



Secret out

Actor Taapsee Pannu reveals why she wanted her wedding to be a private affair

LEISURE | P2



Biden against Netanyahu

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's approach to the war in Gaza is a "mistake," says US President Joe Biden

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Dream rally

Sensex climbs 354 points to close above the record 75,000-mark for the first time while broader Nifty scales a fresh lifetime high

BUSINESS | P11



India lose series

PR Sreejesh's impressive show goes in vain as India suffer third successive loss against Australia in 5-match hockey Test series

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Tattoos banned for SSB personnel

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Police have asked its Special Security Battalion (SSB) personnel to remove tattoos on their bodies within 15 days as these skin markings are easily noticeable with uniform and considered 'obscene and derogatory'. The deputy commissioner of police (security), Bhubaneswar issued an order to this effect Tuesday and asked all officials concerned to prepare a list of SSB men having "easily noticeable tattoos" on their bodies. SSB personnel provide security coverage to vital installations like the Chief Minister's residence, Raj Bhawan, Secretariat, Odisha Legislative Assembly and the High Court. P3

Sandeshkhali: HC orders CBI probe

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court Wednesday ordered a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into allegations of crimes against women and forcible land grabbing in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali, which had witnessed protests over the issues. A division bench headed by Chief Justice TS Sivagnanam directed the CBI to file a comprehensive report on the alleged illegal conversion of farmlands into water bodies. P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Like the CEC, I recited my own poem in a press meet. Now, poets and the public are after me. I too need security

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	75038.15 ↑ 354.45
NIFTY	22753.80 ↑ 111.05
DOLLAR	83.23 ↓ ₹0.13
EURO	90.34 ↑ ₹0.04
GOLD	₹71,300 ↓ ₹40
SILVER	₹82,678 ↑ ₹228

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.4°C	34.8°C
Min Temp	22.2°C	23.5°C
Humidity	56%	57%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
GENERALLY CLOUDY SKY



ON WARPATH: Security personnel use water cannons to disperse BJP workers protesting against AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal outside AAP office in New Delhi, Wednesday. PTI PHOTO

Fresh blow to Moquim

Political future of Congress leader Mohammed Moquim appears to be in jeopardy following two back-to-back jolts from the Orissa High Court. A month after nullifying his election from Barabati-Cuttack Assembly constituency, the HC Wednesday upheld the 2022 judgement of a special Vigilance court that had sentenced him to three years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) along with a penalty of ₹50,000 in connection with the Odisha Rural Housing & Development Corporation (ORHDC) corruption case. The ruling ahead of the Assembly elections has nevertheless, put a spoke in his otherwise rolling political career spanning over two decades

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 10: In a fresh blow to Congress leader Mohammed Moquim, the Orissa High Court Wednesday dismissed a plea challenging his conviction by a Vigilance court in connection with the ORHDC corruption case.

Justice Bibhu Prasad Routray upheld the judgement of the Special Vigilance Court of Bhubaneswar that held Moquim, the Managing Director of M/s. Metro Builders Private Limited, guilty under Sections 120B, 468,



Justice BP Routray observed that 'there is sufficient evidence available on record against Moquim for his active role in getting the loan sanctioned in favour of the company'

471 and 420 of the IPC and 13(2) r/w 13(1)(d) of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 September 29, 2022, according to senior standing counsel Srimanta Das and standing counsel Sanjaya Kumar Das.

Moquim and ORHDC top official Vinod Kumar were convicted and sentenced to undergo RI for three years and to pay fine of ₹50,000 each by the Vigilance court.

"In default of payment of the fine, Moquim would undergo further RI for six months for obtaining pecuniary advantage in favour of M/s. Metro Builders Private Limited under the guise of loans meant for the rural poor from the ORHDC," the Vigilance court had ruled.

Moquim, however, moved the High Court challenging the conviction.

The High Court judgement

came as a severe jolt to Moquim ahead of the upcoming elections as he is likely to be re-nominated by the Congress to contest the Barabati-Cuttack Assembly seat.

The HC had in the first week of March this year nullified the election of Moquim from the Assembly constituency.

While upholding the conviction of the lower court, Justice Routray observed that 'there is sufficient evidence available on record against Moquim for his active role in getting the loan sanctioned in favour of the company'.

"It is further indicated from the evidence that the appellant, along with other co-accused persons, intentionally and knowingly used a series of forged documents to get the loan sanctioned in favour of the accused company without any justification," the court observed, while dismissing the plea.

'No James Bond movie sequels'

DELHI HIGH COURT DEPRECATES REPEATED PLEAS FOR KEJRIWAL'S REMOVAL AS CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 10: The Delhi High Court Wednesday expressed displeasure over repeated filing of petitions seeking removal of AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal from the Chief Minister's post after his arrest. The court said once it has dealt with the issue and opined that it fell in the executive domain, there should not be any "repeat litigation" as it was not a James Bond movie that will have sequels.

A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan pulled up petitioner Sandeep Kumar, a former AAP MLA who sought the removal of Kejriwal from the office, for trying to involve

Setback to Kejriwal

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will be spending this weekend in Tihar Jail as the Supreme Court Wednesday refused to hear his challenge to Tuesday's Delhi High Court ruling. The SC, it is learnt, will not constitute a special bench for an urgent hearing on Kejriwal's appeal. According to Supreme Court's calendar, the court is closed for Eid-ul-Fitr Thursday, a local holiday Friday, then comes the weekend. The court will reopen Monday.

the court in a "political thicket" and said it will impose costs of ₹50,000 on him.

"This is not like a James Bond movie where we will have sequels. (Lt) Governor will take a



call on this. You are trying to involve us in a political thicket, that's all," remarked the court.

The bench, also comprising Justice Manmeet PS Arora, reiterated that it cannot impose Governor's rule in the national capital. Observing that the petitioner was "making a mockery of the system", the court said, "Rs 50,000 costs on you. We will pass the order." On March 28, the court had dismissed a PIL for Kejriwal's removal.

NAVEEN FORMS ELECTION MANIFESTO COMMITTEE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 10: Chief Minister and ruling BJD president Naveen Patnaik Wednesday constituted a 'manifesto committee' for drafting the party's poll document ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the state. The 38-member panel, headed

by Berhampur MP Chandrasekhar Sahu, will also seek public suggestions for preparing the manifesto.

"The committee will have discussions with various sections of society... And prepare a manifesto that will lead to transformation towards a 'New Odisha, Empowered Odisha'," Patnaik said in an official notification.

3 dead, 4 injured as bikes collide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jeypore, April 10: Three people were killed and four others sustained severe injuries in collision between two bikes near Gagnapur under Jeypore Sadar police limits in Korapat district, late Tuesday night.

The deceased were identified as Padman Harijan of Dhanapur village, Gopal Harijan of Jayantgiri and Durjya Keuta of Sanamundapadar village in the area.

The police, with the help of locals, rushed the injured bikers to the district headquarters hospital at Jeypore, IIC of Jeypore Sadar police station Ishwar Tandi said. However, doctors pronounced three of them dead. Four injured bikers are being treated at the hospital, the IIC added. Later, police seized the two motorcycles and launched an investigation.

Police said three persons were on their way to Dhanapur from Jeypore on a motorcycle. In the meantime, four persons on another bike were also travelling to Dhanapur from Sanamundapadar area.

However, the two vehicles collided with each other at Gagnapur resulting in the death of three persons and injuries to four others.

The 'cat burglar' who stole \$7mn from 200 homes

AGENCIES

Washington, April 10: It may surprise you but true. A woman from US who described herself as a former 'cat burglar' has broken into more than 200 homes and decamped with over \$7 million (Rs 58,22,71,550). Jennifer Gomez recently appeared on 'Locked In with Ian Bick' - a podcast - and revealed details of her modus operandi, the 'New York Post' reported.

"Cat burglars", as the name suggests, are essentially thieves who are adept at entering and leaving the burglarised place without attracting notice.

Gomez, who was in prison be-

tween 2011 and 2020 for burglary, mostly targeted affluent neighbourhoods in Florida. "I always wanted nice homes. I mean, at least million-dollar homes. I would always try to find a home that was in a cul-de-sac so I wouldn't get lost in there... or a home that backed up to a street," Gomez confessed during the interview.

She further said that her intimate knowledge of wealthy lifestyles helped her craft her criminal exploits.

"I knew a lot of things about how wealthy people lived because my parents were both physicians. They're probably going to have a privacy fence of



some kind. I can hide behind that when I get in their backyard. I'm completely concealed," she said.

Further, she carefully curated her wardrobe, studied pet behaviour, deciphered security setup clues, and owned sophis-

Jennifer Gomez now advises others on how to keep their homes safe from burglars by pointing out things she used to look out for to see whether a house would be profitable to target

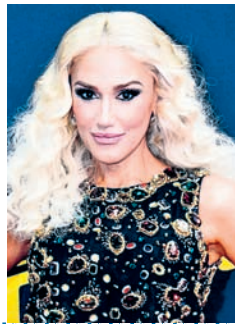
ticated tools to gain easy entry into houses.

Out of prison, Gomez, now a TikTok influencer, advises others on how to keep their homes safe from burglars by pointing out things she used to look out

for to see whether a house would be profitable to target. "There are a lot of things that you can tell from the outside of a home that will give a burglar a lot of information. Stop advertising everything that's going on in your house and with your house," she urged others.

"Delve into Jennifer Gomez's fascinating journey from ordinary life to sophisticated cat burglar, breaking into nearly 200 homes and accumulating over \$7 million. Uncover her ingenious tricks, eventual capture, and the unique challenges of giving birth while serving a 10-year prison sentence," the video was captioned on YouTube.

leisure



STEFANI'S VERDICT ON MUSIC INDUSTRY

Singer Gwen Stefani doesn't know where she sits in the music landscape but she has likened the industry to 'the Wild West'. The 54-year-old rose to stardom as a member of *No Doubt* in the 90s and is married to country music star Blake Shelton.

DOWNEY JR.'S KIDS DIDN'T CARE ABOUT OSCAR WIN

American actor Robert Downey Jr.'s youngest children didn't care about his Oscar win, revealed his wife Susan Downey. The 59-year-old won his first Academy Award, Best Supporting Actor, for his role in *Oppenheimer*, last month.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Ganesh is very impressed with you today for the way you handle your relationships. You will indulge in some future activity today. Ganesh warns you to be cautious about getting caught up in a fix where you have to shell out money.

TAURUS
You might wake up yawning and keep yawning throughout today as lethargy gets the better of you. You may end up spending your day with loved ones, relaxing, while your wallet stresses out. New projects will wait in the shadow of your procrastination, predicts Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will be bound by the bonds of love with your friends today. Deep introspection will provide the much-needed balm to your fragile state of mind. You need to keep your temper in check, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Sheer work pressure and burden of others' work. Yet you will excel. In business, rivals and competitors will fail in their tactics.

LEO
Rise and shine! There is a very bright chance that today will be one of those super energetic and enthusiastic days. Ganesh predicts you will have a great time socialising with neighbours, friends and relatives. Also, you may end up spending a small fortune in trying to please your sweetheart. Since it is such a good day for social occasions, indulge in it. Also, delay the start of any new project or work today, advises Ganesh.

VIRGO
Your new appellation today could well be heart-break kid. Your expenses will overshoot the savings that you have made. You can expect conjugal bliss to bloom. Ganesh advises you to strengthen your bonding with the best, or rather, your spouse to lead a happier life.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today will be a lucky day for you. You will make all efforts possible to please the person you love. You will pay special attention to your appearance and try to change your personality and attitude. There are chances of new romantic relationships developing for those looking for love.

SCORPIO
Ganesh foresees that you may not be at the best of your health as agitation and irritation create pressure on your physical being. Watch your temper and tongue, or a critical situation may take an ugly turn. Keep away from unnecessary discussion with peers or colleagues.

SAGITTARIUS
The day has to offer you a good mixture of work and fun, says Ganesh. Feeling protective about your loved ones, you are ready to fulfil all their needs and demands. An action-packed day at office with meetings lined-up for you. This forces you to unwind in a luxurious way as you plan a family outing or a quick visit to salon for relaxation.

CAPRICORN
The backbreaking work that you've been doing can stretch out all your energy today. But, you'll still be able to cross the finishing line and successfully complete your projects, marks Ganesh. The support and cooperation of your family and friends will be like an oxygen mask for you, as they will understand the hardships you've been facing.

AQUARIUS
Legal matters have given you those wrinkles on the forehead, and you have kept your fingers crossed for a favourable decision. Today, the wait will finally be over as you will receive a positive result.

PISCES
Do not cry over spilled milk, advises Ganesh. What is lost is lost and do not let the grief of your past failures and losses overcome your determination for future endeavors. It is a great day for you to play host and you should take advantage of this.

TIGER REFLECTS ON HIS LEAN PATCH

Mumbai: Just a day away from the release of his latest film *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, and Tiger Shroff feels the pressure.

"My last two films have not worked. They've put me on my backfoot and made me somewhat insecure. But it is an insecurity that drives me to do better. I am very, very proud of the product that we have created in *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*. Very excited to see audiences react to what they've never seen in Hindi cinema. At this moment, I am trying to search in my mind what the audiences' reaction is going to be to the movie. I hope the fans and critics like the film," he said.

The making of the film has been a delightful experience for Tiger. He added, "It's been an absolute learning experience, an absolute joyride. I don't think I've had so much fun on any of my films. All credit goes to Akshay sir, really. I've had such an amazing time shooting with him and also playing many sports in-between shots. Thanks to him, *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* was fun all the way."



Janhvi confirms love for Shikhar

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor has finally confirmed her relationship with Shikhar Pahariya at the *Maidaan* screening.

The actress, who looked every inch beautiful in a cream-coloured pantsuit, completed her look with a custom-made neckpiece adorned with the inscription 'Shiku,' Shikhar's nickname, which caught the attention of many.

In a 2021 interview with *Brides Today*, Janhvi opened up about her wedding plans. Her old interview gives a peek into what their big day and wedding looks could be like.

When asked if she had a mental image of how her wedding will look, the actor had said, "I've had a very clear picture of that, right from the start! I

want to be married in Tirupati; it will be a very intimate affair. I know what I will be wearing — a gold, zari Kanjeevaram saree; and I'll have lots of mogras in my hair. My husband is going to be in a lungi. And we will all eat food on a banana leaf after the wedding."

She went on to add, "I don't like big weddings — they're fun to attend, but being the centre of attention at such a big event will give me too much anxiety."

AGENCIES



Tisca's stay-fit mantra

Mumbai: Actress Chopra shared her key to staying fit, which includes eating on time and in small portions, along with working out like a devil. Tisca took to Instagram and shared a video montage.

In the clip, which was tagged "actors don't eat the say," the actress is seen gorging on croissants, avocado toasts, pastries, and eggs.

For the cap-

tion, Tisca wrote: "I have always been a fan of eating on time, eating well but in small portions and exercising like a devil..."

The 50-year-old actress made her acting debut with *15th August* in 1993. She gained the spotlight with the Aamir Khan-starrer 2007 film *Taare Zameen Par*, which was India's official entry to the Academy Awards.

The actress was then seen in films including *Firaaq*, *Qissa*, *Rahasya*, *Ghayal Once Again*, *Ankur Arora Murder Case*, *Good Newwz*, *Jugg Jugg Jeeyo* and *Murder Mubarak*.

On the web, the actress was seen in shows such as *Hostages*, *Beecham House* and *Dahan*, among many others.

IANS

Reason Taapsee kept her wedding private

Mumbai: Amidst so much buzz and speculation about Taapsee Pannu's intimate Udaipur wedding with beau, badminton player Mathias Boe, the actor officially confirms to an entertainment portal that why she wanted it to be a private affair.

Asked if she has any plans to make an official announcement anytime soon or release the wedding pictures on social media, the *Pink* actress said, "I just am

not very sure if I want to let my personal life and the people involved in it, to go through the kind of scrutiny that happens when a public figure gets married."

As someone who has never really spoken about private life, Taapsee admits that somewhere, she also wants to avoid all judgements that follow such occasions.

"I just didn't want to make it a public affair, because then I will start getting worried about how it is perceived, rather than really enjoying the way I would want to do it. Subconsciously, I would start thinking about how it feels from the outside which I did not want to think about, especially for this one thing, because it's hopefully happening once in life!" she elaborated.

And therefore, she maintains that she has no plans of going all out and talk about the wedding just yet.

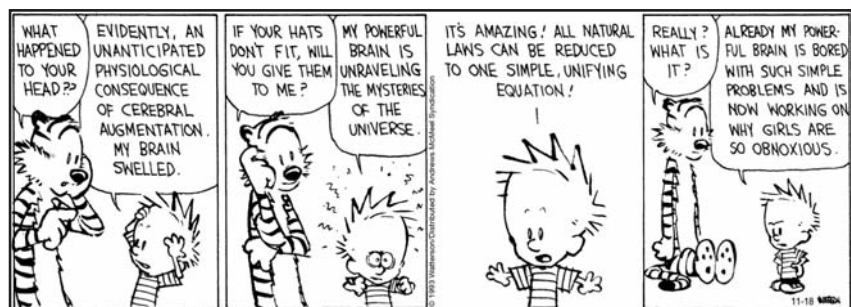
"I have no plans for a release of any kind. I don't think I am mentally prepared to put that out right now," she said.

AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

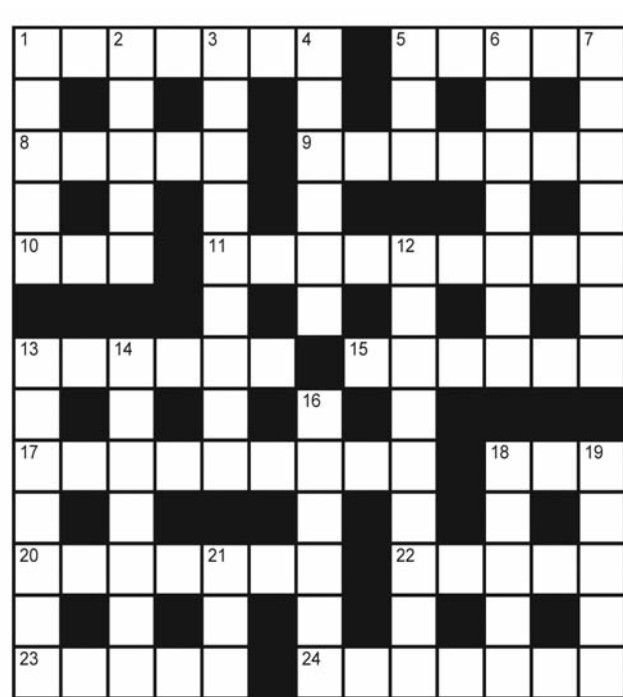


BREVITY



FUN post

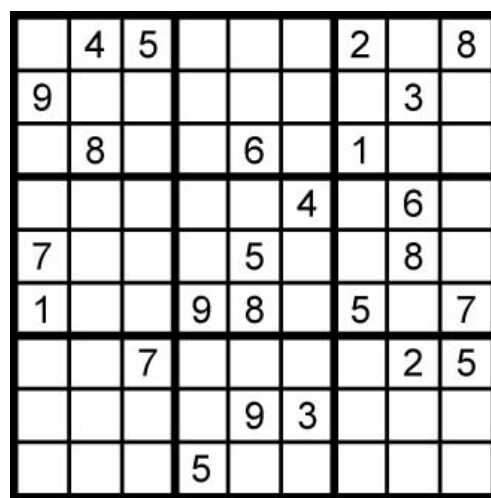
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Sturdy canine
 - 5 Designer's concern
 - 8 Building addition
 - 9 Looks up to
 - 10 Lady lobster
 - 11 Etching
 - 13 Attack
 - 15 Responds
 - 17 Like some machinery (5-4)
 - 18 Plunge
 - 20 Witty saying
 - 22 Praise
 - 23 Cast out
 - 24 Stephen King's Things
 - 5 Hydroelectric project
 - 6 Type of arrest
 - 7 Abdicates
 - 12 Kind of torch
 - 13 Lacrosse player, e.g.
 - 14 Bantoid language
 - 16 Torpedo, maybe
 - 18 Overshadow
 - 19 Floral leaf
 - 21 Future fish

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.

