



Bitter experience
Canada-born Indian actor Nora Fatehi shares how she was ridiculed by male celebs of the film industry

LEISURE | P2



Power plant destroyed
Russian missiles and drones destroy a large electricity plant near Kyiv and hit power facilities in several regions of Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL | P10



ADB raises GDP forecast
Asian Development Bank raises India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7 per cent, from 6.7 per cent

BUSINESS | P11



Sindhu disappoints
PV Sindhu bows out of Badminton Asia Championships after going down against sixth seed Han Yue of China in a hard-fought match

SPORTS | P12

6 students killed as school bus crashes into tree

AGENCIES

Chandigarh, April 11: Six children were killed and around 20 injured as their school bus crashed into a tree and overturned in Haryana's Mahendragarh Thursday, with police saying they have arrested three people including the principal and the driver who was allegedly drunk.

State Education Minister Seema Trikha, who visited the injured students at hospitals, said a show-cause notice has been issued to the private school to explain why it was open despite it being a holiday on account of Eid.

The incident occurred near Unhani village in Kanina around 8.30 am when the bus was carrying around 40 children - from primary to secondary classes - to the GL Public School.

Dharmender was driving rashly due to which he lost control of the bus, which rammed into a tree and overturned, police said, citing reports.

"Six children have died in the incident and around 20 are injured," Mahendragarh Superintendent of Police Arsh Verma told PTI over the phone.

Police said the driver was caught from the accident site and his medical examination confirmed he was under the influence of alcohol. The police



have also arrested school principal Deepthi and one more school official - Hoshiar Singh.

The heart-breaking scenes at the accident site moved one and all. Some of the students lay motionless in a pool of blood, while others, writhing in pain, cried for help. Some passersby rushed to help, and pulled out the children from the severely damaged bus.

An injured student told reporters that the driver was driving at a high speed when he lost control of the vehicle resulting in the crash. "The driver appeared to be drunk," he said.

Mahendragarh Deputy Commissioner Monika Gupta said the private school was open on Eid and the district education officer has sent a proposal to the state government for cancelling its recognition.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The only way to stop people from voting for the Congress is to have all Congress leaders join us

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	30.2°C	28.0°C
Min Temp	24.4°C	21.0°C
Humidity	77%	85%
Rainfall	Nil	4.4mm

FORECAST

LIGHT TO MODERATE RAIN



SMOKY: A police officer stands guard as supporters burn flares outside the Wanda Metropolitan stadium ahead of the Champions League quarterfinal first leg football match between Atletico Madrid and Borussia Dortmund in Madrid, Spain

PEGASUS-LIKE ATTACKS WARNED

APPLE CAUTION COMES AT A TIME WHEN AROUND 60 COUNTRIES, INCLUDING INDIA, ARE GOING FOR ELECTIONS THIS YEAR

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 11: Apple has warned its users in India and 91 other countries about ongoing Pegasus-like sophisticated spyware attacks that target individuals like journalists, activists, politicians and diplomats.

Though deployed against a small number of individuals and often involve exceptional costs, mercenary spyware attacks are 'ongoing and global', according to an Apple threat notification.

"Apple threat notifications are designed to inform and assist users who may have been individually targeted by mercenary spyware attacks, likely because of who they are or what they do. Such attacks are vastly more complex than regular cybercriminal activity and consumer malware, as mercenary spyware attackers apply exceptional resources to target a very small number of specific individuals and their devices," the notification said.

The notification has come at a time when around 60 coun-



tries, including India, are going for elections this year.

The Cupertino-based firm said that mercenary spyware attacks cost millions of dollars and often have a short shelf life, making them much harder to detect and prevent. Besides, the vast majority of users will never be targeted by such attacks.

"According to public reporting and research by civil society organisations, technology firms and journalists, individually targeted attacks of such exceptional cost and complexity have historically been associated with state actors, including private companies developing mercenary spyware on their behalf, such as Pegasus from the NSO

Group," the notification said.

The Pegasus-like spywares take control of mobile phones just by giving a miss call on WhatsApp. "Though deployed against a very small number of individuals often journalists, activists, politicians and diplomats mercenary spyware attacks are ongoing and global," the notification said.

Apple said that the extreme cost, sophistication and worldwide nature of mercenary spyware attacks makes them some of the most advanced digital threats in existence today.

The iPhone maker has recommended notified users to protect their device by enabling lockdown mode.

A survey carried out in last year revealed that almost half (49 per cent) of organisations worldwide are unable to detect an attack or breach on employee-owned devices. At a time when workforces across the world are increasingly distributed, there's a genuine risk that the mobile arena could soon become the new corporate cybersecurity battleground.

3 die in Bargarh road accident

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sohela, April 11: Three employees of a private road construction agency died after being hit by an unidentified truck near Luhurachati under this police limits in Bargarh district late Wednesday night, police said Thursday.

The deceased - Bikash Sandha, 35, Parthiv Sahu, 30, and Subrat Mallik, 35 - had been working with Ashoka Buildcon. While Sandha and Sahu belonged to Bargarh district, Mallik hailed from Amarpada under Niali police limits in Cuttack district.

"The mishap took place around 2 am when the trio was supervising the ongoing road construction work near Luhurachati. Suddenly, a speeding truck hit the three, killing them on the spot," an official said quoting an eyewitness.

On being informed, a police team reached the spot and recovered the bodies before sending those to the district headquarters hospital for an autopsy.

"A case of unnatural death has been registered. Efforts are on to trace the truck and its driver at the earliest," said the official.

The mishap has sent shockwaves in the locality.

Sources said the stretch of road near Luhurachati has become a death trap as it often witnesses fatal mishaps.

BJD declares 9 more Assembly candidates

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 11: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik Thursday announced nine more candidates for the Assembly seats and nominated Lekhasri Samantsinghar as the party's Balasore Lok Sabha candidate for the upcoming elections.

Samantsinghar recently switched allegiance from the BJP's state unit. Her nomination marks the completion of BJD's candidate list for all 21 Lok Sabha seats. Notably, she is the second former BJP vice-president, following Bhruagu Baxipatra, to receive BJD ticket for the Lok Sabha elections.

The BJD has so far fielded seven women candidates for the LS polls, maintaining the party's 33 per cent reservation for women candidates, as seen in the 2019 general elections.

Among the nine Assembly candidates announced, two sitting MLAs - Sambit Routray (Paradip) and Bhopinder Singh (Narla) - have been replaced.

Madhab Sardar, who was defeated in Keonjhar Assembly seat in 2019 elections, got the

ticket for Telkoi Assembly segment.

Prasenada Nayak, who had won the Telkoi seat in 2019, had resigned from the BJD and joined the BJP. He got a ticket from the saffron party.

Prasanna Acharya, the party's senior vice-president, has been nominated as the candidate for Sambalpur Assembly seat. He will take on Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra of the BJP.

Sitting MLAs who have been renominated are Prabhu Jani (Laxmipur), Braja Pradhan (Talcher), Chakramani Kanhar (Baliguda) and Ananta Narayan Jena (Bhubaneswar Central).

Former minister and sitting MLA Rohit Pujari has been renominated for Rairakhol seat

while Paradip MLA Sambit Routray has been replaced by his wife Gitanjali.

Patnaik has denied party ticket to sitting MLA Bhopinder Singh from Narla Assembly segment in Kalahandi district. Manorama Mohanty has replaced Singh, a new face in the electoral race.

So far, Patnaik has announced names of 117 candidates for Assembly elections and all the 21 nominees for the Lok Sabha elections.

After ED, CBI arrests Kavitha

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 11: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha, who is in Tihar jail after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the Delhi excise 'scam' March 15, was arrested by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Thursday, in connection with a corruption case related to the 'scam'.

The CBI had questioned Kavitha, 46, the daughter of former Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao, inside the prison Saturday after obtaining permission from a special court. The BRS leader was questioned over WhatsApp chats recovered

from co-accused Buchi Babu's phone and documents related to a land deal after which ₹100 crore was allegedly paid to Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in kickbacks to swing the now-scrapped excise policy in favour of a liquor lobby.

"The CBI arrested Kavitha in Tihar jail around 12 noon Thursday under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) read with Section 477A (falsification of accounts) of the IPC and Section 7 (offence relating to public servant being bribed) of the Prevention of Corruption Act," an official said.

While Kavitha will remain in Tihar jail Thursday, the agency is likely to produce her before a court Friday to seek her remand.



\$65,000 teacup stolen in Tokyo

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tokyo, April 11: A Japanese department store discovered a golden teacup worth over 10 million yen (\$65,000) had been stolen Thursday, after it was showcased in an unlocked box.

The teacup, made of pure 24-carat gold, went missing from a Tokyo outlet of the major department store chain Takashimaya, where an event displaying an array of gold items for sale is being held.

The stolen teacup was one of the most expensive among over 1,000 pieces of shining teaware, tableware and artefacts on display at Takashimaya spokesman told AFP.

"It was kept in an unlocked transparent box at the time, so it could be taken out easily for



customers to take a close look," the spokesman said.

Security footage showed a man stowing the cup in his bag and fleeing the scene, local media reported, with police seeking the apparent culprit.

The display will continue but Takashimaya will firm up its security, the spokesman said. The incident came a few

months after Takashimaya officials were left red-faced over a fiasco surrounding \$40 Christmas cakes in December.

Many of these strawberry-topped cakes, sold online and supposed to be immaculately decorated, were delivered to customers so mangled that the company was forced to publicly apologise and promise reimbursement.

Vietnam billionaire gets death for fraud

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ho Chi Minh City, April 11: A top Vietnamese property tycoon was sentenced to death Thursday in one of the biggest corruption cases in history, with an estimated \$27 billion in damages.

A panel of three hand-picked jurors and two judges rejected all defence arguments by Truong My Lan, chair of major developer Van Thinh Phat, who was found guilty of swindling cash from Saigon Commercial Bank (SCB) over a decade.

"The defendant's actions... eroded people's trust in the leadership of the (Communist) Party and state," read the verdict at the trial in southern business hub Ho Chi Minh City.

Lan denied the charges and blamed her subordinates. P10

leisure



HELEN MIRREN SHARES HER MOTHER'S ADVICE

Actress Helen Mirren has talked about the life advice her mother gave her, and it explained why she has never been afraid of getting older as she approaches her 80th birthday. "My mother said the greatest thing to me: 'Never be afraid of getting older,'" she told *femalefirst.co.uk*.

ANISTON GETS NERVOUS WHEN SHE WALKS ON THE RED CARPET

Actress Jennifer Aniston has shared that she still gets nervous during public appearances, especially when she walks on the red carpet, more than 30 years after she shot to fame.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
Today you will land up in a tricky or hazardous situation. You will feel compelled to wade against the tide, which may not be such a productive thing, says Ganesh. Nothing seems to be going your way. Take some time off for yourself to relieve the stress.

TAURUS
A short trip could be in the offing today, says Ganesh. Before proceeding, you may, however, be compelled to make changes in your itinerary. If you are not too happy with the new schedules and decide to stick to your original plans, you are likely to feel disturbed, uneasy at the end of the day.

GEMINI
You will feel out of sorts today. This could result in distances between you and your loved ones. You may fall into the wrong sorts of debates on account of your ill-temper. You need to keep a curb on your emotions to perform better, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You are most likely to appear edgy and hypercritical to others, says Ganesh. Remain your typical poised self. Try not to be harsh to others, if you wish to save your relationships and sustain a reputable image. Avoid clashes with your superiors and colleagues.

LEO
Agreed that home is where the heart is. But today, your home is where your troubles will be. The faster you try to run away from them, the quicker they seem to catch up with you, says Ganesh. So, scooting off may not be the best solution. Some people around you may try to blow things out of proportion; the best way to keep them in check is with a smile.

VIRGO
Open the mind gates and let your imagination flow, says Ganesh. At your creative best, you will pursue innovation and creativity today. Luck will be on your side and even those things that you took a risk on may lean your way. You energy levels will be unusually high and you will feel passionate about all that you undertake. A good day to organise social events for family and friends.

LIBRA
There is a very strong possibility of major improvements in your public standing and image today. But it all depends so much upon your personal character, and, therefore, you must guard it zealously, even with your own life. Those who seek to malign or dent your reputation will be disappointed, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO
Today promises to be an exceptional day for those involved in business. With sheer brilliance, you will steer deals right to your door step, and will display great finesse in negotiations and bartering. Bring out the leader in you and take charge when you introduce new products or market them in business, suggests Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
As Ganesh foresees, you will be religiously inclined today. Listening to soft, instrumental music will soothe your nerves. You also feel like going back to school days and dig into detective and suspense stories of Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys. It was fun being kid, isn't it?

CAPRICORN
If you are planning to fly to foreign shores for further studies, start documentation and other preparations today, says Ganesh. Whether you are a student or not, on this favourable day, all you need to do is to make a priority list, follow it and finish off your work one by one. If you are associated with Stock Market, expect an advantageous day ahead.

AQUARIUS
Cooperative and supportive, your colleagues will help you improve your performance at work. Also, your creativity will win you praises from one and all, foretells Ganesh. The day will have a perfect end as you will spend quality time with your friends and family.

PISCES
You are going to be very emotional today. You will be able to express your love to your wife or other loved ones in a very unique and dramatic way. It is not a good day for putting forth marriage or love proposals, and if you do it could be disappointing. Ganesh says that professionally you will be very successful in all tasks.

Nora opens up on showbiz toxicity

Mumbai: Canada-born Indian actress Nora Fatehi recently opened up about the challenges she faces in the film industry, particularly regarding disrespect from top actors.

The *Madgaon Express* actress said she felt uneasy around certain individuals due to their negative vibes and ulterior motives. She shared instances of being mistreated and ridiculed by male celebrities who sought to promote women close to them at her expense.

During a conversation on Ranveer Allahbadia's podcast, Nora highlighted the tendency for influential figures to engage in behind-the-scenes gossip, empowered by a sense of entitlement to bully with-out repercussions.

