

Going candid
Actor Mrunal Thakur talks about reality behind the seemingly perfect lives portrayed on social media
LEISURE | P2

Blinken meets Xi
Antony Blinken meets Xi Jinping, stressing the importance of 'responsibly managing' the differences between the United States and China
INTERNATIONAL | P10

Promoting transparency
RBI proposes new norms for LSPs to promote transparency and give information on all the loan offers available
BUSINESS | P11

Punjab script history
Punjab Kings set a new record of highest successful chase in T20 cricket history as they beat Kolkata Knight Riders by 8 wickets in IPL
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STUDENT POWER: Students of Rama Devi Women's University in Bhubaneswar stage a protest in front of the varsity demanding postponement of their fourth semester exams due to soaring temperatures, Friday (Report on P4)
PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

CBSE exams twice a year from 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: The Ministry of Education has asked the CBSE to work out logistics for conducting the board exams twice a year from the 2025-26 academic session, according to sources. The plan for introducing a semester system has been ruled out, they said.

The ministry and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will hold consultations with school principals next month for conducting board exams twice a year, the sources said.

The CBSE is currently in the process of working out the modalities of how will the academic calendar be structured to accommodate another set of

board exams without impacting the undergraduate admission schedule, they said.

"The ministry has asked the CBSE to work on the logistics of how will board exams be conducted twice a year. The board is working out the modalities and a consultation will be organised next month with school principals," a source said.

7 students die by suicide after examination results

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, April 26: Seven intermediate students allegedly died by suicide across Telangana in the last 48 hours due to failure in exams.

Telangana Board of Intermediate Examinations announced first year and second year results April 24.

According to Mahabubabad SP, two girls allegedly died by suicide after they failed in the examinations.

Similarly, a first year student ended his life under Sultanbazar police station after flunking in the examinations, DCP (East Zone) R Giridhar said.

Another boy hailing from Nallakunta area was found dead at Jadcherla near a railway track. Police suspect the reason for his death to be poor performance in the exams. A senior police official from Mancherla district said they received reports that three intermediate first year students suspected to have died by suicide at different places due to failure in examinations.



Man gets death sentence for double murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Odagaon, April 26: A local court Friday awarded death penalty to a person after convicting him for double murder in Odagaon NAC of Nayagarh district.

The convict was identified as Niranjan Mallick, 37, of Nua Kushadhipi under Model police limits in Odagaon.

This is the first ever capital punishment in the judicial history of Nayagarh district.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Manas Ranjan Rath passed the order after examining the statements recorded by 27 witnesses, other documents and the police chargesheet, additional public prosecutor Indu Bhushan Mishra said.

According to the case diary, Niranjan went on a rampage over some reason and beat up Badani Pradhan, 70, and Trilochan Sethi, 53, to death in 2019.

SC votes for EVM

While voting was underway for the second phase of the general elections Friday, the Supreme Court gave a thumbs-up to electronic voting machines (EVMs), rejecting a batch of petitions seeking mandatory cross-verification of votes cast in EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips. The significant verdict of a two-judge bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta also ruled out returning to the erstwhile paper ballot voting, putting to rest an intensely debated issue that has long divided political parties. The SC judgement found quick echo during poll campaigning with PM Narendra Modi describing it as a 'tight slap' on the Opposition, while the Congress said it will continue with its political campaign on greater use of VVPATs to increase public trust in the electoral process

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 26: The Supreme Court Friday rejected pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and said 'blindly distrusting' any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta delivered two concurring verdicts and dismissed all the pleas in the matter, including those seeking to go back to ballot papers in elections. It also maintained that "democracy is all about striving to build harmony and trust between all institutions."

What if NOTA gets majority

New Delhi: In a significant development amid the ongoing general elections, the Supreme Court Friday asked for a response from the poll panel on a PIL seeking framing of rules to nullify an election and order fresh one if NOTA (none of the above) option gets majority over other candidates. The top court issued notice to the Election Commission on the PIL filed by author, activist and motivational speaker Shiv Khera. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Khera, and issued the notice. "We will issue a notice. This is about the electoral process also. Let us see what the Election Commission has to say..." the CJ said.

Pronouncing his verdict, Justice Khanna directed the Election Commission to seal and store units used to load symbols for 45 days after the symbols have been loaded to electronic voting machines in strong rooms. The apex court also allowed engineers of the EVM manufacturers to verify the microcontroller of the machines after declaration of the results on the request of candidates who stood second and third.

Request for the verification of the microcontroller can be made within seven days of declaration of the results after payment of fees, the court said. "If EVM is found tampered during verification, fees paid by the candidates will be refunded," it said. An EVM comprises three units - ballot unit, control unit and the VVPAT. All three are embedded with microcontrollers which have a burnt memory from the manufacturer. Currently, the Election Commission conducts random

matching of VVPAT slips with EVMs at five polling booths per assembly constituency. "While maintaining a balanced perspective is crucial in evaluating systems or institutions, blindly distrusting any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism..." Justice Datta said. The bench suggested the poll panel can examine whether electronic machines can be used for counting VVPAT slips and also whether bar codes can be used for parties along with their symbols. Besides seeking to return to the ballot paper system, the three petitions before it had prayed that VVPAT slips should be given to the voter to verify and put in the ballot box for counting and there should be 100 per cent counting of VVPAT slips, the bench said.

"We have rejected all of them," Justice Khanna said. Hearing the matter April 24, the apex court bench said it cannot 'control the elections' or issue directions simply because doubts have been raised about the efficacy of EVM.

Over 63% turnout in phase II

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 26: Over 63 per cent polling was reported in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections covering 88 seats across 13 states amid a few complaints of EVM glitches and bogus voting in some states.

The Election Commission (EC) said polling remained largely peaceful. The tentative figure at 8 pm of voter turnout was 63.50 per cent. It is likely to go upwards when reports from all polling stations are obtained, the EC said, adding voters reaching polling stations till the end of polling hour are allowed to cast their vote. Election Commission data showed the highest voting percentage was recorded in Tripura which registered 79.46 per cent polling, followed by Manipur at 77.32, while the turnout was lowest in Uttar Pradesh at 54.85 per cent and Bihar 55.08 per cent.

Polling was held in all 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, eight seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, six seats in

- Tripura registered 79.46 per cent polling, the highest
- Lowest turnout registered in Uttar Pradesh at 54.85 per cent
- 3 voters after casting their votes, 1 polling agent dies after collapsing at booth in Kerala
- Karnataka tribal hamlet records 100 per cent voting

Madhya Pradesh, five seats each in Assam and Bihar, three seats each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and one seat each in Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir.

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Shashi Tharoor, Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar and actor-turned-politician Arun Govil, and former Karnataka CM HD Kumaraswamy (JDS) are among the key candidates while BJP's Hema Malini, Om Birla and

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are seeking a hat-trick of wins from their respective constituencies.

In Kerala, the turnout was 65.91 per cent. One person each reportedly died at Palakkad, Alappuzha and Malappuram after casting their vote and a polling agent died after collapsing at a booth in Kozhikode.

In Madhya Pradesh, there was a turnout of 57.88 per cent. An estimated 71.11 per cent of the 77,26,668 voters exercised their franchise in the five parliamentary constituencies of Assam that went to polls in this phase. In restive Manipur, where polling is being held under high presence of security personnel, the turnout was a significantly high 77.32 per cent.

The overall voting percentage in Karnataka was 68.30.

A voter turnout of 57.83 per cent was recorded in eight constituencies in Maharashtra, while in Rajasthan, the turnout was 64.07 per cent.

In Bihar, the turnout was 55.08 per cent, 71.84 per cent in West Bengal and 71.91 per cent in Jammu and Kashmir.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You are winning on news channels but losing on YouTube

MDH, Everest row: Spotlight on local spices brands

DEBASISH PANIGRAHI, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Ethylene Oxide (ETO), a cancer-causing pesticide detected in products of two popular spices brands - MDH and Everest - that led to a ban on Indian products in Hong Kong and Singapore, has once again raised serious questions over food safety standards in the country and the regulatory authority's failure in effectively implementing the guidelines, thereby seriously affecting health of citizens.

While the Spices Board of India, which oversees quality standards and testing guidelines of spices meant for exports, has sought details of quality check from both these companies, the development nevertheless, has created a serious threat to the prospects of the four billion dollar worth overseas market of Indian spices, vis-à-vis the health risk of over a billion domestic consumers.

The issue has also put the spotlight on the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the food regulating body in the country, which is mandated to carry out the necessary tests before issuing licenses to food and beverage manufacturers and ensure continuation of the quality through periodic inspections. The flagging of Indian consumables on repeated occasions by foreign regulators for health hazard has exposed the loopholes in the regulatory authorities' way of functioning which also put the domestic consumers in peril.

In Odisha, over half a dozen local spices brands are household names which, over the years, have captured a major portion of the market by withstanding stiff competition from established national players.

The recent developments have cast a shadow on the safety of their products as well since they



too carry out their operations under FSSAI license.

Commissioner, Food Safety, Poma Tudu told Orissa POST that following the spices row, the department has asked Food Safety Officers (FSOs) in the state to collect samples of spices belonging to national as well as local brands from retail outlets

across the state and send those for testing. "We have asked our laboratory to check, particularly the ETO levels, in all these samples," she informed.

She said the central FSSAI laboratory issues guidelines for the cut off limits of chemicals/preservatives to be used in food and beverages which the

manufacturers are supposed to comply with. "We have asked the central authorities to provide us with the ETO standards which will help us determine if any manufacturer has violated limits," she added.

Tudu said brands like MDH and Everest, which are presently under the scanner, don't have manufacturing units in Odisha neither are they issued license by the state authorities.

Meanwhile, a top official in Commissioner of Food Safety, which is the implementing authority of the Food Safety and Standards Act and Rules/Regulations in Odisha, said spices samples are being collected by 60 FSOs across the state and those will be sent to the laboratory at Bhubaneswar for necessary tests.

He claimed never in the past local spices manufacturing companies had been found violating FSSAI guidelines.

"This ETO thing is new," he said adding that '99.98 per cent'

local manufacturers are licensed 'centrally' though the state food safety department tests their products periodically.

Not just spices, according to a report in a prominent Bangalore daily, between September 2020 and April 2024, food safety authorities in the European Union found contamination in 527 products linked to India. Most of them are nuts and sesame seeds (313), herbs and spices (60), dietetic foods (48) and other food products (34). As many as 87 of the consignments were rejected at the border while many of the remaining were removed from the markets later.

The detection of cancer causing agents in packed spices also sold in the state is a real danger that should not be ignored. Moreover, it is also a wakeup call for people to consider home-made spices using mortar pestle - which have vanished from most of the kitchens of late - by sparing a few minutes for health sake.

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	73730.16 ↓ 609.28
NIFTY	22419.95 ↓ 150.40
DOLLAR	83.34 ↑ ₹0.02
EURO	89.42 ↑ ₹0.12
GOLD	₹71,430 ↑ ₹216
SILVER	₹ 80,718 ↑ ₹34

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	40.5°C	40.8°C
Min Temp	27.4°C	26.8°C
Humidity	72%	74%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST		
HEAT WAVE TO SEVERE HEAT WAVE CONDITION		

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Ganesh advises you to look before you leap. One hasty decision may undo a lot of hard work accomplished over a long period of time. After a tense morning, you may simply want an evening with kids, helping them grow the Dahlias.

TAURUS
Impulsive action kicks in as you work and interact today. Do not let the pressure and strain cloud your thoughts, and instead focus on acting on the things at hand. If you find things spiralling out of control, take a break and listen to some music that soothes your heart, suggests Ganesh.

GEMINI
Today, you will decide to become a bit more conscious about your health. You may or may not join a gym or measure your calories, but you will definitely sit up and take notice of your lifestyle and unhealthy food habits, predicts Ganesh. A new job is also likely, which will pen a completely new chapter in your life.

CANCER
Today, you will be extremely impulsive and spontaneous, feels Ganesh. You better get rid of your negative thoughts and beliefs and start taking charge of things at hand. Also, stop focussing so much on the pitfalls, and start working.

LEO
Always dependable, that is what you are. And today, you will just underline this fact in bold strokes through your fine display of commitment to work, and your dedication to your family, says Ganesh. Your company may never find a better person for the job that you are assigned to do.

VIRGO
Ganesh sees you keeping away from a joint venture. You are capable enough to handle big projects yourself. You are most likely to lead and coordinate large teams and extract work from them as you will.

LIBRA
Expect some annoyance from the 'man in the chair', or people in charge who may be looking towards throwing a wrench in your way. But know that it is just a blip on the radar. Your fortune is too powerful for anyone to affect it negatively. Stick to your task and dig into your imagination to find a way around the blips. Your ability to think out-of-the-box will perplex your perpetrator, chuckles Ganesh.

SCORPIO
The crown jewel of your character will be your supreme confidence today. Try to pick up tasks that require herculean efforts, and you shall come close to achieving them, predicts Ganesh. Your nerves and buoyant nature will be infective and also leave people awestruck.

SAGITTARIUS
Your business may bring you faster growth rates than bacteria today. Moreover, banking transactions will fetch returns exceeding your expectation. Management institutes will value your expertise and experience, predicts Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Creativity is your innate trait. But how creative can you get when dealing with day-to-day issues? You will not only answer this question with utmost modesty, but will make a great display of your creative skills by cleverly sorting out problems with your siblings, says Ganesh. You will derive pleasure by delving into knotty problems and solving them with ease.

AQUARIUS
Money is on your mind today! If you want to sort out financial matters, today is the day. You may have a good time with friends in the evening. You will also realise how much your friends value you and the respect you command in your wider social circle.

PISCES
Today, you will find yourself partitioning your time equally, and more importantly, excelling, at work as well as at home. So, while you will prove to be the right man for the job assigned to you at the office, at home you will establish yourself as the perfect family man, says Ganesh.



SOPHIA BUSH REVEALS HER SEXUAL ORIENTATION

One Tree Hill star Sophia Bush has revealed that she now identifies as queer. The 41-year-old actress has written a heartfelt essay for *Glamour* in which she confirmed that she's currently in a relationship with Ashlyn Harris, the retired soccer star.

SELENA GOMEZ: SOCIAL MEDIA IS FRUSTRATING

Pop star Selena Gomez has opened up about her frustrations with social media. The brunette beauty who has more than 400 million followers on Instagram - said at the *TIME100 Summit*: "I find it frustrating. Then I get a little mouthy and I want to defend the people I love."



Mrunal's take on facade of perfection

Mumbai: Mrunal Thakur has an interesting take on the reality behind the seemingly perfect lives portrayed on social media. The actor recently shared a photo of herself in tears on her Instagram stories, prompting her to address the facade of perfection often perpetuated online.

In an interview with *Humans of Bombay*, Mrunal bravely admitted to experiencing low moments, revealing, "There were days where I didn't want to wake up, I didn't want to get out of my bed, but I did. Not for others, but for myself."

The *Dhamaka* actress emphasised the importance of self-care during challenging times, urging others to recognise that bad days are a natural part of life. She highlighted the disparity between social media portrayals and reality, questioning the authenticity of holiday snapshots and expressing her own struggles with body image.

"I feel low for one day, two days, three days, weeks, months, but nobody's going to care except your family. So I feel like it's so important to remind ourselves that if there are bad days, there will be good days. So that was just like a proof, there are days, and it's absolutely normal for you to feel not okay," she said.

On the work front, Mrunal recently starred in the film *The Family Star* opposite Vijay Devarakonda which was well received at the box office.

AGENCIES

Aditi calls herself an idealistic lover



Mumbai: Aditi Rao Hydari is back with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar* after six years since *Padmaavat*. In the Netflix series, she plays Bibbojaan, a mistress who also quietly rebels. The actress shares that while both she and her character are determined, their ways of seeking

love are different.

Talking to a news portal Aditi said that Bibbojaan is soft-hearted.

Where she's born and who she possibly wants to be are in conflict. There's a lot of love and steadiness in her and she uses them to serve a larger purpose, shared the actress.

At a personal level, however, she's unable to channel that because of the responsibility she feels towards her mother, she added.

"I'm an anidealistic lover, not so complicated. I believe in love. I'm all about unicorns and rainbows," said Aditi who recently got engaged to her co-star Siddharth from *Maha Samudram*.

Heeramandi: Diamond Bazaar, set in pre-independence India, blends beauty and grandeur in its eight-episode storyline. The series follows Mallikajaan, played by Manisha Koirala, and Faredaan, portrayed by Sonakshi Sinha, as they compete for control

of Heeramandi, a realm ruled by courtesans.

AGENCIES

Motivation behind Sam's success

Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu, known as Sam to her fans, has opened up about how success has been her focus since childhood, as she did not experience a luxurious upbringing.

In one episode of her podcast *Take 20*, Samantha explored the human body's fight or flight response in certain situations alongside wellness coach and nutritionist Alkesh Sharotri.

"I used to believe that exhaustion and the need for rest were signs of weakness. I was proud of being a hustler, thriving on only six hours of sleep, and being exceptionally productive throughout the day," said the actress, who has been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition called myositis.

"Despite feeling exhausted, I refused to acknowledge it, working tirelessly without a break for 13 years."

The actress added: "Growing up, I didn't have a luxurious childhood, so success was my focus from an early age. I always felt intense pressure to 'make it' in life. Constantly fed with the no-

enough, so that became an intense motivation for me to succeed at any cost."

Fears emerged once she achieved success.

"When I achieved success, I feared losing it, immediately searching for the next big accomplishment. So, I believe I've been in fight or flight mode throughout my career," she explained.

Samantha will soon be seen in the lead role opposite Varun Dhawan in the OTT series *Citadel: Honey Bunny*.

IANS



Bhuvan Bam falls in love with Mumbai

Mumbai: Actor and YouTube sensation Bhuvan Bam has announced his decision to relocate his base from Delhi to Mumbai, marking a significant shift in his career trajectory.

He believes the city holds immense potential and endless possibilities for growth in the entertainment industry.

"I am thrilled to embark on this new chapter of my career in Mumbai," said Bhuvan, who is currently busy with *Taaza Khabar 2*.

Bhuvan said: "The city holds immense potential and endless possibilities for growth in the entertainment industry. I've always been drawn to the vibrant

energy of Mumbai, and now, as my work demands more of my time here, it feels like the natural next step for me."

Taaza Khabar 2, directed by Himank Gaur and written by the duo Hussain and Abbas Dalal, also stars Mahesh Manjrekar, Devan Bhojani, Shilpa Shukla, Prathmesh Parab, Nitya Mathur, and others in pivotal roles.

Produced by Rohit Raj and Bhuvan Bam under the banner BB Ki Vines productions, *Taaza Khabar 2* will soon drop on Disney+ Hotstar.