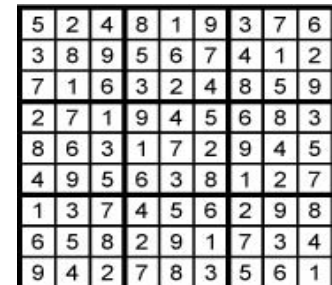


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

MATTER OF FAITH

Devotees during a 'Danda Jatra' in Unit VI area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

PI: MAUSAM NANDA



REMOVE TATTOOS WITHIN 15 DAYS, SSB PERSONNEL TOLD

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 10: The Odisha Police has asked its special security battalion (SSB) personnel to remove tattoos on their body within 15 days as these skin markings are easily noticeable with uniform and considered 'obscene and derogatory'.

The deputy commissioner of police (security), Bhubaneswar issued an order to this effect Tuesday and asked all officials concerned to prepare a list of SSB men having 'easily noticeable tattoos' on their bodies.

SSB personnel provide security coverage to vital installations like the chief minister's residence, Raj Bhavan, state Secretariat, Odisha Legislative Assembly and the Orissa High Court.

They also provide security to VVIPs and dignitaries within



SSB personnel provide security coverage to vital installations like the chief minister's residence, Raj Bhavan, state Secretariat, Odisha Legislative Assembly and the Orissa High Court

the state and those visiting Odisha from the rest of India.

"A good number of unit men are found making tattoos on their body which demeans the image of the battalion as well as Odisha Police since these are

offensive, obscene and derogatory in nature," the order said.

"Hence after careful consideration, it was decided that, from today onwards, tattoos that are visible while wearing a uniform are not permitted," the order read. All guards who are in charge of the SSB personnel have been directed to make a list of men 'having tattoos on their body parts easily noticeable while wearing a uniform and ask them to permanently remove the tattoos within 15 days from the date of receiving the order'.

They were warned that if the order was not implemented, necessary departmental actions would be initiated against those who would not follow the directive.

The deputy commissioner of police (security) advised the SSB personnel to avoid getting inked on the face, neck and hand to maintain a level of professionalism.



POLLS AHEAD: Voting machines for the upcoming simultaneous elections being unloaded at BJB (Autonomous) College in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Drive against tinted glass



DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Panda said vehicles involved in crimes are usually found using tinted glasses. "The drive that began Monday would help curb crimes, especially in the twin cities," Panda said.

Panda said 21 four-wheelers have been seized and Rs 71,500 has been collected by way of fines from erring drivers till Tuesday.

ACP (Traffic) Jayanta Dora said a fine upto Rs 10,000 will be slapped on those caught using tinted glasses and driving without license.

"However, those with driving license, will have to cough up around Rs 5,000," Dora pointed out.

Last year, the twin city police used to seize around 150 four-wheelers found with tinted glasses on a daily basis.

Bhubaneswar, April 10: The twin city Commissionerate Police, along with the Transport officials, has launched a drive against tinted glass in vehicles, official sources said, Wednesday.

Addressing media here, Commissioner of Police Sanjeeb

Pranab fires highway salvo at Pradhan

THE BJD CANDIDATE FOR SAMBALPUR LS SEAT BLAMES CENTRE FOR 400 ROAD FATALITIES IN A DECADE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 10: Senior BJD leader and the party's organisational secretary Pranab Prakash Das has blamed the Central government for the death of more than 400 people in 200 accidents in the last 10 years due to the precarious condition of the National Highway (NH)-55 connecting Sambalpur with Cuttack.

Das, in a post on X, sought to know from Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan as to who is responsible for the loss of so many lives in the road accidents.

He also said work on the NH stretch could not be completed even though Pradhan, the BJP leader from the state, has been a

It is the failure of the Union minister and the Central government for not completing the road project. How will the BJP leader face the people of Sambalpur? Voters will give him a befitting reply in the elections

PRANAB PRAKASH DAS | BJD LEADER

BJD has failed to make drinking water available to all in the state even though its government has been ruling Odisha for 25 years. The people are deprived of basic facilities, including health

NAURI NAYAK | BJP LEADER

available to all in the state even though its government has been ruling Odisha for 25 years. The people are deprived of basic facilities, including health."

Pictures of patients being taken to hospital on cots are regular phenomenon in Sambalpur district, Nayak claimed.

The BJP legislator also blamed the state government for the death of people due to diarrhoea and the spread of jaundice due to consumption of contaminated water in several parts of the state. "People know what our leader Dharmendra Pradhan has done for Sambalpur. He has a relationship with Sambalpur from his student life," Nayak added.

minister at the Centre for the last 10 years.

"It is the failure of the Union minister and the Central government for not completing the road project. How will the BJP leader face the people of Sambalpur? Voters will give him a befitting reply in the elections,"

Das said. The BJD leader has been fielded against Pradhan for the Sambalpur Lok Sabha constituency.

Replying to Das, BJP MLA Nauri Nayak from Rengali under the Sambalpur Parliamentary constituency said, "The BJD has failed to make drinking water

EC bid for ensuring poll transparency

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 10: The Election Commission (EC) Wednesday directed the chief secretaries and chief electoral officers for clear identification of the printer and publisher on printed election-related material, including hoardings, to ensure accountability and transparency in poll campaigning.

The poll authority said the decision was taken after representations were received stating that in hoarding spaces controlled by municipal authorities, hoardings without the identity of the printer or publisher have been noticed.

The Aam Aadmi Party had also approached the EC on the issue recently. The EC also drew attention to the instructions issued by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi earlier this month to all its licensees and contractors regarding political advertisements on outdoor media of the body.

"The instructions, while allowing political ads for promotion of a party or candidate, prohibit any political advertisement given against a party or candidate," it said.

Any political advertisement released at the cost of the exchequer regarding publicity of a party or government in power is also prohibited, it noted.

"All political advertisements will be displayed only after certification/approval of the designated authority responsible for approving advertisement," it said.

The EC pointed to section 127A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 which prohibits the printing or publishing of election pamphlets, posters, placards, or banners without prominently displaying the name and address of the printer and publisher.



AT LORD'S ABODE: Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey near Srimandir Lions' Gate after paying obeisance to the sibling deities in Puri, Wednesday

50.56% posts in pollution control bodies vacant: Govt

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 10: Around 50.56 per cent of the sanctioned posts in 28 state pollution control boards, including Odisha State Pollution Board (58 per cent), and eight pollution control committees are vacant, according to Central government data.

The data is part of a report submitted to the National Green Tribunal Tuesday.

India's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report revealed that 6,075 (50.56 per cent) of the 12,016 sanctioned posts in 28 state pollution control boards and eight pollution control committees are vacant.

The Bihar State Pollution Control Board has the maximum vacancy, with 209 (84 per cent) of the 249 posts unoccupied. In Jharkhand, 198 (73 per cent)

Odisha State Pollution Control Board has 58% positions unoccupied

of the 271 posts are vacant.

Delhi, which grapples with hazardous air pollution levels every winter, has 153 (44 per cent) vacancies against its 344 sanctioned posts. The Delhi Pollution Control Committee has, however, engaged 111 contractual employees.

In 13 states and Union Territories (UTs), the vacancies range between 58 per cent and 84 per cent. These are: Andhra Pradesh (69 per cent), Bihar (84 per cent), Gujarat (62 per cent), Haryana (63 per cent), Jharkhand (73 per cent), Karnataka (60 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (63 per cent), Manipur

(62 per cent), Odisha (58 per cent), Rajasthan (59 per cent), Uttarakhand (61 per cent), Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (83 per cent), and Ladakh (69 per cent).

Sixteen states and UT, including Haryana, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, have engaged 1,091 employees on a contractual basis.

There are 190 environmental laboratories in the state pollution control boards/pollution control committees - 31 at the central level and 159 at the zonal/regional/district level.

Fifty-four per cent of the total 2,965 posts in these laboratories are vacant. 16 state pollution control boards and pollution control committees have engaged 449 scientific staff on a contractual basis.

Cong forms 59-member campaign committee

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 10: The All India Congress Committee (AICC) has constituted a 59-member campaign committee for its Odisha unit for the upcoming polls in the state. Former Union Minister Bhakta Charan Das has been declared as the chairman of the Congress campaign committee for Odisha, while Navajyoti Patnaik has been made the vice-chairman. Sudhanshu Sekhar Deo has been announced as the convener of the campaign committee.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Sarat Pattanayak, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra, former Chief Minister Giridhar Gamang, former Union Ministers KP Singhdeo and Sri Kant Jena, and former OPCC presidents Niranjan Patnaik, Jaydev Jena and Prasad Harichandan have been included in the committee.

India ranks 2nd in hepatitis B, C cases after China: WHO

India accounted for the second-highest number of cases of hepatitis B and C in 2022 after China, with 3.5 crore infections, according to a report by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver that can cause a range of health problems and can be fatal.

According to the WHO's 2024 Global Hepatitis Report released Tuesday, 254 million people lived with hepatitis B and 50 million with hepatitis C in 2022 globally.

India, which was second only to China in the viral hepatitis burden, registered 2.98 crore hepatitis B cases in 2022 while the number of hepatitis C infections stood at 55 lakh.

China registered 8.3 crore cases of hepatitis B and C, representing 27.5 per cent of the total disease burden.

The report said that with a



total of 3.5 crore cases, India accounted for 11.6 per cent of the total disease burden globally that year.

There are five main strains of the hepatitis virus, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E. While they all cause liver disease, they differ in important ways including modes of transmission, severity of the illness, geo-

graphical distribution and prevention methods.

In particular, types B and C lead to chronic disease in hundreds of millions of people and together are the most common cause of liver cirrhosis, liver cancer and viral hepatitis-related deaths.

The WHO Tuesday flagged that the number of lives lost

GLOBAL HEPATITIS REPORT

- 254 million people lived with hepatitis B and 50 million with hepatitis C in 2022 globally
- India registered 2.98 crore hepatitis B cases while the number of hepatitis C infections stood at 55 lakh
- Data from 187 countries show that the estimated number of deaths from viral hepatitis increased from 1.1 million in 2019 to 1.3 million in 2022

due to viral hepatitis is increasing with the disease being the second leading infectious cause of death globally - with 1.3 million deaths per year - the same as tuberculosis.

The WHO report said new data from 187 countries show that the estimated number of deaths from

viral hepatitis increased from 1.1 million in 2019 to 1.3 million in 2022. Of these, 83 per cent were caused by hepatitis B and 17 per cent by hepatitis C.

"Every day, there are 3,500 people dying globally due to hepatitis B and C infections," the report released at the World Hepatitis Summit said.

"This report paints a troubling picture: despite progress globally in preventing hepatitis infections, deaths are rising because far too few people with hepatitis are being diagnosed and treated," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"WHO is committed to supporting countries to use all the tools at their disposal - at access prices - to save lives and turn this trend around," it said.

According to the report, half the burden of chronic hepatitis B and C infections is among peo-

ple 30-54 years old, with 12 per cent among children under 18 years of age. Men account for 58 per cent of all cases.

Apart from talking about global progress and gaps in diagnosis and treatment, the WHO 2024 Global Hepatitis Report also pointed out disparities in pricing and service delivery, and said, funding remains a challenge.

The report outlined a series of actions to advance a public health approach to viral hepatitis, designed to accelerate progress towards ending the epidemic by 2030.

These include: expanding access to testing and diagnostics; shifting from policies to implementation for equitable treatment; strengthening primary care prevention efforts; using improved data for action; and engaging affected communities and civil society among others.

CUO to forge alliance with IGNCA for cultural studies

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 10: In a bid to safeguard and promote traditional knowledge, the Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput will collaborate with

Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi. In a press briefing Wednesday, CUO authorities announced that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect will be signed between the two institutions.

Currently, 55 representatives from IGNCA are conducting field tour of the Koraput region, hosted by CUO. During the press meet, CUO VC Chakradhar Tripathi highlighted the potential of partnership with IGNCA to offer specialised courses in cultural studies, with focus on tribal culture.

Head of the Indian Literature department at IGNCA Arun K Bhardwaj, elaborated on the collaborative efforts for knowledge



exchange and documentation. Bhardwaj lauded CUO as the sole central university collaborating with IGNCA in pursuing specialised courses in temple resources, natural resources, and tribal traditions.

The partnership also entails the introduction of online courses for the dissemination of cultural knowledge and studies, along with the preservation and documentation of traditional knowl-

edge in digital formats.

In addition to the formal proceedings, attendees were treated to an exhibition showcasing the rich flora and fauna of the region, courtesy of students from CUO's Department of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources (DBCNR). Moreover, a number of products made from millets, were also displayed on this occasion.



CLARION CALL: A large number of people participate in 'Utha Odia Sankalpa Yatra' from Puri to Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

PHPA observes World Homoeopathy Day



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 10: On the occasion of World Homoeopathy Day, Private Homoeopathic Practitioners Association (PHPA) organised the 9th annual conference at Rail Auditorium here Wednesday.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), Homoeopathy is the second most popular system of medicines, spreading over 85 countries based on the concept of natural and holistic healthcare approach.

World Homoeopathy Day is observed every year April 10 to commemorate the birth anniversary of Doctor Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of Homoeopathy and celebrate his significant contributions to Medicine.

At the conference, State Director of Health Services Bijay Kumar Mohapatra was present as chief guest. On the occasion, PHPA president Netrananda Bhoi presided over the conference and introduced the guests. Secretary Prafulla Kumar Barik presented the annual report.

"At PHPA, we are on a mission to revolutionise healthcare and make a positive impact on the well-being of people across the nation. Founded on the principles of compassion, innovation, and collaboration, our association brings together passionate individuals from diverse backgrounds who share a common goal to elevate the standard of healthcare," Bhoi said.

CP issues traffic advisory for Ashokastami festival

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 10: In view of the upcoming Ashokastami Car Festival of Lord Lingaraj here, the Commissionerate Police (CP), Wednesday, issued traffic advisory for the convenience and safety of the people. The festival will be celebrated from April 16 to April 20.

As per the advisory, no vehicles will be allowed on Rath road from Mausima Chhak. They will be diverted either towards Museum Chhak or Vivekananda Marg.

Similarly, no vehicles will be allowed on Rath road from Barik Sahi lane, Maharana Sahi lane, Gosagreswar Chhak, Sital Sasthi lane, Tinimundia Chhak, Harchandi lane, Muna Medical lane and Punama gate lane or any other lane / by-lane emerging at Rath road.

The vehicles coming from Rath Khala side will not be allowed on Rath road. Instead, they will be diverted towards Bata Mahadev Temple.

According to cops, the order is passed in the larger interest of public safety. Violation of the instant order is an offence punishable under Section 96 of Odisha Urban Police Act, 2003 and is a compoundable offence with a minimum fine of ₹500, which may go up to ₹1,000.

The Ashokastami festival is celebrated in the month of April. During the festival, Lord Lingaraj



is carried on a chariot to Mausima temple amid singing and dancing by the devotees. After four days' sojourn, Lord Lingaraj returns to the main temple.

A review meeting with different department officials was held earlier under the supervision of the District Collector Chanchal Rana for the festival where he sought everyone's co-operation for the auspicious occasion.

A tight security arrangement will be put in place to prevent any untoward incident and ensure smooth conduct of the festival.

The schedule and timeline of rituals was also decided at the review meeting. As per the decision, the Mangala Alati will be performed at 5am on the day of

Ashokastami, followed by Abakasha Niti and other rituals. Lord Lingaraj will be escorted in a grand procession and board the chariot around 3:30pm in the afternoon.

Thereafter, the Lord's chariot will be pulled by the devotees. Different rituals will be performed after the chariot reaches Mausima temple in the evening.

While the Rath Yatra will be organised April 16, the Bahuda Yatra will be held April 20.

Adequate security arrangements will be made as thousands of devotees are expected to attend the occasion. Drinking water facilities along with sheds will be put in place by the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and WATCO.

IIMT holds int'l conference

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 10: An international conference on Computational Finance and Business Analytics was held at Interscience Institute of Management and Technology (IIMT), Kantabada, here recently under the guidance of IIMT director Srikanta Patnaik.

Participating in the discussion, Patnaik said that Computational Finance has a special significance on the functioning of industries and trade for which it gives profit to the entrepreneur.

Francesco Bartolucci from University of Perugia joined through Zoom and emphasised that both Computational Finance and Business Analytics are required to fulfil the basic aim of the entrepreneur towards integrated progress of the companies.

Prominent social activist and former Information Commissioner of the state, Jagadananda attended as the chief guest. Associate Professor Soma Mitra addressed the theme of the conference. Dean Academics Pramod Kumar Prusty introduced the guests and Dean Administration and Student Welfare Jagamohan Pattanaik gave the vote of thanks.



IGBC organises Green Odisha Conclave 2024



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 10: With an aim to spur innovation towards attainment of sustainable development goals, the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) of Confederation of India Industry (CII) organised a Green Odisha Conclave (GOC) 2024 here, Wednesday.

The conclave saw participation from a diverse spectrum of stakeholders from government, industry, academia and civil societies.

In the face of pressing global challenges to address climate change issue and environmental degradation, GOC emerged as a pivotal platform for thought leaders and experts to exchange insights, strategies and best practices aimed at forging a greener and more sustainable future.