The *Batla House* actress emphasised the prevalent attitude of questioning her success and disliking her straightforward nature. She differentiated herself from those who conform to submissive behaviours, asserting her refusal to yield to anyone's authority.

Reflecting on her journey, Nora described facing attempts to undermine her confidence and presence through verbal abuse and derogatory remarks. "Despite criticism, I remained unapologetic for speaking the truth. This shows the prevalence of gossip in the industry," she said.

Nora also acknowledged her personality as a de-

terrent against potential exploitation, attributing her avoidance of predators to her assertiveness.

In essence, she shed light on the toxic dynamics within the industry, where power struggles and negativity often overshadow talent and authenticity. AGENCIES



Girls Will Be Girls makes it to TIFF

Mumbai: After being premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and the South by Southwest Film Festival, actors

Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal's production venture *Girls Will Be Girls* has been officially selected for screening at this year's Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) Next Wave Film Festival.

The event is scheduled to run from April 11 to 14, with the screening of *Girls Will Be Girls* set to take place April 14.

On the development, Richa said: "Being selected for TIFF Next Wave is a huge honour for us. It's incredibly gratifying to see our film resonate with audiences worldwide and be recognised by such esteemed festivals. *Girls Will Be Girls* is a project that is very close to our hearts, and to witness its journey from conception to being screened at TIFF is truly overwhelming."

She added: "We poured our hearts and souls into this film, hoping to spark meaningful conversations and connect with viewers on a deeper level."

Ali said, "*Girls Will Be Girls* is not just a film; it's a reflection of our collective vision and commitment to storytelling that resonates with people from all walks of life."

Mumbai: Transgender actor Bonita Rajpurohit, who is set to debut with *Love Sex Aur Dhokha 2*, says she is proud to be one of the leads in the upcoming film, which she hopes makes young women like her feel seen.

According to the makers, Rajpurohit is the first transgender woman to lead a Hindi film.

"It's quite a moment for me because I never thought I would be in such a position. It makes me feel really proud. The whole trans community has come a long way. There was a time when trans people were not as visible in mainstream media. But now,

Vidya romantic at heart

New Delhi: National Award-winning actress Vidya Balan is all gung-ho about love stories and rom-coms, as she loves romance and says that she is a romantic at heart.

"Everyone loves a dollop of romance, and everyone loves to have a good time to laugh. And everyone either yearns to be in a relationship or is in a relationship. The relationship is fascinating. Especially romantic relationships. I think it is a relatable genre," she told IANS, when asked about what makes the rom-com genre so popular.

The *Thank You* actress added, "Comedy is my favourite genre, but given that I love

rom-coms because I love romance and I am a romantic at heart."

The actress then revealed the secret behind the popularity of the genre. She said, "It gives you the opportunity to laugh at this couple, who you realise could have been you in any rom-com. It is easy on the eyes, it is fun, filled with laughter, and then there is lovely music and colour. Love makes the world go round and round. That's what makes it a favourite genre." IANS



Trans actor Bonita's expectations from LSD 2

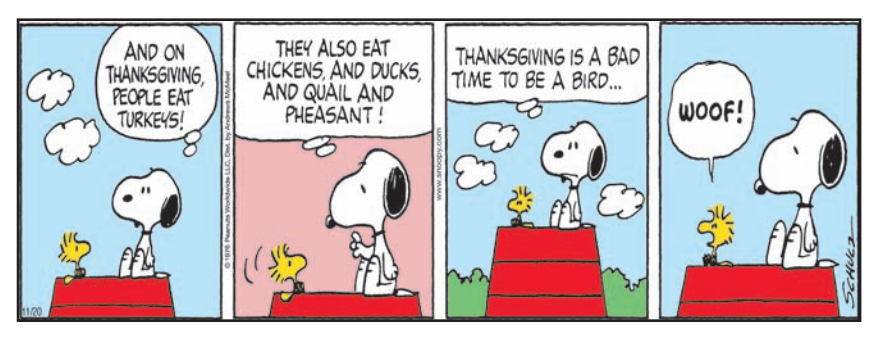
I see some changes, and when I am part of that change, I feel honoured. I hope this sets an example

for so many girls like me, who are young, who live in rural areas, and that they feel happy," the actor told PTI in an interview.

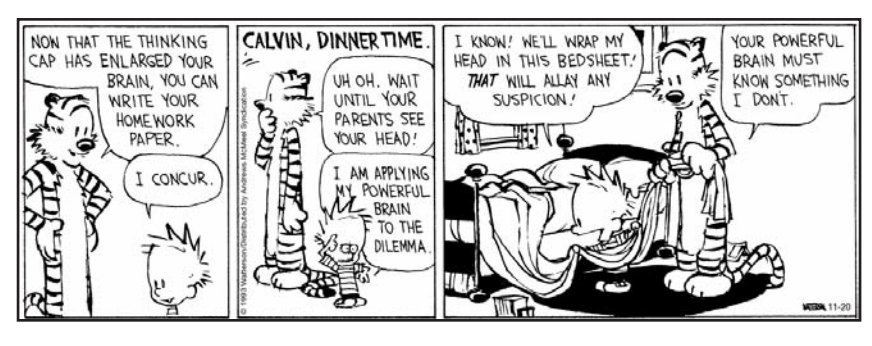
She said she wants to bring about real change in areas where the internet has yet to make inroads.



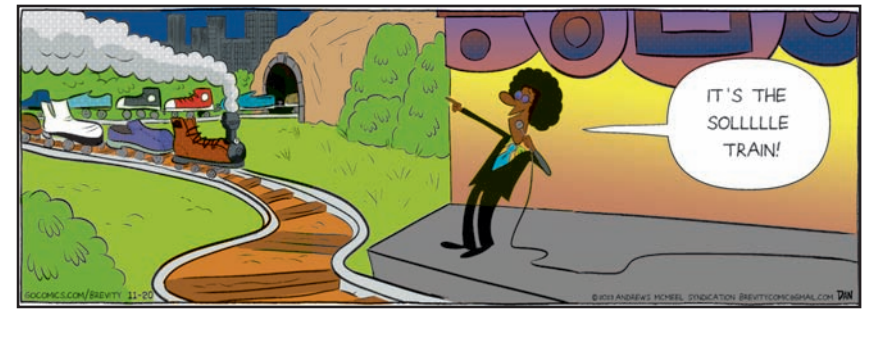
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

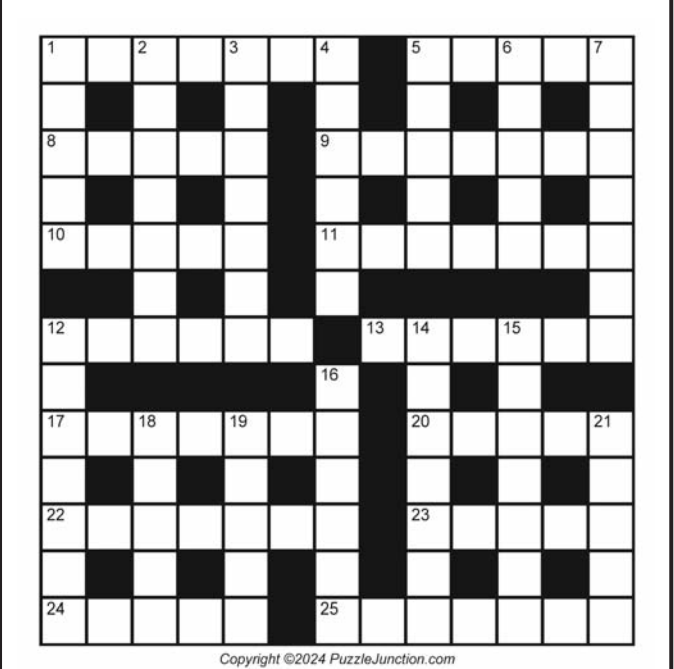


BREVITY



FUN post

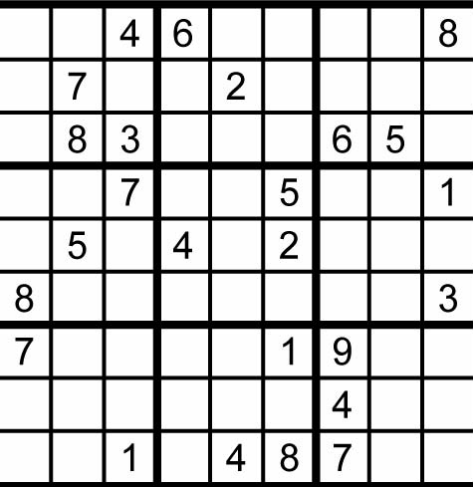
CROSSWORD



- Copyright ©2024 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Propriety
 - 5 Subject to be debated
 - 8 Delineated
 - 9 Concussion aftermath, at times
 - 10 Ceasefire
 - 11 Missives
 - 12 Drive away
 - 13 Compadres
 - 17 Import barrier
 - 20 Shorttail weasel
 - 22 Laundry room item
 - 23 Perspective
 - 24 Roentgen's discovery (1-4)
 - 25 Beaming
 - 6 Western movie group
 - 7 Auto undercarriage
 - 12 Honeycomb material
 - 14 Hot dog condiment
 - 15 Black Sea republic
 - 16 Thief
 - 18 Iraqi port
 - 19 Hotel posting
 - 21 City on the River Adige
- Down**
- 1 Swindle
 - 2 Legendary Spanish nobleman (3,4)
 - 3 Gloom
 - 4 Some due dates
 - 5 Basic belief

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

SBI refuses to disclose bonds details under RTI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: The State Bank of India (SBI) has refused to disclose under the RTI Act the details of the electoral bonds furnished to the Election Commission (EC), claiming that it is personal information held in a fiduciary capacity, even though the records are in the public domain on the poll panels website.

Holding that the electoral bonds scheme was 'unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary', the Supreme Court directed the SBI February 15 to furnish the complete details of the bonds purchased since April 12, 2019 to the EC, which would publish the information on its website by March 13.

On March 11, the court dismissed the SBI's petition seeking an extension of the deadline and ordered it to disclose the details of the electoral bonds to the EC by the close of business hours

to senior advocate Harish Salve to defend its case against the disclosure of the electoral bonds' records, citing that the records are held in a fiduciary capacity and the information is personal in nature.

It is 'bizzare' that the SBI denied the information that is already on the EC's website, Batra said.

On the question of Salve's fee, he said the bank has denied information that involves taxpayers' money.

The EC published the data furnished by the SBI on its website March 14, with the details of the donors and political parties that redeemed the bonds.

On March 15, the apex court pulled up the SBI for not furnishing the complete information by withholding the numbers unique to each electoral bond that would help match the donors with the recipient political parties, saying the bank was 'duty-bound' to reveal the information.

A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said it had directed the disclosure of all the details of the bonds, including the names of the purchasers, amounts and dates of purchase.

All details have to be furnished by the SBI, the CJI observed, as the court admonished the bank for furnishing incomplete information, a day after the EC put out the entire list of entities that purchased the bonds for making political donations.

The SBI had said a total of 22,217 electoral bonds of varying denominations were purchased by the donors between April 1, 2019 and February 15 this year, of which 22,030 were redeemed by political parties.

March 12. RTI activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (retired) approached the SBI March 13 seeking the complete data of the electoral bonds in the digital form, as provided to the EC after the Supreme Court's order.

The bank denied the information citing two exemption clauses given under the Right to Information (RTI) Act - Section 8(1)(e) that is related to records held in a fiduciary capacity and section 8(1)(j) that allows withholding personal information.

"Information sought by you is containing details of purchasers and political parties and hence, cannot be disclosed as it is held in fiduciary capacity disclosure of which is exempted under Sections 8(1)(e) and (j) of the RTI Act," the response furnished by the central public information officer and deputy general manager of the SBI said, Wednesday.

Batra had also sought the details of the fees paid by the SBI



EID MUBARAK: Youths greet each other on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr at Unit III Mosque in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Padmakesarpur on boil again; two hurt

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 11: After five-months of peace, violence erupted in Padmakesarpur village of Patia under Mancheswar police station limits again after an elderly man and his daughter-in-law were critically injured after they were attacked violently by a group of five miscreants, Wednesday night.

Following the incident, the Commissionerate Police has deployed two-platoons of force to prevent any further flare-ups.

A senior cop at Mancheswar police station said Sanatan Das

and his daughter-in-law Nirupama Das are presently recuperating at the SCB Medical College and Hospital. They have suffered multiple injuries on their body and head. The accused involved in the incident are still at large, he added.

IIC Mancheswar police station Manas Swain said the main accused, Babula Das, arrived at Sanatan's house with four of his associates Wednesday night to collect interest on some loans he had given to the latter sometime back. After Sanatan expressed his inability to pay, Babula allegedly assaulted him

with a sword he was carrying with him. When Nirupama tried to intervene, the five miscreants bashed up the two severely. They hurled crude bombs at Sanatan's house before fleeing, Swain added. The injured were taken to hospital by neighbours.

Pratap Das, who lives in the neighbourhood, alleged that the five miscreants, who belong to one family, have been causing trouble in the village since a long time. "If anyone failed to repay the loans taken from them, they would barge into his house, ransack belongings and threaten him with dire consequences,"

he alleged.

Several residents in the village claimed that the hoodlums would grab land in the event a borrower failed to repay loans.

It is worth mentioning here that a group clash had broken out in the village over a similar incident in October last year in which stones and glass bottles were hurled by two rival groups over past enmity. 20 persons had suffered serious injuries in the incident. The Commissionerate Police had to clamp Section 144 of CrPC in the area and arrested 77 people in connection with the incident.

Heatwave: PM reviews preparedness

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 11: Amid a forecast for extreme weather conditions in summer months, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday reviewed the preparedness for heat wave conditions and called for all arms of governments at Central, state and district levels to work in synergy.