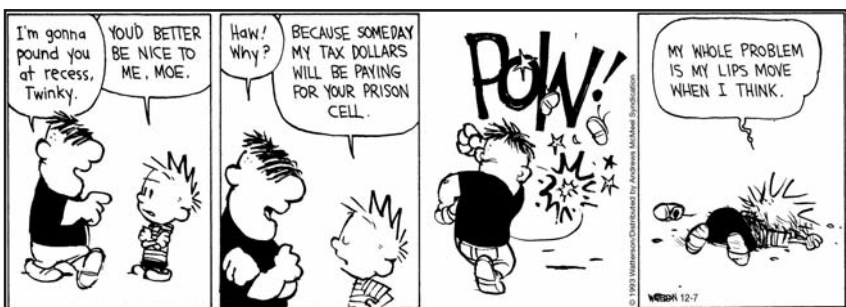
IANS



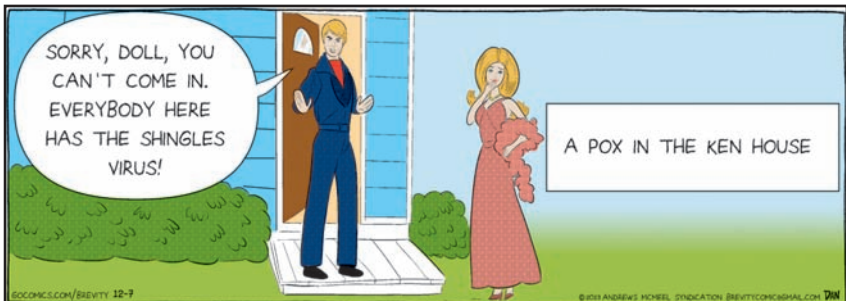
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

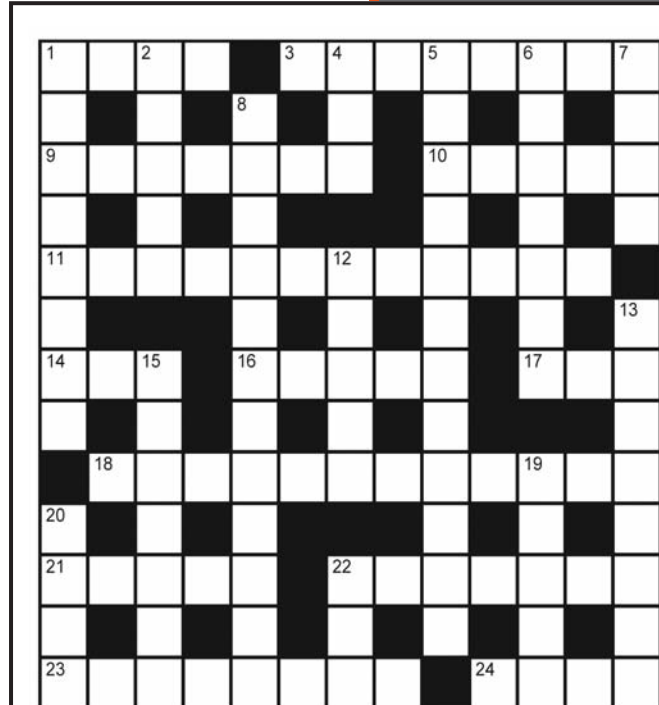


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

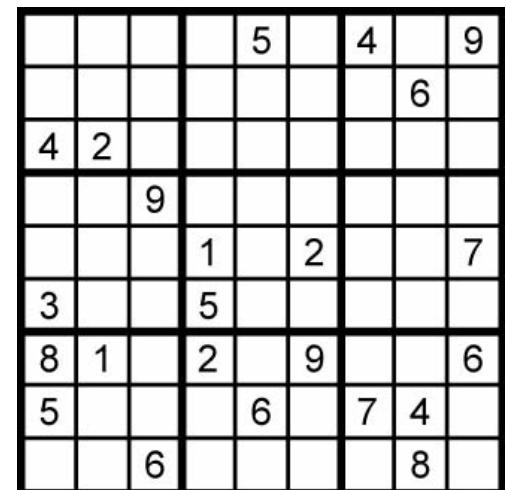


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- Across**
- 1 Fire
 - 3 Kind of lamp or photography
 - 9 Place in handcuffs
 - 10 Oasis
 - 11 Pedigreed animal
 - 14 Gang
 - 16 Tripod
 - 17 First-rate
 - 18 Playboy (3-5-4)
 - 21 Spiritual leader
 - 22 Backdrop
 - 23 Chinese restaurant offering (5,3)
 - 24 Swerve
 - Down**
 - 1 Doctor's clues
 - 2 Division of a long poem
 - 4 Born, in Bordeaux
 - 5 Work with an addict
 - 6 Cote d'Azur locale
 - 7 Just say no
 - 8 Eighty year old
 - 12 Zest
 - 13 Adolescent
 - 15 Thorny plant
 - 19 Martini fruit
 - 20 Jumper
 - 22 Seek damages

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

AT LORD'S ABODE

Actor Daisy Shah poses for a photo op after paying obeisance to Lord Jagannath and His siblings in Puri, Friday



JHARSUGUDA BOAT TRAGEDY

NHRC seeks ATR from Odisha, Chhattisgarh

Bhubaneswar, April 26: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought action-taken reports (ATRs) from the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, and the Superintendents of Police (SPs) of Jharsuguda and Raigarh within six weeks in connection with the boat tragedy in Jharsuguda district that claimed eight lives April 19.



The NHRC move came Thursday while hearing a plea filed by rights activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy. The petitioner has informed the commission that eight people died when the boat they were travelling in capsized in Mahanadi in Jharsuguda district April 19.

a temple at Patharseni in Ambabhona block of Bargarh district, on the other side of the river. When they were returning, the boat capsized near Saradha Ghat in Jharsuguda, Tripathy informed the commission.

Alleging that the boat was overcrowded and operated without a valid license and fitness certificate, Tripathy urged the NHRC to ensure a free and fair investigation of the incident and action against errant officials, who have failed to discharge their duty.

He has further requested the apex rights body to direct the Odisha and Chhattisgarh governments to submit reports on the incident with recommendations on the implementation status of laws, rules, norms, and payment of the adequate amount of compensation to the next of kin of the deceased.

Earlier, disposing of a similar petition filed by Tripathy relating to a series of boat tragedies in Odisha, the NHRC had asked the state Chief Secretary to take appropriate steps in order to curb such tragic incidents.

"Let a copy of the complaint be transmitted to the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, and Superintendents of Police of Jharsuguda and Raigarh, through online mode to ensure the needful action and submit their detailed action taken reports to the Commission within six weeks," the NHRC order stated.



REMEMBERING THE GREAT: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik pays tribute to Maharaja Krishna Chandra Gajapati Narayana Deva on his birth anniversary, in Bhubaneswar Friday

Triangular fight on cards for Bhubaneswar LS seat

ANALYSTS SAY MANMATH SEEMS TO HAVE AN EDGE OVER APARAJITA IN THE BATTLE FOR THE PRESTIGIOUS CONSTITUENCY, BUT CONGRESS' YASIR CAN PLAY SPOILSPORT WITH VOTE DIVISION

Bhubaneswar, April 26: The political battle to win the General Election 2024 has begun and Odisha will join the epic contest in four phases starting May 13, 2024. The Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha constituency is among the 15 in the state where voting will take place in the coming days.



PEOPLE WILL VOTE FOR DEVELOPMENT
I have worked for the people in the last five years and people will vote for me based on that. I am thankful that my party gave me another chance to fight and work for people. People will vote for Aparajita Sarangi | BJP MP CANDIDATE



I WILL BE A MEDIUM BETWEEN PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT
I might be new in the field, but I have the support and guidance of Naveen Patnaik and my father Suresh Routray. I will try to be the medium between people and government. The present MP madam talks more and works less and didn't represent the people well in the Parliament | MANMATH ROUTRAY | BJD MP CANDIDATE



CHANGE IS NECESSARY
My party and my aim has always been to work for the people and their development. My main focus will be on development of students and youths. Change is necessary for development and I hope people will understand that and will kick the corrupt people out of power | YASIR NAWAZ | CONGRESS CANDIDATE

The prestigious Capital City LS seat will witness triangular contest this time with the BJD, BJD and Congress announcing their candidates. While the BJD has repeated the candidature of bureaucrat-turned politician and current MP Aparajita Sarangi, the BJD has fielded Manmath Routray, a commercial pilot and son of six-time Congress MLA Suresh Routray. Youth Congress leader Yasir Nawaz is the Congress party's nominee. All the three candidates are leaving no stone unturned to woo voters as they hit the campaign trail.

fluid. **Orissa POST** tried to gauge the ground realities about the prospects of each candidate and their chances to win the hustle by talking to a cross-section of City residents, and also their expectations from the MP candidates.

Political analyst Sudarshan Chhotaray said Aparajita has morphed into a seasoned politician, backed by well nurtured grassroots support base created during the last five years. Moreover, she also has the backing of the BJD central leadership, he said.

Khurda, Ekamra and Bhubaneswar North Assembly constituencies," he said.

On the other hand, relatively younger and energetic Congress candidate Yasir Nawaz is seen as the future of Congress party. "Yashir's support base extends from minorities to traditional Congress vote bank, and people with secular credentials," Chhotaray said, adding, "Despite

all factors, Manmath seems to have an edge over Aparajita as Bhubaneswar is a BJD stronghold."

During 2019 elections, BJD had won six Assembly segments out of seven and the lone Jatni seat had gone in favour of Manmath's father Sura Routray (INC).

He said the people of Bhubaneswar have a lot of expectations from the MP, such as expansion of the Smart City project, improvement of City's water and sanitation facilities, further development of the Bhubaneswar airport and its connectivity with all state capitals as well as international destinations, modernisation of the Bhubaneswar railway station, et al.

Urban planner and Bhubaneswar resident Piyush Ranjan Rout said, "Whatever developmental work has been carried out in Bhubaneswar City, or the parliamentary constituency, so far, has been done without Central assistance. That also includes the Bhubaneswar Metro. People have experienced the benefits of hosting the Hockey World Cup, Drink from Tap 24/7 water supply or Mo Bus service."

He said what people of the City expected from its MP was her presence in the constituency, and raising her voice in the Parliament over issues facing the state Capital. She should have prevailed upon the Union government for a slew

of mega projects like a Ring Road around Bhubaneswar, pushing for World Heritage City status to Bhubaneswar, restoration of Gangabati river, restoration of Daya west canal, Bindusagar rejuvenation, Bhubaneswar Metro Rail and Biju Patnaik International Airport getting national importance with better connectivity with South East Asia.

"She cared little to address important issues like climate change impacts on Bhubaneswar and restoration of ecology," he added.

Social activist Basudev Bhatt said Aparajita as a Collector and BMC commissioner had done good works which helped her in winning the 2019 election.

"But in the last five years, she failed to implement schemes in different sectors like education, migration, or bring about any improvement in infrastructure, such as road and bridges construction.

"The problem is that Aparajita didn't portray a good image of herself by continuously clashing with the state government rather than working with it for the betterment of the City," he said, adding that she may not get support from party MLA candidates for her 'favouritism'.

Bhubaneswar resident Saroj Barik said sanitation in and around the City is still an issue.

RAHUL, NADDA TO ADDRESS RALLIES IN STATE ON SUNDAY

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and BJP president JP Nadda will address election rallies in different parts of the state April 28, official sources said Friday.

Rahul Gandhi will address a public meeting at Salipur in Cuttack district, and also visit Satyabhamapur to pay tributes to Uttal Gourav Madhusudan Das, AICC general secretary and the party's Odisha in-charge Ajoy Kumar said.

People from across four Lok Sabha constituencies of Cuttack, Kendrapara, Jajpur and Jagatsinghpur would be attending Rahul Gandhi's rally, he said.

Nadda, on the other hand, will address a public gathering in Berhampur and meet party workers at Nabarangpur, senior BJD leader Samir Mohanty said.

Berhampur Lok Sabha seat is expected to witness an intense electoral battle between BJD and BJD candidates, both of whom are turncoats.

While the saffron party has nominated Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahi, a former BJD leader, the ruling party in the state has fielded former BJD leader Bhruagu Baxipatra.

In Nabarangpur, the BJD has nominated Pradeep Majhi, who had won the 2009 polls from the constituency on a Congress ticket.

EC team searches Pandian's chopper

Bhubaneswar, April 26: A five-member team of the Election Commission of India Friday searched a helicopter used by bureaucrat-turned-politician Kartik Pandian in Nabarangpur district, an official said.

"No objectionable material was found in the helicopter," he said. The search was conducted when the helicopter carrying the senior BJD leader, who is also a close aide of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, landed at Umerkote.

The team included election officials, the local BDO, a police officer and a magistrate.

The checking was done in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India, the official said.

Pandian went to Umerkote to address a public meeting. He will also visit Jharigam and Dabugam Assembly segments under Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat, which will go to polls May 13 along with Berhampur, Koraput and Kalahandi. Neither Pandian nor the ruling BJD issued any reaction to the search so far.

From rescue pup to global icon: Story of real life 'Dogecoin' dog

Sakura (Japan), April 26: Her fluffy face now frail, Kabosu still flashes the enigmatic smile that made her the go-to meme dog for millennials and inspired a \$23 billion cryptocurrency beloved by Elon Musk.

She's best known as the logo of Dogecoin, but to Atsuko Sato, Kabosu is the elderly former rescue puppy who accompanies her every day to work at a kindergarten. It felt so strange to discover her dog was an internet celebrity, Sato told AFP in Sakura, where Tokyo's eastern sprawl gives way to fields of rice and solar panels.

In 2010, two years after adopting the Shiba Inu, Sato posted a picture on her blog of Kabosu crossing her paws on the sofa and giving the camera a beguiling look. That image became the 'Doge' meme - and later an NFT digital artwork that sold for \$4 million.

"She's pulling a weird face," Sato laughed. "Now, I think she looks really nice in the famous photo but at first I thought it could be trashed."

The meme grew from an online forum post into an anarchic in-joke that bounced from college

bedrooms to office emails.

"One of my friends messaged me: 'Isn't this picture Kabosu?' Then I searched for it and found all sorts of memes, like Kabosu turning into a doughnut," Sato said. The 62-year-old is now so used to 'unbelievable' events that when Tesla boss Musk changed the icon for Twitter, now X, to Kabosu's face last year, she wasn't even that surprised.

"In the last few years, I've been able to connect the online version of Kabosu, all these unexpected things seen from a distance, with our real lives."

'Mona Lisa of the internet'
Kabosu spends most days resting in a cart at the kindergarten or on a big cushion at home, where fan-made Doge tributes adorn the walls.

The memes typically use goofy broken English to reveal the inner thoughts of Kabosu and other shiba inu 'doge' - usually pronounced like pizza 'dough' but with a 'j' at the end.

"Very love. Such star OMG. So heart. Much drawing," says one framed print using this signature 'doge speak'.

Kabosu fell ill with leukaemia

and liver disease at the end of 2022, and Sato is sure the 'invisible power' of prayers from fans worldwide helped her pull through. Then in November last year, a \$100,000 statue of Kabosu and her sofa crowd-funded by Own The Doge, a crypto organisation dedicated to the meme, was unveiled in a park in Sakura.

Sato and Own The Doge have also donated large sums to international charities, including more than \$1 million to Save the Children. The NGO says it is 'the single largest crypto contribution' it has ever received. "The Doge is the most popular dog of the modern era," said Tridog, a pseudonymous member

of Own The Doge, describing Kabosu as 'the Mona Lisa of the internet'.

'People's crypto'
Dogecoin was started as a joke by two software engineers and is now the world's eighth most valuable cryptocurrency with a market cap of \$23 billion.

"The Doge meme was pretty big on the internet in 2013 and I spent a lot of time on Reddit and other forums back then," Dogecoin co-founder Billy Markus told AFP.

Markus, who is no longer affiliated with Dogecoin, was amused by the 'silliness and innocence' of the memes.

Fellow founder Jackson Palmer drank a beer and saw the doge meme and Bitcoin in the news and thought saying he was gonna invest in Dogecoin would make a funny tweet, he said.

Markus found the idea 'hilarious' and created the coin in 'a few hours' before contacting Palmer and taking it live.

"Lots of weird stuff happened after that," he said. Since then, Dogecoin has been backed by stoner hip-hop king Snoop Dogg, 'Shark Tank' entrepreneur Mark Cuban and Kiss bassist Gene Simmons, who once tweeted: "I bought Dogecoin... six figures."

But its most keen supporter is probably the billionaire Musk, who jokes about the currency on X - sending its value soaring - and hails it as 'the people's crypto'. Dogecoin has also inspired a plethora of other cheap and highly volatile 'memecoins', including spin-off Shiba Inu and others based on dogs, cats or Donald Trump.

for a dog photograph for almost three years'. Own The Doge is his full-time job, and he preaches their motto D.O.G.E, or "Do Only Good Every Day". In 2021, Sato sold the viral photo of Kabosu as a non-fungible token (NFT), a digital ownership certificate that can be traded online, to a group of crypto art collectors called PleasrDAO for \$4.2 million. "That makes it a top-five most expensive photo ever sold," Tridog told AFP.

PleasrDAO split the NFT's value into a brand-new memecoin called \$DOG, allowing many people to collectively 'own' the meme.

Own The Doge has brought fans and other meme stars to Japan to meet Kabosu and Sato, and it recently secured the intellectual property rights to the famous photo, paving the way to make Doge toys, films and other products. As a rescue dog, Kabosu's real birthday is unknown, but Sato estimates her age at 18 - past the average lifespan for a Shiba Inu.

When Kabosu dies, 'the world will mourn', Tridog said, but 'a legend always lives on'. He hopes people will remember 'the deeper values' behind the Doge meme: 'The wholesomeness, the silliness, the not taking yourself too seriously'.



No respite for next 5 days

Red warning issued for next 24 hrs; Angul sizzles at 44.6 degrees Celsius

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 26: There seemed to be no respite from the hot and humid weather conditions in the state, with 12 places recording temperatures above 43 degrees Celsius Friday and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasting similar weather conditions for the next five days.

In its evening bulletin, the regional MeT centre here stated that the maximum temperature is likely to rise by two degrees Celsius at many places in the state in the next 48 hours, following which the maximum temperature is likely to be above normal by four to six degrees Celsius in the subsequent four to five days.

The industrial town of Angul recorded the highest temperature in the state at 44.6 degrees Celsius, followed by Boudh (44.5), and Nuapada and Bolangir at 44 de-



degrees Celsius.

Baripada recorded 43.8 degrees Celsius, while Titlagarh, Jajpur, Sambalpur and Hirakud registered 43.6 degrees Celsius each. Jharsuguda and Talcher simmered at 43.5 degrees Celsius while Dhenkanal recorded 43.1 degrees Celsius.

Capital city recorded a temperature of 40.5 degrees Celsius, while neighbouring Cuttack was sizzling at 40.8 degrees Celsius.

The IMD has issued a red warning for the next 24 hours, stating that severe heatwave conditions may prevail in Mayurbhanj, Jharsuguda,

IMD has issued a red warning for the next 24 hours, stating that severe heatwave conditions may prevail in Mayurbhanj, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Nuapada and Angul districts

Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Nuapada and Angul districts.

