat and China's Chang Yuan respectively.

Six-time Asian Championships medallist Shiva Thapa (63.5kg), Sanjay (80kg) and Gaurav Chauhan (92+) will be in action on Tuesday alongside three other Indian boxers.

The Boxing Federation of India has sent a 21-member squad for the prestigious tournament.