India is likely to experience extreme heat during the April to June period with central and western peninsular parts facing the worst impact, the India Meteorological Department had said recently as the country prepares for the mammoth seven-phase general elections starting April 19.

An official statement said Modi chaired a meeting where he was briefed about the likelihood of above-normal maximum temperatures over most parts of the country during April-June, with high probability of such condition in central west-

ern peninsular India.

Preparedness in the health sector was reviewed in terms of availability of essential medicines, intravenous fluids, ice packs, ORS and drinking water, the statement said.

The timely dissemination of essential information, education and communication (IEC) awareness material, especially in regional languages, through all platforms such as television, radio and social media was stressed upon at the meeting, it said.

"Since a hotter than normal summer is expected in 2024, which coincides with the general elections, it was felt that the advisories issued by the Health ministry and NDMA be translated into regional languages and disseminated widely," it said.

Modi stressed upon the whole of government approach, and said all arms of the government at Central, state and district levels, besides various ministries, need to work on this in synergy.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Cops make a beeline to remove tattoos

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 11: Following an official order issued by the deputy DCP, Security of Special Security Battalion (SSB) directing the police personnel to remove tattoos from their bodies within 15-20 days, cops in large numbers thronged tattoo parlours in the state capital to eliminate the visible imprints.

The order was issued to eliminate visible tattoos in order to maintain the image of the Odisha Police at national and international levels, said sources.

According to Subham Kumar Padhi, owner of WWE Tattoo Studio here, removing a permanent tattoo is a challenging and time-consuming task as compared to getting one.

"The cost of removal is four times higher than the cost of getting a tattoo, with laser treatment requiring four sessions at intervals of 15 to 20 days," he added.

Padhi mentioned that several police personnel visited his studio to begin the removal process.

He said, "The removal cost is Rs 2,000 per square-inch while we charge around Rs 350 to Rs 500 per square-inch for putting up a tattoo."

The SSB, consisting of over 1,000 personnel, is responsible for providing security to important installations such as the Chief Minister's residence, Raj Bhavan, state Secretariat, NISER, state Assembly, and the High Court.

DCP (Security) Sudhakar Mishra explained that the directive to remove visible tattoos was issued to uphold the reputation of the Odisha police. He emphasised that tattoos deemed offensive or derogatory could tarnish the image of the police force.

"Several police personnel have tattoos on their bodies which demeans the image of the battalion as well as Odisha Police," he said.

Mishra stressed the importance of presenting a profes-



While some have tattoos that will need to be removed, others are relieved that their tattoos are not visible in uniform

Insta begins blurring nudity to protect teens

AGENCIES

London, April 11: Instagram said it's deploying new tools to protect young people and combat sexual extortion, including a feature that will automatically blur nudity in direct messages.

The social media platform said in a blog post Thursday that it's testing out the features as part of its campaign to fight sexual scams and other forms of "image abuse", and to make it tougher for criminals to contact teens.

Sexual extortion, or sextortion, involves persuading a person to send explicit photos online and then threatening to make the images public unless the victim pays money or engages in sexual favours. Recent high-profile cases include two Nigerian brothers who pleaded guilty to sexually extorting teen boys and young men in Michigan, including one who took his own life, and a Virginia sheriff's deputy who sexually extorted and kid-



naped a 15-year-old girl.

Instagram and other social media companies have faced growing criticism for not doing enough to protect young people. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Instagram's owner Meta Platforms, apologised to the parents of victims of such abuse during a Senate hearing earlier this year.

Meta also owns Facebook and WhatsApp but the nudity blur feature won't be added to messages sent on those platforms.

Instagram said scammers often use direct messages to ask

for "intimate images." To counter this, it will soon start testing out a nudity protection feature for direct messages that blurs any images with nudity "and encourages people to think twice before sending nude images."

"The feature is designed not only to protect people from seeing unwanted nudity in their DMs, but also to protect them from scammers who may send nude images to trick people into sending their own images in return," Instagram said.

The feature will be turned on by default globally for teens under 18. Adult users will get a notification encouraging them to activate it.

Images with nudity will be blurred with a warning, giving users the option to view it. They'll also get an option to block the sender and report the chat.

For people sending direct messages with nudity, they will get a message reminding them to be cautious when sending "sensitive photos". They'll also be informed that they can unsend the photos if they change their mind, but that there's a chance others may have already seen them.

Instagram said it's working on technology to help identify accounts that could be potentially engaging in sexual extortion scams, "based on a range of signals that could indicate sextortion behaviour."

To stop criminals from connecting with young people, it's also taking measures including not showing the "message" button on a teen's profile to potential sextortion accounts, even if they already follow each other, and testing new ways to hide teens from these accounts.

Images with nudity will be blurred with a warning, giving users the option to view it. They'll also get an option to block the sender and report the chat

STA issues advisory to avoid road hypnosis



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 11: Amid rising cases of road hypnosis-related accidents, the State Transport Authority (STA) has issued an advisory for the drivers and passengers Wednesday. STA asked the drivers to avoid road hypnosis while driving for a long time to minimise chances of accidents. STA Commissioner-cum-Chairman Amitabh Thakur said, "Road hypnosis is a physical condition that most users are not aware of and this often occurs at night. Even with the driver's eyes open, the brain goes into a subconscious state. Drivers may not identify or recognise anything 15 minutes before an accident. The person does not even know how fast he/she is driving or how fast the vehicle in

front is moving, he said. Cautioning the drivers, Thakur said, "While going on long journeys, and after driving continuously for two and a half hours, the drivers need to take a few minutes rest, wash their faces, take a short walk and rest for five to six minutes. Drink tea or coffee to freshen up." "Resume the journey, only when you feel completely refreshed. Be extra careful when driving at night. Not only drivers but also passengers should be careful in this regard and monitor the driver's driving style and warn. The risk of roadway sedation increases when passengers fall asleep," he said. After driving for two and a half hours on a single stretch, the state of road hypnosis begins. In this condition, though the eyes are open, the brain cannot re-

Statistics of accident data over the past few years have revealed that road hypnosis is one of the many causes behind the accidents

According to data, 1,198 people died and 1,272 people were injured in 2,496 accidents due to rear-end collisions in Odisha in 2023

member or understand anything. Statistics of accident data over the past few years have revealed that road hypnosis is one of the many causes behind the accidents.

According to the available data, 1,198 people died and 1,272 people were injured in 2,496 accidents due to rear-end collisions in Odisha in 2023.

Similarly, 274 people died and 354 people were seriously injured in 639 road accidents due to hits with one side of vehicles.

A total of 763 accidents also occurred due to hitting fixed objects, in which 373 people died and 422 people were injured, the STA said. In view of this, awareness programmes have been taken up by the transport authority.

During winters, STA distributes tea to the drivers travelling long distances.



TRADITIONAL DANCE: Artistes perform 'Bagha Nacha' on Chhenapoda Dibasa at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

'Chhenapoda part of our emotions'

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 11: The people of the state, Thursday, celebrated 'Chhenapoda Dibasa' with fun and fervour with the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik calling the occasion as something associated with Odia emotions.

Taking to X, the CM said, "Cehhenapoda is associated with our emotions. As a traditional sweet, it has enriched our food diversity. Let's all celebrate 'Chhenapoda' day with joy and make it even more far reaching."

On this occasion, Nayagarh Vikas Manch (NVM) and Odia Media Private Limited (OMPL) organised an event at Soochana Bhawan here, where visitors got an opportunity to savour the traditional delicacies like Chhenapoda, Moong Dal Pakoda and Arisa Pitha, apart from being treated to cultural programmes such as Pala, Dasakathia, Bagha Nacha and Odissi dance.

The programme was attended by many eminent personalities, including writer Dash Benhur, singer Tansen Singh, writer Karunakar Patnaik and PM's former advisor Umakanta Mishra.

The festival is celebrated to mark the birth anniversary of Sudarshan Sahu, who is believed to have first prepared the sweet dish. NVM aims to initiate a campaign for getting Geographical Recognition (GI) tag for the famous sweet dish. Since 2022, NVM has been celebrating Chhenapoda Dibasa in association with OMP.

Post 1947, Sahu set up a hotel in the village of Dasapalla and began experimenting with left-over cottage cheese. Chhenapoda Dibasa is being celebrated since 11 April 2022, the birth anniversary of Sahu.



Prof Sachidananda appointed member of UGC

Bhubaneswar: Professor Sachidananda Mohanty has been appointed as member of University Grants Commission (UGC) for three years with immediate effect, a Ministry of Higher Education gazette notification said Thursday. In a career spanning more than three decades, Mohanty has received many distinctions in the field of education and culture nationally and internationally. He is a former professor and HoD of English University of Hyderabad and former vice-chancellor of Central University of Odisha (CUO). Winner of many national and international awards such as the Katha, British Council, Fulbright (twice), Charles Wallace and the Salzburg, he has published extensively in the field of British, American, gender, translation, and Post-Colonial studies.



Naxal outfit PLFI cadre held by NIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested an armed cadre of the Naxal group People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI), following raids in Jharkhand and Assam, an official statement issued Thursday said.

PLFI members and cadres were involved in generating funds through extortion from various coal traders, transporters, railway contractors,

and businessmen in Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, as per the NIA investigations. The raids and searches were conducted Wednesday by the NIA teams, with the help of local police, at two locations each in Jharkhand and Assam, it said. The crackdown led to the arrest of one Binod Munda alias Sukkhwa from the Khunti district of Jharkhand, according to the statement issued by the NIA. The NIA teams also seized a host of incriminating material,

including PLFI-related documents, along with two walkie-talkies, five mobile phones, SIM cards and ₹11,000 cash during the searches.

The accused is an armed cadre of the PLFI, a splinter Naxal group, and wanted in four PLFI cases in Jharkhand. He has been arrested in a case relating to revival attempts by the PLFI, the probe agency said. Two accused were arrested earlier in the case, along with ₹3 lakh cash, arms and ammunition.

The case was registered October 11, 2023, under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against one Martin Kerkatta and other members of the PLFI for trying to revive the outfit after the arrest of its supremo Dinesh Gope by the NIA.

AMRI Hospitals observes World Parkinson's Day



Bhubaneswar: AMRI Hospitals organised an event to observe the World Parkinson's Day (WPD) here Thursday. The event was graced by a team of doctors from Neurosurgeon and Neuro-Medicine department including senior neurologist consultant LD Padhi, Pradyut Ranjan Bhuyan, Aakash Agrawal and neurosurgeon Amit Jaiswal along with administrative and nursing staff. The doctors explained about various symptoms of the disease including symptoms, diagnosis and treatments. The team created awareness about the treatment process called Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS). DBS implantation uses advanced brain-sensing technology to treat the patient from Parkinson's to normal life. AMRI director Saktimaya Mohapatra expressed his gratitude and encouraged the family members of patients.

Bhubaneswar among 14 airports to have Digi Yatra facility soon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: Digi Yatra is likely to be rolled out at 14 more airports including Bhubaneswar by the end of this month and efforts are on to make the facility more user-friendly with certain changes in the architecture, according to a top executive.

Based on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT), Digi Yatra provides contactless, seamless movement of passengers at various check points at airports and currently, there are nearly 5 million users.

The facility is now operational at 14 airports for domestic passengers and discussions are ongoing with various stakeholders concerned to make it available for international travellers as well.



BIJU PATNAIK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Digi Yatra Foundation CEO Suresh Khadakbhavi told PTI that Digi Yatra is expected to be available at 14 more airports by the end of April.

A not-for-profit entity, the foundation is the nodal agency for Digi Yatra, which was introduced in December 2022.

The 14 new airports where the facility is to be rolled out soon are Bagdogra, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Coimbatore, Dabolim, Indore, Mangalore, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi, Srinagar, Trivandrum

and Vishakhapatnam. While Digi Yatra is slowly gaining traction, there have been concerns expressed in various quarters about privacy of data of the passengers.

Seeking to assuage the concerns, Khadakbhavi said Digi Yatra does not have any passengers' data.

"It is only in the phone (of the user) that the data is residing and it is in the control of the passenger himself or herself," he told PTI in an interview.

Khadakbhavi said work is going to ensure a more user-friendly experience for Digi Yatra users and changes are being looked at in the overall architecture, on making the facility available for international travel. He said discussions are going on with the external affairs ministry and other agencies.

Hosp sinks highest source of multidrug-resistant bacteria

The risk of spread of multidrug-resistant bacteria is highest in hospital sinks, said a study Thursday.

The findings are based on a multispecies outbreak of superbug carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriales (CPE) that occurred in a paediatric ward at the Toho University Omori Medical Center in Tokyo in 2017. In the paper, published in the American Journal of Infection Control (AJIC), the team detailed that the first case of CPE was detected in a one-year-old boy hospitalised with cardiac disease in June 2016.

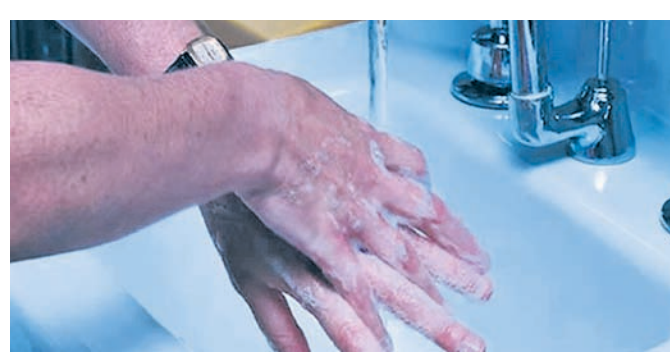
Nine months later in March 2017, a 15-year-old boy became the second to be infected with the deadly superbug.

Subsequently, the outbreak spread to 19 paediatric patients.

On investigation, 9 sinks were identified to be contaminated with CPE. Of these, 6 were from hospital rooms with CPE-positive patients, and 3 from a nurse centre, a waste room, and an ice machine.