It also issued an orange warning for Sambalpur, Jajpur, Balasore, Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Bolangir, Subarnapur, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Khurda, Ganjam, Gajapati, Nayagarh, Nabarangpur and Deogarh districts.



TIMELY ACTION: Members of Happiness Foundation distribute earthen pots to keep water for stray animals and birds during summer in Puri, Friday, to mark the foundation day of the organisation

RD students protest over 4th sem exams



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Raising concerns over the prevailing extreme heatwave conditions in the city, UG students of Rama Devi Women's University staged a protest in-front of the university gate demanding postponement of fourth semester exams Friday.

"The state government announced early summer vacation in schools across the state recently due to intense heat. Than how can we appear the examination under such circumstances? Be it Utkal University or Sambalpur University, both the institutions have already postponed their scheduled examinations," a protesting student said.

"We want the exam to be postponed. We are not mentally prepared to appear for the exam in current situation," said Arpita Rani Meher, an agitating UG student.

A delegation of students met the university officials April 25 to discuss the matter.

"Strike was our last hope as our concerns were ignored and grievances were not resolved. The authorities of Shailabala, Ravenshaw University and others have already postponed the exams," said another student.

After hours of protest, University authority finally agreed to postpone the exams. The examination was scheduled from April 30 to May 18.

Pandian may get backdoor entry: BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 26: The state unit of BJP Friday alleged that Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik, who is contesting from two seats, will vacate one of them to facilitate his close aide Kartik Pandian's entry into the Assembly.

The allegation was levelled by former BJP president Samir Mohanty at a press conference here, a day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to the state.

Pandian is not a candidate either for Lok Sabha or Assembly even though he formally joined the BJD last year. He declared his intention not to contest but rather to ensure Patnaik's sixth consecutive term as Odisha's chief minister, Mohanty said.

Mohanty alleged that Patnaik's dual constituency (Hinjili in Ganjam district and Kantabanji in Bolangir district) bid aims to



set the stage for Pandian's eventual induction through a by-election maneuver, a move he believes Odisha residents will resist.

"The CM will vacate one of the two seats and put up Pandian from there in the by-poll. People of Odisha will thwart this ploy of the BJD to parachute him to Vidhan Sabha," Mohanty told reporters.

Mohanty further accused the BJD government of widespread corruption under the guise of its 5T (transformation) initiative, alleging a calculated strategy to facilitate Pandian's ascension to governance.

"This is well-calibrated strategy of the BJD to ensure backdoor entry of 5T chairman

Utkal Hosp takes lead in Nuclear Medicine: Das

Bhubaneswar: A workshop titled 'Utkal Nuclear Medicine Update 2024' was organised at Utkal Hospital in Niladri Vihar here recently. On the occasion, senior oncologist PK Das said that the hospital has taken a leading role in the state as well as in neighboring states. Director medical services Ranjan Kumar Mohapatra said that such workshops are planned every year. Head of NM department Saroj Kumar Sahu said that the usefulness of NM for various patients in the medical field is not only limited to the detection of diseases, but also in the field of treatment. NM Radiation Safety Officer of Utkal Hospital Latika Devi conducted the workshop.



Care Hospital prog highlights advances in neurosurgical care



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Care Hospitals Friday conducted its Care Connect Programme featuring insightful discussions on patient experiences and latest advancements in neurosurgical care.

During the programme, patients who have undergone treatment at Care Hospitals shared heartfelt accounts of their journeys and life after they were discharged from the hospital, revealing positive impact of the hospital's care on their well-being. Their testimonials underscored the hospital's commitment to delivering compassionate and effective healthcare services.

During the programme, renowned specialists from Care Hospitals discussed cutting-edge developments in neurosurgery. Susant Das, senior consultant in Neurosurgery, highlighted recent advances in brain surgery techniques, showcasing the hospital's dedication to utilising latest technologies for optimal patient outcomes.

Atmaranjan Dash, senior consultant in Neuro and Spine Surgery, made a presentation on Bi-Portal Endoscopic Spine Surgery, an innovative approach that exemplifies Care Hospitals' commitment to offering state-of-the-art spinal surgical options.

Mitalee Kar, senior consultant in Neurology, shared insights into effective management of brain stroke cases. Kislav Anand, chief operating officer (COO) of Care Hospitals, reiterated the institution's status as a centre of excellence in Neuro Sciences. The COO emphasised the hospital's unwavering dedication to provide exceptional care for patients with various neurological conditions.

Care Connect serves as a platform for fostering collaboration between healthcare professionals and patients, promoting a deeper understanding of patient needs and ensuring continuous improvement in healthcare delivery.

Harshpriya Neelachala launches 'Solitaire'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Harshpriya Neelachala, a collaboration between Harshpriya Group and Neelachala Homes, Friday unveiled 'Solitaire', a landmark project set to transform luxury living in the Capital city and its peripheries, said a release issued by the group.

'Solitaire' is a project that combines Harshpriya Group's commitment to quality with Neelachala Homes' innovative approach to modern living, said



the release.

Harshpriya Group's managing director (MD) Chetan Kumar Tekariwal said: "We are delighted to present 'Solitaire', a true reflection of luxury and innovation

in Bhubaneswar. Our goal with 'Solitaire' is not just to meet but to exceed the expectations of contemporary homeowners, offering them a blend of comfort, elegance, and state-of-the-art amenities."

The project showcases a 21-storey tower, featuring 192 upscale residential units alongside essential commercial spaces - all designed with sustainable practices and modern architectural insights. Located strategically near Khandagiri Square, 'Solitaire' offers convenient ac-

cess coupled with serene living spaces, he added.

Elaborating more on the project's distinct features, Neelachala Homes MD Golak Bihari Satapathy said, "Solitaire stands out with its dual-base parking, eco-friendly construction, and a plethora of amenities tailored to enhance the living experience. From landscaped gardens to advanced security systems, every detail is curated to ensure resident satisfaction and harmony with the environment."

G7 falling short of renewable energy capacity tripling goal

According to the International Energy Agency, tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency is crucial to limiting the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.



G7 economies are currently targeting doubling of renewable energy capacity by 2030, falling short of the tripling goal agreed at the UN climate conference in Dubai last year, according to an analysis by global energy think-tank Ember.

At the UN's COP28 climate change conference in December, world leaders, including all G7 members, reached a historic agreement to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030.

"The G7 needs to set a goal to triple their renewable capacity," said Katyae Altieri, electricity analyst at Ember.

"Last year, the G7 agreed tar-

gets for solar and offshore wind. Given the COP28 agreement, these goals are now outdated and need to be aligned with a tripling of global renewables. The acceleration of solar shows the renewables goal is increasingly achievable," she said. According to the International Energy Agency, tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency is crucial to limiting the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

A global tripling does not mean that every country is required to triple its renewables capacity - some will do more, some less - but evidence shows that G7 countries in aggregate would require

a tripling. According to Ember's 2030 Global Renewable Target Tracker, the G7 economies are collectively targeting just over a doubling of 2022 capacity from 0.9 terawatts (TW) at the end of 2022 to 2 TW of renewable capacity by 2030.

A tripling of renewable capacity would require the G7 to reach 2.7 TW by 2030, leaving a 0.7 TW gap between current targets and a tripling-aligned goal.

Italy, this year's host of the G7, along with Germany and the UK, are leading the way with 2030 targets that are more than doubling of the 2022 capacity.

However, France and Japan are lagging behind their G7 partners with targets well below a tripling.

The US and Canada do not have official targets, though model studies indicate that US policies would deliver an almost-

tripling while Canada will hardly see an increase.

This weekend, the G7 Ministerial on Climate, Energy and Environment in Italy presents an opportunity to translate the COP28 goal to triple renewable capacity into clear action.

Ember's report recommends that the G7 commit to tripling their collective renewable capacity from 0.9 TW in 2022 to 2.7 TW in 2030 while acknowledging the gap in current ambition.

Earlier this week, an analysis by global climate science and policy institute, Climate Analytics showed that none of the G7 members are on track to meet their existing emission reduction targets for 2030.

The G7 collectively aims to achieve a 40 to 42 per cent emission reduction by 2030, but existing policies suggest that it will likely achieve only 19 to 33 per cent by the end of this decade.

This is at best around half of what is needed and would lead to GHG emissions in 2030 exceeding a 1.5 degrees Celsius compatible level by around 4 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Such a shortfall in ambition does not provide the leadership signal needed from the world's richest countries, making up around 38 per cent of the global economy and responsible for 21 per cent of the total GHG emissions in 2021, researchers of Climate Analytics said. The G7 economies need to slash their emissions by 58 per cent by 2030 compared to 2019 levels to do their part to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, they said.

The G7 is made up of the United States, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan. Representatives from the European Union also attend its annual summit.

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Cops nab 2 Jharkhand criminals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 26: Police arrested Thursday night, two history-sheeters from Jharkhand on charges of committing armed dacoity at a house in Bhanja Colony on PHD Road under Barbil police limits in this district. The accused were identified as Ainul Ansari and Rajpal Singh, both residents of Dhanbad town.

A country-made revolver with three rounds of bullets and a knife and other incriminating materials were seized from their possessions. However, one associate of the two accused managed to give the cops the slip. The two were nabbed when they were trying to escape back to Jharkhand through the Champua border. A case has been registered in this connection and the two arrested were produced in court Friday, police said.

Police said that the three burglars entered Anup Biswakarma's

house by scaling the boundary wall at about 10.00am Thursday morning. They held Anup at gunpoint and asked him to hand over cash and other valuables in the house. When Anup resisted, one of the three stabbed him repeatedly.

Hearing the screams of Anup, neighbours informed the Barbil police station and rushed to his aid. In the meanwhile, the robbers fled the spot. However, they failed to take any valuables. After police arrived, Anup who had suffered injuries on his stomach and shoulder was taken to the Barbil Government Hospital for treatment. Later he was shifted to the district headquarters hospital here.

Police launched a manhunt for the burglars after examining the CCTV footage of the area. Other police stations were informed about the incident and the border was sealed. These measures helped in nabbing the accused, the cops said.



NARROW ESCAPE: Fifty passengers had a close shave after the bus they were travelling in went up in flames on National Highway-55 between Ananda Nagar and Kathagada in Dhenkanal. The bus was on its way from Talcher to Bhubaneswar, Friday

3 held for trying to set forest on fire

Daringbadi: Officials of the Forest department informed here Friday that three poachers have been arrested Thursday night. It has been alleged that they were trying to set a part of the forest in Baliguda range on fire to hunt animals in Kandhamal district. The three were identified as Mohit Pradhan, Rajesh Pradhan and Akshaya Pradhan, residents of Kundupanga locality in Gumukia panchayat under Baliguda police limits, ACF Prafulla Kumar Mallick informed at a press conference here. One loaded country-made gun, two mobile phones, torches, match boxes and other items used for poaching were recovered from their possession, the ACF said. A case has been registered against the three, Mallick added. The ACF informed that despite organising awareness campaigns on a regular basis to prevent the poaching of animals, some were still involved in illegal activities. "They had planned to set the trees on fire to force the wild animals to come out. Then it would have been easier for them to hunt," Mallick stated. He added that strict action will be taken against the offenders.

Kalahandi affected by mass migration

Thousands leaving the district on a regular basis to seek lucrative futures elsewhere

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, April 26: The malady of migration has hit Kalahandi district hard. Every year, thousands from the district are migrating to other states in search of jobs for their livelihoods. Mostly people migrate to the states of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Goa. Two of the favourite cities for migration are Mumbai and Pune, sources informed Friday.

People seeking high wages and better working conditions usually prefer migration. However, in many cases their dreams remain unfulfilled. At times, many migrants are forced to work as bonded labourers, not paid their wages regularly and they even have to go without food. There have been numerous instances when migrants from Kalahandi district have died in other states and have not even had the privilege of a proper cremation. Sources pointed out that in the last 12-15 months approximately 22 people from the district have died in other states.

Sources said that Dharamgarh block in Kalahandi district is the hub of migration. Every year, hundreds of residents belonging to Dharamgarh, Koksara,



Kalampur; Golamunda, Junagarh and Jaipatna blocks migrate to other states in search of livelihoods. The migration malady is assuming alarming proportions due to the apathetic attitude of the district administration and the state Labour department, the sources added.

Manjhari village under Golamunda block is a case in

point. The village has approximately 3,000 registered voters. However, more than 2,000 of them have migrated to other states in search of jobs. The village wears a deserted look with most of the houses vacant and locked and people rarely are seen on the roads. A few among those who have stayed back informed that because of the lack of offers they have not migrated. They also added that the district administration rarely provides them with employment opportunities.

Despite the death of two residents of the village in Tamil Nadu and Telangana in the last one year, others still want to leave. "After all we need money to run our families. We have mouths to feed. With no opportunities in the district, we have no option but to seek jobs elsewhere," informed a villager.

Dibysha Shankar Das and Kameni Kanda, who have recently returned to Manjhari village from Chennai, alleged that there have been occasions when they have got employment opportunities, but have not been paid their proper remunerations. "We had no option, but to migrate elsewhere for better jobs," they stated.

When contacted, district Labour Officer Subhash Chandra Mandal informed that to prevent people from leaving for other states special awareness programmes have been launched. "Those without jobs need to register their names at the local panchayat office, but they hardly abide by the rules," he stated.

Woman attempts suicide over 'missing' son

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, April 26: Depressed at her son gone missing for a lengthy period of time, a woman attempted to die by suicide Friday by jumping from the roof of the Kantabanji hospital in this district. Luckily however, a hospital staff saw her and managed to stop her from taking the fatal leap just at the nick of time.

The woman has been identified as Padmabati Seth, a resident of Sanjankarpali village under Muribahal police limits. Her son Maitra had left the village and migrated to another state in search of work. However, he has remained untraceable since then.

Unable to contact her son, Padmabati lodged a missing complaint at the Muribahal police station. She even visited the district administration office here and pleaded with the officials to trace Maitra and bring him back. However, all her efforts failed.

Unable to find her 'missing' son, Padmabati went into depression and stopped eating. Her health condition deteriorated following which her brother got her admitted to the Kantabanji hospital a couple of days back. While undergoing treatment, Padmabati managed to hoodwink the attendants Friday and reached the roof. Luckily however, a lady staff of the hospital caught her as she was preparing to jump. Currently she has been kept under strict observation at the hospital.

3 dead as truck hits 2-wheeler

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 26: Three youths were killed on the spot when the two-wheeler they were riding on was hit from the rear by a coal-laden truck close to the NTPC Power Plant at Darlipali under Bhasma police station late Thursday night. The three deceased were identified as Raghuranjan Pradhan, Ashish Bhoi and Rupak Dharua. The driver of the truck fled the spot after the accident.

As news of the deaths of the three spread, locals in the area blocked the road Friday morning for a substantial period of time. They demanded compensation for the families of the deceased and strict action to prevent illegal parking on both sides of the road leading to NTPC. The road block led to a complete chaos in the area with hundreds of vehicles stranded for hours.

The demonstrators relented after police assured them that their demands would be looked into. Police also said that they are trying to trace the driver of the truck.

Meanwhile in another incident, a scooter rider had a providential escape Friday. The scooter came in between two trucks, one of which was trying to overtake the other. Even though the two-wheeler was mangled beyond recognition, the person escaped with minor bruises.

Nine Keonjhar villages face acute drinking water scarcity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, April 26: With normal life severely affected due to the heatwave, residents in two hilly-locked panchayats under this block of Keonjhar district are facing acute drinking water scarcity. The situation has turned really bad as the tube wells in the villages are not working. Many opined that the groundwater level has decreased at an alarming rate and that is the main reason for the tube wells turning non-functional.

Sources said that more than 800 families reside in the nine villages hit by drinking water scarcity. Among them are Daliki, Pitanau, Malipasi, Saramundi, Junapasi, Raighati, Siadimalia and Haradabadi. However, other villages in this block are not facing the same problem.

On the other hand, for the women of these nine affected villages, the summer has turned into a night-



mare. They have to trudge for more than five kilometres everyday to get water from creeks and other sources. Over 90 per cent of the people in these villages work as casual labourers to earn a living. Hence they do not also have the resources to buy water.

While mega drinking water projects have been implemented in

other parts of this block, these nine villages have been deprived. The villagers have lodged several complaints with the block officials but their pleas have not been addressed.

When contacted, block development officer (BDO) Soumyashree Panigrahi admitted Friday that there is drinking water scarcity in the nine villages. He said that drinking water is being supplied to these villages through two tankers to ease the problems faced by the villagers. He informed that he has written to senior officials for installation of four tube wells at Junapasi village and Malipasi village. The tube wells will be installed after receiving the orders from higher authorities, he said.

Panigrahi also said that so far 178 complaints regarding drinking water scarcity have been received from various villages in the block out of which 176 have been resolved. The remaining two complaints will be resolved soon, he added.

NIT (R) CELEBRATES 'WIPD'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 26: National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela celebrated Friday the 'World Intellectual Property Day' (WIPD). Incidentally, the World Intellectual Property Office (WIPO) was the first body to celebrate the

day April 26, 2000.

On the occasion, the 'Foundation for Technology and Business Incubation' (FTBI) organised a one-day awareness session at the 'Smart Seminar Hall' of NIT. Professor Manoj Mishra (president, FTBI) inaugurated the session by sharing insights on the importance of 'Intellectual Property Rights' (IPR). Among others who addressed the gathering were NIT director, Dr K Umamaheshwar Rao and Dr Bijay Kumar Sahu (Senior Regional Manager & Programme Head), WIPO Technology Innovation

Support Centre.

Rao urged the gathering to think in a proper manner and create new ideas in the world of technology. "Try to own what is yours as soon as possible as the world today is in a fast-track mode," Rao said. "I encourage you all to demonstrate your ability to think of something new that can really change the existing conventional technologies, procedures or systems and secure it with IPR," Rao added.

Keynote Speaker Dr Manisha Acharya (Project director, Ernst & Young) later spoke on the topic 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The Need of the Hour'.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. SBP-ELECT-2024-T-208

NAME OF WORK: CARRYING OUT OF NON-CORE ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH AC/TL COACH MAINTENANCE AT SAMBALPUR COACHING DEPOT OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR A PERIOD OF 02 YEARS.

Approx. cost of work : ₹ 80,19,517.46.

EMD : ₹ 1,60,400/-, Cost of Tender Document : ₹ 5,000/-, Completion Period of the Work : Two years from the date of issue of LOA.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1530 hrs. of 15.05.2024.

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 rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website fifteen (15) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G)/ PR-55/P/24-25 Sambalpur

Centre for Development of Advanced Computing
A Scientific Society of Ministry of Electronics and IT, Govt. of India
(Approved by AICTE & Affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Sector 16C, Dwarka, New Delhi 110078)

Admission to M.Tech (AI & DS)

The candidates desirous to take admission in M.Tech (Artificial Intelligence and Data Science) programme at CDAC, Noida for Academic Session 2024-25 are informed to register online at <https://ipu.admissions.nic.in>.
The last date of registration is 25-05-2024.