Speaking on this occasion, Civil Public Works department Engineer-in-Chief Manoranjan Misra said, "Over the years, emissions have surged, with per capita emissions reaching two tonnes by 2022 in India alone. It is necessary that we embrace green building and sustainable projects as non-negotiable imperatives. We do not have any alternative to green buildings and

green projects." CII Odisha State Council and SNM Group chairman Pradipta Mohanty underlined the necessity of a collaborative approach to position the state as a beacon of green initiatives.

He said, "To propel Odisha as a flagbearer of green initiatives, concerted efforts from all stakeholders are indispensable. Prioritising research and development are crucial for enhancing sustainable practices across sectors. Capacity building is imperative as Odisha experiences rapid growth, attracting key industries such as mining, steel and textiles."

Chairman of IGBC Bhubaneswar Chapter Manoj Kar said, "The construction industry, currently contributing eight per cent of carbon emissions, must undergo a paradigm shift towards green building norms and sustainable practices to substantially reduce its carbon footprint."

Deputy Director of IGBC M Anand, in his presentation, showcased the key green concepts, best practices and cost saving for developing green compliant buildings. He also presented several remarkable projects being certified by IGBC across the country.

'Day temp to rise from April 15'

Bhubaneswar: The day temperature across the state, presently comfortable following rains in several parts, is likely to rise from April 15, the SOA's Centre for Environment and Climate (CEC) informed Wednesday. The temperature is likely to rise a little in south interior districts from April 14, but it will rise steadily from the next day with the disappearance of an anti-cyclone along the Odisha coast in the Bay of Bengal from April 15, CEC Director Sarat Chandra Das said. It will cause a stoppage of sea breezes towards coastal Odisha, which will favour the flow of northwesterly dry hot air into the state accompanied by clear sky conditions. The conditions will push up the day's temperature, Sahu said. An anti-cyclone is a weather system with high barometric pressure at its centre, around which air circulates slowly in a clockwise direction.

New weight-loss drugs like Ozempic carry a dark side

Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide are taking drugs like Ozempic to lose weight. But what do we actually know about them? Many have declared Ozempic could "end obesity" by reducing the appetite and waistlines of millions of people around the world.

When we look past the hype, this isn't just untrue - it can also be harmful. The focus on weight, as opposed to health, is a feature of diet culture.

The Ozempic buzz isn't just rooted in health and medicine but plays into ideas of fat stigma and fat phobia. This can perpetuate fears of fatness and fat people, and the behaviours that harm people who live in larger bodies.

Ozempic and its family of GLP-1-mimicking drugs are the

latest in a long line of weight-loss drugs. But none have lived up to the hype in the long term.

Science does improve incrementally, but diet culture also keeps us on a cycle of hope for the next miracle cure. So drugs like Ozempic might not deliver the results individuals expect, continuing the cycle of hope and shame.

Studies might show those using the drug lost an average of 10.9 per cent of their body weight, but some lost more than 20 per cent and others less than 5 per cent.



THE OZEMPIC BUZZ ISN'T JUST ROOTED IN HEALTH AND MEDICINE BUT PLAYS INTO IDEAS OF FAT STIGMA AND FAT PHOBIA. THIS CAN PERPETUATE FEARS OF FATNESS AND FAT PEOPLE, AND THE BEHAVIOURS THAT HARM PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN LARGER BODIES.

Some people are "non-responders". This means not everyone loses as much weight as the average, and some don't lose weight at all. For some people, the side-effects will outweigh the benefits.

When people are on drugs like Ozempic, their blood sugar is better controlled by enhancing the release of insulin and reducing the levels of another hormone called glucagon. One study found an average

weight loss of more than 17 per cent after a year on Ozempic became an average net weight loss of 5.6 per cent more than two years after stopping treatment. Short-term side effects of drugs like Ozempic include dizziness, nausea, vomiting and other gastrointestinal upsets.

For some people, using GLP-1-mimicking drugs like Ozempic will be validating and empowering. They will feel like their biology has been 'normalised' in the same way that blood pressure or cholesterol medication can return people to the "normal" range of measures.

But biologically, obesity isn't solely about GLP-1 activity with many other hormones, physical activity, and even our gut microbes involved. Overall, obesity is complex

and multifaceted. Obesity isn't just driven by personal biology and choice; it has social, cultural, political, environmental and economic determinants.

Obesity often co-exists with malnutrition. We try to separate the effects in research using statistics, but focusing on the benefits of weight-loss drugs without addressing the underlying malnutrition means we aren't likely to see the improved health outcomes in everyone who loses weight.

Even when it is well-intentioned, the rhetoric around the joy of "ending the obesity epidemic" can harm people. Obesity doesn't occur in isolation. It is people who are obese. And the celebration and hope of these weight-loss drugs can reinforce harmful fat stigma.

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Rampant illegal mining funding poll expenses

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 10: Illegal mining of various minerals are growing rampant by the day in this district as the Lok Sabha and the Assembly elections approach. It has been alleged that illegal mining is being carried out to fund the campaigns of candidates belonging to various political parties including the ruling one.

This district has rich deposits of minor minerals like black stones, murrans, sand and laterite stones. More than a year back, the Odisha government had transferred the management of minor minerals from the Revenue to the Mining department. Many alleged that since then illegal mining of these minerals have grown manifold.

The Mining department has leased out 35 of the 90 black stone quarries on lease. However, black stone is being extracted rampantly from the remaining 55 quarries. Also murrans, sand and laterite stone quarries are being plundered on a regular basis. According to sources, all this is allegedly happening in connivance with officials of the Revenue and Mining departments and police.

Sources said that the



Dharmasala tehsil area is known as the storehouse of black stone. They alleged that more than 10,000 tonne of black stone are being smuggled from Aruha hill under this tehsil on a daily basis. The miscreants are using sophisticated and high-powered equipment to extract black stone. Four concrete-breaker machines and over 40 Hyva trucks are being used for mining and smuggling of stones. Sources added that a similar modus operandi is being followed

at the Dankari, Rahadpur, Lumbar, Bichhakhandi and Anjira hills in the district.

Experts observed that black stones worth ₹500 crore have been smuggled from these areas in the last 12 months. Satellite mapping of the areas will reveal the true picture, they said.

Sources pointed out that illegal mining and smuggling of murrans are also taking place daily. A case in point is the 15 acres of government land provided to in-

dustrial firm 'VCI Chemical Industries Private Ltd' a few years back. However, the firm never set up its unit. Currently miscreants are smuggling murrans from large areas of the land and smuggling it, sources added. They further said that murrans worth ₹50 lakh has been smuggled and a major amount of the money is being used to fund the election expenses of some candidates.

On being tipped off, officials of the Mining department inspected the land in question recently. However, the reason they gave for not taking any action is deplorable. They said that since the extraction and smuggling of murrans happen during the night, they can't take any action.

Similarly it has been alleged that on an average 50 trucks of laterite stones are being smuggled from the district daily. The stone-laden trucks pass by the Bairi police station but the cops have so far not taken any action, sources said.

When contacted, Deputy Director Mines (DDM), Jayaprakash Nayak said that illegal quarries are being raided on a regular basis and fines are being collected. He however, could not throw any light as to when such activities will stop.

Selfie points, Rangoli events to attract voters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 10: Kandhamal district administration has set up special selfie points and organised street plays and Rangoli competitions to maximise voter turnout.

These efforts, part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme, aim to raise awareness and encourage people, especially young voters, to exercise their voting rights, said Kandhamal District Collector Ashish Ishwar Patil.

Selfie points, adorned with slogans like 'My Vote My Rights' and 'Ready to vote on May 20', have been established at strategic locations.

The selfie points are not only a place to click pictures, but to motivate young voters to participate enthusiastically in the elections, said Rina Pradhan, sub-collector, Baliguda.

"We are happy as several people have clicked their pictures at the selfie points," she added.

Additionally, voter awareness has been boosted through Rangoli competitions and human-chain formations by students at Baliguda stadium Monday. Around 80 girls participated in the competition, Pradhan informed.

Street plays, such as *Nirvachana Parba*, *Desha ra Garba*, *Sahara thu Gaon* and *Vote Dei Rakhibi Na*, were performed Sunday in Phulbani to further educate the public about the importance of voting.

The tribal dominated Kandhamal district has three Assembly constituencies - Phulbani, Baliguda and G Udayagiri - all reserved for Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidates.

In 2019, Baliguda recorded 70.64 per cent voting, G Udayagiri 68.67 per cent and Phulbani 72.36 per cent, officials said.

Red camps destroyed inside Gandhamardan forest



PNN & AGENCIES

Bargarh, April 10: A joint operation by the Special Operation Group (SOG) of Odisha police and the District Voluntary Force (DVF) in bordering areas of this and Bolangir districts has successfully destroyed Maoist camps inside the Gandhamardan forest.

The joint operation was initiated

Tuesday in response to intelligence indicating the presence of Maoists in Bolangir district.

According to police sources, during an intensive combing operation inside the Gandhamardan forest area Monday, Maoists suddenly opened fire upon encountering security personnel, who promptly retaliated, leading to an exchange of fire that lasted several hours.

As the fierce gun battle persisted and security personnel mounted an aggressive attack, the Maoists fled the scene, leaving behind a large quantity of materials. The recovered articles include detonators, wires, batteries, Maoist literature, radio sets, cordex wires, medicines, manpack battery chargers and a number of household articles like utensils, clothes etc.

Sources informed that at least two Maoist camps were destroyed during the gun battle.

Security personnel have further intensified the combing operation to flush out the Maoist elements from the area.

As per sources, the Maoists have become active in the area as the state administration is focused on preparation for Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. The extremists might attempt to disrupt the poll process in this district, they said.

YSBM threatens agitation over construction of pipelines in forests

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 10: The laying of slurry pipelines for transportation of iron ore fines in wildlife corridors has come in for flak from various quarters. A delegation of social outfit 'Yuva O Shram Bikash Mancha' (YSBM) organised a demonstration here Wednesday and demanded that laying of the pipelines through the wildlife corridors within the Sadar and Ghatgaon ranges in Keonjhar forest division must be stopped immediately. They submitted a memorandum on this issue to District Collector Vishal Singh and DFO Keonjhar, Dhanraj HD. They also forwarded the copies of the memorandum to the Secretary, Forest and Environment



department and the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The delegation was led by the outfit's president Ranjan Kumar Behera, vice-president Jaykrishna Nayak and other office-bearers.

It has been alleged that the consultancy agency which has taken up the work is mindlessly felling trees for laying of pipelines adjacent to National Highway-20. This has affected the free movement of wild animals in the forest ranges. YSBM members alleged that despite complaints being lodged on the issue, the con-

struction firm has not even been show-caused.

The association alleged that the Forest department is favouring the firm. They demanded that work on the laying of pipelines be stopped immediately and a high level inquiry should be initiated into the irregularities. Members of YSBM threatened of long-term agitations if measures to protect the forests are not taken.

It has been alleged that the consultancy work is not being carried out in a proper and methodical manner. Sources informed that even the filling up of trenches is being carried out carelessly causing injuries to animals while they are on the move. They asserted work for laying of pipes should be supervised by district officials.

Koel Bridge turns game-changer for many

NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED BRIDGE CONTRIBUTES TO FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT ON BOTH SIDES OF RIVER

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 10: The bridge over river Koel connecting Kuarmanda block on one side with Nuagaon block on the other, has indeed proved to be a game-changer in the lives of people living on both sides. Since it was inaugurated in February 2016, the 'Koel Bridge' (sometimes also called 'Jhirpani Bridge') has indeed affected the lives of thousands in a very positive manner.

The bridge has helped in giving new dimensions and dynamics to business, means of livelihood and economic prosperity. Today, it has brought financial affluence to a large number of people and also created new business opportunities.

Jhirpani, on one side of the river, even a few years back was a sleepy extension of this town. Today however, the situation has completely changed. Even five



years back, there were hardly any shops and business establishments in Jhirpani. Currently a number of business establishments have sprung up including marbles and tiles shops, grocery, mobile, home décor and many other varieties of stores. Business is brisk as the bridge is offering smooth connectivity.

"The 'Koel Bridge' has changed Jhirpani's skyline. It has been very beneficial," said Devi Jena,

a local contractor. Manoj Sahu, a resident of Jhirpani also supported Jena's claim. "It is as if a miracle happened in front of our eyes. Due to the bridge, land prices have increased substantially in adjacent areas of Jhirpani including Jareikela," Sahu said.

On the other side of the bridge, the story is equally encouraging. Ashish Sahu, a civil engineer, who is also involved in agriculture, said that life has changed due to

the bridge. "Earlier it used to be a pain to visit the weekly market at Jhirpani. Now due to the bridge, I can visit the market on a daily basis and reap rich rewards," Ashish informed.

Ashish is not the only one to get benefits due to the bridge. Many others from localities like Titerkela, Khuntgaon, Kundri, Mitkundri and Phuljhar said that the bridge has solved communication and commuting problems.

Even students are happy that the bridge has come up. A girl who is studying in a college at Koel Nagar said that the bridge has helped her in pursuing education. "My brother did not allow my elder sister to study further as there was no bridge over the Koel river. However, I have been allowed as now commuting to the college is easy and comfortable," the girl said.

The 366-metre bridge which was built at a cost of approximately ₹12 crore, today stands a testimony regarding the importance of communication and transportation. "This is the best example of how communication helps. Now people can travel seamlessly anytime during the year," said Prof SK Biswal, a teacher of marketing in this city.

RDA employees suffer as salaries get delayed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 10: Salaries of the employees of Rourkela Development Authority (RDA) for the month of March have been delayed due to transfer of an officer, sources stated here Wednesday. They said that employees are yet to receive their salaries as the signing authority, RDA secretary Chandrakant Mallick has been transferred on the orders of the Election Commission.

Employees on condition of anonymity pointed out that such a delay has never occurred earlier. Even though the first week of April has elapsed, employees are not sure when they will get their salaries for March. "Usually we get our salaries on the 1st of every month unless it is a Sunday or a public holiday. Then we get salaries on the 2nd of the month. This time however, everything has gone haywire," said an employee. After Mallick's transfer, as-



sistant commissioner of Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) Pallabini Nayak has been posted in his place with the additional charge of secretary, RDA. However, she has not been given any financial power or signing authority. "She (Pallabini) has been posted without any powers. Hence our salaries have been delayed, and we are not sure when we will get it as the Model Code of Conduct has come into force," said another employee.

"We hope at least someone will notice our plight and do the needful. Or else we will go

without salaries for more than three months and it will be very difficult for us to manage things," informed another employee.

Due to the absence of a full-time secretary in the RDA, other official matters are also getting delayed. Work like approval of plans, selling and purchasing of plots and transfer of ownerships have more or less stopped.

Unfortunately for the RDA, following the transfer of Dolamani Kandher in 2004, the office never got a full-time secretary. Following Kandher's transfer, the responsibilities associated with the post have always been entrusted to the additional district magistrate (ADM), Rourkela. Sources pointed out that in the absence of a full-time secretary, the RDA has failed to start any housing projects in the last 20 years. For its income, the RDA has to depend on rents and fees associated with various other types of work.

Man shot over extortion bid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Athagarh, April 10: A man was seriously injured when miscreants shot him during an extortion bid Wednesday evening at Mahidharpur village under this police limit in Cuttack district. The victim, identified as Biswajit Palei is a tractor driver. The question however, is why did the miscreants try to extort money from a tractor driver.

Sources said that Biswajit was employed by a company which is engaged in soil-laying work at Mahidharpur. They added that five miscreants accosted Biswajit when he was on his way to the work site.

It has been stated that one of the miscreants identified as Dilip Palei alias Dilu demanded extortion money from Biswajit. However, the latter expressed his inability to pay following which the miscre-



ants shot Biswajit and fled from the spot.

Biswajit, who was shot in the abdomen, was rescued by locals and taken to a hospital here. He was later transferred to the SCB Medical College & Hospital in Cuttack, after his condition deteriorated. Doctors said Wednesday evening that his condition is still critical.

"Five-six miscreants belonging to our village came in a car and demanded extortion money from my brother. It appeared that they were inebriated when they opened fire. We still don't know why my brother

was shot as he did not have a past history of enmity with anyone," Biswajit's younger brother Aju Palei said.

On being informed, Athagarh police reached the spot and initiated a detailed probe. They are also waiting for Biswajit to regain consciousness so that they can talk to him.

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Tender Notice No.: Ref. SDDM/KUR/EP/2023-24/E-procurement Tender Notice/1, Dated : 05.04.2024
Tender No. : 81245295
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF MATERIALS : SUPPLY & INSTALLATION OF DIGITAL PLATFORM DOUBLE SIDED CLOCK WITH GPS SYNCHRONIZATION, QUANTITY : 84 NOS.
Closing date and time : At 1500 hrs. on 06.05.2024.
The following tender have been uploaded on website www.ireps.gov.in
Sr. Divisional Materials Manager/ PR-15/P/24-25 Khurda Road

EAST COAST RAILWAY
(1) e-Tender Notice No. 01-SBP-TRD-OT-2024-25, Dtd. 04.04.2024
Name of the work: ELECTRICAL TRD WORKS FOR PROVISION OF 12M WIDE FOOT OVER BRIDGE (FOB) AT TITLAGARH (TIG) STATION OVER SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx. cost : ₹ 30,74,518.98, EMD: ₹ 61,500.00.
(2) e-Tender Notice No. : 02-SBP-TRD-OT-2024-25, Dtd. 05.04.2024
Name of the work: TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF MODIFICATION IN CONNECTION TO THE RUNNING OF HIGHER MMD TRANSPORTATION AT BRIDGE NO. 7UP IN BETWEEN THE SECTION OF BRUNDAKAL (BXQ)-LAPANGA (LPG) IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Approx. cost : ₹ 18,79,105.45, EMD: ₹ 37,600.00.
Completion period: 08 Months (for both tenders).
Tender closing Date & Time: At 1530 hrs. on 26.04.2024 (for sl. no. 1) and At 1530 hrs. on 29.04.2024 (for sl. no. 2).
No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : www.ireps.gov.in
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. All relevant paper must have to be uploaded at the time of participating, on e-tendering as per instruction.
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/ corrigendum issued for this tender.
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD) PR-14/P/24-25 Sambalpur

EAST COAST RAILWAY
ENGAGEMENT OF HONORARY VISITING SPECIALISTS (HVS) AT CENTRAL HOSPITAL, MANCHESWAR, BHUBANESWAR
Notice No. : ECoR/BBS/MD/CH/BBS/HVS Consultants Engagement-2024, Dated : 03.04.2024
Engagement of Honorary Visiting Specialists (HVS) Consultants for East Coast Railway, Central Hospital, Mancheswar, Bhubaneswar-17 in the following discipline:
Sl. No. Name of the post Speciality Hours, Day & Week of Working Remuneration
01 OPHTHALMOLOGIST Specialist 2 hours a day for 6 days/week ₹ 52,000/- P.M.
02 PHYSICIAN Specialist 4 hours a day for 6 days/week ₹ 78,000/- P.M.
As per the Railway Board guidelines, the above posts to be filled up through newspaper advertisement indicating terms and conditions as indicated below: **QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE :** ● **SPECIALIST :** Post Graduate degree from a recognized University, Minimum 03 years experience in the professional work related to concerned Speciality after obtaining P.G. Degree. P.G. Diploma holders with 05 years experience in the professional work related to concerned speciality after obtaining P.G. Diploma. ● **AGE PROFILE :** During first time engagement, the preferred age is between 30 years to 64 years. Upper age limit of continued engagement is 65 years. ● **TENURE OF WORKING:** Each time the offer is given, it is to be given for one year only. After expiry of one year, extension can be given. ● **NUMBER OF VISITS/NUMBER OF HOURS ETC. :** Average of 2 hours every day/6 days/week for Specialist post (Ophthalmologist). Average of 4 hours every day/6 days/week for Specialist post (Physician). In addition they will have to come to hospital whenever called in for emergency on any day, including Sunday and off day.
The interested Doctors can submit their Willingness, BIODATA, age proof School certificate, Degree certificate, Higher qualification certificate, Registration certificate along with their professional work experience and contact details addressed to **Medical Director, Central Hospital, East Coast Railway, Mancheswar, Bhubaneswar-751017** within 15 days of the publication of the Advertisement. For other details please visit <http://www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in>
PR-16/P/24-25 Medical Director, Central Hospital, Bhubaneswar

Bank of India **VEHICLE SALE NOTICE**
ZONAL OFFICE: Bhubaneswar Zone, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015
Offers are invited in sealed envelope from interested parties for sale of our following vehicles on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS".
Sl.No. Branch/Office Type of Vehicle / Model Registration No. Registration Date Floor Price of the Vehicle
1. Zonal Office Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd./ Bolero OD-02K-2959 11.11.2013 ₹ 2,00,000/-
2. Zonal Office Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd./ Bolero Camper 2WD OD-02V-8664 2015 ₹ 75,000/-
Detailed notification and tender documents are available in Bank's website www.bankofindia.co.in Any corrigendum / addendum will be published in BOI website only.
Last date & Time of submission of offers is up to 05.00 PM on 30.04.2024.
Date: 10.04.2024 Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone

What men call knowledge, is the reasoned acceptance of false appearances. Wisdom looks behind the veil and sees.