Genomic analysis identified bacterial strains such as "Klebsiella varicola, Klebsiella quasipneumoniae, and Escherichia coli." Importantly, the CPE contamination continued, even after the team replaced all sinks in the paediatric ward with new ones that were thoroughly disinfected with hydrogen peroxide.

Further, DNA sequences showed that the resistance mechanism could have been passed



from one bacterial species to another within the hospital, the team said.

"The discovery of the same bacterial species in sinks in adjoining rooms indicates that pathogen transmission may be possible from one sink

to another via the drains and connected plumbing," the team said.

Preventive measures included recommending hand disinfection after using sinks, introducing disposable tools for cleaning sinks, prohibiting

mouth-washing with sink water, enacting disinfection and drying procedures for any items exposed to sink water, and more.

The outbreak was finally controlled in October 2017.

"After months of intense infection control protocols, we were at last able to declare an end to this outbreak," said Sadako Yoshizawa, Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at Toho University.

"Our experience highlights the importance of focusing on sinks and other water-related areas in hospital wards, as these are critical for CPE transmission and therefore major fronts in the fight against antibiotic resistance," Yoshizawa added.

Assistive device library launched

Bhubaneswar: In a groundbreaking effort to bridge the accessibility gap for visually impaired children, city based We4You Charitable Trust launched an assistive device library here Thursday. The innovative device is set to revolutionise the way blind children engage with literature, opening doors to a world of imagination and knowledge previously inaccessible to them. We4You expressed its heartfelt gratitude to Jindal Steel and Power Foundation, for providing support and help throughout, making the dream come true. We4You founder Abhaya Mohanta said that the library instruments are efficiently designed for the visually impaired children, providing them with seamless access to a vast array of literary works in various formats. The key features of the library include individual feedback, personal assessment and knowledge transfer.

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Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookieman-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-977682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

GI tag still eludes Nayagarh's Chhenapoda

After 'Kanteimundi Brinjals' of Kantilo got GI recognition, hopes have been rekindled that Chhenapoda will soon get the much-awaited tag

The Minister of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Industries and Energy, Pratap Keshari Deb for this purpose but to no avail.

However, after 'Kanteimundi Brinjals' of Kantilo in this district got GI recognition, hopes have been rekindled that 'Chhenapoda' will soon get the much-awaited tag. However, concerns have been expressed over the inordinate delay in GI tagging of the sweetmeat.

The district administration has proposed the same to the head office of GI Registry in Chennai. After applying through ORMAS, the application for the GI tag status to 'Chhenapoda' has been sent to Chennai on behalf of 'Krishna Chhenapoda Producer Group' in Machhipada. The district administration informed that a proposal received from the 'Madhu Baisya Samaj' has also been sent to the MSME, Industries and Energy department.

This district is known for its 'Chhenapoda'. The delicacy was originally made here taking inspiration from the traditional



'podapitha'. With this, late Sudarshan Sahu of Satapatna village in Dasapalla area in this district attained limelight.

Locals said Sudarshan's father Bidyadhar used to run a breakfast shop at Dasapalla market square. Bidyadhar was assisted by Sudarshan. In the shop, some cottage cheese would go to waste every day. In order to prevent wastage, the family tried out

a new way to bake it like 'podapitha' and the famed 'Chhenapoda' was born.

Six years after Sudarshan's death, the people of this district celebrated 'Chhenapoda Dibasa' to remember him on his birthday in 2022. Nayagarh's 'Chhenapoda' has now become gradually a mouth-watering delicacy not only in Odisha, but even outside the state.

However, at this juncture, disputes have cropped up over the real creator of the sweet. After the district administration celebrated 'Chhenapoda Day' in 2023, the dispute intensified. Some of the family members claimed that the real creator of 'Chhenapoda' is not Sudarshan, but his father Bidyadhar.

With Chhenapoda being sold at prices even lower than cottage cheese, questions have risen over the quality of the delicacy. It is being made and sold at different places in this district. Along with its growing popularity, criticism has also surfaced both inside and outside the state

over its quality. While the price of the main ingredient, cottage cheese is ₹130-250 per kilogram, the rate of 'Chhenapoda' varies from ₹90-300/kg in markets and shops, thereby creating apprehensions about its quality.

Approximately 110 families are making 'Chhenapoda' in Machhipada village which can be called the origin of the dessert. Similarly, 90 families in Solapata of Odagaon block, 30 in Darpada, 15 in this town, and more than five families in Nabaghanapur are preparing 'Chhenapoda' on a daily basis. Similarly, more than 20 families in Fatehgarh area of Bhapur block are preparing this much-loved delicacy. For this purpose, 'Chhenapoda' kilns have been set up where special confectioners have been employed.

Once ready, the famed sweet is sent to Jharsuguda, Rourkela, Sundargarh, Berhampur, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Koraput, Rayagada, Baliguda, Joda, Barbil and Bhubaneswar on a daily basis by buses.

Pensioners urge people not to vote for BJP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rupsa, April 11: Peeved over payment of meagre pensions by the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), pensioners have appealed to people not to vote for the BJP-led government at the Centre in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Sources informed Thursday that a meeting was convened Wednesday by pensioners of the district committees of Balasore and Mayurbhanj in Podadiha village under this police limits. Balasore district president of the Pensioners' Association, Anadi Charan Behera presided over the meeting.

Hundreds of retired staff of Odisha Lift Irrigation Corporation, Rupsa Jute Mill, Konark Paper and Industries Ltd and Baripada Spinning Mill participated in the meeting. During the meeting it was decided that the minimum pension amount should be ₹9,000 as per a ruling by the Supreme Court. Various unions have been agitating all over India for increase

in pensions, dearness allowances and government medical insurance facilities. However, the state-run EPFO is paying less than ₹1,000 as pension per month to many people, officials of the committees pointed out.

Madhusudan Jena, vice-president of Mayurbhanj District Pensioners' Association, Bishnu Prasad Mohanty, Balasore District Committee secretary of the same unit, former staff of Odisha Lift Irrigation Corporation Shyamsundar Jena, former secretaries of Rupsa Jute Mill Workers' Union, Umesh Kumar Sethi and Janmejaya Parida appealed to the people not to vote for the ruling party. They said that this decision has been taken in a meeting of the All India Pensioners' Association.

Purnachandra Behera, Banshidhar Sahu, Purnananda Pandit, Panchanan Jena, Kamalakanta Panda, Dibakar Senapati, Aniruddha Mantri, Narayan Das, Nityanand Mishra and Trilochan Sahu from various other organisations took part in the discussions.

Malaria rears its ugly head again in Keonjhar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 11: There was a time when this district was infamous in the whole country as a hotspot of malaria owing to the alarming rate at which the disease infected people and the large number of deaths. It was brought under control in the last few years after the Health department organised various awareness campaigns and prevention programmes. The fear associated with malaria gradually evaporated from the minds of the people.

However, this year, malaria has once again reared its ugly head in this district. Health officials are concerned at the alarming rate in which this disease is spreading.

In March, a total of nine positive cases were reported in this district, while this month, six people have allegedly been infected in Joda area in just three days.

A few months back, the spreading of dengue in Joda was the topic of discussion, but now the return of malaria has become a matter of concern for all. Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO), Keonjhar, Dr Kishore Chandra

Prusty confirmed that nine malaria cases have been reported in March. He however, added that the final test report of the six suspected cases in Joda is yet to come.

Locals said that unseasonal rains in the recent past could be the main cause for the rising malaria cases. Many people in Joda locality are down with cold and fever and their samples have been sent for testing. Only after the reports arrive, a clear picture about how the disease is spreading will emerge, they added. Among those suffering with high fever and cold, are infants also.

Till last year, mosquito nets were being distributed among people and fumigation vehicles were being used in each ward of Joda Municipality. This year, however, the administration has not taken any such preventive measures so far. It can be one of the reasons for the spread of malaria, locals opined.

Locals said diseases such as malaria and dengue can only be prevented if the municipality takes up cleanliness and fumigation drives, distribution of mosquito nets and starts awareness campaigns among other preventive measures.

2 poachers held by locals in SNP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mayurbhanj, April 11: Locals living in villages close to the Simlipal National Park (SNP) have now decided to prevent poaching activities within the forest. They have formed groups who are guarding many areas of the park at night.

Officials informed Thursday that locals apprehended two poachers along with their guns and sharp-edged weapons Wednesday night and handed them over to the Forest department staff. The two poachers were forwarded to a court in Baripada, Thursday.

Susanta Nanda (PCCF) Wildlife acknowledged the role of local villagers in apprehending the poachers. He added that such actions will definitely motivate Forest department officials.

"Now the villagers are up against the criminals trying to dent their Pride-The Simlipal Tiger Reserve. Thrilled to share that villagers of Kendua village bordering Simlipal, have nabbed 2 accused with 2 loaded guns last (Wednesday) night while entering into Simlipal for poaching. Kudos (sic)," Nanda wrote on 'X'.

Meanwhile local villagers informed that more than 10 teams have been formed to track the movement of poachers inside the forest and take action accordingly. This definitely will go a long way in ensuring safety to the animals living within Simlipal National Park, officials said.



SOAKED IN DEVOTION: Over 5 lakh devotees thronged the Chandaneswar shrine in Bhogra of Balasore district bordering West Bengal to witness the Mahanila Parva which concluded, Thursday

Retd revenue inspector sentenced to 1-year RI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 11: Lingaraj Sahoo, a retired revenue inspector (RI) of Gopna, under Lahuripada police limits in Sundargarh district was sentenced Thursday to one year of rigorous imprisonment on charges of demanding and accepting a bribe.

A complaint to this effect had been lodged by the person who was

asked to pay the bribe when he wanted permission to build a brick kiln on a plot of land. Sahoo was convicted by the Hon'ble Special Judge, Vigilance Court in Sundargarh and sentenced to one year in prison.

The judge also imposed a fine of ₹1,000 on Sahoo. Failure to pay the fine would result in an additional two months in prison for the convict, the judge said in the order.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to all concerned that, Chandra Sekhar Sahoo, S/o - Purna Chandra Sahoo, Permanent Resident of Plot No. - 40/1137, Bijaya Vihar, Lane - 1, P.O.-Sishupal Gada, P.S. - Dhaul, Dist - Khurda is going to purchase the property of Biswajit Mishra. Biswajit Mishra has lost the Original Regd. Sale Deed No. 11531003523 Dt. 15.12.2010 which was executed by Rabintra Jena, in favour of Chitta Ranjan Mishra and original Khata No.767/832, Plot No. - 435/2483 under Mouza Puga Sasan for which Biswajit Mishra has lodged a F.I.R. on 08.04.2024 before the Cuttack Sadar Police Station. However Chandra Sekhar Sahoo has applied for a housing loan before the LIC Housing Finance Ltd., Cuttack by offering to mortgage the said property title documents as per agreement for sale.

Therefore, all concerned having any claim over the aforesaid property under Sale Deed No. 11531003523, dtd.15.12.2010 and Original R.O.R. (PATA) relating to Plot No.435/2483, Khata No.767/832 are required to file any claim with the undersigned within 15 (Fifteen Days) from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the property having link with the said documents is free from encumbrances and any claim against the applicant/mortgagor and the company as the mortgagee shall be ineffective after the lapse of 15 days of publication of this notice.

Pravata Kumar Rout (Advocate)
L.I.C. Housing Finance Ltd., Cuttack Branch
Link Road, Cuttack
Mob.: 9861515731

Cuttack
Dt. 11.04.2024

Kotia residents asked to vote in Andhra

In a bid to claim the disputed area as Andhra's, YSRCP leaders are asking Kotia residents to vote during the polls in the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, April 11: The Andhra Pradesh government is persisting with its efforts to woo the residents of Kotia panchayat under this block in Koraput district. The latest initiative has been launched by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). Its workers are regularly imploring the residents of Kotia panchayat to vote for their party. Not only that, YSR Congress is ferrying Kotia residents to their party meetings on the other side of the border.

Sources informed that the issue of Kotia residents participating in the electoral meetings in Andhra came to the fore recently. YSRCP candidate, Peedikar Rajanna Dora from Salur Assembly constituency arranged for buses so that people from Kotia panchayat could participate in a meeting organised by him at a village close to the Odisha-Andhra border.

People from Uparsembi,



Dhulipadar, Neredibalsa and Tadibalsa villages under Kotia panchayat attended the meeting. Incidentally Andhra claims these villages as its own. During his speech, Dora appealed to the residents of Kotia panchayat to vote for YSRCP.

However, the issue to note here is that residents of Kotia reciprocated to the appeals by Dora. They

sang a song prepared for the occasion in praise of Dora and the Andhra Pradesh government. After the meeting, Dora personally met the Kotia residents and asked them whether they were happy with the development work. He urged them to vote for him and promised development work will continue if he is re-elected. He also told the

villagers that the Odisha government will not do anything for their villages and only the Andhra administration is willing to help them. The villagers also assured him of their votes.

The question is how will Odia villagers vote for an YSR Congress Party candidate. Sources informed that many of the residents in the disputed villages are in possession of two voter identity cards and two Aadhaar cards belonging to both states. They utilise the documents according to their needs. Sources added that as it is difficult to identify people with documents of both the states, the villagers take full advantage of it.

Sources also pointed out that the Andhra Pradesh government is trying to woo voters in all the 21 disputed villages under Kotia panchayat. They added that it has already prepared a blueprint to prove in the Supreme Court that Kotia panchayat is within its boundaries and not in Odisha.

Meanwhile, local officials here said that they are keeping a close watch on the situation. They said steps will be taken to prevent Odia voters from casting their votes in Andhra.