Admissions Criteria
GATE Score/ Direct Admission

Eligibility Criteria
Minimum 60% or equivalent in the qualifying examination as under:-
1.B.Tech. / B.E. in (CS, IT, ECE, Instrumentation, EE, EEE or equivalent)
2.Graduate IETE/AMIE (ECE/CSE/IT/EE).
3.M.Sc. (IT/ Electronics/ CS/ Physics/ Mathematics/ Statistics/OR/ Applied Physics).
4.MCA or MCA (SE).

Other Programmes offered at CDAC: M.Tech (CSE/ VLSI Design), MCA, MBA
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ଝୁମ୍ପା ନିର୍ବାଚନ ଅଧିକାରୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶାଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର
ଘଞ୍ଜ୍ୟା: ୨୯୭୧, ତାରିଖ: ୨୭.୦୪.୨୦୨୪

ବିଜ୍ଞପ୍ତି

No.D-81:ଏତଦ୍ୱାରା ସର୍ବସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ଅବଗତ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଜଣାଇ ଦିଆଗଲା ଯେ ନିର୍ବାଚନ କମିଶନଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ୍ରମେ ୨୦୨୪ ସାଧାରଣ ନିର୍ବାଚନ ସମୟରେ ଫ୍ଲାଇଙ୍ଗ୍ ସ୍କାର୍ (FS), ଷ୍ଟାଭିକ୍ ସର୍ଭେଲାର୍ (SST) ତଥା ପୁଲିସ୍ ଭଳି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସଂଗ୍ରାହନାଦାନ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ବିଶେଷଙ୍କ ଯାଞ୍ଚ କରି ସନ୍ଦେହଜନକ ଅର୍ଥ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଜବତ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ତେବେ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ଅସୁବିଧାକୁ ଏତଦ୍ୱାରା ନିମନ୍ତେ ପ୍ରତି କ୍ଷମାରେ ଝୁମ୍ପା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟନିର୍ବାହୀ ଅଧିକାରୀ/ଝୁମ୍ପା ଉତ୍ତରଣ ଅଧିକାରୀ, ଜିଲ୍ଲା ପରିଷଦଙ୍କ ଅଧିକାରରେ "ଜିଲ୍ଲା ଅଭିଯୋଗ କମିଟି" ଗଠନ କରାଯାଇଛି । ଉକ୍ତ କମିଟି ଜବତ ସାମଗ୍ରୀର ଖଲାସ ନିମନ୍ତେ ନିଜ ଆଡୁ ବୈଦିକ କରି ବିଚାର କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଜବତ ବିଷୟରେ କୌଣସି ଏଫ୍.ଆଇ.ଆର୍. /ଅଭିଯୋଗ ଦାଖଲ କରାଯାଇ ନଥିଲେ କିମ୍ବା ଜବତ ଅର୍ଥ/ସାମଗ୍ରୀ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରାଥମିକ କ୍ଷମା ରାଜନୈତିକ ହକ୍ ବା ନିର୍ବାଚନ ପ୍ରଚାର ସହିତ ଜଡ଼ିତ ନୁହେଁ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣିତ ହେଲେ, ଷ୍ଟାଭିକ୍ ଅପରେଟିଂ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ସେହିଭଳି ନଗଦ ଅର୍ଥ/ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ରୁଗ୍ଣ ମୁକ୍ତ କରିବାକୁ ବାରନିକ ଆଦେଶନାମା ଦେବା ସହିତ ଜବତ ଅର୍ଥ/ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ (ଯେଉଁ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଜବତ ହୋଇଥିଲା) ଫେରସ୍ତ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପଦକ୍ଷେପ ନେଇଥାନ୍ତି । ଉକ୍ତ କମିଟି ଜବତ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି ସମସ୍ତ ମାମଲାର ଅନୁଧ୍ୟାନ କରିବା ସହିତ ଜବତ ନଗଦ ଅର୍ଥ/ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଉପରେ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନେବ ।
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Feedback on revised new SAR format for UG Engineering Tier I

National Board of Accreditation (NBA), being a permanent member of Washington Accord, has revised its Program Outcomes and Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for the Undergraduate Engineering Program under Tier I aligned with the revised Graduate Attributes and Professional Competencies (GAPC) Version 4.0

The draft of the new SAR is uploaded on NBA website (<https://www.nbaind.org>) for soliciting the valuable feedback from the stakeholders. The stakeholders are hereby, requested to kindly visit NBA website to go through the draft SAR and provide their valuable feedback on the given email id sar.feedback@nbaind.org, within 15 days of publication of the new SAR on the NBA website.

Feedback from our esteemed stakeholders will help NBA to improve its processes towards fulfilling its aim of ensuring high standards in technical education.

CBC-21315/12/0001/2425 **Member Secretary**

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

PANDEMIC FINANCING



COVID-19 taught us that developing novel mechanisms in the midst of a pandemic is practically impossible. International policymakers must establish the necessary frameworks now to ensure that low- and middle-income countries can purchase medical countermeasures at-risk in the next pandemic in order to shorten its duration and improve equitable access to healthcare

procurement rules prevent purchasing these countermeasures at-risk. The rules must therefore be revised to allow for such purchases, in recognition of the unique challenges of a global health crisis. MDBs can also coordinate with stakeholders to create model procurement contracts and establish indemnity and liability frameworks to streamline processes and minimize delays.

High-income countries can help by guaranteeing these loans in case the vaccine candidates fail. This would reduce the financial risk for LMICs and alleviate politicians' concerns about their potential liability. In exchange for this relatively modest burden on their balance sheets, high-income countries can facilitate significant investments that promise substantial global health benefits and large economic returns. During COVID-19, many of us in the UK government recognized that this was one of the most effective ways to use our limited aid money and even proposed such a measure, to no avail.

COVID-19 taught us that developing novel mechanisms in the midst of a pandemic is practically impossible. International policymakers must establish the necessary frameworks now to ensure that LMICs can purchase medical countermeasures at-risk in the next pandemic in order to shorten its duration and improve equitable access to healthcare. As our work at the University of Chicago's Market Shaping Accelerator shows, any delay risks millions of lives and trillions of dollars.

The writer, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, served as Chief Economist of the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Pandemic preparedness was on the agenda at last week's Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, held in Washington, DC, a little over four years after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Millions of people died, and billions of dollars were spent in the intervening period, but some important lessons of the pandemic remain unlearned. One glaring example is that low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are still unable to invest in medical countermeasures before they are approved. The United States and the United Kingdom employed this 'at-risk' strategy to great effect during the COVID-19 crisis. LMICs need the same opportunity.

When a pandemic strikes, governments must act swiftly and invest heavily in technological solutions that may be unproven. Expanding vaccine production when medical trials were ongoing, rather than waiting for regulatory approval, proved critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. The US and the UK, in particular, made early and substantial investments in developing and producing vaccines, securing doses at-risk. In exchange for bearing much of the risk of technological failure, these countries were first in line when the vaccines were found to be effective—a boon for their own citizens. But these investments also helped other countries by accelerating vaccine development and production.

At the time, I was working in the UK government, running analyses showing the cost-effectiveness of at-risk investment. America's Operation Warp Speed, for example, which cost \$13 billion as of December 2020, paid for itself if it shortened the pandemic by just 12 hours. Moreover, increased investment in production capacity could have sped up global vaccination efforts by a year, saving an estimated \$1.75 trillion.

We clearly need to do better when the next pandemic strikes. This could move forward even without a coordinated global investment—a daunting challenge. Instead, our analysis showed that it would have been cost-effective for individual countries, including LMICs, to invest at-risk in expanded vaccine production during COVID-19. Vaccines would have been made available faster; fewer people would have died, and economies would have recovered sooner. (That said, high-income countries can and should take the lead in research and development spending, which does benefit from coordination.)

I spent much of the spring and summer of 2020 trying but failing to persuade LMICs to follow the UK's lead; most of these countries did not purchase vaccines at-risk. A World Bank working paper found that 60-75% of the delay in COVID-19 vaccine deliveries to LMICs was attributable to their signing

purchase agreements later than high-income countries. While it is undoubtedly difficult to do something new in a crisis, conversations with various stakeholders revealed two problems: politicians feared being accused of corruption if the vaccine failed, and institutions like the World Bank could not provide loans to purchase a vaccine that did not exist yet.

To overcome these problems, multilateral development banks (MDBs) must establish financing mechanisms to enable at-risk purchases in a pandemic, as well as mechanisms for high-income countries to de-risk these loans. Unlike the vaccine donations and pledges during COVID-19, which were too little too late, these measures would actually provide LMICs with sufficient resources to respond to the next pandemic.

When LMICs need to purchase vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics at the scale required to fight a pandemic, MDBs are their only realistic source of finance. But current



Rachel Glennerster

WHEN A PANDEMIC STRIKES, GOVERNMENTS MUST ACT SWIFTLY AND INVEST HEAVILY IN TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS THAT MAY BE UNPROVEN

Wheels of Discord

In the middle of the Lok Sabha elections frenzy, the Haryana government finds itself tangled in a peculiar accusation of discriminatory practices and bureaucratic tangles. Y Puran Kumar, a senior IPS officer with a knack for details, has written a whimsical complaint to Chief Secretary T.V.S.N. Prasad. His lament? The rather lackluster car he has been allotted.

It's a tale as old as time, Puran Kumar is upset that while his counterparts and peers zip around in shiny new Innovas, he's been handed the keys to a relic—a seven-year-old Honda City, with more character than reliability.

Now, in a profession governed by strict protocols and meticulously crafted rules, the choice of official transportation holds more weight than one might think. The choice of car becomes a symbol of status and prestige. And it is here that Puran Kumar feels shortchanged. He accuses the system of playing favourites. Barely two weeks after parting ways with his previous official ride, he wrote to the Sarkar alleging favouritism and selective distribution among the IPS elite.

The aggrieved IPS officer has implored the Chief Secretary to investigate the murky world of staff cars and operational vehicles, hoping to unravel the mystery behind the 'wheels of fortune'. However, he may have got the timing wrong, with the senior members of the state administration more concerned with the elections than an aggrieved babu nervous about his status.

Retired IRS officer reelected to prestigious INCB

This bit of good news seems to have got lost in the heat and dust of the poll fray. It is now certain that retired IRS officer Jagjit Pavadia is going to keep her seat on the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for another term. She has been re-elected for the 2025-2030 stint, and it appears like she has many



BABUDOM BYTES
Dilip Cherian

backers in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and back home. In fact, External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, was quick to spread the good news on social media, letting everyone know about Pavadia's victory in the Big Apple. Former Permanent Representative of India at the UN, Syed Akbaruddin, also tweeted.

The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations couldn't be more grateful, expressing their thanks to all the member states who had our back and threw their support behind India's nominee. Pavadia reportedly received the highest number of votes among all the 15 candidates for this position. Her victory ensures that Pavadia will get an unprecedented third term on the prestigious board.

Meanwhile, in another win, India was reelected to the Executive Board of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) for another three years, 2025-2027.

Senior IAS appointments signal focus beyond elections

The Government may be focused on the currently underway Lok Sabha elections, but the government's business continues. The recent appointment of senior IAS officers to additional secretary positions reflects the government's aim to restructure the bureaucracy and bolster key departments with experienced leadership.

With Rakesh Kumar Verma taking charge in the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Suman Billa assuming responsibilities in the Ministry of Tourism, and Aradhana Patnail joining the Department of Health and Family Welfare, there is a clear emphasis on enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in critical sectors.

Additionally, the in-situ upgradation of officers like Hemani Pande and Kamal Kishore Soan further underscores the government's commitment to optimising administrative capacities.

These appointments bring fresh perspectives and signify a proactive approach to governance. Readers will recall that just before the announcement of elections and hitting the poll trail, Prime Minister Modi had 'instructed' babus to prepare and be ready with a 100-day programme, to be implemented once his government is reelected. Overconfidence? Perhaps, but this drive to look ahead and keep pushing has been a hallmark of the Modi sarkar.

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

WISDOM CORNER

No amount of political freedom will satisfy the hungry masses.
VLADIMIR LENIN

When I understand myself, I understand you, and out of that understanding comes love.
JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

Crave for a thing, you will get it. Renounce the craving, the object will follow you by itself.
SWAMI SIVANANDA

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1296: King Edward I of England, seeking suzerainty over the Scots, invaded Scotland and removed the coronation stone of Scone to Westminster Abbey in England.

1865: The worst maritime disaster in U.S. history occurred when the overloaded steamship SS Sultana exploded on the Mississippi River, killing some 1,800 people, many of whom were former Union POWs returning home from the Civil War.

1960: After several years as an autonomous republic in the French Union, the West African country of Togo became independent.

1992: British politician Betty Boothroyd became the first woman to be elected speaker of the House of Commons; she held the post until 2000.

LOL

Didn't get any money this time

A man in a bar sees a friend at a table, drinking by himself. Approaching the friend he comments, "You look terrible. What's the problem?" "My mother died in August," he said, "and left me \$25,000." "Gee, that's tough," he replied. "Then in September," the friend



continued, "My father died, leaving me \$90,000." "Wow. Two parents gone in two months. No wonder you're depressed." "And last month my aunt died, and left me \$15,000." "Three close family members lost in three months? How sad." "Then this month," continued, the friend, "absolutely nothing!"

SPECTRUM POLITICS

The 'foreign hand' in general elections

On April 21, two days after the first phase of polling in the 2024 general elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had one of those stream-of-consciousness moments that have become all too frequent as the mercury soars—and the synaptic link between the brain and the tongue sags. (No, not the one on Congress taking away your mangalsutra to give them to Muslims.)

On the campaign trail in Karnataka, apropos nothing, the BJP's pradhan orator said in the grandiloquent manner which students, administrators, and alumni of Bharat's biggest academic institution—WhatsApp University—have come to expect of him, that 'big and powerful people' from inside India and outside the country had united 'to defeat Modi' in the polls. Mind the words: 'defeat Modi', not defeat the BJP or defeat the NDA.

In the best traditions of one-way communication, of which he is the acknowledged lord and master, the PM offered no proof

to back his claim of the 'foreign hand', something Indira Gandhi too invoked at the drop of a hat, sans evidence. And, like so much else in the last 10 years, the lapdogs of the media dutifully stenographed the blather. Which then effortlessly slid, unexamined and unfiltered, into the phones and minds of the devout and the deferential.

Maybe nonchalance is the right way to approach such a statement. Like in love and war, anything goes in an election season, and netas must be allowed some leeway. Maybe nobody expects any better from 'The Lie Lama' any more, because Modi followed it up with another head-banger a couple of days later that the Congress was plotting to literally 'break' his head. Maybe gravitas is a word no longer associated with the Prime Minister's Office. Maybe, but if it is not?

Whether the Prime Minister brought information about outside forces conspiring to influence the elections to the security agencies is not known. (What action they have initiated is naturally

a national secret.) But intrinsic to the tone and tenor of Modi's illelism is the arrogant belief that in a globalised world, somehow it is illegal for people to seek to influence outcomes across borders. Worse, that only 'big and powerful' people are out to get him. What if it is just ordinary citizens, the salt of this earth, who want to see the back of him?

Conversely, if it is wrong for outsiders to influence a sovereign nation's election, then how can it be right for people of Indian origin owning foreign passports to bat for Modi long distance? Or for the CEO of J.P. Morgan to issue a glowing certificate of the 'unbelievable job' he has done, smack bang in the middle of an election campaign? And how right is it for people inside India—Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, to start with—to join hands with an outside force to amplify that message? Is only cheering a regime OK, not carping about it?

Who are these 'big and powerful' people outside India that want to see him bite the dust

anyway? Are they nations, institutions or individuals? And how do they do it, by throwing cash, leaking audios and videos, moving markets, and tampering with EVMs? What a travesty if Pegasus, the weapons-grade spyware sold to clients vetted by Israel, is only being used by the mother of democracy to smother its citizens, opposition, civil society and journalists—but not as an external threat flagged by the PM?

Once the 'Vishwaguru' deludes himself into thinking that India is the 'lone bright spot' in the world while 85 crore people get free food grains, it must help the ego to think that George Soros wants to do to the 2024 election what Russia did to America in 2016. But if such outside forces are still happily fishing in India's waters despite the weaponisation of FCRA licences, what does it say of a government's intelligence, efficiency and combat-readiness? Probably that's why China is finding it so easy from Kashmir to Arunachal with Siachen in between.

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, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

EVM end game

Sir, The Supreme Court dismissed the pleas seeking ballot paper voting and rejected pleas seeking cross-verification of the votes cast in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). Delivering the verdict, the bench issued two directions—containers carrying the symbol loading unit should be sealed in the presence of polling agents and candidates and be kept secured for 45 days and the control unit, ballot unit and VVPAT shall be verified by engineers of the manufacturing companies post the result of the counting on a written request to be made within seven days of the declaration of results. The expenses for the verification (of the programme) to be borne by the candidates making the request, in case the EVM is found to be tampered with, the expenses will be refunded. It is a right step in the right direction and will lead to free and fair elections. Thus, the EVM end game has come, and SC rejects all the petitions challenging EVMs. It has all the opposition raising its doubts cleared once and for all.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Man-animal conflicts

Sir, The Supreme Court has recently stressed the need to strike a balance that considers the rights of both humans and animals. India's highest rate of urbanisation has caused a hasty expansion of human settlements into areas that were once exclusively wildlife habitats. With vaguely defined boundaries for fauna, human-occupied areas in the country have increasingly become hangouts for wandering wild animals. Conflict with wildlife has reached unprecedented levels, with predators attacking livestock, thus leading to retaliatory animal killings. The deadly human-animal conflict has largely been the consequence of a fast growing human population's inability to find sustainable ways to co-exist with the country's bustling wildlife. Human population growth and its consequent demand for natural resources have led to the degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats. As a result, humans and wildlife compete for the same diminishing resources. Mitigation of human-wildlife conflict is thus becoming one of the major concerns for both wildlife managers and the scientific community. It is therefore necessary to address the issue in a holistic manner, and co-create palliative solutions with the full engagement of all the relevant stakeholders.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI



JUMBO BATH: Two men bathe an elephant on a hot summer day at the Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Udyan and Zoo, in Mumbai

Ailing Jarange-Patil goes in ambulance to vote in Jalna

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jalna (Maharashtra), April 26: Shiva Sanghatana leader Manoj Jarange-Patil left in an ambulance from Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (Aurangabad) for neighbouring Jalna to exercise his franchise on E-day, Friday.

Jarange-Patil, who had rattled the Maharashtra Mahayuti government with his serial Maratha quota agitation and hunger strike starting from August 29, 2023, cast his vote at his native Antarawali-Sarati village Friday afternoon.

Lying on a stretcher in a fully equipped ambulance which left Galaxy Hospital of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Jarange-Patil was in the care of a medical team to ensure an event-free 60 km-long journey to Jalna, an aide said.