SRI AUROBINDO



Let Polluters Pay

After years of avoiding any explicit mention of the primary cause of climate change, negotiators at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai last year finally reached an agreement calling for a “transition away from fossil fuels.” But another uncomfortable question still looms large: How will that transition be financed? As Simon Stiell, the UN’s climate chief, recently observed, “it’s blazingly obvious that finance is the make-or-break factor in the world’s climate fight.”

Climate finance will be the single most important issue both at COP29 in Azerbaijan this year and at COP30 in Brazil in 2025. Notwithstanding recent pledges of money for a new “loss and damage” fund to help developing countries deal with climate change, current financing falls far short of what is required. The European Union estimates that it must invest €1.5 trillion (\$1.63 trillion) per year from 2031 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and developing countries (excluding China) are expected to need \$2.4 trillion per year by 2030. Brazil alone will have to find an additional \$200 billion to reach its 2030 emissions-reduction goals.

There are no simple solutions. The sluggish growth and tight monetary conditions following the pandemic mean that even rich countries are operating with limited fiscal headroom. While more private capital is needed everywhere, its role will be smaller in low- and middle-income countries, owing to the significant premiums they face when borrowing for green projects.

Bold new policies are needed to mobilise public funding, and there is a strong case to be made for progressive taxes on carbon-intensive activities and extreme wealth. Both would generate revenues while also extending the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” to industries and individuals.

Taxation is the standard instrument for states to raise funds reliably and at scale, and thus to commit to long-term spending and investment plans. For developing countries, in particular, the predictability of taxes makes them more useful than concessional finance. Moreover, new taxes can unlock additional resources for countries to dedicate to climate-related investments, sparing them from having to reallocate scarce funding within existing budgets. Globally, a 0.1 per cent financial-transactions tax could raise up to \$418 billion per year, while a relatively modest levy of \$5 per ton of carbon dioxide emissions could bring in \$210 billion per year.

The International Monetary Fund has long advocated taxes on CO2 emissions and fossil-fuel extraction, both as a source of climate finance and to shape incentives by ensuring that polluters pay. The extra revenue from such taxes would help high-income countries (the leading historical source of emissions) fulfill their moral obligations toward poorer, more vulnerable countries. As matters stand, rich countries’ financial assistance for developing countries needs to be an order of magnitude greater than the current pledge of \$100 billion per year.

Pollution taxes would also help to redress inequalities within countries. Even in those economies with lower historical and per capita emissions, there is a significant gap between most of the population’s emissions and the highest emitters. The economist Lucas Chancel finds that “carbon inequality” is greater within countries than between them, and that it tracks inequalities in income and wealth. This should come as no surprise. Globally, the wealthiest 1 per cent emit the same as the poorest 66 per cent combined.

This injustice is not lost on ordinary citizens. In fact, it increasingly threatens our ability to build and sustain a political consensus for effective climate policies. Taxes to ensure that those with the greatest means and the highest emissions pay their fair share would go a long way toward convincing the public that a “just transition” is not just an empty slogan.

But while the theoretical case for such taxes is strong, adoption and implementation has proven difficult. Capital, people (particularly the wealthy), and emissions all move easily across borders, undermining the efficacy of national or regional tax regimes. Though cross-border cooperation on taxation is never easy, an international agreement would give countries more leverage over their own resources, allowing them to protect those most in need. Multilateralism would be in every country’s interest.

There are encouraging signs that the political taboo against taxation is weakening. The text agreed by all parties at COP28 explicitly called “for accelerating the ongoing establishment of new and innovative sources of finance, including taxation.” And last November, UN member states passed a resolution to establish a Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, paving the way for a fairer approach to setting global rules.

Now, the G20, led by Brazil, is considering a global minimum tax on the world’s 3,000 billionaires, who currently pay a much lower effective tax rate than the rest of the population. The EU Tax Observatory estimates that a 2 per cent annual levy on their wealth – if properly coordinated – could raise \$250 billion per year.

Capitalising on this momentum, a diverse group of countries has launched a new international tax taskforce. Chaired jointly by the leaders of Kenya, Barbados, and France, its mandate is to explore tax policies that could raise the equivalent of at least 0.1 per cent of global GDP to finance sustainable development and climate action. The point is not to prescribe a single solution for all countries, but rather to assess the political and technical obstacles to many plausible options, drawing on a diverse range of experts and perspectives.

Many options are on the table, including taxes on aviation and shipping, in addition to fossil-fuel extraction and financial transactions. The taskforce will seek to advance our understanding of how such taxes could be applied equitably, perhaps paving the way for an agreement on particular policies.

Fair taxation could be a powerful lever for accelerating a just transition. By contributing fresh empirical findings and fostering trust and cooperation between countries, the new taskforce can help everyone to address the injustices at the heart of the climate crisis and unlock the resources they need to address it. Reducing the burden on poorer people and countries is not just a moral obligation. It is also necessary to win their support for a transition that cannot happen without them.

The writer, a former French ambassador to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is CEO of the European Climate Foundation. @PROJECTSYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings. **WILLIAM BLAKE**
- If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything. **MARK TWAIN**
- Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes. **OSCAR WILDE**

THE WRITE-OFF CONUNDRUM

FOCUS BANKING



Chander Gupta

THE WRITING-OFF OF LOAN AMOUNTS FROM THE BALANCE SHEET DOES NOT IPSO FACTO ABSOLVE THE CONCERNED DEFAULTERS OF THEIR LIABILITIES TO REPAY



Laurence Tubiana

Capital, people (particularly the wealthy), and emissions all move easily across borders, undermining the efficacy of national or regional tax regimes

Political barbs are being fired thick and fast as banks have reportedly written-off a whopping amount of more than Rs 10 lakh crore of corporate loans during the decade gone by. Wise with 35 years’ experience of working in a leading bank, I feel impelled to clear the ambiguity about write-offs for the layman. But before touching upon the subject of write-off, a contextual allusion to the banking background would be imperative.

I joined a leading PSB in 1984 as a Probationary Officer without even an elementary knowledge of banking. I held a bachelor’s degree in arts and a post-graduate degree in English Literature. Anyone who wants to become a doctor has to first obtain a degree in medical science, an engineer a degree in engineering, a lawyer a degree in law, and so on. This rule does not apply to the profession of banking. There is no qualifying degree/ diploma course in banking. A degree-holder in any stream can enter a banking job subject to cracking the competitive examination. Banks give their own in-house training to the employees.

By virtue of internal trainings imparted by the bank and the studies undertaken for qualifying the Certified Associate examination (CAIB) conducted for bank employees by Indian Institute of Bankers, I acquired fairly good knowledge of banking in general and book-keeping in particular. The concepts about balance sheet, including about ‘write-off’, became crystal clear to me.

The two sides of a balance sheet are called liabilities and assets. In simplified language, liabilities are the ‘sources of funds’ and assets are ‘uses of funds’. Apart from the capital, deposits from public are the major ‘sources of funds’ for banks. Loans and advances are the main ‘uses of funds’. Credit given for financing of fixed assets is called ‘loan’ and credit given for financing of current



The process of so-called cleansing of balance sheets through the convenient medium of write-offs should be made more rigorous and transparent

assets (working capital) is called ‘advance’ in banking parlance.

Credit (loans and advances) portfolio constitutes a predominant part of asset side of banks’ balance sheets. Loans and advances (‘loans’ in short) are classified as standard assets or stressed assets in bank’s books depending upon whether servicing of debt (interest and principal) is regular or irregular. Banks create provisions for their credit portfolio to cover the inherent risks. While general provision in small degree is earmarked for standard assets, banks create specific provision for stressed assets taking into account period of stress and availability of collateral securities. Provisions are created out of profit & loss (P&L) account and are shown on liability side of banks’ balance sheets.

A loan account becomes eligible for write-off whenever the specific provision against it gets accumulated to 100% of outstanding after a certain number of years it has been irregular. In order to cleanse the balance sheet, the banks resort to removing the outstanding in a particular loan account from the asset side and the equivalent provision from the liability side of balance sheet. This is called write-off in accounting parlance.

P&L is charged at the time of creation of provision rather than at the time of write-off.

The writing-off of loan amounts from the balance sheet does not ipso facto absolve the concerned defaulters of their liabilities to repay. Such written-off amounts, where legal action has been initiated or is contemplated, are parked in a proforma account outside the balance sheet for recovery follow-up. Other written-off accounts, where legal action is not considered viable due to small outstanding or absence of collateral, are simply recorded in a kachcha (plain) register. But the dictum ‘out of sight, out of mind’ kicks in. As the outstanding amount moves out of balance sheet, there is a proclivity for slackness in the follow-up for recovery. More attention of the bankers is riveted to balance sheet credit portfolio to prevent further slippages. However, liability of defaulters in the written-off accounts continues unless dues are settled through compromise settlement or some other mechanism which necessitates waiver (haircut for bank). Once the bank concludes an outstanding to be irrecoverable, the entry is removed from the proforma account and relegated to kachcha register.

Movement to kachcha register is deemed to be virtual waiver. Defaulters, however, aren’t given no-dues certificate by the lender unless there is complete liquidation or partial liquidation under settlement.

The amounts written off from the balance sheets by banks reflect principal amounts only. If a loan account remains irregular for more than 90 days, further application of interest in the borrowal account is stopped. In other words, booking of interest income is suspended when a loan account remains irregular for more than 90 days. From the beginning of stress in a loan account till it gets written off – the entire process normally takes more than 3 years – there is no booking of interest income. That’s why stressed assets are called non-performing assets (NPA) because there is no interest income earned from them. The interest income forgone doesn’t reflect in the written-off amounts.

Therefore, the actual loss to the banks or the equivalent liability of the borrower is much higher than the figures of write-offs. The correct indicator of loss to bank in a written-off account will be the total of ‘written-off outstanding’ and the ‘interest accrued but not applied’. Recovery, if any, in the written-off accounts is straight away income for the bank.

There is a need for evolving robust accounting principles for declaring the figures of ‘interest accrued but not applied’ and recovery amounts in written-off accounts as annexures to the balance sheets of banks. Plugging of accounting loophole is the need of the hour for ensuring structured disclosure of accurate data on loss accruing to banks on account of stressed assets. The process of so-called cleansing of balance sheets through the convenient medium of write-offs should be made more rigorous and transparent.

The writer is a former banker.

SPECTRUM CAPITALISM

A distorted societal framework

Capitalism has managed to establish a perverted society where individuals who construct homes often endure homelessness, those who produce food often go to bed hungry, and those who build roads frequently lack a footpath to walk for themselves. Moreover, individuals involved in constructing schools, colleges, and universities find that their own children lack access to quality education. These stark narratives and disparities underscore the profound inequalities inherent in capitalist society, where access to basic necessities like housing, health, education, and food is not guaranteed, despite the abundance of resources and wealth generated by the very people who face crisis and live in a marginalised condition while few enjoy the privileges of capitalism.

The perverted capitalist society and its every day realities illustrate how essential contributors to societal infrastructure and services often face deprivation and exclusion from the very benefits they help create. The disparity between labour and its rewards underscores the profound injustices ingrained within capitalist systems, where the distribution of resources and opportunities remains skewed. In

such a society, the disconnect between labour and its fruits raises fundamental questions about fairness and human dignity. It calls into question the sustainability of an economic model that prioritises profit over people, leaving workers vulnerable to the harsh realities of poverty, hunger, and inadequate access to essential services.

In a capitalist system driven by market forces, almost everything, from housing and food to education and healthcare, becomes commodified. This commodification extends beyond material goods to essential aspects of human life and dignity. Housing is treated as a commodity to be bought and sold for profit, leading to inflated prices and housing insecurity for many. Similarly, food production becomes geared towards maximising profit rather than ensuring universal access to nutrition, leaving many to suffer from hunger and malnutrition.

Likewise, the privatisation and commercialisation of education and healthcare often result in unequal access, with those who can afford to pay receiving better quality services while others are left underserved or excluded altogether. In such a system, the value of goods and

services is determined by their market price rather than their inherent social or human value, leading to a distorted and often unjust distribution of resources and opportunities.

From its early stages to its contemporary manifestations, capitalism has wielded significant influence, moulding social structures and cultural norms in ways both profound and complex. These transformations have not only altered economic landscapes concomitant with the requirements of capitalism but also engendered shifts in cultural values, political ideologies, and interpersonal relationships shaped by the values of mass consumerism for the growth of market for profit. This distorted societal framework challenges notions of fairness, justice, and human flourishing, prompting calls for alternative economic models and social arrangements that prioritise equity, sustainability and collective well-being.

These troubling realities of everyday marginalisation of masses highlight the fundamental flaws of a capitalist system. This underscores the urgent need for systemic change to address the root causes of inequality and ensure that all members of society have access to the essen-

tials for a dignified and fulfilling life. This necessitates a re-evaluation of the economic priorities and a commitment to building a society where everyone could thrive and access the resources they need. This may involve basic reforms to regulate markets, promote social welfare, and ensure universal access to essential goods and services, ultimately striving towards a more just and equitable society.

A perverted capitalist society, moulded by profit driven capitalist market, systematically erodes the very fabric of social cohesion, rendering individuals as isolated and atomised beings, bereft of meaningful connection. This societal structure not only diminishes communal bonds but also engenders a pervasive sense of loneliness, exacerbating the fragmentation of human relationships and weakening the collective foundations upon which society thrives. Therefore, capitalism can never offer any form of alternatives or platforms to reform itself. The struggle to end capitalism is the only alternative to reclaim the social foundations of society, economy, culture, and life.

The writer teaches at the University of Glasgow, UK. Views are personal.



Bhabani Shankar Nayak

THE DISPARITY BETWEEN LABOUR AND ITS REWARDS UNDERSCORES THE PROFOUND INJUSTICES INGRAINED WITHIN CAPITALIST SYSTEMS

Misleading voters

Sir, The great Indian election stage is set and ready for the biggest democratic process on earth. All the parties - major and minor - are sweating it out to reach voters and get their valuable votes. However, a trend that has been seen over the past few years and used by almost all parties is the trick of fielding a candidate with a similar name as that of the opponent mainly to confuse voters. An analysis of past elections does show instances where political parties have put forth candidates with identical names misleading voters and thereby causing damage to opponents. This often results in deserving candidates losing their valuable votes. Identical candidates’ cause significant damage to voting share in constituencies with a close contest. This age old political trick to deceive voters might give some gains to parties that field ‘identically named candidates’ but are they not cheating democracy and the voters’ rights? The value of democracy is thereby crushed. Every party wants to win but can’t they do so upholding the faith of democracy? It is high time voters are aware about such tricks and see that their valuable vote does not go waste.

Suicide prevention

Sir, It is really painful to note that youth suicides in India have been on a gradual increase. Such a grim scenario can be attributed to lack of economic, social and emotional resources. More specifically, academic pressure, stress at workplaces, social pressures, modernisation of urban centres, relationship concerns and breakdown of support systems contribute to suicides and suicide attempts by Indian youngsters. As young Indians become more progressive, their traditionalist households become less supportive of their choices pertaining to financial independence, marriage age, premarital sex, rehabilitation and taking care of elderly persons. There are several organisations, crisis centres and suicide prevention helplines that offer a great deal of support to the emotionally distressed and those individuals who take the extreme step of ending lives on their own. It is time to increase awareness about suicidal behaviour and know how to effectively prevent it.

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

Orissa POST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

M Pradyu, KANNUR

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Barmer LS seat to witness triangular contest

Banswara set for BAP, BJP contest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Overall, there are 11 candidates in the fray including Kailash Choudhary from the BJP, Ummeda Ram Beniwal from the Congress and Independent candidate Ravindra Singh Bhati



today. The party won in those conditions too. Now, this time it is different.

"There are many policies of the Modi government which have been implemented on the ground and people see him as a world leader. So we will emerge as the winner on this seat."

It is worth noting that similar to 2014, this time also, there is a

BJP government in the state. Meanwhile, exuding faith in Beniwal, Congress General Secretary and Spokesperson Swarnim Chaturvedi said, "We have fielded Ummeda Ram Beniwal, who is a strong face in the Barmer belt. He lost Assembly polls to Congress candidate Harish Chaudhary while contesting from the Rashtriya

Loktantrik Party (RLP). Now he is a member of the Congress and his switch to the Congress from the RLP will bring in more votes, making him the winner."

Further, the Independent candidate Ravindra Bhati, who is a MLA from the Sheo constituency, is equally confident of his win and has been addressing huge gatherings. This 26-year-old has been promising employment generation and quality education in Barmer.