PUBLIC SUMMONS
IN THE COURT OF HON'BLE 2ND ADD. CIVIL JUDGE, AHMEDABAD (RURAL) AT, OLD HIGH COURT BUILDING BLOCK B ROOM NO. 20, NAVRANGPURA, AHMEDABAD

SMST R NO. 71/2018
Plaintiff Advocate : M. M. Shah

Plaintiff (s) :
M/S. ACULIFE HEALTHCARE PVT. LTD.
Address - REG. OFFICE - COMMERCE HOUSE -V, BEDSIDES VODAFONE HOUSE, PRAHLADNAGAR CORPORATE ROAD, AHMEDABAD-380051

Defendant (s):
OMM MAA PHARMA
Address - ARUNDAYA NAGAR, BADAMBARI, CUTTACK- 753010, ORISSA

Suit Valued at Rs. 208206/- for recovery.

WHEREAS you the defendant is hereby informed that summons issued by the Hon'ble Court/ RPAD has been returned Unreserved and you whereabouts are not known hence this summons is published as per order.

WHEREAS The plaintiff above named has instituted a suit against you under Order XXXVII of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 for Rs. 208206/- and interest, you are hereby summoned to cause an appearance to be entered for you, within Ten days from the Publication hereof, in default whereof the plaintiff will be entitled, after the expiration of the said period of ten days, to obtain a decree for any sum not exceeding the sum of Rs. 208206/- and the sum of Rs. 208206/- for costs, together with such interest, if any, as the Court may order.

If you cause an appearance to be entered for you, defendant above named the plaintiff will thereafter serve upon you a summons for judgement at the hearing of which you will be entitled to move the Court for leave to defend the suit.

Leave to defend may be obtained if you satisfy the Court by affidavit or otherwise that there is a defence to the suit on the merits or that it is reasonable that you should be allowed to defend.

Given under my hand and seal of the Court, this 16 day of March, 2024.

Order by
(K. R. Paraliya)
I/c Registrar,
Principal Senior Civil Court,
Ahmedabad (Rural),
At Navrangpura, Ahmedabad

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“ If you can always smile at life, life will always smile at you. **”**
THE MOTHER



Creative Destruction

The ancient Chinese concept of yin and yang attests to humans' tendency to see patterns of interlocked opposites in the world around us, a predilection that has lent itself to various theories of natural cycles in social and economic phenomena. Just as the great medieval Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun saw the path of an empire's eventual collapse imprinted in its ascent, the twentieth-century economist Nikolai Kondratiev postulated that the modern global economy moves in 'long wave' super-cycles.

But no theory has been as popular as the one – going back to Karl Marx – that links the destruction of one set of productive relations to the creation of another. Writing in 1913, the German economist Werner Sombart observed that, “from destruction a new spirit of creation arises.”

It was the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter who popularised and broadened the scope of the argument that new innovations perennially replace previously dominant technologies and topple older industrial behemoths. Many social scientists built on Schumpeter's idea of “creative destruction” to explain the innovation process and its broader implications. These analyses also identified tensions inherent in the concept. For example, does destruction bring creation, or is it an inevitable by-product of creation? More to the point, is all destruction inevitable?

In economics, Schumpeter's ideas formed the bedrock of the theory of economic growth, the product cycle, and international trade. But two related developments have catapulted the concept of creative destruction to an even higher pedestal over the past several decades. The first was the runaway success of Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen's 1997 book, *The Innovator's Dilemma*, which advanced the idea of “disruptive innovation.” Disruptive innovations come from new firms pursuing business models that incumbents have deemed unattractive, often because they appeal only to the lower-end of the market. Since incumbents tend to remain committed to their own business models, they miss “the next great wave” of technology.

The second development was the rise of Silicon Valley, where tech entrepreneurs made “disruption” an explicit strategy from the start. Google set out to disrupt the business of internet search, and Amazon set out to disrupt the business of book selling, followed by most other areas of retail. Then came Facebook with its mantra of “move fast and break things.” Social media transformed our social relations and how we communicate in one fell swoop, epitomising both creative destruction and disruption at the same time.

The intellectual allure of these theories lies in transforming destruction and disruption from apparent costs into obvious benefits. But while Schumpeter recognised that the destruction process is painful and potentially dangerous, today's disruptive innovators see only wins. Hence, the venture capitalist and technologist Marc Andreessen says: “Productivity growth, powered by technology, is the main driver of economic growth, wage growth, and the creation of new industries and new jobs, as people and capital are continuously freed to do more important, valuable things than in the past.”

Now that hopes for artificial intelligence exceed even those of Facebook in its early days, we would do well to re-evaluate these ideas. Clearly, innovation is sometimes disruptive by nature, and the process of creation can be as destructive as Schumpeter envisaged it. History shows that unrelenting resistance to creative destruction leads to economic stagnation. But it doesn't follow that destruction ought to be celebrated. Instead, we should view it as a cost that can sometimes be reduced, not least by building better institutions to help those who lose out, and sometimes by managing the process of technological change.

Consider globalisation. While it creates important economic benefits, it also destroys firms, jobs, and livelihoods. If our instinct is to celebrate those costs, it may not occur to us to try to mitigate them. And yet, there is much more that we could do to help adversely affected firms (which can invest to branch out into new areas), assist workers who lose their jobs (through retraining and a safety net), and support devastated communities.

Failure to recognise these nuances opened the door for the excessive creative destruction and disruption that Silicon Valley has pushed on us these past few decades. Looking ahead, three principles should guide our approach, especially when it comes to AI.

First, as with globalisation, helping those who are adversely affected is of the utmost importance and must not be an afterthought. Second, we should not assume that disruption is inevitable. As I have argued previously, AI need not lead to mass job destruction. If those designing and deploying it do so only with automation in mind (as many Silicon Valley titans wish), the technology will create only more misery for working people. But it could take more attractive alternative paths. After all, AI has immense potential to make workers more productive, such as by providing them with better information and equipping them to perform more complex tasks.

The worship of creative destruction must not blind us to these more promising scenarios, or to the distorted path we are currently on. If the market does not channel innovative energy in a socially beneficial direction, public policy and democratic processes can do much to redirect it. Just as many countries have already introduced subsidies to encourage more innovation in renewable energy, more can be done to mitigate the harms from AI and other digital technologies.

Third, we must remember that existing social and economic relations are exceedingly complex. When they are disrupted, all kinds of unforeseen consequences can follow. Facebook and other social-media platforms did not set out to poison our public discourse with extremism, misinformation, and addiction. But in their rush to disrupt how we communicate, they followed their own principle of moving fast and then seeking forgiveness.

We urgently need to pay greater attention to how the next wave of disruptive innovation could affect our social, democratic, and civic institutions. Getting the most out of creative destruction requires a proper balance between pro-innovation public policies and democratic input. If we leave it to tech entrepreneurs to safeguard our institutions, we risk more destruction than we bargained for.

The writer is Institute Professor of Economics at MIT.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

“ A man can do what he wants, but not want what he wants. ”
ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“ Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change. ”
STEPHEN HAWKING

“ Many receive advice, only the wise profit from it. ”
HARPER LEE

INDIA, GREECE SHOW THE WAY

FOCUS DIPLOMACY



DK Giri

BUILDING INDIA-GREECE RELATIONS SHOULD CERTAINLY INVOKE THE RICH LEGACY OF HISTORY INVOLVING BOTH COUNTRIES



Daron Acemoglu

History shows that unrelenting resistance to creative destruction leads to economic stagnation

India-Greece bilateralism received a new impetus in an international seminar, organised at Jawaharlal Nehru University early this week. The seminar was devoted to discussing various dimensions of India-Greece relations – history, tourism, culture, geopolitics, diplomacy, trade etc. In my presentation, while commending the initiative of augmenting bilateral relations, I raised the issue of the artificial dichotomy between bilateralism and multilateralism and the need to balance it.

Pointedly, I referred to the European Union (EU) as a multilateral regional organisation which is by far the best example of regional integration. Yet, EU has so far failed in projecting its political personality to the world. The EU was created not only as an economic union, but a political player in promoting pluralism, democracy and human rights, the values the EU member countries dearly seek to adhere to. But there has certainly been a mismatch between these values and the trade policy they adopted. In particular, EU trade with China has been booming although the latter is universally considered to be an autocracy and a consistent violator of human rights.

Likewise, the other multilateral bodies have failed in their objectives. The biggest of them all, the UN, which was created after Second World War, to prevent the recurrence of wars, becomes a helpless onlooker as wars in Ukraine and Gaza rage unabated. The point to note is if multilateralism is being infertile, it is advisable to focus on bilateralism. At any rate, while multilateralism in a globalised and an inter-dependent world should be aspired for, bilateralism lays out the building blocks. What has been happening is that the quest for multilateralism has downplayed bilateralism. The India-Greece bilateral efforts should correct the fault line in contemporary geopolitics.

On India-Greece relations, Amrit Lugun, who served as Indian Ambassador to Greece, narrated the developments be-



While multilateralism in a globalised and an inter-dependent world should be aspired for, bilateralism lays out the building blocks

tween the two countries from during his time and till today. He informed that the long historical link between two countries is reflected in a Greek psyche even today. The former Lt. General, Philip Campose, a strategic expert, made a meticulous presentation of contours of bilateralism.

The bilateral relations got a shot in the arm in August 2023 when PM Modi visited Greece. He was doing so after 40 years of visit by an Indian Head of Government to Greece. Also, significantly, the bilateral cooperation was elevated to a strategic partnership during this visit. Campose attributes this sudden shift to strategic partnership to a response to the growing trilateral relationship between Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey. The strategic partnership is a logical extension to the said response as Greece has stood firmly with India on the Kashmir issue and countering Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

The second push to India-Greece relations came from the visit of Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis early this year as Chief Guest on Republic Day parade as well as the keynote speaker in the Raisina Dialogue. He made a strong case for deepening India-Greece relations. He said, “India could not find a better gateway than Greece to Europe and Greece will have no better gateway to Asia than through India.”

Building India-Greece relations should certainly invoke the rich legacy of history involving both countries. It goes back to 326 BC when Alexander invaded India. The historical anecdotes suggest that Alexander, a great fighter, had to retreat in the North-West of India when an Indian king paraded elephants on the battlefield. The legend has it that an Indian king from Punjab offered his daughter in marriage to Alexander to buy peace. That sets a matrimonial relation between Greece and India. Likewise, many Greeks came to India as soldiers or traders and settled down forever in this country. There is evidence of Greek art and architecture in Indian society and civilisation. In India and ancient Greece, there were similar allegories and analogies, particularly in Plato's Phaedrus and the Katha Upanishad. The image of the chariot in Phaedrus portrayed the structure of an individual's soul whereas in Katha Upanishad, it is used in order to describe an individual's structure. There were also maritime trade contracts of Graeco Roman world with South India. The Greek Indologist Dimitrios Galanos lived in India for 47 years and breathed his last in 1833 in Banaras. He translated Vedic texts into Greek language and produced a Sanskrit-English-Greek dictionary of 9000 words. Currently, India and Greece

need each other in their mutual interests. Greece is a high-income economy and India is a growing economy with a huge workforce and potentially the largest market in the world. The bilateral trade is low at the moment but has the potential of growing manifold. Greece is a member of EU and NATO, two powerful bodies, economically and militarily, while India is the most populous country in the world and spearheading the Global South. India would need Greece to counter China's influence in the Mediterranean region, for access to her port and shipping industry and a market, both Greece and EU for its exports. Likewise, Greece would need India for its tourism sector, expertise of Indian companies, investment in privatisation of public assets and a market for goods produced in Greece. The future road map for bilateral relations should consist of cooperation on defence and security issues, connectivity between two countries, cooperation in ecological security, skilled manpower migration, joint trainings by army, navy, air force and special forces and developing inter-operability and cooperation in key areas of special interest to both countries.

That said, the elephant in the room is, as usual, China. One of the Greek participants asked for India's reaction to China having a port in Greece, Port of Piraeus, as India is also in the process of acquiring a port. The answer to that question is, it is for Greece to decide whether it would open its strategic space to an autocrat like China “posing a systemic threat to the world” (Germany's stated view). The West has created China almost like a Frankenstein. It is time they decide whether they should neutralise the Frankenstein or feed it to become stronger. India will inevitably counter China, Greece and the EU have to decide whether they will correct the mistakes of the past or continue with it in regard to dealing with China.

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism.

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Viksit Bharat: Rhetoric & reality

With the air awash with nationalism and Opposition fragmented, PM Modi's call to transform India into a developed entity by 2047 has ignited discussion, debate and dissent. In the cacophonous democracy that we live in, data in support of the decade-long Modi rule as compared to Manmohan's decade-long strategy is often obfuscated by ideological inclination rather than by sober empiricism. Aaron Levenstein had wittily observed: “Statistics are like bikinis. What they reveal is suggestive, but what they conceal is vital.” In the India context, Levenstein could not have been more prescient and beguiling.

The Human Development Report brought out by the UNDP every year, divides nations in to four categories, very high human development (62 countries), high human development (48), medium human development (40), low human development (32). HDI combines per capita GNI, life expectancy and mean years of schooling, each having equal weightage to determine a country's score. India is placed in the third category with a ranking of 134, as per the latest HDR, while China which

was lagging behind India in 1950 in terms of per capita income is now in the comity of countries with high human development. If India wants to catch up with countries with very high human development by 2047, it will need to double its per capita GNI and mean years of schooling. Apart from income growth, a significantly higher level of education would be germane to our just aspiration to be a Viksit Bharat.

While there is a remarkable coalescence in the economic ideology of Congress and BJP in terms of embracing free market economy, quite clearly in terms of growth momentum, the Modi regime has been noses ahead of Manmohan's. Three visible vectors have significantly contributed to this growth momentum. The invisible hand is the robust GST network with credit based tax system and intra-national economic marketing system, the supply chain cost has come down, and tax collection significantly improved. The fast spread of digital payment through UPI/ UID is lubricating financial transactions better and plugging leakages in payment of subsidy. No less has been the

contribution of IBC which has brought down Gross NPA from a high of 11.2% in 2018 to a modest 3.25% in 2023. India is also a preferred destination for FDI with inflow increasing from \$32.7 billion in 2000 to \$85 billion in 2023.