"After casting his vote, Jarange-Patil is expected to return to the hospital where he was admitted Wednesday, after he suddenly felt unwell during a tour in Dharashiv (Osmanabad)," the

aide from Satara told IANS. Appearing frail but firm, Jarange-Patil reiterated that he would not recommend the names of specific Lok Sabha candidates belonging to any political party to the Marathas for their support.

"I will only say that you should vote wisely for those who will fight for your interest... and not for those who are opposing the Marathas getting reservation from the OBC category," reiterated Jarange-Patil.

Jarange-Patil will visit a polling station in Antarawali-Sarati village, where a deserted large marquee still stands testimony to the Maratha quotas stir he launched with the first 'fast unto death' agitation August 29, 2023.

Thereafter, there were at least four hunger strikes, protest marches, record public rallies to drum up the quotas cause and massive Maratha processions which reached the doorsteps of Mumbai in January, rattling the Mahayuti government.

Maha MLA takes MP wife on bike ride to cast vote

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amravati, April 26: Actress-turned-politician BJP candidate for Amravati (SC) Lok Sabha constituency, Navneet Kaur-Rana knows how to grab eyeballs, not just inside dark cinemas but also in broad daylight.

As the much-awaited E-day dawned, Navneet, 38 - sporting a dazzling golden-orange sari with small designs - decided to do something different while stepping out to vote Friday morning.

In the 39 degrees Celsius fiery heat, she discarded her cool comfy car and hopped onto her independent MLA husband Ravi Gengadhar Rana's Bullet motorcycle as a pillion rider to cast her vote, but minus the protective helmets.

With her husband acting as the 'driver', Navneet happily perched pillion behind him while her retinue of supporters and excited media crews followed suit on their own motorcycles, and she indulged in some straight talk, unmindful of the blazing sun.

Navneet grabbed a media person's mike and delivered homilies asking people to step out and vote, how each vote would be an endorsement for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and exuded supreme confidence that she would win the LS elections for the second consecutive time with a three-lakh vote margin.

Attired in a casual white kurtapyjama, MLA Ravi gingerly negotiated the sparse oncoming traffic of vehicles, the occasional tractor or a JCB, had to slow down a couple of times as the couple's motorcycle glided off some sharp speed-breakers, but keeping his full concentration on the road.

When the couple reached the polling station, they got off and entered the polling booth, voted in turn, displayed their inked fingers and stepped out to mingle with the ordinary voters.

The Mumbai-born daughter of an ex-armyman of Punjabi roots, Navneet (Kaur) has a passion for life on the fast lane and has been seen zooming around on the roads several times in the past.

KCR family not in fray for first time in two decades



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, April 26: For the first time in two decades, the family of former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy (KCR) is not in the fray for Lok Sabha elections.

No member of the family of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) founder has filed a nomination for the May 13 polls in the state.

This is the first time since the formation of TRS (now BRS) in 2001 that the KCR family is staying away from the contest.

The former chief minister or his family member fought every Parliament and Assembly election since 2004.

KCR, who had resigned from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to float TRS to revive the Telangana movement, had contested for Lok Sabha from Karimnagar and for Assembly from Siddipet. He was elected from both seats but vacated

Siddipet to enter Parliament and became a minister in the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre.

KCR's nephew and TRS leader Harish Rao was elected from Siddipet in the by-election.

The TRS founder, who forced by-elections in 2006 and 2008 after differences with Congress over the Telangana issue, retained Karimnagar's seat on both occasions.

In 2009, KCR was elected to Lok Sabha from Mahabubnagar. It was during this term that he succeeded in achieving the goal of Telangana state. KCR's son KT Rama Rao made his electoral debut in the 2009 elections with a win from the Sircilla Assembly seat and he retained the seat in the 2010 by-election.

In 2014, KCR contested for Lok Sabha from Medak and for Assembly from Gajwel. He was elected from both places. As the TRS secured a majority in the 119-member Telangana Assembly,

he quit the Medak seat to become the first chief minister of the new state.

In the same elections, KCR's daughter Kavitha was elected to Lok Sabha from Nizamabad. His son and nephew, who were once again elected to the Assembly from Sircilla and Siddipet respectively, became ministers in his Cabinet.

While TRS retained power in 2018, Kavitha lost the Nizamabad Lok Sabha seat to BJP's Dharampuri Arvind in the 2019 elections. She was later elected to the Legislative Council.

In 2022, KCR changed the name of TRS to BRS to focus on national politics. However, after ruling the state for 10 years, the party lost power to Congress late last year.

KCR contested from two Assembly seats - Gajwel and Kamareddy. He retained Gajwel but could not win Kamareddy. This was the first electoral defeat for the seasoned politician since 1985. KTR and Harish Rao retained their respective seats.

There were indications that Kavitha would again contest from Nizamabad but finally, KCR decided not to field her. She was recently arrested in the alleged Delhi excise policy case.

There was also speculation that KCR may contest Lok Sabha elections from Medak or Malkajgiri but the leader of the opposition decided to focus on state politics.

BMC connects Mumbai Coastal Road with Bandra Worli Sea-Link using 'tidal waves'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 26: In the first experiment of its kind in the country, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has successfully connected the upcoming Mumbai Coastal Road (MCR) with the existing Bandra Worli Sea-Link (BWSL) using 'tidal waves conditions' in the Arabian Sea, officials said here Friday.

The significant milestone was achieved by successfully installing the first, gigantic 136-metre-long Bow Arch String Girder, made of steel, weighing around 2,000 tonnes at 3.25am (Friday morning) linking the two important routes in south Mumbai through India's biggest 'arch bridge'.

BMC Municipal Commissioner Bhushan Gagrani, Additional Municipal Commissioner Amit Saini and other officials witnessed the engineering marvel completed after a nail-biting effort of 85 minutes in the wee hours as Mumbai slept, and the massive girder 18-21 metres wide, fell into place.

The girder commenced its voyage on a 25,000 tonnes barge

from Mazagon Docks Wednesday at 12.30 pm and reached the Worli bay at 4am the next day, awaiting the further process.

Keeping vigil on the existing tidal conditions there, the work of setting up the girder was taken up at 2am Friday, it was gradually brought to the midpoint of the MCR and the BWSL on the barge, and expertly stabilised amid the sea waves and the winds to ensure optimal conditions for the final setup.

For this, the engineering teams had set up four 'mating units', two each on the MCR and the BWSL measuring 2 metre and 1.8 metre cones, and they were precisely

mated at 3.25 am, completing the connectivity, amid a huge round of applause, cheers and cries of 'hip hip huray'.

After the girder was in place, the barge below it sailed off, paving the way for asphalt and water-proofing the girder to prepare the road on which thousands of vehicles will zoom in the next few weeks.

The mammoth girder was manufactured in pre-fab parts at a unit in Ambala, Haryana, and with the help of 500 trailer trucks, transported to the Mazagon Docks, where it was assembled using advanced welding technology and then commenced its

62-km long sea-voyage to the Bandra Worli Sea Link.

Now, the engineers will erect jacks on all the four corners of the girder and once the jacks are activated, the mating cones and units will be removed, the girder will be settled using bearings after which even jacks shall be removed.

After this process is completed, the cement concretisation of the girder using anti-corrosive C-5 Japanese technology will be taken up.

The south-bound arm of the MCR was inaugurated in March, but it was not yet connected to the sea link for its onward phases till Borivali at the north-west tip of Mumbai.

Simultaneously, a second similar colossal girder, 143 metres long and 26-29 metres wide, has already arrived in Mumbai for the northern arm of MCR, and is likely to be installed near the BWSL by mid-May.

These two girders will fully complete the connectivity, enable vehicles in both directions to enter-exit the BWSL from the MCR and ensure smooth, fast and signal-free traffic movement.



Free haircut, 'mehendi' for women on offer as Maha votes in Phase 2

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 26: A voter turnout of 53.51 per cent was recorded till 5 pm for the eight Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra on Friday.

Wardha registered the highest polling percentage till 5pm at 56.66 per cent, followed by Amravati (54.50), Yavatmal-Washim (54.04), Parbhani (53.79), Akola (52.49), Nanded (52.47), Buldhana (52.24), and Hingoli (52.03).

The voters at the Hivari polling station in the Yavatmal-Washim constituency were made to wait for around 25 minutes as the polling staff took a 'break' for lunch. For a while, the voters, including senior citizens, got con-

and get a haircut for free," read a board outside his salon.

Stating that the offer was part of his efforts to encourage people to vote, Kanulkar appealed, "Wake up voters, become a part of democracy."

In Washim, District Collector Bhuvaneshwari S cast her vote at the Lions Vidya Niketan and thereafter planted a sapling on the school campus.

She also said the district administration had made efforts to increase the polling percentage to 75 per cent.

As part of the voter awareness drive, the Washim district administration also resorted to a novel idea of applying free 'mehendi' to the female voters who cast their votes Friday.



fused as they were made to wait as if they had gone to some government office. The polling was stopped from 2.10pm to 2.35pm due to this reason.

In Akola, a salon operator named Anant Kanulkar gave a novel offer of free haircuts to the customers who cast their votes. "Show your inked finger

Testing Agency were announced Thursday.

Talking to PTI over the phone, Nilkrishna's father, Nirmal Gajare, said he had no words to express his happiness over his son's success.

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Vidarbha farmer's son aces JEE Mains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washim, April 26: With perseverance and hard work over the last two years, Nilkrishna Gajare, son of a farmer from Maharashtra's Washim district in Vidarbha region, has secured All India Rank 1 in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains.

Hailing from Belkhed, a remote village in Washim, Nilkrishna followed a rigorous schedule, dedicating more than 10 hours to prepare for the exams every day.

The results of the JEE Mains conducted by the National



Testing Agency were announced Thursday.

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114 candidates file papers for India's biggest LS constituency

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad, April 26: Malkajgiri, which is the biggest Parliamentary constituency in the country, accounts for the highest number of candidates filing their nominations in Telangana.

As many as 177 nominations were filed by 114 candidates in the constituency on the periphery of Hyderabad.

According to the Election Commission, a total of 895 candidates filed their nominations in all 17 constituencies in the state. On Thursday, which was the last day for filing of nominations, 348 candidates, mostly independents, filed their papers.

A total of 1,488 nominations were filed in all the constituencies with many candidates filing multiple sets.

Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj said the scrutiny of nominations was taken up Friday, April 29 is the last date for withdrawal of candidatures while voting will take place May 13.

In Malkajgiri, the last day saw 63 aspirants filing their nominations, taking the total number of candidates to 114.

Chevilla, which is also spread over Assembly segments on the outskirts of Hyderabad and surrounding districts, has the second highest number of contestants at 66. A total of 88 nominations were filed here.

In Peddapalli, 63 candidates filed their nominations while this number is 61 in Bhongir. Warangal and Hyderabad saw 58 and 57 aspirants filing their nominations respectively. Secunderabad constituency also recorded nominations by 57 candidates.

Adilabad saw the lowest number of candidates (23) filing their



nominations. In Mahabubnagar and Nizamabad, 42 contestants each filed their nominations.

Majority of the candidates are independents or from smaller parties. Almost all the constituencies are likely to witness three cornered contests among ruling Congress, opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

In 2019, BRS had bagged nine seats while BJP had won four. The Congress candidates were elected from three constituencies. All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) had retained the lone seat (Hyderabad).

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Nomination filing for second phase begins

FIVE LOK SABHA AND 35 ASSEMBLY SEGMENTS IN STATE TO GO TO POLLS MAY 20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 26: The process of filing nomination papers for five Lok Sabha and 35 Assembly constituencies to be held May 20 started Friday with the Election Commission of India and Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) issuing the notification in this regard. The five Lok Sabha constituencies are: Bargarh, Sundargarh (ST), Bolangir, Kandhamal and Aska Lok Sabha constituencies along with 35 Assembly segments under the Lok Sabha constituencies. "As recommended by the Election Commission of India, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of Section 15 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951), the Governor of the State of Odisha is, hereby, pleased to call upon..." the Chief Secretary said in a notification. As per the notification, May

3 is the last date for filing nominations while scrutiny of nominations to be done on the next day. Candidates can withdraw their nominations on or before May 6. The Election Commission has made different schedule for voting in 35 Assembly constituencies that come under the five Lok Sabha constituencies. The usual voting timing is 7am to 6pm. However, it has been revised for some areas keeping security and other points in view, sources said. Polling in Padampur, Bonai, Kantamal, and Boudh along with some parts of Patnagarh, Kantabanji, Baliguda, Udayagiri and Phulbani Assembly segments will be held from 7am to 4pm. Voting in some booths of Patnagarh, Kantabanji, Baliguda, Udayagiri, and Phulbani and all booths of Daspalla Assembly segments will be held from 7am to 5pm, the notification said.



Congress nominee for Mahakalpara Assembly constituency in Kendrapara district, Loknath Maharathy, taking out a procession to Ramchandi temple before launch of his campaigning, Friday (PTI)

266 candidates in fray for 28 Assembly seats

ALTOGETHER 39 CANDIDATES INCLUDING 10 INDEPENDENTS HAVE FILED NOMINATIONS FOR KALAHANDI, NABARANGPUR, BERHAMPUR AND KORAPUT PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Filing nomination papers has concluded for 28 Assembly segments under four Lok Sabha constituencies of Odisha where the polling is going to take place May 13. As per the data released by the Election Commission Friday, as many as 266 candidates filed 483 nomination papers for 28 Assembly seats for the fourth phase of elections. Among the Assembly segments, 20 candidates have filed nominations for Berhampur Assembly seat while 14 candidates each for Digapahandi and Koraput Assembly constituencies. Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee President Sarat Pattanayak has filed nominations for Nuapada Assembly segment under Kalahandi Lok Sabha constituency. Popular cine star



and BJD leader Sidhant Mohapatra filed nominations for Digapahandi Vidhan Sabha seat. Similarly, 39 including 10 independent candidates have filed nominations for Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Berhampur and Koraput parliamentary con-

stituencies. As many as 13 candidates have filed nominations for Koraput Lok Sabha constituency while only four candidates have filed their nominations for Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat. Nominations have been filed by 11 candidates each

for Kalahandi and Berhampur Lok Sabha seats. Senior Congress leader Saptagiri Ulaka has filed nominations for Koraput Lok Sabha seat. Similarly, BJD leader Pradeep Kumar Majhi has filed nominations for Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituency. BJD leader Pradeep Kumar Panigrahy has filed nominations for Berhampur parliamentary constituency. Scrutiny of nominations was held Friday, while the candidates can withdraw their nominations by April 29. On the other hand, filing of nominations commenced Friday for the fifth phase of polling scheduled to be held May 20 in 35 Assembly segments under five Lok Sabha constituencies - Bargarh, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Kandhamal, Aska. The last date for filing of nominations is May 3.

Karnataka tribal hamlet records 100 pc voting

AGENCIES

Mangaluru (Karnataka), April 26: Banjarumale, an interior hamlet in Belthangady taluk of Dakshina Kannda district, recorded 100 per cent voting in the Lok Sabha election Friday. This hamlet has 111 voters and each one of them turned up at the only polling booth, completing voting two hours before polling ended at 6pm. The hamlet is inhabited by forest dwellers, tribal farmers and collectors of minor forest waste. Despite having no power or transport connectivity, the people survive in the forest using water from the perennial water sources in the hills of the Western Ghats. To reach their taluk headquarters Belthangady, the people have to travel via Mudigere by bus or walk 8 km through the dense forests, but they all made sure to vote. The district authorities ap-



preciated their spirit. Anni Malekudia, a resident of the village, told PTI, "We do not complain about the lax facilities. We understand that all the facilities that are given to towns cannot be given to all villages. Nevertheless, that has not deterred us from voting in full numbers. I am sure even if there were 500 voters or more they would have all come to vote." In the 2023 Karnataka Assembly election, Banjarumale had recorded 99 per cent voting according to the district polling statistics.

Parshuram Dhada joins BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 26: Weeks after resigning from ruling BJD, Soro MLA Parshuram Dhada Friday returned to BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in Odisha. Dhada joined the saffron party at an event organised at the BJP headquarters here in the presence of its state president Manmohan Samal, former president Samir Mohanty and other leaders. The legislator quit the BJD April 3 after being denied a ticket to contest the upcoming polls. He had successfully contested the Assembly polls in 2014 and 2019 from Soro constituency on a BJD ticket.



The BJP has already fielded Raju Das as its candidate from the Soro Assembly segment, but the party is yet to announce candidates from Nilagiri, Balasore Sadar, Jaleswar and Basta under the Balasore Lok Sabha seat. Earlier, BJD MLAs Arabinda Dhali, Premanda Nayak, Ramesh Chandra Sai, Simarani Nayak and two MPs Bhartruhari Mahtab and Anubhav Mohanty have resigned from the regional outfit and joined the BJP. Dhada said, "I am happy that senior BJP leaders gave me an opportunity to return to the party after 10 years. I will take up whatever responsibility is assigned to me." He had, in 2009, unsuccessfully contested as a BJD candidate from Balasore Assembly seat.

BJD pacifies Prasant Sethy with crucial party post

Two days back, the Biju Janata Dal officially declared Prasant's appointment as one of the secretaries of the party and also the election coordinator for Raghunathpalli Assembly seat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 26: BJD has been successful in containing an imminent internal rebellion in the Raghunathpalli Assembly segment by tactfully pacifying Prasant Sethy who was a major ticket contender. Sethy, who in 2019 fought as a Congress candidate, resigned from the party last year and had been waiting for an entry into the BJD fold ever since.

Two days back BJD officially declared Prasant's appointment as one of the secretaries of the party and also the election coordinator for Raghunathpalli Assembly seat. It came as a shock to Sethy who was eyeing for nothing less than a ticket from the party to fight from the constituency and was lobbying hard for the same. In fact, he had long been seen as a threat to and replacement for sitting MLA Subrat Tarai.