Meanwhile, many star campaigners from the BJP and Congress will be wooing the electorate in the districts of Barmer, Balotra, and Jaisalmer for the forthcoming elections.

According to BJP officials, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address the 'Vijay

Shanknadh' rally April 12 at Adarsh Stadium in Barmer at 11:40 am.

There are 226,237 voters in 8 Assembly constituencies of Barmer Lok Sabha seat and 20 candidates had filed 30 nominations. The nomination of one candidate was rejected. Of the remaining 19 candidates, 8 have withdrawn their names, leaving 11 candidates in the fray on this seat.

The final list of candidates contesting for the Barmer seat was released Monday. These include Ummeda Ram Beniwal (Congress), Kailash Choudhary (BJP), Leela Ram (BSP), Prabhuram Goyal (Aazad Samaj Party) and Independents including Ravindra Singh Bhati, Tararam Mehna, Devi Lal Jain, among others.

Jaipur, April 10: The Banswara-Dungarpur Lok Sabha seat is set to witness a fight between the Bharatiya Adivasi Party (BAP) and the BJP, as for the first time in its history, the Congress has decided not to field any candidate from this seat in Rajasthan and has announced an alliance with the tribal party.

The Congress will also not field its candidate in the bye-election to be held on the Bagidora Assembly seat April 26. In both these seats, the Congress has announced support to the BAP candidates.

Earlier, there was suspense over this, but the picture became clear Sunday night when state election Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa announced the Congress-BAP alliance from his social media handle.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, April 10: The Barmer-Jaisalmer seat in Rajasthan is being discussed in political corridors due to a tough triangular contest being witnessed here between the BJP-Congress and an Independent candidate, for the Lok Sabha election.

Overall, there are 11 candidates in the fray including Kailash Choudhary from the BJP, Ummeda Ram Beniwal from the Congress and Independent candidate

'NO T-SHIRTS, DENIMS AT WORK'



AGENCIES

Jaipur, April 10: The Rajasthan Transport department asked its employees not to come to office wearing dresses like jeans and T-shirt.

State Transport Department Commissioner Manish Arora issued an order in this regard with a subject line 'Regarding ensuring adherence to dignified formal attire, discipline, morality and etiquette in the office'.

"The chief secretary recently had conducted a surprise inspection in the office and many employees were seen wearing casual dress, including T shirt and casual dresses on the occasion," the order said.

"The CS also expressed his displeasure over the same. So now onwards, the employees should come to the office wearing a formal dress; males should come in formal dresses (pants and shirts) and females should come in saree or salwar suit," the order said, adding that "it should be considered seriously".

Key leaders of TDP, Jana Sena join YSR Congress

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati, April 10: Some key leaders of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Jana Sena Wednesday joined Andhra Pradesh's ruling YSR Congress Party.

Pamula Rajeswari Devi, a former MLA from the Jana Sena representing P Gannavaram, R Ramesh Kumar Reddy, a former MLA from the TDP representing Rayachoti, and Pothina Mahesh, who previously served as Jana Sena's constituency in-charge from Vijayawada West, formally joined the YSRCP in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at Gantavari Palem in Palnadu district on the 12th day of his Memantha Siddham Yatra.

Mohan Reddy, former ZPTC from Lakkireddypalli, Umamathi Reddy, former MPP from Lakkireddypalli, K Prabhakara Reddy, former marketing committee chairman, Sheikh Hussain, former hospital committee chairman, TDP state secretary Oludasu Krishnamurthy, Divya Kumar Reddy, and other TDP leaders also joined the YSR Congress.

Along with Rajeswari Devi, other



Jana Sena leaders too joined the YSRCP. They include Pamula Prakash, Kandregula Ananthababu; Jana Sena district secretary Potu Kashi; former DCCB director Bontu Jawaharlal; former MP TC G Prabhuvaram, Y Nagaraju, and Chilakapati Srinu.

Jana Sena Vijayawada Town Vice President Venna Sivashankar, West Division Constituency President Sheikh Amir Basha, P Srinivasa Rao, S Ramugupta and other leaders also joined the YSRCP.

Meanwhile, YSRCP MLC Shaikh Mohammed Iqbal joined the TDP Wednesday. The TDP President and former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu welcomed him into the party.

Last week, the retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officer resigned from primary membership of the YSRCP. He also resigned as a member of the Legislative Council. His term was to end in March 2027. The former Inspector-General of Rayalaseema Range joined YSRCP in 2018.

He contested unsuccessfully as a YSRCP candidate against actor and TDP leader Balakrishna in the Hindupur constituency.

After the YSRCP came to power in 2019, Iqbal was made MLC. He was reportedly unhappy over the YSRCP's choice of Tippegowda Narayan Deepika as the party candidate from Hindupur.

4.5 lakh govt school students appear for TOEFL in AP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, April 10: Over 4.5 lakh government school students in Andhra Pradesh appeared for Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) examination Wednesday, said an official.

The students belonged to classes III to V from 13,104 schools across the state.

"The TOEFL exam for classes 3rd to 5th was successfully conducted for 4,53,265 students in 13,104 schools. It was overwhelming to see students studying in the schools located in far flung tribal areas and remote rural areas participating in the exam," School



Education Principal Secretary Praveen Prakash told PTI. Further, he said arrangements are being

made to conduct the examination for more than 16.5 lakh students (classes VI to IX) from 5,907 schools

April 12. Prakash noted that successful students will be awarded certificates by the Education Testing Service (ETS). The Andhra Pradesh government and Princeton-based ETS have signed an agreement June 23, 2023 to offer customised English assessments for government school students. This collaboration is aimed at fortifying the English language skills of lakhs of students, which could aid in promoting academic excellence.

TDP seeks public donations, launches website

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amaravati, April 10: Ahead of the next month's elections, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) launched a website to receive public donations.

TDP president and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launched the website 'TDPforAndhra.com' and appealed to supporters of the party to make online donations.

Naidu, who made the first donation of ₹99,999, said the NRIs can also make donations through the website. He mentioned that TDP gets membership money every two years.

"We are spending that money along with the money given by the well-wishers. Unlike other political parties, we are not accepting illegal money. The YSRCP took ₹160 crore through bonds from online gambling. By taking money from the gamblers, they are speaking about ethics and values," he said.

Naidu stated that TDP always depended on the people. "Several people have benefited from TDP policies. People should come forward and help the party in their possible capacity. I am asking people to come directly and talk about their ex-



perience and the benefits they got. They are in a position to compete across the world after using the policies implemented by us," he said in a statement.

The TDP chief said people should also contribute financially to the party, be it ₹100, ₹1,000 or whatever they wish.

"People will be given a receipt after they donate to the party. People will be donors in the party books and accounts and they will be honoured. We have taken all

precautions and permissions for NRIs to donate to the party. We will verify their donations, and we will accept them if they are eligible," he added.

He pointed out that TDP has a history with 42 years of experience. It worked constantly with new ideas to change the lives of people. He asserted that not only rich and landlords but educated and honest people should enter politics.

He recalled that in 1982, TDP ensured social justice for back-

TDP president and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launched the website 'TDPforAndhra.com' and appealed to supporters of the party to make online donations

Naidu, who made the first donation of ₹99,999, said the NRIs can also make donations through the website. He mentioned that TDP gets membership money every two years

ward classes. It made the educated with no prior experience in politics as MLAs and MPs. Politicians should also be value-based, he said. Naidu said there was a time when Telugu people had no importance.

"They used to be called Madrasis. The TDP started from there and introduced the self-respect of Telugu people to the world. Through public policies, we can bring changes to people's lives," he said, and recalled that it gave importance to Information Technology.

"We used to tell them that instead of doing jobs, they should also innovate products. We also said that they should not only do jobs but should give jobs to others. We told them about artificial intelligence, cloud management, data centers, and data science 20 years ago," he said.

The Odisha Gazette



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HOME (ELECTIONS) DEPARTMENT
DIRECTION
The 30th March, 2024

NO.4097-EC-CON-EVM-0002/2023 /Elec — The following direction issued by Election Commission of India, New Delhi is hereby republished in the Extraordinary issue of Odisha Gazette for general information.

NIKUNJA BIHARI DHAL
Chief Electoral Officer, Odisha

No.D-5
ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA
Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001

No.576/3/EVM/2024/SDR-Vol.-I Dated: 20th March, 2024
Phalgun 30, 1945

DIRECTION

No.576/3/EVM/2024/SDR-Vol.-I.- Whereas, Section 61A of the Representation of the People Act 1951, provides that the giving and recording of votes by voting machines in such manner as may be prescribed, may be adopted in such constituency or constituencies as the Election Commission of India may, having regard to the circumstances of each case, specify;

2. Whereas, as per the proviso to Rule 49A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, a printer with a drop box of such design, as may be approved by the Election Commission of India, may also be attached to voting machine for printing a paper trail of the vote, in such constituency or constituencies or parts thereof as the Election Commission of India may direct;

3. Whereas, the Election Commission has considered the circumstances in all the Parliamentary Constituencies of Lok Sabha, all the Assembly Constituencies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha & Sikkim at the current general elections, 2024 and in 26 Assembly Constituencies (as per Annexure-1) in 13 States at the current bye-elections, announced by the Election Commission's Press Notes No. ECI/PN/23/2024 & ECI/PN/24/2024 both dated 16th, March 2024, and is satisfied that sufficient number of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Printers for printing Paper Trail [Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)] are available for taking the poll in all the Parliamentary Constituencies and all the Assembly Constituencies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim and in 26 Assembly Constituencies (as per Annexure-1) of 13 States. The polling personnel are well trained in efficient handling of EVMs and 'VVPAT Printers' and the electors are also fully conversant with the operation of the EVMs and the VVPAT Printers;

4. Now, therefore, the Election Commission of India, in exercise of its powers under the said Section 61A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and Rule 49A of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, hereby specifies all the Parliamentary Constituencies of the Lok Sabha, all the Assembly Constituencies of the legislative assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha & Sikkim at the current General Elections, 2024 and 26 Assembly Constituencies (as per Annexure-1) in 13 states at the current bye-election, as per the schedule announced by the Election Commission on 16th March, 2024, as the constituencies in which the votes, shall be given and recorded by means of EVMs and VVPAT printers in the manner prescribed, under the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, and the supplementary instructions issued by the Election Commission from time to time on the subject.

5. The Election Commission also hereby approves the design of EVMs and VVPAT Printers as developed by the Bharat Electronics Ltd., Bangalore and Electronics Corporation of India Ltd., Hyderabad, which shall be attached to the said machines, to be used for the giving and recording of votes in all the Constituencies.

By Order,
(S.B.JOSHI)
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY
Annexure-1

Sl. No.	Name of State	Assembly Constituency No. & Name
1.	Bihar	195-Agiaon(SC)
2.		26 - Vijapur
3.	Gujarat	108-Khambhat
4.		136-Vaghodia
5.		85 - Manavadar
6.		83 - Porbandar
7.	Haryana	21-Karnal
8.	Jharkhand	31-Gandey
9.	Maharashtra	30-AkolaWest
10.	Tripura	7- Ramnagar
11.		136-Dadraul
12.	Uttar Pradesh	173-Lucknow East
13.		292 - Gainsari
14.		403 - Duddhi (ST)
15.	West Bengal	62-Bhagawangola
16.		113-Baranagar
17.	Telangana	71-Secunderabad Cantt(SC)
18.		18-Dharamshala
19.		21 - Lahaul&Spiti (ST)
20.	Himachal Pradesh	37 - Sujanpur
21.		39 - Barsar
22.		42 - Gagret
23.		45 - Kutlehar
24.	Rajasthan	165-Bagidora(ST)
25.	Karnataka	36 - Shorapur (ST)
26.	Tamil Nadu	233 - Vilavancode

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Elections divide families as fathers, sons take different political routes

Bhubaneswar, April 10: At least three veteran politicians in state are facing a strange situation at home in this election time since their sons are contesting the polls with tickets from rival political parties.



Senior Congress leader and Jatani MLA Suresh Routray has been issued a show cause notice by the disciplinary committee of the Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) for allegedly campaigning for his son Manmath Routray, who is a ruling BJD candidate from Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha seat. Routray (80), a six-time MLA from Congress, who announced not to contest the elections this time, was found campaigning for his son Manmath in different parks in the state capital. "I have not told anyone to vote for my son, but when people are asking me if they should cast their votes for my son, I am telling them yes," Suresh said. "Yes, I have told people to vote for my son because they ask me what to do. If AICC or the PCC wants to punish me, I will accept it. But I will be a Congressman till my death," Routray said. He further claimed that he is a man of principles. For former Odisha Assembly Speaker and veteran Congress leader from Ganjam district,

ister Bijoy Mohapatra, a long-standing political opponent of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, is also in trouble. His son Arabinda Mohapatra has been fielded as a BJD candidate from the Patkura Assembly segment. Though not active in the BJD, Bijoy continued to remain in the saffron party and had also contested the last Assembly elections from the Patkura Assembly segment. This time, his son is a candidate from BJD. He, however, had blessings for his son when he joined the BJD, and the regional party fielded him as a candidate.

Mohapatra was opposed to BJD for over two decades and this time with his son being a candidate, appeared to have softened his stand. He has started canvassing for his son Arabinda during a meeting in Kalapada. "I have informed BJD state president Manmohan Samal about the activities of Bijoy. The party will soon take proper action against him," said Kishor Panda, president of the Kendrapara district unit of BJD. Senior BJD leader Baidyanath Chatterjee said it is illegal to campaign for the BJD candidate, maybe his son since he (Bijoy) is still a member of the saffron party. During the 2000 elections, Bijoy, one of the founders of the ruling party, was barred from contesting from the Patkura Assembly seat after the BJD denied him a party ticket at the very last moment.



UP IN ARMS: Dissident BJD workers holding placards protest candidature of Bibhuti Bhushan Balabantaray from Jatni Assembly seat in front of BJD state headquarters Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

BJP's 10th list of LS candidates out

New Delhi, April 10: The BJP Wednesday fielded Neeraj Shekhar, the son of former prime minister Chandrashekar, from Ballia in Uttar Pradesh as the party released its 10th list of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections. Shekhar has been fielded in place of four-term MP Virendra Singh. The party has named SS Ahluwalia as its candidate from the Asansol seat in West Bengal. Ahluwalia is the incumbent MP from the Bardhaman-Durgapur constituency in the state. The BJP, in its 10th list, announced candidates for nine Lok Sabha constituencies - seven in Uttar Pradesh, one in West Bengal and Chandigarh's lone seat.



Sinha. Sinha is currently the Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP has also named Sanjay Tandon as its candidate from Chandigarh, dropping sitting MP Kirron Kher. It has fielded Niraj Tripathi from Allahabad in place of incumbent MP Rita Bahuguna Joshi. Jaiver Singh Thakur has been fielded from Mainpuri to take on the Samajwadi Party's Dimple Yadav, who is seeking another term in the Lok Sabha. The BJP has named Praveen Patel from the Phulpur seat in Uttar Pradesh, replacing sitting MP Keshari Devi Patel. BJP MPs Vinod Sonkar and BP Saroj will contest from Kaushambi and Machhlishahr in Uttar Pradesh, respectively.

Not David vs Goliath, it's 'battle royale' this time at Sundargarh

Rourkela, April 10: With Jual Oram and Dilip Tirkey in the fray, this time Sundargarh will witness a battle royale, not a David vs Goliath fight for its lone Lok Sabha seat. The electoral battle between the two is going to be watched eagerly. Jual is a five-time MP from here. Had he not lost to former Odisha CM Hemananda Biswal in 2009 in a neck to neck race, the number would have been six. Hemananda had pooled 2,80,054 (36.47%) against Jual, who had garnered 2,68,430 votes (34.96%). BJD was not contesting then. In 2014, Jual pooled 3,40,508 votes (33.69%) and found a formidable opposition in BJD's Dilip Tirkey, who got 3,21,679 votes (31.83%). Dilip was then considered by many as an 'also ran' candidate but the margin was only 18,829 votes. Post election, a jolted Jual grudgingly accepted, "The fight was very close and I never expected it to be so." In 2019, Jual got 5,00,056 votes (45.45%) and an astounding rise of 11.76% in his vote share. He



almost steamrolled his opponent BJD's Sunita Biswal, who received 2,76,991 votes (25.18%), and the party's vote share fell by 6.65%. INC's George Tirkey polled 2,68,218 votes, (24.38%) with a very marginal fall of 2.30% in vote share. Political pundits say INC's vote share would have reduced by a lakh if George had not been the candidate. Between Dilip and Jual, the public views the former as someone well-behaved, soft spoken and simple, while for Jual, it is "rude and clever enough to understand the TINA factor in favour of him." Apart from Dilip's personality, the other factors that favour him are hockey, Christian votes and the indirect comeback of George Tirkey into BJD's fold. Dilip remained instrumental in the lay-

ing of the 17 astro turfs in the same number of blocks. This has proved a game changer for him. "Like IPL helped in finding many hidden cricketers, these turfs will bring out many more talents without doubt because of early exposure which will be helpful during selection," said Robin Tirkey a farmer near Rajgangpur, who wants his son to be a good player of the game. For Jual, the biggest headache this time will be winning the Christian votes in Sundargarh district. Call it a diktat or anything else, they have been communicated to vote for Dilip. Besides, George, who has over a lakh pocket votes, is standing solidly behind Dilip. But Jual's political acumen cannot be underestimated. BJD also has a good following in urban areas like Rourkela, Bonai town, Biramitrapur, Rajgangpur and Sundargarh. Here people vote for BJP and not for Jual. He knows that so he doesn't bother about the PR. In all the mentioned places there are sizeable populations of Marwaris, Biharis and UPites, the traditional BJP voters.