These legitimate economic achievements, however, obfuscate serious challenges of unemployment, underemployment, poor quality education and skilling, access to basic nutrition for children and women and multi-dimensional poverty that roil the growth story. The NFHS V for 2019-21, shows that compared 51.8% of women being anaemic in 1999, two decades later it stands at 57%. The same survey brings out the percentage of children who are stunted due to persistent malnutrition and poor sanitation is 33%. As per a report brought out Niti Aayog as against SDG targets, child mortality is as high as 28.3%, clean cooking fuel is not available to 28.2%, poor sanitation dogs 24.6% and nutrition deficiency afflicts 21.2%. As regards education, India's foundational learning, skilling, early childhood education are in a state of disarray. The latest ASER survey brings out how only 48% of stu-

dents in class 5 can read class 2 text-books, 25.6% can do simple arithmetic calculation and 24.5% can read a simple English sentence. The vocational skill of students above the age of 15, when they get into working age group, is very poor. Quite clearly the growth story is not in sync with human development factors like quality education, skilling, nutrition and basic sanitation.

This is clearly reflecting in the chronic unemployment and underemployment that affect both the rural and urban landscape. In a recently released India Employment Report we find that the Labour Force Participation Rate is coming down from 61.2% in 2000 to 55.2% in 2023. The average wages are very low for self-employed (Rs 6843 per month) and Rs 4712 for casual labourers.

While the overall economic prosperity of India is showing good resonance, in terms of social development, the rhetoric of Viksit Bharat does not jell with the reality of extreme deprivation of bottom 50%.

The writer teaches Macro Economics. Views are personal.

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

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Safe motherhood

Sir, Since a nation's socioeconomic prosperity is directly proportional to the safety of its prospective mothers, a day called “National Safe Motherhood Day” is marked to promote awareness among all stakeholders. Maternal mortality rate in India has remained a cause for concern though over the years there has been a slight drop in maternal deaths. The number of maternal deaths in a given period per 1,00,000 live births during the same period defines the maternal mortality rate. Care of the mother during pregnancy and lactation is a turning point for a healthy woman and her child. Also, child marriages tend to exacerbate the situation. Rural India poses a high risk for safe pregnancies and child deliveries. Mindset of elders and mothers should shift for the better because in spite of having access to skilled institutional deliveries, many households are opting for home deliveries. The WHO wants to reduce maternal mortality rate to less than seventy per one lakh live births by 2030.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Knockout blow

Sir, It is a knockout blow for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who is in incarceration in connection with the alleged liquor scam. The Delhi High Court has categorically stated that this is the case between Kejriwal and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), and not between the Centre and Kejriwal. The court said that the ED is in possession of enough evidence. As such, the court has considered that the arrest is not illegal. Kejriwal has questioned the timing of arrest. It has been viewed by the court that timing of arrest is not sustainable. Arrest cannot be made at the time of the accused's choice. The court has rightly maintained that petition by Kejriwal was not for bail but it was a challenge against his arrest by ED. The court viewed that doubting the approver is tantamount to doubting the judge. The court looks at the cases from every angle including the verification of veracity of truth by the approver. It has been made clear by the court that the statements of approver cannot be questioned.

KV Seetharamaiah, BANGALORE

Minorities may support TMC in Bengal

BJP stock going up in TN under Annamalai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 11: Minorities in West Bengal, constituting nearly thirty per cent of the electorate, are likely to vote for the TMC to halt BJP's advance, despite the presence of a secular alternative in the form of Left-Congress alliance, community leaders said.

According to minority leaders, Muslims in West Bengal, pivotal in several Lok Sabha seats, are inclined towards the Mamata Banerjee-led party, which they see as a credible force, unlike the Left-Congress alliance.

This inclination is particularly evident in districts such as Murshidabad, Malda, and Uttar Dinajpur, where minorities form the majority. With the Indian Secular Front (ISF) opting to go solo, efforts to woo minorities might become more challenging for the Left Congress, especially with the saffron party capitalising on various polarising issues such as the Ram Mandir and Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

West Bengal boasts the second-highest number of Muslim electorate in the country after Kashmir and Assam. Even though there may be some discontent within the community regarding the state government, religious minority leaders believe that voting for the TMC is crucial to counter the BJP.

Imams are likely to appeal to members of the community to ensure there's no split in minority votes, which in 2019 contributed to the BJP's success in minority-dominated areas. "It must be ensured there's no split in minority votes. The TMC is the best choice in most of the seats,



whereas the Left and Congress are best suited in some seats of North Bengal," said Qazi Fazlur Rehman, the Imam-eh-din, who leads prayers at the Red Road in Kolkata every year.

The president of the West Bengal Imam Association, Mohammed Yahya, said in districts such as Murshidabad, Malda, and Uttar Dinajpur, minorities might face a tough choice between the Left-Congress and TMC candidates.

"In these districts, the division of minority votes resulted in BJP victories in Uttar Dinajpur in 2019 and in one seat in Malda. However, this time around, minorities are expected to rally behind the TMC, similar to their support in the 2021 assembly polls," he added.

Imams are expected to convey this message to minorities from 40,000 mosques across the state. The BJP had won Malda and Uttar Dinajpur seats in North Bengal in 2019, where the minorities constitute approximately

45 per cent of the electorate, due to the split of this voting bloc.

In a state where minorities constitute around 30 per cent of the electorate, their influence extends to 16-18 Lok Sabha seats, making them a coveted voting bloc for all parties.

Several parliamentary seats in both north and south Bengal, such as Raiganj, Coochbehar, Balurghat, Malda North, Malda South, Murshidabad, Diamond Harbour, Uluberia, Howrah, Birbhum, Kanthi, Tamluk, and Joynagar, have significant Muslim populations.

Mohammed Kamruzzaman, general secretary of All Bengal Minority Youth Federation, whose organisation has the biggest following among Muslim youths in the state, said, "In Bengal, TMC is the most credible force when it comes to fighting against BJP."

Sabir Ahamed, a researcher with Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's Pratichi Trust, believes that the TMC's public welfare

West Bengal boasts the second-highest number of Muslim electorate in the country after Kashmir and Assam

Even though there may be some discontent within the community regarding the state government, religious minority leaders believe that voting for the TMC is crucial to counter the BJP

schemes have fostered strong support from minorities. "The welfare schemes of the TMC government have played a key role in minority voters' preferences," he noted.

The CPI(M) and Congress highlighted livelihood issues, scams, anti-incumbency and a rise in religious-ethnic sentiments as factors eroding TMC's hold over the minority vote- with the defeat in Sagardighi bypoll in 2023 being an indicator.

"The minority votes are returning to the Left and Congress and that has left the TMC and the BJP panicked," CPI(M) state secretary Md Salim said. The defeat in the minority-dominated seat in the bypoll had sent shockwaves in the TMC camp, with the ruling party taking up measures to reach out to the community.

The entry of the Indian Secular Front (ISF) led by Abbas Siddiqui into Bengal's political arena was a response to the absence of a strong proponent for Muslims in the state's political landscape.

Although now led by its lone MLA Naushad Siddique, the ISF, despite garnering only 1.35 per cent of popular vote in 2021 West Bengal assembly election is still seen as a threat to mainstream parties for a share of the state's 30 per cent Muslim vote. "It's not about dole politics. Minorities in Bengal are fed up with TMC's

corruption and misrule," remarked the ISF MLA Siddiqui. The ISF, which has decided to go solo, had announced candidates for six Lok Sabha seats — Jadavpur, Balurghat, Uluberia, Barrackpore, Diamond Harbour, and Basirhat.

Historically, minorities initially supported the Congress against Hindu Mahasabha and Jan Sangh. However, from the late sixties, they shifted towards the Left, especially under leaders like Jyoti Basu. The Left's decline began with the Sachar Committee report in 2008, highlighting the poor condition of minorities and anti-land acquisition movements in Nandigram and Singur.

Mamata Banerjee's TMC then emerged as the new minority advocate, leading to her overthrowing of the Left Front in 2011. This shift has been criticised by the BJP-RSS as minority appeasement.

TMC won 34 Lok Sabha seats in 2014, reduced to 22 in 2019. However, in the 2021 assembly polls, minorities voted for the TMC, securing its third consecutive term. "The TMC has fought against the communal onslaught of the BJP and has protected the minorities. The Left-Congress are B team of the BJP in Bengal," senior TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said.

The BJP feels that post-abolition of instant triple talaq in 2017 and recent incidents in Sandeshkhali, where women have accused the TMC leaders of sexually abusing them, it is likely to get a pie of women-minority votes.

"The Muslim women this time will vote for the BJP in Bengal to express their gratitude," said state BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 11: Often considered a fringe player in Tamil Nadu's electoral arena dominated by the Dravidian heavyweights, a resurgent BJP in Tamil Nadu has seen its stock rising much beyond its expectations this time, thanks to an assertive and aggressive K Annamalai who is steering the party.

The BJP has made no bones about its intentions to make good electoral inroads in the Dravidian heartland and is hopeful of turning the positive wave into votes for the April 19 general election. It is heading a non-DMK, non-AIADMK bloc and is contesting directly from 19 seats, including Coimbatore from where Annamalai has been fielded.

Much of the party's newfound confidence stems from Annamalai's "En Mann, En Makkal" (My Land, My People) padayatra, a crucial political journey that made many heads turn towards the Tamil Nadu BJP and the former IPS officer. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the culmination of the nearly seven month-long yatra.

Though how much of the frenzied crowd that swarmed the rallies would translate into votes for the saffron party remains to be seen, the padayatra ended up projecting Annamalai as a tall leader battling against corruption and dynastic politics, which was the very purpose of the foot march.

He repeatedly targeted the DMK over corruption and irregularities, such as in the state-run milk cooperative Avvin. He released what he termed as "DMK files," alleging graft by senior leaders, accusations which were dismissed by the ruling party.

However, these episodes made him people take note of Annamalai. Political observers feel his vehement criticism of the ruling party on many public issues, his assertive and aggressive nature, and cordial approach to the people have endeared him to more people, especially the ones looking at an alternative to the DMK and AIADMK.

Unlike the AIADMK or the DMK, which alternately come to power in the state banking on their iconic leaders, the BJP lacks traditional vote banks either from the minorities, fishers, women or other sections.

So, the party is left with hardly any option but to raise issues of corruption and dynastic pol-

itics in Tamil Nadu. And most invariably, the BJP invokes the names of its central leaders in the state where the people identify themselves with sons of the soil - in other words regional identity. Throughout its electoral history in the state, the BJP had gained only when it aligned with either of the Dravidian majors which have regional identity, a senior AIADMK leader said.

Claiming aligning with political parties at the time of elections was a decision of the party high command, BJP state vice president M Chakravarthy says his party expanded and made inroads into new areas after Annamalai took over as president.

"Not only youngsters but also all those in varying age groups are supporting us and want the corrupt (DMK) government dis-

lodged," he said. More than the Vel yatra of former president L Murugan in 2021, Annamalai's En Mann, En Makkal padayatra has made the BJP's stock go up, he asserts.

According to Dr Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy, former MLC and BJP's national co-incharge of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, public support to the party has been increasing on a massive scale and the Wednesday rally at Mettupalayam in Coimbatore district by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was an indication.

"The overwhelming response reflects Tamil Nadu's optimism for a developed India under the leadership of our dynamic and visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji. Bharat is committed to elect the Modi government again with the spirit of "Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar, Is Baar 400 Paar," he said, alluding to Modi's assertion of the saffron party crossing the 400-seat mark in this election.

On the padayatra that virtually catapulted him to a star status, something no BJP leader in the state has enjoyed so far, Annamalai terms the initiative as "important."

"The En Mann, En Makkal padayatra was an important journey for the BJP in Tamil Nadu. We are contesting from 23 seats in the state - 19 on our own and 4 of our allies are contesting on the Lotus symbol," he said.

In Coimbatore, he has narrowed down the poll battle to a triangular contest, his rivals being those from the DMK and AIADMK.

TN to witness slight drop in temperature



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, April 11: The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC), Chennai, have forecasted a slight drop in temperature over the next few days in Tamil Nadu.

The RMC released a statement Thursday informing that the maximum temperature in southern districts of Tamil Nadu and some parts of Pondicherry is going to decrease by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius in the next few days.

Additionally, according to the statement, moderate to light rainfall is expected in the southern delta districts of Tamil Nadu between April 11 and April 15. The rains will be due to fluctuating wind directions in the upper and lower layers of the atmosphere.

The rains and easterly winds that are likely to hit some parts of Tamil Nadu will bring down the temperature in the next few days, as per the statement.

The RMC also said that Chennai is expected to have cloudy skies with a maximum temperature of 35 degrees Celsius. However, in some interior regions of Tamil Nadu, the temperature is likely to touch 40 degrees Celsius.

Tea industry issues hold key in north Bengal polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 11: Ailing health of the tea industry, closed gardens, discontent over socio-economic conditions and stagnant wages of plantation workers could emerge as key issues for both the TMC and the BJP in the upcoming polls in four Lok Sabha seats in the northern part of West Bengal.

In the run-up to the general elections, the air is thick with blame games among political parties and a cacophony of promises that reverberate through 300-odd tea gardens spread across Darjeeling, Dooars and Terai regions. Though tea plantations are touted as India's second-largest employer, the plight of the estate workers whose votes are crucial for all parties is a major poll plank, industry stakeholders said.

The sector is plagued by the twin blows of rising production costs and lower price realisation at the auctions, former Tea Board chairman P K Bezbaruah said. This might have thrown the planters' business and livelihood of 4.5 lakh tea garden workers into jeopardy, but political parties get an opportunity to woo them with promises.