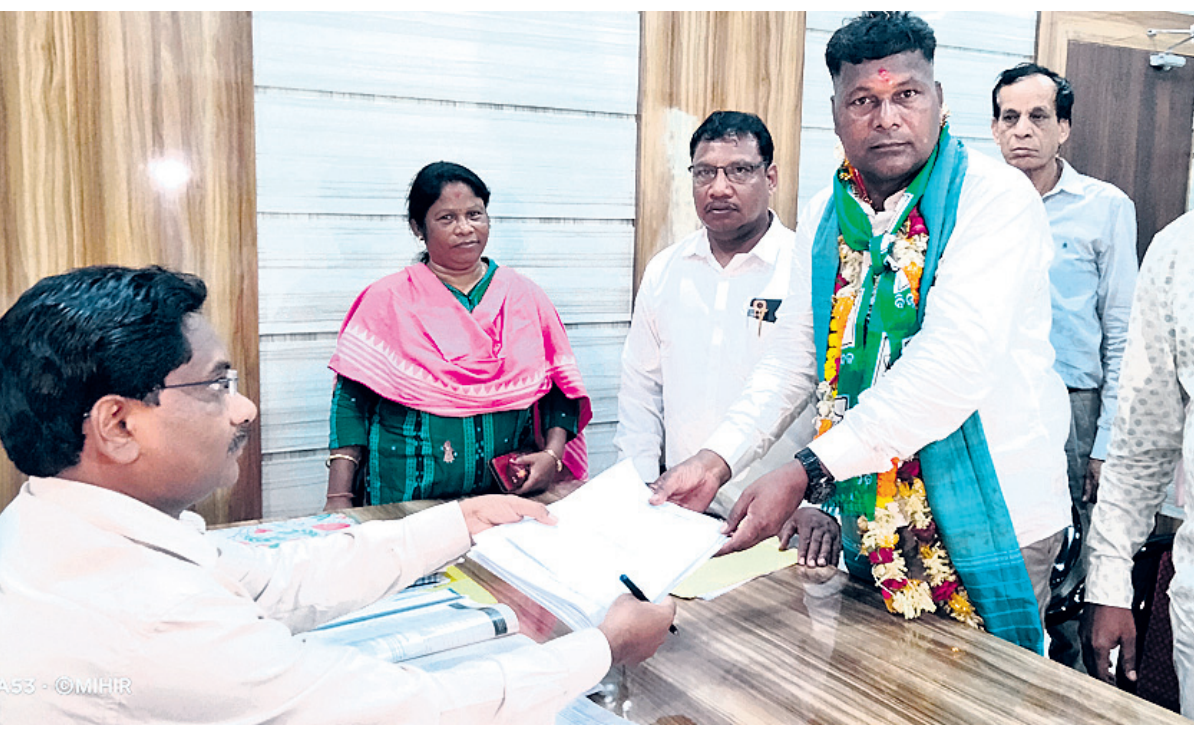
However, the party chose the middle path by allotting the ticket to Tarai's wife Archana Rekha Behera. Sethy has been active in the constituency since the past five years and established a good rapport with the voters. "He would reach the door of the needy extending all sorts of help, from taking to hospital, to availing ration card. His philanthropy helped him garner large number of followers and support base," said a local. This relentless social work made him a strong and natural claimant for the party's MLA ticket. Moreover, Tarai's protracted absence from the constituency - not to forget the 'miss-



ing' posters of him pasted across the constituency sometime back - further brightened his chance. Against this backdrop, it was natural for Sethy to feel disappointed when the party preferred to overlook him when it came to

allocation of the ticket. So, when a few days back when the party announced to make him one of the secretaries, Sethy was very critical about it. "I have no idea, this could be another person, not me," he said sarcastically. To drive home his point, he said, "How I have been made one of the secretaries when I am not even a formal member of the party?" This was perhaps enough to send a subtle message to the party high command. Though his efforts in the past to meet BJD supreme Naveen Pattnaik and 5T Chairman VK Pandian did not bear any fruits, earlier Thursday he reportedly received a call from party district observer Priti Rajan Ghadei who

asked him to rush to Bhubaneswar to meet the Naveen and Pandian. He was formally inducted into the party in the evening and was installed as one of the secretaries. It is reliably learnt that Sethy was categorical about his lack of interest in being made the election coordinator for Raghunathpalli. Sources said he has been made the coveted election coordinator for Kantabanji Assembly constituency from where Naveen is contesting. "This is another opportunity for me. My waiting since 2009 has come to an end," Sethy said on the new assignment.



BJD nominee Binay Kumar Toppo filing his nomination for Talsara Assembly constituency in Sundargarh district before the Sadar Sub-Collector and returning officer Dasharathi Sarabu in Sundargarh, Friday



Several BJD leaders and workers from Dharmasala Assembly constituency joined BJP at the state office of the saffron party in Bhubaneswar, Friday



Voters want NDA's good governance. Youth and women voters are powering the strong NDA support
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

BOOSTING TIES

Top officials of India and South Korea Friday discussed developments in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation relating to nuclear, chemical and biological domains. India-Republic of Korea Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation were held in Seoul, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement



of the day quote

Modi has only snatched money from poor people. He has made some billionaires



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Our country is also facing the epidemic of lifestyle diseases - diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery diseases and lipid disorders are on a rapid rise



RAM NATH KOVIND | FORMER PRESIDENT

Rahul baba, neither the people will elect you, nor will triple talaq be reintroduced. I am saying today that we will not allow anyone to touch CAA (Citizenship (Amendment) Act), triple talaq (prohibition act) and (scrapping of) Article 370



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SANDESHKHALI RAIDS Cache of arms including foreign-made revolvers seized by CBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Kolkata, April 26: The CBI seized arms and ammunition, including foreign-made firearms, during searches at multiple locations in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali Friday in connection with the January attack on an Enforcement Directorate team by a mob allegedly instigated by now-suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh, officials said.

Teams of the Central Bureau Investigation (CBI), the bomb detection squad, the National Security Guard (NSG), the central paramilitary forces and the West Bengal Police were part of the searches at the village - a riverine delta - on the fringes of the Sunderbans in North 24 Parganas district.

"During investigation of this case, information was received that the items lost by the ED team and other incriminating articles may be hidden at the residence of an associate of Sheikh at Sandeshkhali, North 24 Parganas. Accordingly, the team of the CBI along with CRPF personnel searched two premises at Sandeshkhali today," the spokesperson of the CBI.

The swift operation, till afternoon, resulted in the seizure of a huge cache of small arms and ammunition, and these included foreign-made pistols, the officials said. During the searches, the CBI seized three foreign-made revolvers and one foreign-made pistol, one Indian revolver, one Colt official issue police revolver, one country-made pistol, 120 nine mm bullets,



- The searches were launched in connection with the three FIRs that the CBI had registered related to the attack on the team of ED officials when it had gone to raid the premises of Shajahan Sheikh
- On the orders of the Calcutta High Court, the central agency had registered three FIRs related to the incidents January 5
- Sheikh was arrested by the West Bengal Police February 29 in connection with the attack

50 cartridges of .45 calibre, 120 nine mm cartridges, 50 cartridges of .380 and eight cartridges of .32, the spokesperson said.

"Besides, many incriminating documents related to Shajahan have also been recovered. Some items suspected to be country-made bombs have also been recovered, which are being handled and disposed of by the teams of the NSG," the spokesperson said in a statement.

As officials spread across Sandeshkhali to search targeted locations, NSG units had the responsibility for detecting and handling explosives found during the operation, the officials said. Five teams of CBI officials, with support from the West

Bengal Police, the central forces and the NSG, conducted a search at the house in Sarberia, a senior official said in Kolkata

"We had received specific information regarding the stockpiling of this huge cache of arms and ammunition, and explosives. Explosives stacked inside boxes have also been found. The search operation is underway," the official had told PTI during the operation.

The owner of the house, identified as Abu Taleb Mollah, is a relative of Sheikh, sources in the CBI said and added that it was not clear why such a huge cache of arms and ammunition, and explosives were stacked inside the house.

SHORT TAKES

Email threatens to blow up Kolkata airport

Kolkata: Authorities at the Kolkata Airport Friday received an email claiming bombs were planted at various places on its premises, triggering a frantic search across the facility, officials said. However, the mail, which threatened that the bombs will explode at 12.55 pm, turned out to be a hoax, they said. According to sources at the airport, the mail said that the sender's team had kept the bomb at Rameswaram Café but the bomb in Kolkata airport was larger.

Five of family killed in Raj road mishap

Jaipur: Five people of a family, including four women were killed and two people were injured when their car collided with the rear of a truck Friday in Rajasthan's Anupgarh district, police said. Additional Superintendent of Police Bhanwarlal said the accident occurred when the family of seven were travelling in a car from Raisingh Nagar to conduct some ritual. The accident occurred between Khokhrawali and Salempura when the car collided with a truck, killing five members of the family on the spot and leaving a woman and the driver injured, the ASP said.

Two terrorists dead as gunbattle resumes

Jammu: Two terrorists were killed while as many Army personnel got injured Friday as a gunbattle between the militants and security forces continued for the second day in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, officials said. The encounter began Thursday at Check Mohalla Nowpora in the Sopore area of north Kashmir. After the night's lull, a fresh exchange of firing took place Friday morning, they said. Two terrorists have been killed so far, according to the officials.

Ch' garh cop killed in accidental firing

Raipur: A policeman was killed and another injured due to an accidental discharge of a firearm in the bungalow of a former Congress MLA in Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur Friday, police said. The incident occurred between 7 am and 8 am when the two personnel of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force were cleaning their service weapons in the barrack at the bungalow of former MLA Devti Karma here in the Civil Lines area, a police official said. A District Reserve Guard (DRG) constable was killed Thursday and another policeman injured due to an accidental discharge of a firearm in the state's Dantewada district.

SNIPPETS

Delhi court dismisses Brij Bhushan's plea

New Delhi: A Delhi court Friday dismissed an application filed by former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh seeking further investigation into a sexual harassment case lodged by six female wrestlers against him. While dismissing the application, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Priyanka Rajpoot fixed May 7 for an order on whether to frame charges against Singh in the case. Singh had moved the application seeking time to make further submissions on charges and for further investigation, saying that he was not in India on the date of one of the incidents wherein a complainant has alleged that she was harassed at the WFI office. Singh's counsel claimed that Delhi Police had relied on the call detail records (CDR) of the coach who had accompanied the complainant and stated that they had gone to the WFI office September 7, 2022, where she was allegedly molested.

Court extends judicial custody of Sisodia

New Delhi: A court here Friday extended the judicial custody of AAP leader Manish Sisodia, co-accused Vijay Nair and others till May 8 in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. The accused persons were produced before Special Judge Kavari Baweja through video conferencing on the expiry of their judicial custody granted earlier. The judge also directed the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to submit a report on how much time it was likely to take to digitize the documents related to the charge sheet. During the proceedings, ED's special public prosecutors Naveen Kumar Matta and Simon Benjamin alleged that the accused persons were delaying the proceedings and that they were not willing to expedite the hearing. Earlier, the court sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and BRS leader K Kavitha to judicial custody till May 7 in the case.

Omar, Mehbooba ask EC not to postpone polls

Srinagar/Jammu: NC leader Omar Abdullah and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti Friday asked the Election Commission not to postpone polls in the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. The former Chief Ministers made the appeal after the EC sought a report from Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo and the Chief Electoral Officer on representations submitted by some parties and three candidates seeking rescheduling of elections in the constituency due to adverse weather conditions. "I appeal to the EC that such a step should not be taken. The demand for postponement is not from all parties. The weird thing is that some of the people who have written to the EC are not contesting. If I write to the EC about constituencies in Tamil Nadu etc. will they take notice," he told a press conference in Srinagar.



Voters show their fingers marked with indelible ink after casting their votes for the second phase of Lok Sabha polls in Dudu district of Rajasthan

Southern India faces water crisis: CWC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: The southern region, encompassing states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, has significantly reduced water storage compared to historical averages at just 17 per cent of reservoir capacity, according to the recent bulletin of the Central Water Commission.

In the bulletin released by the CWC late Thursday concerning reservoir storage levels across various regions of India, it was reported that 42 reservoirs under CWC monitoring in the southern region have a total live storage capacity of 53,334 BCM (billion cubic meters).

As per the latest report, the total live storage available in these reservoirs stands at 8,865 BCM, representing only 17 per cent of their total capacity.



This figure is considerably lower compared to the storage levels during the same period last year (29 per cent) and the ten-year average for the corresponding period (23 per cent).

The reduced storage levels in the southern region are indicative of worsening water scarcity and potential challenges for irrigation, drinking water supply and hydroelectric power generation in these states.

In contrast, the eastern region, comprising states like Assam, Odisha and West Bengal, has shown a positive improvement in water storage levels compared to last year and the ten-year average.

The bulletin highlighted that in this region, 23 monitored reservoirs with a total live storage capacity of 20,430 BCM currently hold 7,889 BCM of water, representing 39 per cent of their

Adopt zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism: India

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 26: Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane emphasised the need to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting held in Astana Friday.

The meeting, held within the framework of Kazakhstan's on-going SCO chairmanship, was attended by the heads of the defence departments of the SCO member states, the Secretary General, the Director of the Executive Committee of the Organisation's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), as well as Belarus' Minister of Defence. A joint communication issued after the meeting stated that the SCO Defence Ministers agreed, among other initiatives, to develop the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', which is rooted in the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

Leading the Indian delegation, the Defence Secretary delivered the statement at the ministerial meeting and also held meetings with the Defence Ministers of the SCO member countries on various issues of bilateral cooperation. Aramane reiterated India's steadfast commitment towards maintaining peace, stability and security in the SCO region and mentioned New Delhi's longstanding proposal of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations.

He also highlighted India's concept of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' (SAGAR) for the Indo-Pacific region.

Sunita to spearhead AAP's LS campaign

Sunita Kejriwal, a retired IRS officer, is slowly emerging out of the shadows to assume a bigger role in the party to give a fillip to the AAP's campaigning which has been affected by Arvind Kejriwal's arrest in a money laundering case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal will spearhead AAP's Lok Sabha campaign in the national capital and other states, which begins with her maiden roadshow Saturday in support of party's East Delhi candidate Kuldeep Kumar, senior party leader Atishi said.

Addressing a press conference here, Delhi minister Atishi said Sunita will seek votes and blessings for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in the absence of her husband who is in judicial custody. "In protest against the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal, his wife Sunita Kejriwal will campaign to seek blessings for him and to seek votes for AAP candidates. She will seek blessings for him from the people of Delhi, Punjab, Gujarat and Haryana," Atishi said. "She will hold a roadshow in East Delhi tomorrow and will seek blessings from the people of East Delhi for Arvind Kejriwal. She will hold a roadshow April 28 in the West Delhi Lok Sabha constituency," Atishi added.

Sunita, a retired IRS officer, is slowly emerging out of the shadows to assume a bigger role in the party to give a fillip to the AAP's campaigning which has been affected by the Chief Minister's arrest in March in a money laundering case. Kejriwal's would re-



main in judicial custody till May 7 as per a court order.

Atishi alleged that Kejriwal was arrested to stop him from campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls. "I want to tell the BJP that their gamble has backfired completely. Whether it is Delhi, Punjab or the rest of the country, the common people are protesting against the arrest of Kejriwal, protesting against the dictatorship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, protesting against this attack on democracy."

"The people are unanimously saying that they will respond to Arvind Kejriwal's arrest with their votes," she said.

The AAP, which is contesting the Lok Sabha polls in alliance with the Congress in Delhi, has fielded its candidates in East Delhi, West Delhi, South Delhi and New Delhi seats. In Gujarat, the party is contesting from two seats - Bharuch and Bhavnagar - while in Haryana, the party is in the fray from Kurukshetra. In Punjab, it is not in any alliance with the Congress and is contesting all 13 seats.

US puts high priority on student visas: Envoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: America puts "high priority" on student visas because it knows people-to-people ties "last a lifetime", US envoy Eric Garcetti said here Friday and asserted that its Mission is preparing to accommodate higher number of applications from Indian students this year.

In an interview to PTI at the American Center, he also recalled that US President Joe Biden had asked him to reduce waiting time for visas for Indians.

"He did! It is the first time, I think in American history that a President has told an ambassador - get those visas waiting time down. It is all because, we have Indian friends, they want to see their family members and colleagues, or business partners," the envoy said.

international

of the day quote

India has always been of the view that the General Assembly can be revitalised only when its position as the primary deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations is respected in letter and spirit

PRATIK MATHUR | COUNSELLOR FOR INDIA'S PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UN

Numerous women and girls have been detained in Iran for failing to heed head-covering regulations, and hundreds of businesses have been closed for failing to enforce them

VOLKER TURK | UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

In just seven years, India's digital public infrastructure model has achieved over 80 per cent financial inclusion for its citizens, and now accounts for more than 60 per cent of all digital transactions worldwide

DENNIS FRANCIS | UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Nepal & China sign pacts to boost ties

Kathmandu: Nepal and China Friday signed two agreements in the field of human resources development and the improved bone marrow transplantation service. The two agreements were inked in the presence of Finance Minister Barshaman Pun during a ceremony at the Ministry of Finance. The first agreement, related to human resources development cooperation for global development initiatives, was signed by Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini and chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) Luo Zhaohui on behalf of their respective governments. The second agreement regarding bone marrow transplant services was signed by Health Secretary Dr Roshan Pokharel and Luo of the CIDCA, officials said.

Pak rejects US report

Islamabad: Pakistan has "categorically" rejected a report by the US State Department over the human rights violations in the country last year, saying that only a "politically motivated report can ignore the alarming situation in Gaza." "It is deeply concerning that a report purported to highlight human rights situations around the world ignores or downplays the most urgent hotspots of gross human rights violations such as in Gaza," Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said.

King Charles III to resume public duties

London: King Charles III will begin resuming some of his public-facing duties as medical experts were "sufficiently pleased" and "very encouraged" with his progress following a cancer diagnosis earlier this year, Buckingham Palace said in a statement released here Friday. The 75-year-old monarch will mark his recuperation milestone with a joint visit with his wife, Queen Camilla, to a cancer treatment centre in London next Tuesday.

Vietnam Parl chief quits

Hanoi: The chairman of Vietnam's parliament Vuong Dinh Hue resigned over unspecified "violations and shortcomings", the ruling Communist Party said on Friday, a new sign of political turbulence weeks after the dismissal of the country's President.

TRUMP HUSH-MONEY TRIAL RESUMES

Ex-tabloid publisher faces more questions



REUTERS

New York, April 26: Former National Enquirer publisher David Pecker will answer more questions about his efforts to suppress damaging information about Donald Trump during the 2016 election, as the former President's criminal hush-money trial resumed Friday.

Pecker, 72, faces more questioning from Trump's lawyers, who have sought to illustrate that the tabloid's practice of burying unflattering stories about famous people was well established before Trump ran for President.

Pecker previously testified that he worked as Trump's "eyes and ears" to suppress stories which could have hurt the businessman-turned-politician's presidential bid at a time when he was facing multiple accusations of sexual misbehavior.

Pecker said his tabloid paid to "catch and kill" two of those stories and alerted Trump that porn star Stormy Daniels was

also looking to sell her story of a sexual encounter with Trump.

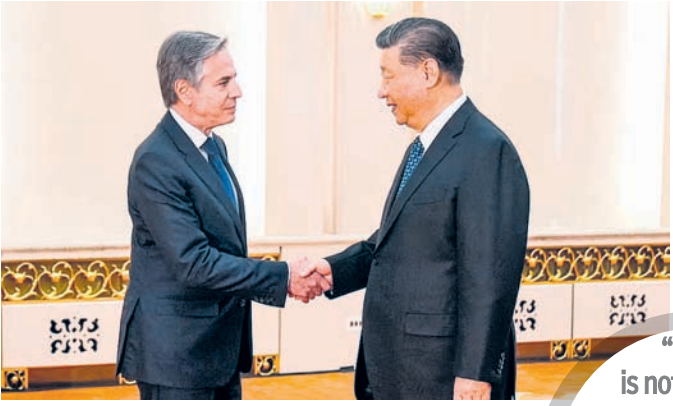
New York prosecutors have charged Trump with falsifying business records to cover up a hush money payment to Daniels. Trump has pleaded not guilty and denies the encounter took place. Trump's lawyers sought Thursday to illustrate to the jury that Pecker's checkbook journalism was not confined to Trump.