PALASPANGA-BAMEBARI ROAD Villagers warn poll boycott over bad road

Keonjhar, April 10: Residents of Kandrapasi panchayat under Sadar block of this district have warned to boycott the upcoming polls if their demand to repair the Palaspanga-Bamebari road, which is in a bad shape, is not met. Reports said that the Palaspanga-Bamebari road, the lifeline of the mining area in Keonjhar district, is dilapidated due to lack of repair. Traffic as well as pollution problems in the area have become acute due to bad road conditions. As a result, local people have been suffering immensely for past many years. Even the three-km stretch of road from Palaspanga to Kandrapasi is not being repaired despite several protests. Residents of the panchayat, led by Sarpanch Ayodhya Naik, Monday met the District Collector and submitted a memorandum warning to boycott the upcoming polls if the road is not repaired immediately. They also demanded sprinkling of water on the road to prevent air pollution. They alleged that many a time



trucks transporting minerals and other goods break down on the road, causing traffic snarls and accidents. Long queues of thousands of trucks standing on both sides of the road are a usual scene to behold here. The mining and industrial companies had promised to sprinkle water daily on the road to prevent air and dust pollution during an agitation staged by locals October 19, last year. However, that did not happen as was promised, locals alleged. Warning of intensifying their protest otherwise, they demanded to start work on the road and arrange for sprinkling of water on the road within 24 hours. They relented after Keonjhar

SDPO Mahendra Nath Murmu discussed with them and gave assurance that the problem will be resolved after the election while sprinkling of water will be arranged to control the pollution immediately. Mayadhar Mohanta, former sarpanch of Kandrapasi panchayat, said they have been agitating for the last two years for repairing of the three-kilometer stretch but it is not being done. He said that if iron ore transportation is obstructed during the movement, the companies come and give false promises requesting to withdraw movement. They promise that water will be sprinkled regularly until the road work is taken up. However,

they stop sprinkling water after a few days causing severe dust pollution. Repair work of the road is yet to be taken up while people continue to suffer. It has been revealed that the 28-km long Palaspanga-Bamebari road has become a commuters' nightmare due to the daily movement of thousands of iron ore trucks, trailers, and other heavy vehicles. Heavy pollution due to the dust and fumes envelops the roadside houses as well as farmlands and water bodies. The government is minting crores in revenue while mining companies, truck owners and transport companies are benefiting from this road. However, innocent local people are suffering untold pain. The road is used by local farmers, local residents and children to visit their farmland, market, office, schools and colleges respectively. They are forced to travel in an unsafe condition due to the bad condition of the roads and movement of so many heavy vehicles. They said that many times people get injured and even killed due to accidents while getting stuck in traffic jams is a daily burden.



PUBLIC OUTREACH: BJD's Sambalpur Lok Sabha candidate Pranab Prakash Das and party's Athamallik Assembly nominee Nalinikanta Pradhan participate in a procession during a campaign trail at Athamallik in Angul district, Wednesday



CAMPAIGN TRAIL: BJP party leaders and workers participate in campaigning for party's Chikiti Assembly candidate Manoranjan Dyan Samantara and party's Lok Sabha nominee Pradip Panigrahi at Damodarapalli village under Padadigi panchayat of Patrapur block in Ganjam district, Wednesday

national

of the day quote

Congress-DMK has deprived the SC-ST-OBC for decades. The INDI alliance has never trusted the potential of the people of India

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

In 2022, a bomb blast took place in Bhupatinagar which killed three people. Those behind the blast must be put behind the bars. When the NIA conducted an investigation into this following a Calcutta High Court order, Mamata Didi registered a case against them (NIA) to protect the perpetrators

SAGARIKA GHOSE | TRINAMOL CONG MP

The first victory of the Congress is its unity in Karnataka. Their (BJP) first defeat is that they remain a divided house. The BJP has changed 15 faces in the Lok Sabha election as they faded away from the minds of the people. This in itself is a defeat

DK SHIVAKUMAR | DEPUTY CM OF KARNATAKA

SHORT TAKES

Modi extends Eid greetings to Muizzu

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday extended his "warm greetings" to Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr. In his message to President Muizzu, the ruling government of the island nation, and the people of Maldives, PM Modi highlighted the cultural and civilisational linkages shared by India and Maldives "that go back in time". Detailing PM Modi's Eid greetings, the High Commission of India in Male stated: "The Prime Minister further conveyed that as we celebrate Eid al-Fitr with traditional fervour, people across the world are reminded of the values of compassion, brotherhood and togetherness, which are essential in building a peaceful and inclusive world that we all aspire for."

Child trafficking gang busted

New Delhi: Two infants were rescued and four members, including a married couple, of a child trafficking gang were arrested, a Delhi Police official said Wednesday. The gang, after luring poor families, used to take away their children and sell them to others, police said. The accused were identified as Gurmeet Singh, 41, his wife Hasmeet Kaur, 37, Mariyam, 30, and Naina, 24, all residents of Delhi. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Outer, Jimmy Chiram said that information regarding a child trafficking gang, being seen near the Sonia hospital, was received at Nangloi police station April 2.

Nearly 200 babies born in shelters for displaced in Manipur

THE VIOLENCE DISPLACED THOUSANDS, WITH OFFICIALS SAYING MORE THAN 50,000 PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN CAMPS FOLLOWING THE UNREST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, April 10: Cradling her baby born in a shelter for the displaced in Manipur, Hatneu says she has named her daughter Nganthoibi which aptly means shining light. Dispelling some of the darkness of 11 months of conflict and continuing uncertainty, Nganthoibi is one of the 200 babies born to displaced women who have taken shelter in different relief camps across the state. For the women like Hatneu, the last months have been unforgettable. Not just because their lives were upended when violence broke out in Manipur last year in May but because they welcomed their newborns. "When I held my twins in my arms, all my miseries melted away," a 26-year-old woman at a

relief camp in Kakching district told PTI, requesting not to be identified or photographed. Her twin boys are now four months old. "When they grow up, I will tell them these stories." "This is an unforgettable period for me for a different reason and I want to remember it as such years later. I don't want any memory of this period to haunt my children when they grow up," she said. When she landed at the relief camp, she knew it was going to be very tough. "Pregnancy is a period when we are told to take extra care of ourselves, not to do any heavy-lifting, not take stress, and eat well. However, for me, this period was all about survival." Hatneu, who found shelter at a camp in Churachandpur, the epicentre of the violence then, ran a bamboo goods shop in



Imphal Valley. "I am a Kuki but I have always lived in the Valley only. We were forced to relocate here due to circumstances. Last month I gave birth to my baby at a nearby health facility. I have named my baby girl Nganthoibi, which means shining light," she said. Hatneu said at least 15 babies have been born in her camp. PTI visited six relief camps in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley and Kuki-zo-dominated

Churachandpur district. According to official estimates, at least 200 children were born in the six camps. Over 280 relief camps are operational across the state. The hill state has witnessed sporadic, sometimes intense, ethnic clashes since May 3 last year between the majority Meitei community and Kukis, resulting in loss of over 200 lives. While Meiteis population is concentrated in Imphal city, Kukis

have shifted to the hills. The violence displaced thousands of people, with officials saying more than 50,000 people are living in camps following the unrest. Ngahjemkim, who is also in a camp in Churachandpur, said she wants to remember this period for the gift she got in her baby. "Despite all odds, my daughter was born here and is healthy today. At a time when I thought none of us would survive... this seems like a miracle," she said. Lu Lamva Ngahjemkim was eight months pregnant when the clashes broke out. She and her family landed at a relief camp in Churachandpur. Among the women counting their blessings in form of their newborns at the relief camps are four who gave birth to twins. A dedicated camp set up for pregnant women in Imphal Valley

saw the birth of 168 babies. The facility, which was opened May 21 last year, hosted 164 women, who were brought there from different relief camps around the state. The camp wound up in February when no pregnant women were found in the relief camps in the valley. As Manipur goes through a period of uncertainty, there is an anti-poll sentiment in the state among the displaced. But the elections for the two Lok Sabha seats in Manipur have been announced alongside the general elections. They will be held in Manipur in two phases April 19 and 26. While Inner Manipur and some segments of Outer Manipur will vote in the first phase April 19, the remaining segments of Outer Manipur will vote in Phase 2 April 26.

India expands strategic presence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 10: For the first time, India will post defence attaches in several countries including Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ivory Coast, Philippines, Armenia and Poland in line with its broader policy initiative to expand strategic ties with key regions, a move that comes amid renewed geopolitical rivalries. New Delhi is also appointing a new defence attache to the tiny African nation of Djibouti that serves as a major maritime gateway around the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and is considered as a prized location for military bases, people familiar with the matter said. The new defence attache in Djibouti will be the second one to hold the post in the island nation. New Delhi is planning to rationalise the strength of its teams of military officials in its embassy in Moscow and high commission in London.



Research and proficiency will play an important role in further increasing the acceptance and popularity of homoeopathy

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

JNU INDIA'S HIGHEST-RANKED UNIVERSITY

Jawaharlal Nehru University is the highest-ranked university in India in the coveted rankings announced by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the London-based higher education analytics firm. The university is ranked at 20th position globally for development studies



BJP misusing ED, CBI: AAP

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 10: In a jolt to the Aam Aadmi Party, Delhi minister Raaj Kumar Anand Wednesday resigned from the cabinet and the party, alleging that it is embroiled in corruption.

Addressing a press conference, Anand, a Dalit leader who held portfolios of social welfare in the Arvind Kejriwal government, also alleged that Dalits were not given representation in the party.

The Aam Aadmi Party claimed Anand's resignation vindicated its stand that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest was aimed at finishing the party and accused the BJP of using the ED and the CBI to "break" its ministers and MLAs.

The BJP hit back, claiming the minister's resignation revealed AAP's "corrupt ways and how the entire party extorts like mafias".

AAP's Sanjay Singh said that although the resignation may demotivate some party workers, the Aam Aadmi Party will largely stand strong against attempts to break the organisation.

The latest setback to the party came a day after the Delhi High Court upheld Chief Minister Kejriwal's arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy.

Asked whether he would join any political party, he replied: "I will not go anywhere."

In response to a query on the timing of his resignation, He said, "Till yesterday, we were under the impression that we are being framed, but after the High Court verdict, it seems that



AAP TO OBSERVE 'SAMVIDHAN BACHAO, TANASHAHI HATAO DIVAS' APRIL 14

NEW DELHI: The AAP Wednesday announced it will observe 'Samvidhan Bachao, Tanashahi Hatao Divas' on the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, April 14 on the advice of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. In another message from jail, Kejriwal has asked AAP MLAs and volunteers to work to ensure that the people of Delhi face no problems, party leader Gopal Rai told reporters. Sunita Kejriwal, the Chief Minister's wife, met him in Tihar jail Tuesday and relayed his message at a party meeting that was attended by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh and others, Rai said. In his message, Kejriwal said the AAP is prepared to face any torture of the "dictatorship" in the country.

there is something wrong at our end." On Tuesday, the Delhi High Court dismissed Kejriwal's petition challenging his arrest, saying there was no contravention of legal provisions.

Addressing a press conference soon after Anand resigned, AAP MP Sanjay Singh lashed out at the BJP, alleging it was misusing probe agencies against Aam Aadmi Party MLAs and ministers.

"It is 'agnipariksha' (trial by fire) of AAP ministers and MLAs," Singh said at a press conference.

"The reason behind Arvind Kejriwal's arrest is the destruction of AAP. The sole rea-

son behind the investigations and raids by ED is to destroy the AAP BJP is a criminal party which has been doing this type of hooliganism," he alleged

In November last year, the Enforcement Directorate raided the premises of Anand and some others as part of a money laundering probe.

Anand, who is an MLA from the Patel Nagar, constituency, said that "if someone is feeling suffocated for a long time, then it becomes difficult" to continue in the party.

"But when High Court's decision came yesterday and what it said categorically, then it felt that somewhere our party was

at fault," he said in a statement.

The high court, in its order, had said the ED had "enough material" which led to Kejriwal's arrest, and the trial court remanded him in the custody of the agency by a well-reasoned order.

"From Jantar Mantar, Arvind Kejriwal had said that the country will change once politics changes. The politics hasn't changed but the politician has changed," Anand told reporters.

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh said the resignation shows "that people are feeling suffocated in the party (AAP) because they have institutionalised corruption".

"The AAP minister's resignation Wednesday has revealed the party's corrupt ways. It is now clear how the entire party extorts like mafia and how they spent in the Goa elections... It is unfortunate how the people who want to bring change have now become 'the mother of corruption'," he alleged.

Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj claimed that Anand may have been threatened to quit AAP.

"Time and again we said that the intention behind arresting Arvind Kejriwal was to break the party and governments of Delhi and Punjab. Many of our colleagues will feel that we hate Raaj Kumar (Anand) and will call him dishonest and cheater. We will not say any such thing".

"Not everyone is Sanjay Singh. I believe that he was scared," Bharadwaj said.

Singh said that earlier the BJP used to call Anand corrupt "when a raid was conducted against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) but now the party will welcome him into its fold with garlands".

SANDESHKHALI VIOLENCE

HC orders CBI probe



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 10: The Calcutta High Court Wednesday ordered a court-monitored CBI investigation into allegations of crimes against women and land grabbing in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali, saying an "impartial inquiry" was required in the interest of justice and fair play.

A division bench presided by Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam asked the CBI to file a comprehensive report on the alleged illegal conversion of agricultural land into water bodies for pisciculture after conducting a thorough inspection of revenue records and physical inspection of land alleged to have been converted.

The court also directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to investigate allegations of crimes against women and land grabbing in Sandeshkhali and submit a comprehensive report to it on the next date of hearing. The state was directed to provide the required support to the agency.

The bench, also comprising Justice Hiranmay Bhattacharyya, directed that the matter be heard again May 2, the

date on which the CBI was asked to file the report.

ED officials were attacked January 5 by a mob when they went to Sandeshkhali to search the premises of now-suspended Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh in connection with a ration distribution scam case.

Passing the judgement, the court observed that an impartial inquiry is required to be done by an agency that has the power to probe the criminal angle stated to be involved.

"In the interest of justice and fair play and for expeditious consideration of various complaints and allegations, an impartial inquiry is required to be conducted," the court said.

Around 600 complaints in the form of affidavits, including those of alleged sexual atrocities, land grabbing and other crimes such as assault and destruction of property, had been submitted before the court by petitioner-lawyer Priyanka Tibrewal.

Directing that the copies of the affidavits filed by the petitioner be forwarded to the CBI, the court said that if the complaints disclose cognisable offences, the agency will proceed as per law.



JOYFUL MOOD: A Muslim devotee with her child during Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of the holy month of Ramzan in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

international



For me, of great concern is that we have lost our moral compass on Gaza, as a humanity, as the international community

SWITZERLAND JOINS ESSI

Switzerland's Federal Council approved the country's participation in the European Sky Shield Initiative air defence umbrella, designed to build an integrated air and missile defence system across Europe. The European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) is a common air defence scheme set up by Germany in 2022 to boost European air defence



of the day quote

I often say if you want see the future, come to India, if you want to feel the future, come to India and if you want to work on the future, come to India

China and Russia have the right to engage in normal economic and trade cooperation. This kind of cooperation should not be interfered with or limited, and China also does not accept criticism or pressure

The main intent of this trilateral agreement is for us to be able to continue to flourish, to be able to help one another, and of course to keep the peace in the South China Sea and the freedom of navigation

SHORT TAKES

Yoon in trouble

Seoul: South Korea's main opposition party and its allies were projected to win a majority in Wednesday's elections for the country's legislature, exit polls showed, in what would mark a significant blow to President Yoon Suk Yeol. A joint poll released by broadcasters KBS, MBC and SBS estimated that the opposition Democratic Party (DP) and its minor allies could secure between 183-197 seats in the single-chamber, 300-seat parliament, and Yoon's conservative People Power Party (PPP) and its affiliates would win 85-100. The bitterly fought race was seen by some analysts as a referendum on Yoon, whose popularity has suffered amid a cost-of-living crisis and a spate of political scandals. Official results are not expected to be released until the early hours of Thursday, but exit polls in previous elections have given a broadly accurate reflection of the results. Nearly 29.4 million people, or 66.3% of eligible voters, had cast their ballots as of 6 pm, according to the National Election Commission, including 14 million who had voted before election day.

Japan PM in US

Washington: US President Joe Biden and the First Lady Dr Jill Biden Tuesday evening welcomed Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his wife, Yuko Kishida, at the White House and treated them with a seafood dinner at a city restaurant. Biden has invited the Japanese Prime Minister for a State Dinner Wednesday as part of the efforts to strengthen ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The president had last year hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a State visit. The President and First Lady welcomed Kishida Fumio and Kishida Yuko at the White House for a guest book signing and official gift exchange.

Five charred in HK

Hong Kong: A fire in a large, mostly residential building in Hong Kong Wednesday morning killed at least five people and left another 36 injured. Some 250 residents were rescued from the New Lucky House in Hong Kong's Jordan neighbourhood and the fire was extinguished. The fire services department said that the fire began on the first and second floors of the 16-story building, where a gym and licensed guest rooms were located. More investigation was needed into the cause of the fire, officials said. The five who died were apparently trying to escape the building. The New Lucky House has 200 units and was built in 1964.

India elected to key UN bodies

THE COUNTRY WINS SIGNIFICANT RE-ELECTION TO INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, April 10: India has been elected to several key bodies at the UN, including a significant victory by its nominee Jagjit Pavadia who was re-elected for a third term to the International Narcotics Control Board after garnering the highest number of votes.

Pavadia was re-elected to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) by secret ballot for the third term for five years from March 2025-2030, getting the highest number of votes in the highly competitive election.

India was also elected by acclamation to the Commission on the Status of Women for the term 2025-2029; Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund for the term 2025-2027; Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services for 2025-2027.

It was also elected to the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment



of Women for the 2025-2027 term and the Executive Board of the World Food Programme for the 2025-2027 term.

"India remains steadfast in its commitment to actively engage in the discourse within these UN bodies, upholding the principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' — the world is one family," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said in a post on X.

She said this guiding philosophy "underscores our dedication to contributing constructively and collaboratively to global deliberations, fostering a spirit of unity and shared responsibility for the betterment of all."

The UN Economic and Social

Council (ECOSOC) held elections to fill vacancies in 17 of its subsidiary bodies Tuesday. These vacancies were filled through election by acclamation, secret ballot and nomination.

"Today, a significant triumph for India at the UN, clinching a prestigious re-election to the International Narcotics Control Board for 2025-2030 and earning seats across several key UN bodies," the Permanent Mission of India to the UN said on X.

"India will continue, as always, to actively contribute towards deliberations in these bodies in keeping with our overall philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'," the Indian Mission said.

External Affairs Minister S

The 54-member ECOSOC is one of the six main organs of the United Nations and deals with economic, social, cultural and health matters as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms

Jaishankar also said in a post on X that Pavadia, India's nominee, has been re-elected to the International Narcotics Control Board at elections held in New York, for the term 2025-2030.

He noted that India secured the highest number of votes amongst all elected member states to the Board. "Good work," he said, lauding the Permanent Mission of India to the UN and the team at the Ministry of External Affairs.

India secured 41 votes out of the 53 voting members of the ECOSOC, the highest amongst all winning member states. With 41 votes, Pavadia secured a convincing win in the tough election with the candidate coming in second garnering 30 votes.

The election was highly competitive given that there were 24 candidates for five seats.

"The Permanent Mission of India thanks all the member states for their valuable support and the trust they have placed on India's nominee," the mission

said in a press release.

Pavadia has been a member of the International Narcotics Control Board since 2015. She was re-elected by the Council for a five-year term from 2020 to 2025 in May 2019. She had served as President of the Board in 2021-2022.

Established in 1968, the INCB is the independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions.