"The workers will vote against



the negligence that they have been enduring. Neither the Centre's BJP nor the TMC government has helped them get rid of their distress with dwindling ration system and deteriorating medical facilities," convenor of Joint Forum of Trade Unions and CITU's general secretary (tea industry) Zia-Ul-Alam said. Mani Kumar Darnal, leader of INTUC in the Dooars region of north Bengal, said closed gardens are "not reopening, while huge defaults in making statutory payments like PF and gratuity created resentment among workers". According to the planters' body Tea Association of India (TAI) estimates, there are nearly 12 closed gardens in north Bengal. Darnal alleged that the Tea Board, under the union commerce ministry, stopped giving subsidies to the industry eight years ago, adding that this could be a major issue in the elections.

'Metro Ride Kolkata' app hits milestone with 4.46 lakh downloads

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 11: More than four lakh people have downloaded Kolkata Metro's mobile app on their smartphones, an official said.

A Metro Railway spokesperson Kaushik Mitra said that this app 'Metro Ride Kolkata' was developed by the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS). The idea of developing such an App was conceived to enable Metro commuters to recharge their smart cards or book QR Code-Based tickets anytime from anywhere," he said.

Mitra said for the benefit of the commuters, 'Metro Ride Kolkata' App was launched March 5, 2022, on android platform and March 22, 2024 on iOS platform. "Till April 6, around 4.46 lakh android users have downloaded this app from Google Play Store and 1,400 iOS users have downloaded this app from Apple Store. These figures signify the acceptability and popularity of this app among the Metro users," he said.

To make more commuters aware about it, special promotional films on how to download and use this app are being shown on platform televisions of both old North-South and new East-West Metro stations.

Tribal hamlets in TN to boycott LS polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, April 11: People residing in tribal hamlets of Pungampattu and Nellivisal Nadu of Tirupathur district in Tamil Nadu have decided to boycott the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Maniyappa, a villager of Pungampattu, said: "We don't have proper roads, school is 12 km away from our hamlet and our children have to walk through dense forests to reach the school." "This time, we decided to boycott elections," he added, citing that "hollow promises" are made every election and nothing changes.

Residents of remote tribal hamlets constituting these villages and atop Jawadhu Hills near Tirupathur town, have erected banners in their villages, asking political parties not to visit them to canvas for votes for the Lok Sabha election.

Karuppammal, a resident of Pungampattu Nadu village said: "Political parties should not visit our village and we have asked them not to come." She said that children from these hamlets have to go to government schools in Pudur Nadu or Nellivisal Nadu, around 12 km away. Moreover, she explained that only muddy pathways are available for residents to reach these villages for their day-to-day work. Karuppammal added: "Many men from the areas left their families behind and migrated to work as labourers in big towns and cities like Bengaluru, Salem and Chennai. These hamlets have 40-45 families, with mostly women leading them."

The villagers said that sick persons, including pregnant women, had died on the way to the hospital over the years as people could not shift them to Jolarpet or Tirupathur town at the foothills of Jawadhu hills.

Battle for Bengal's walls as power of poll graffiti still unmatched

Grffiti - some witty, some satirical and some thought-provoking - have been an inseparable part of any election in the eastern state since 1952

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 11: With barely two weeks left for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, poll graffiti and wall paintings are becoming common across West Bengal, demonstrating its unmatched power to grab the attention of voters.

In Siliguri, a mural by Trinamool Congress portrays a figure resembling Prime Minister Narendra Modi being cautioned by Lord Ram to maintain a safe distance and win the elections on his own merit.

Hundreds of miles away in Kolkata's Jadavpur, a graffiti by CPI(M)'s student wing SFI compares TMC to the "demon" of Sandeshkhali and BJP to a "dacoit", urging voters to reject both. Another graffiti by CPI(M), with



images of LPG cylinder, reads 'tel theklo satake, gas gelo hazare, bhaktagan mookh kholena bazare' (the price of oil has breached the ₹100 mark, price of LPG has reached ₹1,000 but sup-

porters of BJP are silent).

Grffiti - some witty, some satirical and some thought-provoking - have been an inseparable part of any election in the eastern state since 1952.

According to SFI state committee member Subhajit Sarkar, artworks by left parties portray the need to combat undemocratic forces like the BJP and the TMC.

Sarkar said, "Cartoons, graffiti, wall writings have been an integral part of West Bengal politics, especially during elections." "The need to fight undemocratic and fascist forces, on-going probe against TMC leaders in cases of corruption and their involvement and attempts by the BJP to polarise society in the name of Ram have all been portrayed and reflected in our campaign," he said.

Trinamool Congress spokesperson and party's student wing state chief Trinankur Bhattacharya said, "We have harped on the pressing issues

faced by West Bengal and people of the country". "From squeezing of central funds meant for West Bengal under MGNREGA and Awas Yojana to frequent raids using the CBI and ED to harass and scare opposition leaders, our graffitis reflect wide-ranging issues," he said.

The BJP also responded with murals countering TMC's claims and highlighting corruption allegations. In an apparent response to the TMC's 'Tihare Bosei Khela Habe' (the game will be played from Tihar jail) poster, the saffron party put up a graffiti in Dubrajpur under Birbhum Lok Sabha seat, saying, 'khelte khelte Tihar gele sange niye meye, bakira sob Bose ache tomar dike cheye' (you and your daughter went to Tihar jail, now others are waiting to join you).



Over 40 workers of BJD joined Congress at a merger meeting in the presence of Bolangir MLA Narasingha Mishra in Bolangir, Thursday



BJD leaders submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) outlining their concerns over alleged harassment of women ASHA, Anganwadi and Mission Shakti workers by BJP

BJD cadres confused over delay

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

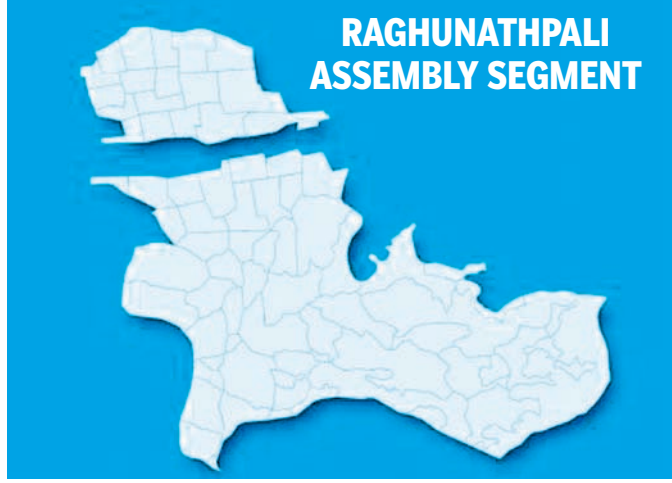
Rourkela, April 11: BJD continues to drag its feet on declaring the name of the candidate for the Raghunathpali Assembly constituency here. This has led to confusion among party cadres, sources said.

The party has formally announced the entry of former Congress MLA nominee Prafulla Sunyani into the party fold.

While the party has once again reposed faith in minister and heavyweight Sarada Nayak for Rourkela, it is delaying in announcing the candidate for its sibling segment Raghunathpali.

The confusion among the party cadres over the delay stems from two reasons. Who will be the candidate and when will it be announced? "Overall, all parties, including our party, have started some sort of political activities in other constituencies. For the continuous deferral in declaring the candidate here we are lagging behind," said a party cadre.

Raghunathpali is presently represented by Subrat Tarai of BJD who has been winning from



While the party has once again reposed faith in minister and heavyweight Sarada Nayak for Rourkela, it is delaying in announcing the candidate for its sibling segment Raghunathpali

here since 2009. Sources said he may not find favour of the party high command to retain his candidature this time. The cadres are of the view that this time the party ticket might go to Sunyani after he jumped fence and ac-

cepted BJD ideology. Ironically, Subrat got the test of his first victory in 2009 by defeating his nearest Congress rival Prafulla Sunyani by a margin of 18,171 votes.

"This time we came to know

that Subrat is ready to accept Sunyani as his substitute and has promised to fully back him in the election," said a party insider.

Sources said the reason for Subrat's support to Sunyani stems from the fact that Prashant Sethy, who had fought against him on a Congress ticket in the last election and came third, is a diligent organiser and activist. He resigned from the party and is likely to contest as an independent candidate this time if BJD did not give him ticket. Besides, Subrat's health issue is also preventing his candidature.

Prashant has remained dedicatedly with the masses of his constituency since 2019. And it is said Subrat is vehemently opposing his entry into the party.

Meanwhile, Prashant's supporters say if he fails to get a BJD nomination then he will fight as an independent. "He will be a big threat to BJD's fortunes because in the last five years his vote bank has swelled significantly for the service he has provided to the needy," said an analyst closely observing BJD.

BJP leaders defame women workers: BJD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 11: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Thursday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission (EC), accusing BJP leaders and candidates of defaming and harassing women ASHA, Anganwadi, and Mission Shakti workers.

The party submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) outlining their concerns.

According to the BJD, BJP leaders and candidates have allegedly adopted a dangerous strategy aimed at systematically targeting women grassroots workers in Odisha.

They alleged that ASHA and Anganwadi workers, and leaders of Mission Shakti, are being falsely accused by BJP representatives in an attempt to influence them to support the saffron party's agenda in the upcoming elections.

The party said these actions violate the Model Code of Conduct and urged the EC to take strong action against BJP leaders and candidates.

JMM to contest in 16 Assembly seats

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, April 11: With the simultaneous polls in Odisha fast approaching, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) has decided to field candidates in 16 Assembly constituencies and Mayurbhanj Lok Sabha seat.

This was revealed during a press conference of the party top brass held at Rairangpur recently.

JMM state president Anjani Soren, Jharkhand's Tribal Development and Transport Minister Deepak Birua, Baharagora MLA Samir Mohanta and other party leaders took the decision at the meeting.

The party decided to field candidates for Saraskana, Bangiriposi, Morada, Rairangpur, Jashipur, Baripada, Udala and Karanjia Assembly seats apart from Mayurbhanj Lok Sabha seat.

Similarly, the JMM has declared to nominate its candidates for Biramitrapur, Bonai, Rajgangpur and Raghunathpali in Sundargarh district, Basta



in Balasore district, Sukinda in Jajpur district, Parjang in Dhenkanal district and Champua in Keonjhar district.

Meanwhile, a merger meeting was also held on the occasion. In a shot in the arm for JMM, aspiring candidate for Morada Assembly seat and BJD's former state secretary Krushnachandra Das, along with his supporters, joined the ruling party. Sources said that JMM is contemplating to declare Das as its candidate for Morada.

Exuding confidence among the workers, the Jharkhand minister said JMM would put up a strong fight and win in all the seats.



BJD workers and leaders joined BJP at a merger meeting in Nabarangpur, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Peeved at support to Modi, MNS office bearers resign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 11: Many office bearers of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) have resigned in protest after their party chief Raj Thackeray declared support to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance in the state.

MNS general secretary Kirtikumar Shinde, one of those who have quit, took to Facebook to explain his decision.

In a post on the social media platform Wednesday, he said MNS chief Thackeray had taken a stand against PM Modi and BJP in 2019.

"Today, after five years, Raj saheb has changed his political role at the most crucial moment in the history of the country. Political analysts will tell how wrong he is and how right. Nowadays leaders can play the political role they want, whenever they want. But the fighters (a reference to party workers) who believe in their thoughts are crushed. What about that," he asked in the post. In his annual Gudi Padwa (the first day of Marathi New Year) rally Tuesday, Thackeray announced his unconditional support to PM Modi and the Mahayuti alliance comprising the BJP, Eknath Shinde-

led Shiv Sena and the NCP under Ajit Pawar.

Formed in 2006, the MNS backed Modi's candidature for the PM's post in 2014. However, Thackeray, a firebrand leader known for his oratory skills, became a bitter critic in 2019 and attacked Modi's policies. He has now backed Modi just before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Mihir Dave and office-bearers of MNS' student wing in Dombivli, on the outskirts of Mumbai, also quit the party citing Thackeray's inconsistent positions.

Dave said they exited the party in protest after Thackeray declared his support to PM Modi.

"We found it difficult to cope with the changing stances of Raj saheb. The difference of opinion over Raj saheb's decision has also led to disagreements among the workers, so it is better to part ways," he said.

Moreover, it was becoming difficult to face people due to the changing positions of the party, he said, adding that a section of workers is silent but not happy with Thackeray's decision.

The announcement by Raj Thackeray, the estranged brother of former Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, came after his meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah last month.

Quest for dominance of Hindi, Hindutva, Hindustan: Tharoor slams BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 11: Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor Thursday dismissed the BJP's claim of a strong performance in south India in the Lok Sabha polls as a product of its propaganda mill, and said the narratives that the ruling party harps on in the north such as communalism, religious division and nativist social cleavages, do not pass muster there.

Tharoor took a swipe at the BJP over its aggressive southern pitch, saying that for a party that claims to be focused on 'vikas' (development), the region that actually enjoys the highest 'vikas' in real terms is the least receptive to the ruling party's agenda.

In an interview with PTI, he also said, "The quest for dominance of Hindi, Hindutva, Hindustan is indeed the most dangerous threat to the foundations of our plural consciousness." The Congress leader, however, stressed that Indian secularism is intertwined in the DNA of the coun-

try's culture and it will not disappear so easily.

On whether it was a make or break election for secularism, the Congress leader said, "No, because the forces of national unity have always prevailed over earlier challenges to India's essential secularism."

Tharoor, however, said this Lok Sabha election is a vital phase in the ongoing battle for India's soul.

On suggestions that there is a Ram temple wave in the country which could benefit the BJP, the Congress Working Committee member said, "The BJP's politicisation of religion went too far when the PM performed the pran pratishtha at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, for which he is clearly not qualified."

"As a lifelong devotee of Ram, whose picture always adorns a central place in the puja room at my home, I have every right to ask why I should surrender my Ram to the BJP. Who gave the copyright on Lord Ram to the BJP?" Tharoor said.

However, the forecasts of a Ram Mandir wave considerably overstate the case, he said.