Under questioning, Pecker said it was normal for celebrities and politicians to curry favor with the Enquirer to get good publicity and that he sought to kill negative stories about other famous figures, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tiger Woods. He said the Enquirer paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to obtain stories from women who came forward during Schwarzenegger's 2003 run for California governor to say they had affairs with him.

Pecker said the first time he gave Trump a heads up about a negative story was in 1998 in relation to Marla Maples, his wife at the time. Pecker said he still considered Trump a friend, even though the two have not spoken since 2019.

Prosecutors say Pecker's arrangement with Trump corrupted the 2016 election. He agreed to cooperate to avoid criminal charges.

Blinken meets Xi as US and China fight over bilateral issues



AGENCIES

Beijing, April 26: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Friday with Chinese President Xi Jinping and senior Chinese officials, stressing the importance of "responsibly managing" the differences between the United States and China as the two sides butted heads over a number of contentious bilateral, regional and global issues.

Talks between the two sides have increased in recent months, even as differences have grown.

Blinken said he raised concerns with Xi about China's support for Russia and its invasion of Ukraine, as well as other issues including Taiwan and the South China Sea, human rights and the production and export

of synthetic opioid precursors.

Blinken sounded a positive note on recent progress made in bilateral cooperation, including in military communications, counternarcotics and artificial intelligence.

"We are committed to maintaining and strengthening lines of communication to advance that agenda, and again deal responsibly with our differences so we avoid any miscommunications, any miscalculations, any miscalculations," he said. But he said he made clear to Xi on-going concerns about Beijing's supply of materials, including machine tools and micro electronics, to Moscow that President

Vladimir Putin is using to boost Russia's defences and its war on Ukraine. "Russia would struggle to sustain its assault on Ukraine without China's support," Blinken told reporters after his meeting with Xi. "Fueling Russia's defense industrial base not only threatens Ukrainian security, it threatens European security," he added. "As we've told China for some time, ensuring transatlantic security is a core US interest. In our discussions today, I made clear that China does not address this problem."

Blinken also said he urged China to use its influence "to discourage Iran and its proxies from expanding the conflict in the Middle East" and convince North Korea "to end its dangerous behaviour and engage in dialogue."

Blinken also discussed with Xi China's maritime maneuvers in the disputed South China Sea, and reiterated "ironclad" American support for the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia. Xi stressed that China and the US must seek common ground "rather than engage in vicious competition."

"China is not afraid of competition, but competition should be about common progress, not a zero-sum game," Xi said

Chinese marine research ship back in Maldives waters



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Male, April 26: A 4,500-tonne high-tech Chinese research ship is back in the Maldivian waters, two months after it spent a week docked at different ports in this archipelago nation.

Xiang Yang Hong 03 was docked at the Thilafushi industrial island's harbour Thursday morning, news portal Adhathu.com reported Friday.

However, "the government has not disclosed the reason for its return. But the government previously confirmed permission for the ship to dock before its first visit," it said, days after President Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader-led People's National Congress won the general election, securing 66 out of the 93-member People's Majlis.

Muizzu rode to power last year on an 'India Out' promise and with a super majority win in parliamentary polls April 21, he has further consolidated his position. "The ship has now come back after skirting the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Therefore, Xiang Yang Hong 03 has been active inside or near Maldives territory since January," it said.

The ship had earlier docked February 23 at the same Thilafushi port, about 7.5 km to the west of Male.

The hi-tech ship reached Maldivian waters February 22 after spending about a month near the boundary of the Maldives' EEZ. About six days later, the ship went back to the EEZ boundary. In February, the Maldivian Foreign Ministry had said the Xiang Yang Hong 3 was here to "make a port call, for the rotation of its personnel and replenishment" after a diplomatic request was made by the government of China to the government of Maldives. "The vessel would not be conducting any research while in the Maldivian waters," the Foreign Ministry said January 23.

Black man dies after US cops pin him down, kneel on neck

REUTERS

Washington, April 26: Ohio police released video of a Black man who died at a local hospital after repeatedly telling officers "I can't breathe" as they pinned him to the floor of a bar and handcuffed him, evoking memories of the killing of George Floyd in 2020.

In body camera video released Thursday by the Canton Police Department, officers are seen apprehending the man, identified as Frank Tyson, 53, who was suspected of leaving the scene of a single-car accident April 18.

The Canton Police Department was not immediately available for comment on the video, which was posted online by several local media outlets, or to confirm details about the incident.

The 36-minute clip begins with a patrol officer coming upon a car that had struck an electrical pole and a bystander telling him that the driver of the vehicle had fled into a nearby tavern. Officers are then seen entering the establishment, where they find Tyson standing at the bar. An altercation ensued as they attempted to grab his arms, and he repeatedly shouts "They are trying to kill me" and "Call the sheriff."

Officers wrestled Tyson to the ground and handcuffed him. One of them is seen placing a knee on his back near his neck for about 30 seconds.

Tyson can be heard repeatedly saying, "I can't breathe. I can't... get off my neck," as an officer yells "Calm down" and "You're fine" before standing up. The video next shows Tyson lying motionless, face down on the floor for about six minutes, while officers speak with bar patrons.

The officers then check on Tyson, who appears to be unresponsive. They can be heard saying, "Is he breathing?" and "Does he have a pulse?"

Eight minutes after the officers handcuffed Tyson, they remove the cuffs and begin CPR. Paramedics then arrive at the scene and take Tyson out of the bar on a stretcher and into a waiting ambulance, the video shows.

Tyson died at a local hospital, according to WKYC, an NBC affiliate in Cleveland. Reuters could not immediately confirm the report.

The official cause of death has not been determined. The incident is reminiscent of Floyd's deadly encounter with Minneapolis police four years ago.



A vessel, moves past the stranded container ship Dali, through a newly-opened deep-water channel in Baltimore after being stuck in the harbour since the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapsed four weeks ago

SNIPPETS

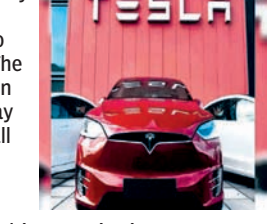
PIO shot dead by San Antonio police

New York: A 42-year-old Indian-origin man in the US was shot and killed by police in San Antonio after he struck two officers with his vehicle as they were trying to arrest him in connection with an aggravated assault case against a woman. Sachin Kumar Sahoo was pronounced deceased at the scene after police officer Tyler Turner shot at him April 21 in San Antonio, a city in Texas. The Bexar County Medical Examiner's Office said Sachin Kumar Sahoo died from multiple gunshot wounds during last weekend's altercation with police, the San Antonio Express-News reported. Sahoo originally hailed from Uttar Pradesh. Sources said he could have been a naturalised US citizen.



US probes Tesla recall of two million vehicles

Detroit: The US government's auto safety agency is investigating whether last year's recall of Tesla's Autopilot driving system did enough to make sure drivers pay attention to the road. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says in documents posted on its website Friday that it has concerns about the December recall of more than 2 million vehicles, nearly all the vehicles that Tesla had sold at the time. The agency pushed the company to do the recall after a two-year investigation into Autopilot's driver monitoring system, which measures torque on the steering wheel from a driver's hands. The fix involves an online software update to increase warnings to drivers.



Egypt sends delegation to Israel

Cairo: Egypt sent a high-level delegation to Israel Friday with the hope of brokering a cease-fire agreement with Hamas in Gaza, two officials said. At the same time, it warned that a possible Israeli offensive focused on Gaza's city of Rafah — on the border with Egypt — could have catastrophic consequences for regional stability. Egypt's top intelligence official, Abbas Kamel, is leading the delegation and plans to discuss with Israel a "new vision" for a prolonged cease-fire in Gaza, an Egyptian official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the mission freely. As the war drags on and casualties mount, there has been growing international pressure for Hamas and Israel to reach an agreement on a cease fire.



56 firms responsible for half of world's plastic pollution: Survey

Global leaders gather in Canada's capital this week to discuss progress in drafting a first-ever global treaty to rein in soaring plastic pollution by the end of the year.

Many plastic and petrochemical-producing countries including Saudi Arabia, Iran and China — known collectively as the group of Like-Minded Countries — have opposed mentioning production limits. They blocked other countries from formally working on proposed treaty language calling for production caps, chemical disclosures or reduction schedules after last year's Nairobi session. As per a recent study, fewer than 60 multinationals are responsible for more than half of the world's plastic pollution, with six responsible for a quarter of that.

The researchers concluded that for every percentage increase in plastic produced, there was an equivalent increase in plastic pollution in the environment. "Production really is pollution," says one of the study's authors, Lisa Erdle, director of science at the non-profit The 5 Gyres Institute. An international team of volunteers collected and surveyed more than 1,870,000 items of plastic waste across 84 countries over five years: the bulk of the rubbish collected was single-use packaging for food, beverage, and tobacco products.

Less than half of that plastic litter had discernible branding that could be traced back to the



WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH PLASTICS?

- While plastic waste has become a global menace polluting landscapes and waterways, producing plastics involves releasing greenhouse gas emissions
- The plastic industry now accounts for 5% of global carbon emissions, which could grow to 20% by 2050 if current trends continue, said a report last week from the US federal Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
- Plastic production is on track to triple by 2060 - unless the treaty sets production limits, as some have proposed. Most virgin plastic is derived from petroleum

company that produced the packaging; the rest could not be accounted for or taken responsibility for.

The branded half of the plastic was the responsibility of just 56 fast-moving consumer goods multinational companies, and a quarter of that was from just six companies. The two tobacco companies Altria and Philip Morris International combined made up 2% of the branded plastic litter found, both Danone and Nestlé each produced 3% of it, PepsiCo was responsible for 5% of the discarded packaging, and 11% of branded plastic waste could be traced to the Coca-Cola company. However, while many

of these companies have taken voluntary measures to improve their impact on plastic pollution, the experts behind the study argue they are not working. Plastic production has doubled since the beginning of 2000 and studies show only 9% of plastic is being recycled. When the team collected data on self-reported yearly plastic packaging production for each of these multinational companies and compared it with the data from their 1,500-plus litter surveys, their statistical analysis showed that every 1% increase in plastic production was directly correlated with approximately a 1% increase in plastic pollution. AGENCIES

of the day quote

The development (IndiGo's A350 aircraft order) augurs well for the industry as these (international long haul) routes are comparatively more profitable and open up avenues for innovative combinations

JAGANNARAYAN PADMANABHAN | SENIOR DIRECTOR, CRISIL LTD

We believe that our new office will not only facilitate greater collaboration and synergy among our team members but will also enable us to better meet the evolving needs of our customers and partners

VINOD PAREMAL | PRESIDENT & MD, EVONIK INDIA

We've experienced significant momentum. We are setting ambitious revenue goals, aiming for a target of over ₹1,000 crore in the coming fiscal year

VARUN GUPTA | CO-FOUNDER, BOULT



We met our guidance of delivering consistent and predictable 20 per cent growth in the sale bookings during the last fiscal year. The guidance for the current fiscal has been kept at ₹17,500 crore, again 20 per cent growth from the 2023-24 fiscal

ABHISHEK LODHA | MD & CEO, MACROTECH DEVELOPERS

CHANCE FOR UPGRADE

RBI invited applications from small finance banks Friday meeting specified criteria, including a minimum net worth of ₹1,000 crore, for becoming regular or universal banks. It should also have a net profit in the last two financial years as well as GNPA and NNPA of less than or equal to 3 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, in the last two financial years



Markets snap 5-day rally

Sensex tumbles over 600 pts amid worries over high valuations and lackluster Q4 earnings



Correction is also attributed to global factors after the Japanese Yen fell to a new 34-year low and disappointing US data pushed its benchmark yields to over 4.7 per cent, thus worsening hopes of an interest rate cut in the medium term

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

The BSE benchmark climbed 486.50 points or 0.66 per cent to settle at 74,339.44 Thursday, while the NSE Nifty advanced 167.95 points or 0.75 per cent to 22,570.35

On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark advanced 641.83 points or 0.87, and the NSE Nifty climbed 272.95 points or 1.23 per cent

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. Bajaj Finance was the biggest drag on the Sensex chart, skidding nearly 8 per cent after the company's March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. Bajaj Finserv also declined over

NEW NORMS PROPOSED

RBI asks LSPs to be more transparent



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 26: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Friday proposed that lending service providers (LSPs), acting as agents of banks, should give information on all the loan offers available with them to borrowers so that they can make an informed decision.

Many of the LSPs offer aggregation services for loan products. LSP is an agent of a regulated entity (RE) who carries out one or more of lender's functions or part thereof in customer acquisition, underwriting support, pricing support, servicing, monitoring, recovery of specific loan or loan portfolio on behalf of REs in conformity with extant outsourcing guidelines.

In December last year, the RBI announced to issue draft framework saying connected lending or lending to persons who are in a position to control or influence the decision of a lender can be of concern, if the lender does not maintain an arm's length relationship with such borrowers.

Such lending can involve moral hazard issues, leading to a compromise in pricing and credit management, it had said. "In such cases, particularly where an LSP has arrangements with multiple lenders, identity of the potential lender to the borrower may not be known upfront to the borrower," said the Reserve Bank's draft circular on 'Digital

While the LSP may adopt any mechanism to ascertain the willingness of the lenders to offer a loan, it shall follow a consistent approach in this regard, which shall be disclosed suitably on their website

RBI DRAFT

Lending - Transparency in Aggregation of Loan Products from Multiple Lenders'

The draft proposed that the LSP should provide a digital view of all the loan offers available to the borrower, as per his/her requirements, from all willing lenders with whom the LSP has arrangements with. "While the LSP may adopt any mechanism to ascertain the willingness of the lenders to offer a loan, it shall follow a consistent approach in this regard, which shall be disclosed suitably on their website," said the draft on which the RBI has sought comments from stakeholders by May 31.

The digital view should include the name(s) of the RE(s) extending the loan offer, amount and tenor of loan, the annual percentage rate (APR) and other key terms and conditions in a way which enables the borrower to make a fair comparison between various offers, the draft said.

Mumbai, April 26: Market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty wilted under selling pressure Friday after a five-day rally as investors pared exposure to banking, financial and consumer durable stocks amid mixed trends in global markets.

Rising global crude prices, a depreciating rupee and persistent foreign fund outflows further weighed on sentiment, traders said.

Profit-taking also came into play as the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 609.28 points or 0.82 per cent to settle at 73,730.16. During the day, it lost 722.79 points or 0.97 per cent to 73,616.65. The NSE Nifty declined 150.40 points or 0.67 per cent to 22,419.95.

"The fall was on expected lines as both the benchmark indices had rallied for five straight sessions, and profit-taking has been due for some time," said

TECH MAHINDRA UNVEILS ROADMAP TO BOUNCE BACK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Shares of Tech Mahindra Friday surged over 7 per cent after the company outlined an ambitious three-year roadmap to accelerate revenue growth and lift margins.

The stock advanced 7.34 per cent to finish at ₹1,277.45 on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 13 per cent to ₹1,344.95. At the NSE, the stock zoomed 7.54 per cent to ₹1,280.15. During the session, it climbed 13.16 per cent to ₹1,347.

The company's market capitalisation increased by ₹8,537.51 crore to ₹1,24,781.54 crore. It emerged as the biggest gainer on the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty.

In traded volume terms, 8.53 lakh shares of the company were traded at the BSE and over 204.32 lakh shares at the NSE. The IT services company Thursday reported a 41 per cent fall in consolidated net profit for the March quarter to ₹661 crore amid weakness in the communications vertical, even as its CEO outlined an ambitious three-year roadmap to boost revenue growth and lift margins.

The top brass acknowledged that the Q4 results marked a "low point" in the company's growth trajectory but exuded confidence that year-on-year improvement will become visible starting the first quarter.

Tech Mahindra CEO Mohit Joshi said the company hopes to come back to growth in H2 FY25. In Q4 FY24, the company's revenue dropped by 6.2 per cent year-on-year to ₹12,871 crore.

Forex drops to 6-week low

FOREX KITTY DROPS FROM USD 2.28 BN TO USD 640.33 BN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 26: India's forex reserves decreased USD 2.282 billion to USD 640.334 billion for the seven days ended April 19 in the second consecutive week of drop in the kitty, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said Friday.

The reserves had dropped USD 5.401 billion to USD 643.162 billion in the previous reporting week, ending a multi-week trend of an increase, which also saw the overall reserves touching a new all-time high of USD USD 648.562 billion for the week ended April 5.

In September 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached a high of USD 642.453 billion, which was breached in March this year. The reserves took a hit as the



central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global events, but there had been a steady accretion over the past few months.

For the week ended April 19, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves,

decreased USD 3.793 billion to USD 560.86 billion, according to the data released on Friday. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound, and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Go First court rule delivers big win for aircraft lessors

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 26: Lessors with aircraft stranded at Indian airline Go First can take back their planes, a local court ruled Friday, nearly a year after the carrier declared bankruptcy.

Foreign lessors have been locked in a legal tussle to repossess their planes after Go First was granted bankruptcy protection in May 2023, with the recovery of more than 50 Airbus planes blocked under a law in place at the time.

Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) Capital, ACG Aircraft Leasing and other lessors, which



were allowed only occasional inspections of their grounded planes, took the matter to court.

The Delhi High Court Friday directed the aviation regulator to deregister the aircraft within

The Delhi HC directed the aviation regulator to deregister the aircraft within five working days. They are restrained from "entering, accessing or in any manner operating or flying any of the aircraft"

five working days. Go First is restrained from "entering, accessing or in any manner operating or flying any of the aircraft," the court said. India amended its insolvency

law in October to exclude leased aircraft from assets that can be frozen, aligning the world's third largest aviation market with global standards.

Go First has said that agreeing to the lessors' demands could derail the airline's turnaround process, according to court filings seen by Reuters in September.

The airline has received bids from budget carrier SpiceJet and Sharjah-based Sky One Airways, 'Reuters' previously reported. The airline's resolution professional did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China-built airport to be managed by India, Russia firms

REUTERS

Colombo, April 26: Sri Lanka will hand over management of its \$209 million Chinese-built airport to two Indian and Russian companies, a cabinet statement said Friday, as the island nation attempts to reduce losses from its state enterprises.

Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA), funded by China EXIM Bank, has stoked controversy since its opening in 2013 due to a low number of flights, environmentally sensitive location and persistent financial losses.

The airport's management will be handed over to Shaurya Aeronautics (Pvt) Ltd. of India and Airports of Regions Management Company of Russia for 30 years, a cabinet statement said, without mentioning the deal value. Sri Lanka is negotiating with China EXIM Bank to restructure the airport loan, part of \$4.2 billion borrowed for other infrastructure projects.