It consists of 13 members who are elected by the Economic and Social Council and who serve in their personal capacity, not as government representatives. Three members with medical, pharmacological or pharmaceutical experience are elected from a list of persons nominated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and 10 members are elected from a list of persons nominated by Governments.

According to information about its mandate on its website, INCB endeavours, in cooperation with Governments, to ensure that adequate supplies of drugs are available for medical and scientific uses and that the diversion of drugs from licit sources to illicit channels does not occur. INCB also monitors Governments' control over chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs and assists them in preventing the diversion of those chemicals into illicit traffic, it said.

Israeli airstrike kills 3 sons, 2 grandkids of Hamas leader

REUTERS

Cairo, April 10: Three sons of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza Wednesday, the Palestinian Islamist group and Haniyeh's family said.

The three sons - Hazem, Amir and Mohammad - were killed after the car they were driving in was bombed in Gaza's Al-Shati camp, Hamas said. Two of Haniyeh's grandchildren were also killed in the attack and a third was wounded, Hamas media said.

"Our demands are clear and specific and we will not make concessions on them. The enemy will be delusional if it thinks that targeting my sons, at the climax of the negotiations and before the movement sends its response, will push Hamas to change its position," Haniyeh told Al Jazeera TV. "The blood of my sons is not dearer than the blood of our people," said Haniyeh, who is based abroad in the Gulf Arab state of Qatar.

Haniyeh has been the tough-talking face of Hamas' international diplomacy as war with Israel has raged back in the Gaza Strip, where his family home was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike back in November.

In the seventh month of a war in which Israel's air and ground offensive has devastated Gaza, Hamas wants an end to Israeli military operations and a withdrawal from the enclave, and permission for displaced Palestinians to return home.

Nobody can stop 'family reunion' with Taiwan: Xi

REUTERS

Beijing, April 10: Chinese President Xi Jinping told former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou Wednesday that outside interference could not stop the "family reunion" between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and that there are no issues that cannot be discussed.

Since the defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war to Mao Zedong's communists, no serving Taiwanese leader has visited China.

Ma, president from 2008 to 2016, last year became the first former Taiwanese leader to visit China, and is now on his second trip to the country, at a time of simmering military tension across the strait.

Ma had been widely expected to meet Xi this time around, having first met Xi in Singapore in late 2015 for a landmark summit shortly before the current Taiwan president, Tsai Ing-wen, won election.

Meeting Ma in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, where foreign leaders normally hold talks



with top Chinese officials, Xi said that people on both sides of the strait are Chinese.

"External interference cannot stop the historical trend of reunion of the country and family," Xi said, in comments reported by Taiwanese media.

People on both sides of the strait are Chinese, Xi said.

"There is no rancour that cannot be resolved, no problem that cannot be discussed, and no force that can separate us."

China has never renounced the use of force to bring democratically-governed Taiwan under its control, and has ramped up military and political pressure to assert its sovereignty claims.

GAZA WAR

REUTERS

Washington, April 10: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's approach to the war in Gaza is a "mistake," US President Joe Biden said in an interview published Tuesday, offering further criticism of Israel's handling of the conflict.

"I think what he's doing is a mistake. I don't agree with his approach," Biden said in comments to Univision, a US Spanish-language TV network.

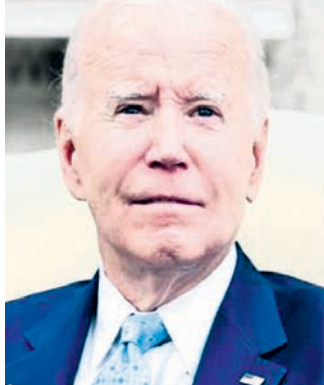
Biden has also previously called Israel's bombing in Gaza "indiscriminate" and its military actions "over the top."

The White House said last week that the president, in a call with Netanyahu, threatened to make conditional US support for Israel's offensive on it taking concrete steps to protect aid workers and civilians. That call followed an Israeli airstrike that killed seven staff of the aid group World Central Kitchen.

"What I'm calling for is for the Israelis to just call for a ceasefire, allow for the next six, eight weeks, total access to all food and medicine going into the country," Biden said in Tuesday's

'Netanyahu's approach is a mistake'

REUTERS



interview.

Israel's military assault on Gaza has been the subject of mounting international criticism. Domestically, Biden has also faced months of protests, opens new tab from anti-war activists, Muslims and Arab Americans across the country, who have demanded a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and restrictions on US military assistance for Israel.

Hamas' October 7 attack, opens new tab on Israel killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's subsequent military assault on Hamas-governed



Gaza has killed over 33,000, according to the local health ministry, displaced nearly all of its

2.3 million population and led to genocide allegations, opens new tab that Israel denies. The coastal enclave also suffers widespread hunger.

Israel has received more US foreign aid than any other country since World War Two, although annual assistance has been dwarfed for two years by funding and military equipment sent to Ukraine since Russia's 2022 invasion.

The United States has traditionally shielded Israel in the UN Security Council and vetoed three draft resolutions on the war in Gaza. It abstained last month when the Security Council demanded an immediate ceasefire.

Israel must be punished: Khamenei

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said Wednesday that Israel "must be punished and it shall be" for attacking the Iranian embassy compound in Syria. In a major escalation of Israel's war with regional adversaries, suspected Israeli warplanes bombed Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital April 1 in a strike that Iran said killed seven military advisers. "When they attack the consulate, it is as if they have attacked our soil," Khamenei said in a speech marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. "The evil regime made a mistake and must be punished and it shall be," he added. In an apparent response to Khamenei, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Wednesday that Israel will respond if Iran attacks Israel from its own soil. "If Iran attacks from its own territory, Israel will respond and attack in Iran," Katz said in post on the social media platform X.

How Iran is remaking the Middle East

Left unchecked, the dramatic expansion of Iran's influence would have a catastrophic impact on Israel, the wider region, and the global economy

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, and the looming threat of escalation, has disrupted the efforts of three successive US presidents to shift American focus and resources away from the Middle East. Following Hamas' attack October 7, President Joe Biden swiftly came to Israel's aid, a crucial ally, in order to prevent further escalation of violence. However, the situation has now reached a stalemate, with the security concerns driving the conflict enjoying widespread support among the Israeli population. Despite months of intense Israeli military operations, Hamas remains a formidable force, resulting in the deaths of numerous Palestinian civilians and a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

As the crisis deepens, the United States finds itself increasingly entangled in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the October 7 attack, Washington has delivered aid to Gaza, conducted military operations to safeguard maritime routes, addressed threats posed by groups like Hezbollah in

Lebanon, and sought to weaken disruptive militias throughout the region. Additionally, diplomatic efforts have been made to promote normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

For President Biden, reengaging with the Middle East carries risks, especially as he faces re-election challenges from former President Donald Trump, whose criticisms of America's involvement in Middle Eastern conflicts have resonated with voters. A majority of Americans express concerns about the potential for direct military intervention in the region, and there is limited support for a major diplomatic push to end the Israel-Hamas conflict.

However, the dangers of inaction are significant, particularly benefitting Iran, a regional actor seeking to exploit Washington's reluctance or withdrawal. The ongoing quagmire in the Middle East presents Iran with an opportunity to weaken Israel, a longstanding adversary, and diminish US influence in the region.



Iran's Islamic regime aimed to inspire copycat religious uprisings after its own 1979 revolution, and to many observers, it may appear to have failed. Indeed, the conventional wisdom in Washington and elsewhere has often held that Iran has become contained, even isolated. But this was never true. Instead, Tehran developed a calculated strategy to empower proxy militias and to influence operations in its neighbourhood while main-

taining plausible deniability—a scheme whose canniness was vindicated by the devastating scope of Hamas' assault and subsequent attacks by Iranian-affiliated militias in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. The post-October 7 strategic landscape in the Middle East is one that was largely created by Iran and that plays to its strengths. Tehran sees opportunity in chaos. Iranian leaders are exploiting and escalating

the war in Gaza to elevate their regime's stature, weaken and delegitimise Israel, undermine US interests, and further shape the regional order in their favour. The truth is that the Islamic Republic is now in a better position than ever to dominate the Middle East, including by attaining the ability to disrupt shipping at multiple critical chokepoints.

Left unchecked, the dramatic expansion of Iran's influence would have a catastrophic impact on Israel, the wider region, and the global economy. To disrupt this amplification of Iranian power, Biden urgently needs to articulate and then implement a clear strategy to protect Palestinian civilians from bearing the brunt of Israel's military operations, counter Iran's corrosive war-by-proxy strategy and blunt the capabilities of Tehran's accomplices. Achieving these goals will require a tricky set of moves by Washington, and Americans are weary of the military, economic, and human toll of their country's commitments in the Middle East. But no world

power other than the United States has the military and diplomatic capacity to frustrate Iran's most destructive ambitions by managing the spiraling conflict between Israel and Hamas and containing its most devastating long-term consequences.

In a sense, Iran now has the default advantage over the United States because it does not actually have to achieve anything material in the near term. Chaos itself will constitute a victory. By contrast, the bar for US success is high. Like it or not, however, the United States remains an indispensable player in the region despite its dubious record over the past several decades. Standing by its allies—and safeguarding access to oil that remains vital to the world economy—with a delicate balance of support and restraint requires commitment. Several US presidents hoped to downsize America's role in the Middle East on the cheap—in Biden's case, to focus on China's challenge and Russia's growing threat. But Hamas and Iran have drawn the United States back in.

business

of the day quote

We're seeing a surge in demand for healthcare professionals within the country as well as from countries like Malaysia, Italy, Portugal, Poland, and Germany. We expect demand for Indian healthcare professionals to double nationally and globally by 2030

SACHIN ALUG | CEO, NLS SERVICES

Foreign luxury retailers are entering India through partnerships with local players. This reflects a renewed optimism in India's retail sector, with investments from major developers in tier-1 cities, while institutional investors target tier-II cities, creating a dynamic retail landscape

RAM CHANDNANI | MD (ADVISORY & TRANSACTIONS SERVICES), CBRE INDIA

Our focus will be on creating merchant education and awareness to ensure the uptick of UPI on the Fonepay Network in Nepal

RITESH PAI | CEO (INTERNATIONAL PAYMENTS), PHONEPE

SHORT TAKES

Maruti Suzuki hikes Swift prices

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India Wednesday said it has hiked the price of its hatchback Swift by up to ₹25,000 along with an increase on a select variant of SUV Grand Vitara. The prices of Swift have been raised by up to ₹25,000, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. Similarly, the price of the Sigma variant of Grand Vitara has been increased by ₹19,000, the company said. Now, Swift is available at a price range of ₹5.99 lakh to ₹8.89 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). The Sigma variant of Grand Vitara is priced at ₹10.8 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi), as per the company's website. The price hikes are effective April 10, 2024, the company said.

Musk to meet Modi

New Delhi: Tesla chief Elon Musk will visit India this month to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and is expected to make an announcement on plans to invest and open a new factory in the country, two sources with direct knowledge said. The billionaire will meet Modi in the week of April 22 in New Delhi, and will separately make an announcement about his India plans, said the two sources, who declined to be named as the trip details are confidential. The Tesla CEO will be accompanied by other executives during his visit, said the first source.

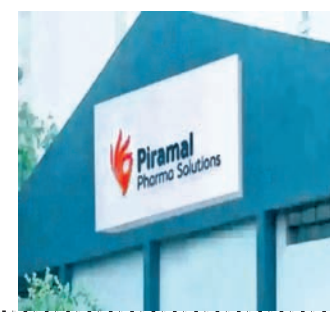


The size of the business (in India) out of our total global portfolio today is limited. However, it is the fastest-growing business portfolio in our global business. So that's why huge attention is there and strategic attention is here in India

HIROSHI YOSHIZANE | MD, BRIDGESTONE INDIA

PIRAMAL PHARMA FORAYS INTO MEN'S GROOMING SEGMENT

Piramal Pharma Wednesday said its consumer products division has forayed into the men's personal grooming category with the launch of a new product range. The company's Bohem product range includes hair removal spray, beard growth oil, and underarm roll-on, the company said in a statement



SIZZLING STOCKS

D-ST ON DREAM RUN

Sensex closes above record 75K mark, Nifty hits new peak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

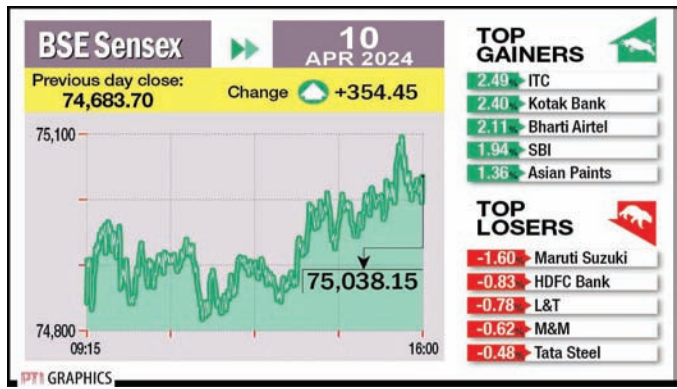
Mumbai, April 10: Benchmark Sensex climbed 354 points to close above the record 75,000 mark for the first time while broader Nifty scaled a fresh lifetime high Wednesday on gains in FMCG, energy and metal shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 354.45 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 75,038.15. During the day, the index spurred 421.44 points or 0.56 per cent to hit a high of 75,105.14.

Broader Nifty of the NSE advanced by 111.05 points or 0.49 per cent to close at a record peak of 22,753.80. During the day, it jumped 132.95 points or 0.58 per cent to reach a lifetime intra-day peak of 22,775.70.

Key indices hit intra-day lifetime high levels Tuesday with Sensex scaling the historic 75,000 mark for the first time but closed in the red following profit booking in index major Reliance Industries.

From the Sensex basket, ITC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti



Indian markets sustained their upward momentum, buoyed by a robust performance in the broader market, albeit slightly lagging behind its Asian and European counterparts

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Airtel, State Bank of India, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, Reliance Industries and Nestle were the major gainers.

Maruti, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards.

The majority of sectors were aligned with the move wherein FMCG, metal and energy were

among the top gainers. The broader indices also edged higher after two days of pause and gained in the range of 0.7-0.9 per cent, Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.89 per cent and smallcap index advanced 0.46 per cent. Among the indices, oil & gas jumped 1.74 per cent, energy by 1.71 per cent, metal by 1.66 per cent, commodities by 1.30 per cent and services by 1.15 per cent. Utilities and auto were the laggards.

As many as 1,961 stocks advanced while 1,869 declined and 103 remained unchanged.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹593.20 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark declined 58.80 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 74,683.70 Tuesday. The NSE

Gold, silver scale record highs for 3rd straight session

New Delhi: Gold and silver prices hit fresh lifetime high levels for the third straight session Wednesday, with the yellow metal breaching ₹72,000 per 10 grams level in the national capital amid strong cues in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities. Gold prices rose ₹160 to hit its lifetime high of ₹72,000 per 10 grams in the national capital. It had settled at a record ₹71,840 per 10 grams Tuesday. Similarly, silver prices climbed ₹200 to hit a record ₹84,700 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at ₹72,000 per 10 grams, up by ₹160, amid a bullish trend in the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold was trading at \$2,356 per ounce, up \$6 from the previous close.

Investors richer by ₹2.27L-crore

Investors' wealth climbed ₹2.27 lakh crore Wednesday as the benchmark Sensex closed above the 75,000 mark for the first time. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms climbed ₹2,27,024.52 crore to reach its all-time high of ₹4,02,19,353.07 crore (\$4.83 trillion). The market valuation of BSE-listed companies has gone past the coveted ₹400 lakh crore mark for the first time Monday.

Nifty dipped 23.55 points or 0.10 per cent to 22,642.75.

Stock and money markets will remain closed Thursday on account of Ramzan Id.

Equity MFs end FY24 on a high

Equity mutual funds attract ₹22,633cr in March; SIP hit fresh high at ₹19,187cr

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 10: Equity mutual funds ended the financial year 2023-24 on a positive note with a net inflow of ₹22,633 crore in March, propelled by huge interest for thematic funds and launch of new fund offerings (NFOs).

However, the latest flow was 16 per cent lower compared to an infusion of ₹26,866 crore seen in the preceding month, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) showed Wednesday.

Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) monthly inflow rose to a fresh high of ₹19,187 crore during the month under review from ₹19,187 crore in February. Total SIP contribution stood at ₹2 lakh crore, an uptick of 28 per cent over the previous year.

Hybrid funds attracted ₹5,584 crore in the last month of 2023-24. Debt mutual funds, on the other hand, saw an outflow of ₹1.98 lakh crore in March.

Total outflows of the mutual fund industry stood at ₹1.6 lakh crore in March due to quarter ending advance tax payments and higher valuations in mid and small cap space. MFs had seen a total pull out of ₹1.2 lakh crore in preceding month, Gopal Kavalireddi, Vice President of Research at FYERS, said.

The outflow has pulled down the industry's assets under man-



agement (AUM) to ₹53.4 lakh crore last month from ₹54.54 lakh crore in February-end. However, for the financial year 2023-24, the AUM surged 36 per cent, capturing the buoyancy in equities.

In the equity segment, all categories experienced inflow in March, barring small cap funds, which saw an outflow of ₹94 crore. Moreover, the flow in March marks the 37th consecutive month of net inflows in equity funds.

The equity segment was also aided by five new fund launches during the month which cumulatively garnered ₹3,074 crore. All these new launches belonged to the sectoral or thematic category, Melvyn Santarita, Analyst at Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Within the equity asset class, the sectoral or thematic funds category saw the highest inflows to the tune of ₹7,918 crore.

However, the small cap category witnessed a net outflow of ₹94 crore, making it the first outflow since September 2021. Moreover, in the mid-cap category, net investment dropped to ₹1,018 crore in March from ₹1,808 crore in the preceding month.

NSE cautions against deepfake videos of its chief recommending stocks

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) Wednesday cautioned investors against deepfake videos of its MD and CEO Ashish Kumar Chauhan giving stock recommendations. In a statement, the exchange said it has observed the use of the face or voice of Chauhan and NSE logo in a few investment and advisory audio and video clips falsely created using technology. Such videos seem to have been created using sophisticated technologies to imitate the voice and facial expressions of Chauhan, it added. "Investors are hereby cautioned not to believe in such audio and videos and not follow any such investment or other advice coming from such fake videos or other mediums," NSE said. It may be noted that NSE's employees are not authorised to recommend any stock or deal in those stocks.

BIZ BUZZ



SBI celebrates World Homoeopathy Day

Bhubaneswar: State Bank of India, Local Head Office, Bhubaneswar has observed World Homoeopathy Day April 10. The day is observed on the birth anniversary of German physician and father of Homoeopathy Samuel Hahnemann. DGM & Circle Development Officer Manoj Kumar Singh felicitated Dr Akshay Kumar Mishra, MD (Homoeopathy) of LHO Dispensary on the eve of World Homoeopathy Day.