The airport was built during the tenure of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa who shifted the country closer to China and away from its traditional neighbour India. The airport is located in Rajapaksa's home town. Sri Lanka defaulted on its foreign debt in May 2022 after the island nation's foreign exchange reserves fell to record lows triggering the worst financial crisis in more than seven decades.

Sri Lanka is working to reduce losses made by dozens of state owned companies after securing a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has helped stabilise the economy and move it closer to returning to growth in 2024 after two years.

Deep-tech drives growing patenting patterns in India: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Intellectual Property (IP) rights, particularly patents, are gaining traction as innovation drives the economy, with a significant surge in patents filed in India led by the deep-tech sector, according to a recent study. It said that Tamil Nadu filed the maximum number of patents during FY23.

Industry body Nasscom Friday released the seventh edition of its annual 'Patenting Trends in India' study, highlighting approaches to fostering an IP-led digital economy.

The study sourced insights from annual reports of WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization) and Intellectual Property India, among others.

Subsidies by the government for IP registrations for startups and MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises), facilitation centres, strong research and development ecosystem, lit-



eracy and an increased number of PhD scholars were named as some key drivers behind Tamil Nadu's top position.

The number of patents granted also witnessed a significant growth rising over two times between FY2019 and FY2023, it said. Nasscom anticipated the trend to increase sig-

nificantly on account of over 1,00,000 patents granted between March 2023 and March 2024.

Over the past decade, the proportion of patents filed by residents (primary filers based in India) has almost doubled, climbing from 33.6 per cent of total filings in fiscal year 2019 to more than 50 per cent in FY23.

The surge in patent filings within the last few years is a clear indication of India's growing innovation prowess, particularly in areas like AI. To further enhance domestic patent activity, collaborations among key stakeholders are essential for fostering and increasing awareness of IP rights

DEBJANI GHOSH | PRESIDENT, NASSCOM

According to the report, 83,000 patents were filed in India in FY2023, marking the highest surge of 24.6 per cent in the last two decades

The share of patents filed by women in India grew to 11.6 per cent in FY2022 from 10.2 per cent a year ago

With 9.3 per cent of total patent filings during FY23, Tamil Nadu surpassed Maharashtra (contributing 6.8 per cent) to take the top rank

"This significant increase reflects a growing focus and height-

ened awareness of intellectual property rights in the country. Educational institutes have been a key driver to this growth," Nasscom said.

The study highlighted the gathering steam around innovation in technology in India with major Indian deep-tech startups filing 922 patents since 2008.

The report noted that the Chennai patent office accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the India-origin filings by deep-tech startups as 25-30 per cent of these are based out of Bangalore. The majority of these are in the AI and healthcare space, it said.

RECORDS TUMBLE AS PUNJAB HUMBLE KOLKATA IN THE 'CITY OF JOY' IN HISTORIC T20 CHASE

KINGS REIGN OVER KNIGHTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 26: Jonny Bairstow lit the Kolkata skyline with a monstrous century as Punjab Kings owned the 'City of Joy' with a world record chase of 262 against a completely befuddled Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL match here Friday.

On a sultry evening in a parched Kolkata, Punjab Kings batters rained sixes — 24 of them all as a target of 262 was overhauled in 18.4 overs, courtesy Bairstow's unbeaten 108 (48b, 8x4, 9x6), well supported by Shashank Singh (68 n.o., 28b, 2x4, 8x6) and pint-sized Prabhsimran Singh (54, 20b, 4x4, 5x6).

When Sunil Narine (71, 32b, 9x4, 4x6) and Phil Salt (75, 37b, 6x4, 6x6) smoked the Punjab bowlers in 40 degree plus temperature in the early evening, little did Shreyas Iyer envisage what awaited fate awaited him and his men at night. The night never belonged to Knights as Bairstow had earmarked the Friday night for his redemption with a 'Shashank' for company.

No credit is enough for Prabhsimran, who started in earnest making a minicemeat of KKR attack on a flat deck, giving Bairstow some time to get his bearings right. After Prabhsimran's departure, Rilee Rossouw struck a 16-ball 26 before Bairstow-Shashank show made the chase a walk in the park.

The match also witnessed 523 runs and an all time IPL record sixes of 42 maximums. Both the record chases now have come against KKR in space of 10 days and at the same venue of Eden Gardens.

It was April 16, KKR had failed to defend 223/6 with another Englishman — Jos Buttler — who smashed a 55-ball century to pull off the heist. It was IPL's joint record chase till then and both by with Rajasthan Royals — first against Mumbai Indians in 2000



JONNY BAIRSTOW

SHASHANK SINGH

PRABHSIMRAN SINGH

262/2 PBKS hunt down the target (262) against KKR to record the highest successful chase in all of T20 history, bettering South Africa's 259/4 against West Indies in March last year

42 Sixes hit in the KKR-PBKS match, most in a men's T20 game, surpassing the previous best of 38 — in the SRH-MI match and RCB-SRH game earlier in the ongoing IPL

24 Sixes hit by PBKS batters against KKR, becoming the second highest in the T20s after Nepal's record of 26 against Mongolia in the Asian Games last year

357 runs from eight matches, 73 runs behind Virat Kohli (430 runs) who has played one match extra. Salt also was at his explosive best and blazed his way to his third fifty of the season.

Narine's fifty came off just 23 balls, while Salt took two more deliveries to complete the milestone as the KKR opening duo reeled off 100 runs in just eight overs.

They also posted season's highest opening partnership of 138, eclipsing 134 by Lucknow Super Giant's KL Rahul and Quinton de Kock in their match against Chennai Super Kings April 19.

At 190/2 from 15 overs, KKR seemed well on course to improve upon their highest total of 272/7 that came against Delhi Capitals in Visakhapatnam April 3. But their middle and lower order failed to capitalise and it was Shreyas Iyer's 10-ball 28 (1x4, 3x6) which went a long way in taking them past 260-run mark.

BRIEF SCORES

KKR 261/6 (Phil Salt 75, Sunil Narine 71, Venkatesh Iyer 39; Arshdeep Singh 2/45) lost to PBKS 262/2 (Jonny Bairstow 108 n.o., Shashank Singh 68 n.o., Prabhsimran Singh 54; Sunil Narine 1/24) by 8 wickets.

and then vs KKR in 2024.

The two defeats also highlighted KKR's bowling plight this season as their 24.75 crore buy Mitchell Starc has failed to live up to his big prize purse, something that may be a big concern for the team poised to make the playoffs.

This win may be a little too late

for PBKS to make the playoffs. This was their third win from nine matches as they improved their position to eighth spot in the 10-team standings.

For KKR, this was their third loss from eight matches as they have 10 points, occupying the second spot behind Rajasthan.

Earlier KKR's posted their

second ever 250-plus total, both coming during the current season. Narine struck his third fifty plus score of the season after 85 against Delhi Capitals and 109 versus Rajasthan Royals previously.

Narine also jumped to second spot in the race for the 'Orange Cap' for leading run-getters with

PLAYOFF RACE INTENSIFIES

Upbeat DC take on struggling Mumbai



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ishaan Kishan.

New Delhi, April 26: Bolstered by Rishabh Pant's brilliant batting form and inspiring leadership, the resurrected Delhi Capitals will aim to continue their upward march in the IPL points table when they take on an inconsistent Mumbai Indians here Saturday.

The Capitals have endured a rollercoaster season so far, showing flashes of brilliance while also succumbing to embarrassing defeats. But three wins in the last four matches have helped them climb to the sixth spot and a win against MI will strengthen their claim to a playoff spot.

On the other hand, after a familiar poor start, MI bounced back with three wins in their next four matches but a comprehensive nine-wicket thrashing by Rajasthan Royals put an end to their resurgence. They are tottering on the eighth place on the points table and can ill-afford to lose.

DC's biggest positive has undoubtedly been skipper Pant's form, which appears to be improving with each game. He has looked sharp behind the stumps and seems to be batting with freedom. He was at his belligerent best during a match-winning unbeaten knock against Gujarat Titans Wednesday.

It would be fair to say that the southpaw is in prime position to make India's squad for the T20 World Cup despite stiff opposition from the likes of Sanju Samson, Dinesh Karthik and

In Jake Fraser-McGurk, DC have found an able top order batter who can exploit the powerplay but more is expected of opener Prithvi Shaw, given that his only responsibility is to bat as he is used as an Impact Substitute.

Tristan Stubbs has time and again proved he can be brutal with the bat while Axar Patel also showcased his batting prowess. While the spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Axar have bowled economically, DC's fast bowling unit needs to step up.

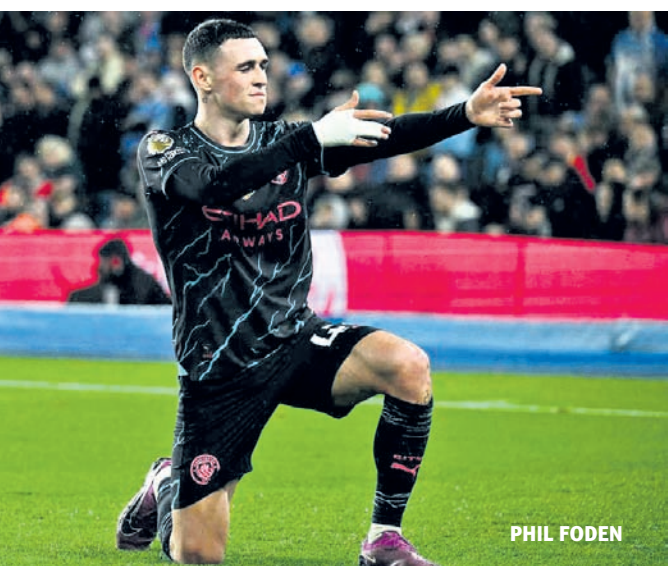
MI's resurgence this season began with a win against DC and the five-time champions would hope for an encore in the crucial clash. Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma have got runs but all of them have found form in patches.

While the batting department has occasionally looked good, the bowling remains a massive cause of concern. Jasprit Bumrah has expectedly been MI's standout bowler. He has led the attack with 13 wickets at an economy rate of 6.37. Although expensive and inconsistent, Gerald Coetzee has accounted for 12 wickets in eight games. Barring the two seamers, Mumbai's bowling has disappointed.

MATCHDAY

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

City crush Brighton to stay on course for title



PHIL FODEN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brighton, April 26: Manchester City chalked up another big win in their pursuit of an unprecedented fourth straight Premier League title, with Phil Foden continuing his career-best scoring season with two goals in a 4-0 thrashing of Brighton Thursday.

Foden's first-half double came between goals by Kevin De Bruyne and Julian Alvarez as City extended its unbeaten run in the league to 18 games and trimmed the gap to leader Arsenal to one point. Liverpool are two points further back in third after their title chances were damaged by a 2-0 loss at Everton Wednesday.

City have five games remaining — one more than Arsenal and Liverpool — and, on current form, they are showing no sign of slipping up in the final stretch that still contains trips to Nottingham Forest, Fulham and Tottenham as well as home matches against Wolverhampton and West Ham.

Win all five of those games and City are the champion again. No team have ever won four successive top-flight titles in the history of English football. Since a 0-0 draw with Arsenal at home March 31, City have won four straight league games and scored 17 goals in the process.

Pep Guardiola's team kept up that hot streak without the injured Erling Haaland — the

league's joint-top scorer with 20 goals — and that allowed Foden to potentially join the race for the Golden Boot.

It's 16 goals for the campaign and 24 in 48 games in all club competitions this season for Foden, who delivered another clinical display in front of England coach Gareth Southgate at Amex Stadium — seven weeks out from the start of the European Championship.

De Bruyne scored his first-ever headed goal in the Premier League when he met Kyle Walker's right-wing cross to give City the lead in the 17th and Foden made it 2-0 in the 26th when his shot from a free-kick deflected in off the back of Brighton midfielder Pascal Gross.

Foden added a third in the 34th by curling home a low finish from just inside the area after Brighton lost possession attempting to play out from the back. Alvarez slotted in the fourth in the 62nd after Walker was given space to roam down the right wing and cut inside before sliding in to challenge goalkeeper Jason Steele and get the ball across to the Argentina striker.

The Premier League is the only one of Europe's top five leagues where the title race is still realistically up for grabs. Bayer Leverkusen has won the German league, Inter Milan has clinched the Italian title, while Real Madrid and Paris Saint-Germain have 11-point leads in Spain and France, respectively.

Deepika in semis, archers confirm 4 medals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shanghai, April 26: Continuing her spirited progress post motherhood, former World No.1 Deepika Kumari eliminated Korean Jeon Hunyoung to storm into the semifinal, while compound archers continued to shine to assure India a fourth medal in the World Cup Stage 1 here Friday.

Deepika, the three-time Olympian, who has slipped to World No.142 and qualified as 30th seed in the rankings round, overcame a 1-3 deficit to defeat Jeon 6-4 (27-28, 27-27, 29-28, 29-27, 28-28) in the women's recurve individual quarterfinal.

Korean teenager Nam Suhyeon, who qualified as the seventh seed, stands in Deepika's way in the semifinal. The other half will feature top seed and 20-year-old World No.2 Korean Lim Sihyeon taking on Li Jiaman of China.

Jyothi, Verma shine The day began with Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Abhishek Verma advancing into the compound mixed team final. The



Deepika Kumari & Nam Suhyeon

World No.2 Indians dropped just five points to prevail over their Mexican opponents Andrea Becerra and Lot Maximo Mendez Ortiz 155-151.

They will face lower-ranked

Estonia in the gold-medal clash Saturday. Jyothi is also a member of the women's compound team, which had entered the final Wednesday.

With Jyothi also securing a

semifinal spot in the individual section Thursday, the World No.3 and Asian Games gold medalist is in the hunt for a hat-trick of top podium finishes.

Overall, Indian archers have qualified in four finals, all in the team events, and are in the hunt for two medals in compound individual events — where Jyothi and Priyansh have made the semifinals.

The four events where Indian teams have made the gold-medal round are compound men's, women's, mixed categories and men's recurve.

Aiming for bronze

The fourth-seeded Indian recurve mixed team of Ankit Bhakat and Dhiraj Bommadevara lost out to the top-seeded Korean duo of Lim and Kim Woojin in straight sets 0-6 (38-39, 35-36, 36-38) in the semifinal. They will fight for bronze against Mexico.

There was heartbreak for other recurve archers as Tarundeep Rai made a quarterfinal exit, losing to Andres Temino 3-7 (29-26, 27-29, 27-27, 27-30, 27-28).

India's medal count swells to 15 at Asian U-20 Athletics meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 26: Promising middle distance runner Laxita Vinod Sandilea and low hurdler Shreeya Rajesh won silver and bronze medals, respectively, on the penultimate day of the Asian U-20 Athletics Championships here Friday. India's overall medal tally thus swelled to 15 medals, including five gold, six silver and five bronze.

Laxita had to contend with a silver in the women's 800m. Her silver-medal winning time was 2:07.10 seconds. Shreeya settled for a bronze in the women's 400m hurdles with a time of 59.20 seconds.

In the women's 100m hurdles heats both Sabita Toppo (14.10 seconds) and Unnathi Aiyyappa Bolland (13.72 seconds) advanced to the medal round. The men's 4x100m relay team also advanced to the medal round. The Indian team finished second in their heat with a time of 40.43 seconds.

Nethra bags 2nd Paris Olympics quota in sailing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Nethra Kumanan Friday secured India's second Paris Olympics quota in sailing, claiming it under the Emerging Nations Program banner at the Last Chance Regatta, an Olympic qualifier, in Hyeres, France.

Nethra, who has competed in the Tokyo Games three years ago, was competing in the women's dinghy (ILCA 6). Nethra managed 67 net points to finish fifth on the overall leaderboard. However, she secured the Olympic quota as the top performer among sailors from the Emerging Nations Program (ENP) who had not yet obtained a quota.

World Sailing, the world governing body for the sport, aims to help athletes from less well-known sailing nations make an impact at the top level through its ENP programme.

WFI faces ban threat if ad-hoc committee returns

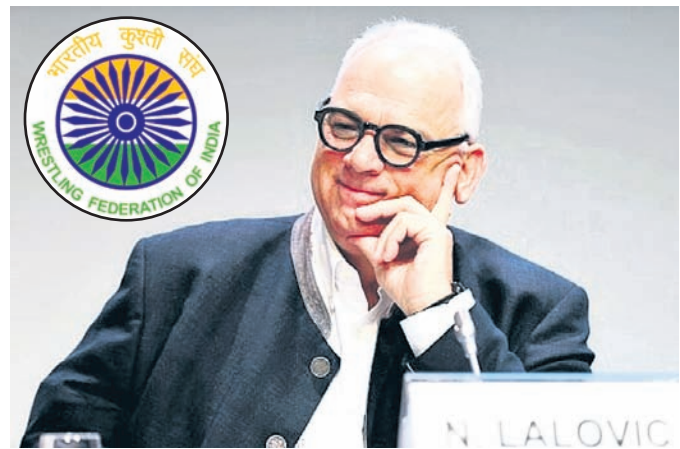
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 26: Wrestling's world governing body UWW Friday threatened to reimpose the ban on India and bar its wrestlers from the final Olympic Qualifiers next month if an ad-hoc committee was brought back to run the sport.

Recently, the Delhi High Court directed the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to file an affidavit stating the circumstances which led to the dissolution of the ad-hoc committee for running the national wrestling body.

The UWW (United World Wrestling) in a letter to WFI (Wrestling Federation of India) reiterated its stand that they won't allow any third party interference in the running of the national association of any country.

"We have been informed that the Wrestling Federation of India is once again threatened by your Ministry of Sports with the imposition of an Ad-hoc committee to oversee its affairs," UWW president Nenad Lalovic wrote



N. LALOVIC

in his e-mail to WFI.

He reminded the WFI of the serious implications the move could have, including jeopardising India's preparations for the upcoming Olympic Games.

"Besides our lassitude for this additional affair impacting your federation and its members, we would like to reiterate UWW's determination to uphold the principle of autonomy and independence of its national

federations in accordance with the UWW Statutes and the Olympic Charter.

"In case any decision or order should be made against your federation, and a third party be designated to run the daily affairs of our sport in India in violation of the UWW Statutes, UWW would have no other option than to re-impose a temporary suspension of your federation until further notice, and which, this

time, could maybe include your athletes," Lalovic warned.

Earlier, in a big relief for WFI, the UWW had lifted its suspension on it on after it conducted elections. However, the sports ministry is yet to lift its suspension. A number of court cases are also pending in the matter as elite wrestlers have challenged the legality of WFI's elections.

The Indian wrestling contingent have always returned with medals since Sushil Kumar's bronze medal in Beijing in the 2008 edition and the comeback of an ad-hoc committee would mean robbing the wrestlers a chance of qualification for the Paris Games.

"This suspension would apply to the final Olympic Games Qualifying Tournament in May, and will certainly attract the attention of the IOC on this matter, who may also consider further action. Please note that the UWW Bureau is informed of this situation and eventually, it further stated."