IndiGo now world's 3rd largest airline by m-cap

Mumbai: IndiGo has now become the world's third-largest airline in terms of market capitalisation (m-cap) with shares of the operator InterGlobe Aviation Limited soaring nearly five per cent to achieve a lifetime record-high mark during intra-day Wednesday, April 10. According to Bloomberg data, IndiGo surpassed United Airlines to become the sixth largest airline in the world during December 2023. Delta Air and Ryanair Holdings are the top two airlines with \$30.4 billion and \$26.5 billion m-cap, respectively, according to Bloomberg.

GLOBAL TRADE GROWTH TO REBOUND THIS YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 10: The global trade growth is expected to pick up gradually this year after a contraction in 2023 but regional conflicts, geopolitical tensions and economic policy uncertainty pose substantial downside risks, according to a WTO forecast released Wednesday.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO), however, lowered the trade growth projection for 2024 to 2.6 per cent.

In October last year, the organisation had projected that growth would be 3.3 per cent.

"Global goods trade is expected to pick up gradually this year following a contraction in 2023 that was driven by the lingering effects of high energy prices and inflation," the WTO said in a statement.

"It said the volume of world merchandise trade should increase 2.6 per cent in 2024 and 3.3 per cent in 2025 after falling 1.2



We are making progress towards global trade recovery, thanks to resilient supply chains and a solid multilateral trading framework, which are vital for improving livelihoods and welfare. It's imperative that we mitigate risks like geopolitical strife and trade fragmentation to maintain economic growth and stability

NGOZI OKONJO-IWEALA | DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WTO

per cent in 2023. However, regional conflicts, geopolitical tensions and economic policy uncertainty pose substantial downside risks to the forecast," it added.

The decline in merchandise exports in 2023 was partly due to falling prices for commodities, such as oil and gas.

"In 2024 and 2025, inflation is expected to gradually abate, allowing real incomes to grow again in advanced economies,

boosting consumption of manufactured goods. A recovery of demand for tradable goods in 2024 is already evident. This is related to an increase in household consumption linked to improved income prospects," it added.

It also said conflict in the Middle East has diverted sea shipments between Europe and Asia while tensions elsewhere could lead to trade fragmentation.

Icra downgrades banking sector outlook

THE GROSS FRESH NPA GENERATION AT STATE-OWNED BANKS IS EXPECTED TO COME AT 1.3% IN FY24, AND GO UP TO 1.5% IN FY25, WHILE THE SAME AT PRIVATE SECTOR BANKS IS ESTIMATED AT 2% AND 2.2%, RESPECTIVELY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 10: Domestic rating agency Icra Wednesday revised downwards its outlook for the banking sector to 'stable' from 'positive' on expectations of moderation in credit growth and profitability.

The agency said the credit growth will moderate to 11.6-12.5 per cent in FY25 from 16.3 per cent (excluding the impact of the HDFC twins merger) in FY24,



while the lower net interest income margins on higher deposit rate payouts will lead to a dip in profits.

On the asset quality front, it expects a further moderation in the gross non-performing assets ratio for the banking system at 2.2 per cent by March 2025 from 3 per cent likely in March 2024, its vice president Sachin Sachdeva told reporters.

This will be the lowest level since September 2011, Sachdeva added. Unsecured retail advances and loans to non-bank finance companies will slow

NIMs have been under pressure for the last two years and will further moderate in FY25, as the impact of deposit rate hikes plays out

ANIL GUPTA | SENIOR VP, ICRA

down in FY25, leading to a dip in the overall non-food credit growth in the system, the agency said.

The RBI's curbs on unsecured lending by way of increasing the risk weights in November

have already led to a reduction in the incremental disbursements of such loans to over 23 per cent from 29.4 per cent earlier, it pointed out.

However, challenges on deposit mobilisation will continue in FY25, and banks will have to hike deposit rates to attract the funds, the agency said, adding that the credit deposit ratio, which has reportedly come under the regulatory gaze lately, will continue to be elevated at over 80 per cent.

The agency said it expects a "convergence" between credit and deposit growth in FY25, which will be helpful for the system, given the four percentage point gap that exists at present.

The share of the low-cost current and savings account deposits will also moderate as customers continue preferring the higher-yielding term deposits. This will put pressure on the net interest margins (NIMs) for banks, it added.

A growth in operating expenses will also hurt the profits, it noted.

TIDBITS

Alibaba's Jack Ma steps out from shadows

Shanghai: Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma has penned a lengthy memo to employees that expresses support for the internet giant's restructuring efforts, a rare move from the billionaire after spending the last few years out of the spotlight. Alibaba's Hong Kong-listed shares surged 5% after the post. The post, made in an internal company forum, comes one year after Alibaba announced its decision to split into six units - the biggest shake-up in its 25-year history. It has had a tumultuous time since then, installing a new CEO, announcing and then abandoning the listings of its cloud and logistics units. At the same time, it has lost ground in e-commerce to low-cost rivals such as PDD Holdings and ByteDance-owned Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok. "We must not only have the courage to admit and correct yesterday's problems in a timely manner but also make reforms for the future," he said in the post.

China rejects Fitch Ratings downgrade

Bangkok: China's Finance Ministry denounced a report by Fitch Ratings that kept its sovereign debt rating at A+ but downgraded its outlook to negative, saying Wednesday that China's deficit is at a moderate and reasonable level and risks are under control. Risks to China's public finances are rising, Fitch said, as Beijing works to resolve mounting local and regional government debts and to shift away from heavy reliance on its troubled property industry to drive economic growth. But while slower growth is adding to the challenges of coping with heavy borrowing, Fitch said it kept China's A+ rating due to its "large and diversified economy's" vital role in global trade and its huge foreign exchange reserves. The Finance Ministry said it was a "pity" that Fitch had downgraded its sovereign debt and faulted its methods, saying it had failed to take into account Beijing's moves toward "appropriately intensifying, improving quality and efficiency" of its government spending.

Anil Ambani suffers another setback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 10: He was ranked the sixth richest person in the world in 2008 but a series of setbacks - the latest being the Supreme Court setting aside a ₹8,000 crore arbitral award that was granted in favour of a firm in his group - reversed his fortunes.

An MBA from Wharton School, Anil Ambani, 64, the younger son of legendary business tycoon, Dhirubhai Ambani, was known for his flamboyant nature - he married Bollywood actress Tina Munim and was a Rajya Sabha MP for two years - as much as for his unbeatable business acumen.

But over the past few years, he has had setbacks across businesses that pushed him out of the billionaire list.



The Supreme Court Wednesday set aside a ₹8,000 crore arbitral award granted in favour of Delhi Airport Metro Express Pvt (DAMEPL).

The award was in relation to a dispute arising out of a "concession agreement" that was entered into between DAMEPL (a subsidiary of Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure) and Delhi Metro Rail Corp in 2008.

The court asked DAMEPL to refund all sums previously paid by the Delhi Metro Rail in accordance with the arbitral award.

DMRC had paid ₹3,300 crore to the Reliance Infra arm, which now needs to be refunded.

Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure Ltd in a stock exchange filing that no liability has been imposed on it by the Supreme Court order.

"Reliance Infrastructure wishes to clarify that the Order dated April 10, 2024, passed by the Supreme Court does not impose any liability on the company and the company has not received any money from DMRC/DAMEPL under the arbitral award," it said.

TITANS BEAT ROYALS IN THRILLER

RCB take on MI in strugglers' faceoff



Rashid Khan and Rahul Tewatia run between wickets, while Kuldeep Sen asks a fielder for the ball



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 10: Desperate Royal Challengers Bengaluru will be under tremendous pressure to get their act together against an equally struggling Mumbai Indians when the two teams faceoff in an IPL match here Thursday.

Four losses in five matches have not only vindicated how poor RCB were in the last IPL auction, but they have also missed the opportunity to make it up with better on-field showing.

However, there is nothing much to separate the two teams as RCB are just a rung below MI in the points table at the ninth position with MI winning just one (29-run victory over Delhi Capitals) out of their four games so far.

Virat Kohli's brilliance, notwithstanding, RCB's campaign is under threat of falling apart even before they could register enough wins to have a real shot at the knockouts. Kohli's imperious form — 316 runs with one century and two fifties at a strike rate of 146.29 — has been the lone bright spot for RCB.

RCB's case, whose bowling looked threadbare even before they hit the ground running, Maxwell's four scalps neither provide any respite nor assurance.

But their recent record against MI could boost RCB, who have won four of their last five games. The overall record in 32 matches, however, is tilted in favour of the five-time champions, who

enjoy 18 wins against RCB's 14. MI would know present circumstances provide them with a ripe opportunity to build up on their recent success and move further up in the points table after a rough start.

For a side which invariably starts IPL with a few losses, MI know their way around these lanes. A contest against a floundering RCB could bring about their second win on the trot and some further boost in confidence, before facing defending champions Chennai Super Kings.

But it would be imperative for MI not to get too far ahead, since they also have their share of concerns. Even though Rohit Sharma and Ishan Kishan have set the scoring tempo at the top, the middle-order has failed to carry the momentum for which skipper Hardik Pandya is answerable to a large extent.

It remains to be seen if the anger of MI fans against Pandya persists when he takes the field next. Suryakumar Yadav's return amid a lot of attention ended in a damp squib, but the World's No.1 T20 batter would be itching to hit the strides and get a big score. Romario Shepherd's blitz against Anrich Nortje for 32 runs in an over clearly proved to be the difference against DC here.

MATCHDAY

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

BRIEF SCORE

RR 196/3 (Riyen Parag 76, Sanju Samson 68 not out; Rashid Khan 1/18) lost to GT 199/7 (Shubman Gill 72, Sai Sudharsan 35, Rashid Khan 24 n o, Rahul Tewatia 22; Kuldeep Sen 3/41, Yuzvendra Chahal 2/43) by 3 wickets.

long-on missed the ball under the lights of a low full-toss delivery of which Samson didn't generate much power but survived for a boundary. It was another big over for the Royals as both the batters collected 15 runs and with one over left in his spell, Sharma already thrown away 36 runs. Later, Simron Hetmyer's 5-ball-13 lifted hosts Royals to 196/3.

Skiper Samson reached his half century in 31 deliveries after Rahul Tewatia guiding the

breakthrough as Jaiswal had to depart after scoring 24.

Rashid then sent back Buttler in the last over of the Powerplay as Royals were reduced to 42/2. Then it was all Samson and Parag show Parag escaped falling for a duck, as Rashid got him to edge a leg break that Matthew Wade dropped behind the stumps. The boundaries flow stopped in the middle overs, thanks to Afghan spin duo of Rashid and Noor Ahmad and Royals' struggle for the runs continued Royals ended on 73/2 after 10 overs.

They broke the shackles in the 13th over collecting 15 runs off Ahmad over Parag looked dangerous as he started the counter-attack against the spin-

ners. Parag reached his third half century of the season in 34 deliveries. After the end of 14 overs, Royals were 118/2. After Ahmad was hammered for 15 runs it was a chance for another youngster Spencer Johnson, who was taken into remand for 16 runs over. Samson collected a boundary down the cover to a half-tracker outside off and then smashed for a boundary and a maximum to end the over on a high. Samson, who hasn't had as much strike as Parag during their partnership, rushed from 29 off 20 to 44 off 25.

in the 16th over with the Titans requiring 64 off 28 balls. It looked like the match was over for the Gujarat side, but Tewatia, Rashid and M Shahruxh Khan (14, 8b) have other ideas.

Earlier, a 130-run third wicket partnership between skipper Sanju Samson (68, 38b, 7x4, 2x6) and Riyan Parag (76, 48b, 3x4, 5x6) off 78 balls lifted Royals to 196/3.

Given the chance to bat first on a flat track and big square boundaries, the Royals kicked off to a good start as both the openers Jos Buttler and Yashasvi Jaiswal added 32 runs in 26 deliveries for the opening wicket. Umesh Yadav in his third over of the innings provided the first

breakthrough as Jaiswal had to depart after scoring 24.

breakthrough as Jaiswal had to depart after scoring 24.

AGENCIES

Jaipur, April 10: Late cameos from Rashid Khan (24 n o, 11b, 4x4) and Rahul Tewatia (22, 11b, 3x4) helped Gujarat Titans beat Rajasthan Royals by three wickets in a thrilling IPL contest here, Wednesday.

Chasing a challenging target of 197, openers Sai Sudharsan (35, 29b, 3x4, 1x6) and skipper Shubman Gill (72, 44b, 6x4, 2x6) gave Titans a superb start stitching together 64 runs before Kuldeep Sen (3/41) gave triple blow to the last edition's finalists.

Titans were reduced from 64 for no loss to 79/3 in 15 balls. However, Gill kept his wicket at one end. The skipper departed

Gukesh downs Abasov to jump into joint lead



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Toronto, April 10: Grandmaster D Gukesh grabbed a share of the lead alongside Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi by becoming the only Indian to post a win in the fifth round of the FIDE Candidates Chess Tournament, outwitting Azerbaijan's Nijat Abasov in a hard-fought contest here.

With nine rounds still to come in the double round-robin event, the 17-year-old Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi share the top spot with 3.5 points and they are followed by top-seeded American Fabio Caruana half a point behind.

American Hikaru Nakamura was the other winner on the day against Firouza Alireza of France while Indian teen R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with overnight sole leader Nepomniachtchi. Vidit Gujrathi also put an end to his losses by settling for a draw with Caruana.

Praggnanandhaa and Nakamura share the fourth spot with 2.5 points followed closely by Gujrathi on two points. Alireza and Abasov share the last position on 1.5 points apiece.

In the Women's competition, nothing changed in terms of standings with all the four games ending in draws. Praggnanandhaa's sister R Vaishali could not dent the

defenses of Anna Muzychuk and Koneru Humpy recovered with a draw against Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia.

Tournament leader Zhongyi Tan of China was held to a draw by the continuously improving Nurgul Salimova of Bulgaria and Russian Kateryna Lagno signed peace with Tingjie Lei of China.

Tan remained in front following the drawing melee with 3.5 points in her kitty and Goryachkina inched up to 3 points to remain right behind the leader. Lagno, Vaishali and Salimova shared the third spot with 2.5 points, half a point ahead of Humpy, Muzychuk and Lei.

Gukesh started off with the King pawn and faced the Petroff defense. The Indian ensured a complex middle game and had an edge right till the time the players hit the first time control. However, on the 40th move, Gukesh erred and what seemed like a walk-in-the-park became a tough game.

Abasov fought hard and was close to a draw by the 80th move but a blunder by the Azerbaijani on the 83rd cast the die decisively in Gukesh's favour with an extra pawn in the queen and pawn endgame. The game lasted 87 moves and went on for a marathon six hours.

Sreejesh heroics in vain as India lose series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Perth, April 10: Veteran goalkeeper PR Sreejesh's heroics went in vain as India squandered a goal lead to go down 1-2 against Australia in the third men's hockey Test to hand the home team an unassailable 3-0 lead in the five-match series here Wednesday.

The Indians, who lost 1-5 and 2-4 in the first two Tests, produced a much-better show Wednesday with the defensive unit leading from the front. It was a classic battle between the ever-attacking Australians against the Indian defence, which the latter narrowly lost eventually.

India took the lead through Jugraj Singh's penalty corner conversion in the 41st minute, but Jeremy Hayward (44th and 49th) dashed the visitors' hopes by scoring a brace to hand Australia their third win on the trot.

India played cohesively and with a lot more intensity to frustrate the Kookaburras, who secured as many as six penalty corners in the opening quarter but failed to get past the resolute defence of the visitors. Credit must go to both Indian goalkeepers — Sreejesh and Krishan Bahadur Pathak — for their brilliant display in the first half.

It was the hosts who had the



first scoring chance in the form of a penalty corner in the fourth minute but Sreejesh made a

lovely low diving save to his right to keep out Hayward's shot. Five minutes later, Australia se-

cured three more penalty corners but they failed to get past the 'The Great Indian Wall' in Sreejesh.

After Sreejesh, it was Pathak's turn to show his heroics. He first denied Australia skipper Aran Zalewski with a save off his chest and then came out of his line to keep out Tim Brand.

India took the lead against the run of play from their second penalty corner through Jugraj's lightning flick. Jolted by the goal, Australia launched fierce attacks and secured two more penalty corners but they couldn't beat Sreejesh, who was magnificent under the bar, pulling off saves after saves.

A rare defensive lapse from Amit Rohidas finally helped Australia to bounce back. Rohidas miss-trapped a ball inside the circle and conceded a penalty stroke for blocking an Australian striker. Hayward stepped up to score Australia's equaliser. The Australians secured two more penalty corners in the final quarter and from the second chance, Hayward finally broke Sreejesh's defence with a powerful flick.

India pulled out Sreejesh with two minutes left in the match for an extra field player, but the move didn't yield result. The fourth Test of the series will be played here Friday.

Real, City share spoils in frantic CL quarters 1st leg

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, April 10: Three goals in the first 14 minutes. Back-and-forth attacking. Stunning second-half strikes. It was an instant classic between the newest Champions League rivals, with Real Madrid and Manchester City drawing 3-3 in a frantic first leg of the quarterfinals Tuesday.

Federico Valverde scored a 79th-minute equaliser for Madrid after City had rallied with Phil Foden and Josko Gvardiol scoring goals five minutes apart midway through the second half at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. The second leg will be next Wednesday in Manchester.

Bernardo Silva had put City ahead two minutes into the match,

but Madrid rallied with an own-goal by City defender Ruben Dias in the 12th and a score by forward Rodrygo in the 14th.

It is the third consecutive encounter between the clubs in the knockout stages of the Champions League. Madrid eliminated City in the semifinals in 2022, while City got the best of Madrid at the same stage last year. Both teams went on to win the title after eliminating their rivals.

The match at the Bernabeu went on as scheduled despite of a possible terror threat by the Islamic State, with no security incidents being immediately reported.

The result extended Madrid's 28-match unbeaten streak in all competitions, as well as City's 26-match unbeaten run across all tournaments. Defending cham-



Federico Valverde (2nd from L) reacts after scoring against Man City

City is unbeaten in 22 straight games in the Champions League.

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti made his record-ex-

tending 200th appearance as a coach in the Champions League. He also is the coach with the most titles (four) and victories (114). It was his 59th game as Madrid coach in the European competition.

Arsenal hold Bayern

Harry Kane got his customary goal against Arsenal on his return to north London, but Bayern Munich couldn't leave with the win this time. Leandro Trossard's second-half equaliser rescued a 2-2 draw for Arsenal against Bayern in the first leg after Kane had scored against his old rival yet again. The hosts had taken a 12th-minute lead through Bukayo Saka before former Arsenal player Serge Gnabry made it 1-1 in the 18th.