The voters know the importance of substantive issues - unemployment, price rise and communal hatred being key among them - and they realise those are the responsibilities of the Union government, Tharoor said.

People elect a government to look after their welfare, not just their religion, and if they vote in their self-interest they will vote the BJP out of office, he said.

"When we go to polls over the next few weeks, Indians can support a new India united in striving, or an India divided by communal hatred. We can support an inclusive vision of the future, or one that excludes and disempowers," he stressed.

Tharoor, who is seeking a record fourth term from Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram, said there is no doubt that the BJP is trying to make inroads into the South and Prime Minister Modi's recent peregrinations in the region are a clear indication of that.

Since they have peaked everywhere else in 2019, this is the only region left where they hope



they can grow, he noted.

Asked about the BJP's claim that its performance in southern states will be exemplary, Tharoor said, "The claim of an 'exemplary' performance is yet another product of the BJP's propaganda mill."

Aside from national schemes that are applicable anywhere,

the BJP has literally nothing to point to in Kerala in their 10 years of rule, he claimed.

"They made three promises to the state and broke all of them. They promised Kerala an AIIMS; no AIIMS has come. Their AYUSH minister, in response to me, promised us a National University of Ayurveda; they

established it in Gujarat instead. In their Budget of 2015-16, they explicitly accepted my request to upgrade the National Institute of Speech and Hearing in Thiruvananthapuram to a National University for Disability Studies. Despite this solemn commitment in Parliament, when they established such a University, they decided to do so in the North-East," Tharoor said.

After three broken promises, a batting average of zero, which is apparently their idea of 'exemplary performance' why would any Keralaite trust any promise by the BJP, he said.

Tharoor said there is a need to understand why Modi's BJP has little to no appeal in the South.

"Our history has also been different for instance, Kerala has welcomed followers of every faith here for millennia, and all have come in peace and not by the sword. So the narratives that the BJP harps on in the North-communalism, religious division, chips on the shoulder about history, nativist social cleavages - don't pass muster here,"

Tharoor said. On the BJP accusing the opposition of creating a North-South divide, Tharoor said if anyone has been dividing the country on communal, linguistic or regional issues, including the so-called North-South divide, it is the BJP.

"Their arrogation of more funds to the Union government and starving states ruled by non-BJP parties has created major concerns. If this government is somehow voted to power again, which I do not expect, there are real fears of how they will handle the South after the 91st Amendment lapses in 2026, and they initiate their project of increasing Lok Sabha seats for Hindi heartland," he said.

"Do they have a sensible policy response when the South questions them on whether it is being punished for doing a good job in human development and family planning? In their quest for absolute power, will they give themselves a two-thirds majority by gerrymandering constituencies, and leave the South feeling disempowered?" he said.



Extortion is going on and its name is electoral bonds
RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

NORTHWEST INDIA BRACES FOR RAINS

A spell of moderate rainfall is expected over the mountains and the plains of northwest India this weekend due to two back-to-back western disturbances and high moisture incursion from the Arabian Sea, the India Meteorological Department said Thursday



of the day quote

I think the security of our country, security of our states, including Mizoram, require us to take certain precautions. But the precautions that we are taking right now are in response to a certain situation. Even right now our neighbour is going through a very difficult phase. If things were normal in Myanmar, this would not have happened

JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

BJP's politicisation of religion went too far when the PM performed the pran pratishtha at the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, for which he is clearly not qualified

SHASHI THAROOR | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

The Prime Minister had a chance to send a powerful message to China. However, his ineffective and feeble response is likely to only encourage China further in asserting its claim on Indian territory

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

SC voices concern over misuse of social media in sub judice matters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: The Supreme Court has voiced concern over misuse of social media platforms with posting of messages, comments and articles on subjudice matters.

A bench of Justices Aniruddha Bose (now retired) and Bela Trivedi made the observation while initiating a contempt action against Assam MLA Karim Uddin Barbhuiya for his misleading Facebook post regarding a case reserved for judgment.

"It is a matter of serious concern that nowadays there has been a profuse misuse of social media platforms on which messages, comments, articles etc. are being posted in respect of matters pending in Court.

"Though our shoulders are broad enough to bear any blame or criticism, the comments or posts published in respect of matters pending in Court, through social media platforms under guise of right to freedom of speech and expression, which have the tendency of undermining the authority of the Courts or of interfering with the course of justice, deserves serious consideration," the bench said.

The top court said it is very usual for judges to react during the course of arguments being made by lawyers, sometimes in favour of and sometimes against a party to the proceeding.

"However, that does not give any right or

The apex court listed the matter next after four weeks and asked the registry to place the matter before the CJI for appropriate orders on the administrative side for listing the case before the appropriate bench

leeway to either of the parties or their lawyers to the proceedings to post comments or messages on social media distorting the facts or not disclosing correct facts of the proceedings."

"The matter is required to be taken up more seriously when any such attempt is sought to be made by the party to the proceedings," the bench said while issuing contempt notice to the MLA and directing the presence of the MLA from All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in the court.

The apex court listed the matter next after four weeks and asked the registry to place the matter before the CJI for appropriate orders on the administrative side for listing the case before the appropriate bench. The SC initiated contempt proceedings against Barbhuiya for his Facebook post March 20 in which he had falsely claimed a favourable ruling from the court in an election petition while the court had on that day only reserved its judgment in the matter.



Will not accept CAA, NRC, UCC: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 11: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Thursday reaffirmed the state's Opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

Responding to her statement, the BJP accused her of resorting to vote bank politics and trying to polarise the society.

Addressing a gathering here at the Red Road on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, Banerjee claimed that some people will try to "engineer riots" during elections and urged everyone "not to fall prey to the plot".

Eid-ul-Fitr marks the culmination of the month of Ramzan. "We will not accept the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Register of Citizens and Uniform Civil Code. We will not accept any forcible implementation of these. I do not know how to hate people. I do not deliver hate speeches. I want everybody to live like brothers, in peace and harmony. If we will live



unitedly, nobody will be able to cause harm to us. Do not let anybody break this unity," Banerjee said. "As long as I am alive, nobody will be able to harm you. I will keep fighting them," she added. "There will be people who will try to engineer riots in the name of religion. You keep your cool and we will not let them succeed in initiating riots here," Banerjee said.

In an apparent reference to the BJP, Banerjee alleged that with the elections closing in, the

central government agencies are being "used" to scare the people, mainly the Opposition leaders. "A few people want to scare people in the name of agencies during the elections. I will tell them (BJP) to construct a jail and put everyone behind the bars. But will you be able to put the entire population of 130 crores in jail? I am ready to shed blood for the country, but not ready to allow this torture go on," she said. She asserted that in West Bengal, people live in

We will not accept the CAA, NRC and UCC. We will not accept any forcible implementation of these. I do not know how to hate people. I do not deliver hate speeches. I want everybody to live like brothers, in peace and harmony. If we will live unitedly, nobody will be able to cause harm to us

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

peace because there is a brotherhood among different communities. "Live in peace and it is our responsibility to look after your security. Nobody will be able to torture you," she said. She asserted that her party, TMC's fight is against the BJP. "Remember, it's the TMC that is fighting against the BJP. We will decide about the INDIA bloc later. But in West Bengal, please ensure that no vote goes to any other party," she said.

TMC national general secretary and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee accompanied her at the Eid meet.

SHORT TAKES

Delhi: 18 injured as DTC bus hits pole

New Delhi: Eighteen people, including the driver and the conductor, sustained injuries after a Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus hit a pole in west Delhi's Rajouri Garden area Thursday, police said. Police said that a police control room (PCR) call about a DTC bus meeting with an incident was received at Rajouri Garden police station at 11:40 a.m. and a police team reached the spot to find that the vehicle had hit a roadside pole.

Techie duped of ₹2.24crore

Bangalore: A 52-year-old software engineer has lost ₹2.24 crore to the cyber fraudsters who swindled him by posing as Delhi Customs and Narcotics Control Bureau officials, police said Thursday. This incident comes close on the heels of a 29-year-old woman lawyer from Bengaluru losing ₹14.57 lakh who ended up stripping on Skype video conference before the fraudsters. The mode of operation adopted by the fraudsters to dupe Kumarasamy Sivakumar from Jakkur was similar to the one faced by the woman lawyer.

Five killed as truck hits bikes

Pilibhit (UP): Five people, including a married couple, died after a speeding truck hit their motorcycles here Thursday, police said. Station House Officer of Jahanabad Police station in Pilibhit district Mukesh Kumar Shukla said the accident took place on the Haridwar National Highway. All the five victims died on the spot, the SHO said.

BJP worker attacked

Ramanagara (Karnataka): A BJP worker sustained head injuries after he was attacked allegedly by two men with a wooden stick in Kempashettidoddi village here, police said Thursday. Naveen CS (34), a farmer, was attacked April 9, they said. Following the incident, BJP State President BY Jayendra accused the Congress of attacking BJP-JDS workers and creating an atmosphere of fear. According to Naveen's family, a day before the incident, he had gone to his acquaintance Shekhar's house after some persons told him that the latter had called him. Things took a turn when Naveen did not return home that night.

Patanjali Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj 'katha' enters 2nd day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 11: The special discourse on 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj', under the aegis of Yoga guru Baba Ramdev's Patanjali, by the revered Pujya Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj at the Patanjali University auditorium in Haridwar entered its second day, Wednesday.

At the event, Swami Govind Dev Giri Ji Maharaj said that had Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj not performed deeds like Lord Rama or Lord Krishna we would not have established the Patanjali Yogapeeth or promoted the essence of yoga.

"We would have been doing something else," he said. He emphasised his deep regards for all great personalities



and said of them Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati deserves special accolades for his nationalistic endeavors without having any formal English education of training.

He also stressed the need for efforts to dispel the ignorance prevailing since generations and

acknowledged Patanjali Yogpeeth's significant contributions towards this cause.

Speaking on the occasion, Baba Ramdev underlined that Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj not only provided political leadership to the nation but also created a movement of sorts for its

NCPER seeks uniformity in syllabus under RTE Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPER) has written to all principal secretaries and secretaries of school education across India asking them to ensure uniformity in the syllabus, textbooks, and evaluation methods across all schools falling under the Right To Education (RTE) Act.

The apex child rights body, in its letter, underscored the importance of adhering to Section 29 of the RTE Act, 2009, which specifically outlines the curriculum and evaluation procedures for elementary education.



The recommendations, detailed in a letter dated April 9, emphasise the need for strict enforcement of curriculum guidelines laid down by academic authorities, particularly the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) at the central level and respective State

- The NCPER has set a 30-day deadline for schools to demonstrate compliance with these recommendations
- They anticipate that these measures will fortify the RTE Act's objectives, ensuring that every child receives the quality education they are entitled to under the law

Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) at the state level.

This directive seeks to ensure uniformity in syllabus, textbooks, and evaluation methods across all schools, including Central schools and institutions affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), falling under the Act.

India ranks number 10 in cybercrime: Study

An international team of researchers has compiled the 'World Cybercrime Index' that ranks roughly 100 countries and identifies key hotspots according to various categories of cybercrime, including ransomware, credit card theft and scams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: India ranked number 10 in cybercrime, with frauds involving people to make advance fee payment being the most common type, according to a new research that surveyed cybercrime experts around the world.

An international team of researchers has compiled the 'World Cybercrime Index' that ranks roughly 100 countries and identifies key hotspots according to various categories of cybercrime, including ransomware, credit card theft and scams.

Russia topped the list, and was followed by Ukraine, China, the US, Nigeria and Romania. North Korea was at the seventh position, while the UK and Brazil were at the eighth and ninth po-

sitions, respectively, according to the research published in the journal PLoS ONE.

Through the survey, the researchers asked the experts to consider major types of crime in the virtual world and nominate countries that they thought contributed significantly to each of them. The major categories that the researchers identified were: technical products and services such as malware and compromising systems; attacks and extortion including ransomware; data and identity theft including hacking, compromising accounts and credit cards; scams such as advance fee fraud; and cashing out or money laundering involving illegitimate virtual currency.

Invites to respond to the survey were sent out from March to October 2021. The team received



- Russia topped the list, and was followed by Ukraine, China, the US, Nigeria and Romania
- North Korea was at the seventh position, while the UK and Brazil were at the eighth and ninth positions, respectively

92 complete survey responses. The top six countries appeared among the top ten countries under each cybercrime category, the researchers found. They further found that countries that are cybercrime hubs "specialise" in particular categories.

TIDBITS

CBI creates e-mail ID for land-grab victims

New Delhi: The CBI has created a dedicated e-mail ID -- sandeshkhali@cbi.gov.in -- on which victims of land grab in Sandeshkhali, a village in West Bengal, can get their complaints lodged, officials said Thursday. The agency has created the e-mail ID in compliance with the orders of the Calcutta High Court passed Wednesday. "The District Magistrate, North 24 Parganas has also been requested to give adequate publicity of the said e-mail ID in the locality and also issue a public notice in the vernacular dailies having a wide circulation in the areas as per the Hon'ble High Court's order," a CBI spokesperson said.

Son of Indira Gandhi's assassin to contest polls

Chandigarh: The son of one of the assassins of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Thursday said he will fight the upcoming Lok Sabha polls from Faridkot seat in Punjab. Sarabjit Singh, 45, said many people from Faridkot asked him to fight the elections, adding that he will contest the poll as an independent. Singh is the son of Beant Singh, one of the two assassins.

LeT terrorist killed in Pulwama encounter

Srinagar: A Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist was killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district Thursday, police said. This was the first encounter between terrorists and security forces in Jammu and Kashmir in more than three months. The security forces had launched a cordon-and-search operation in Fressipora village in the Rajpora area of the south Kashmir district following inputs about the presence of terrorists there, a police spokesperson said.

Minor, women among 15 Maoists surrender

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, April 11: In a major success for security forces ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, 15 Maoists, including a minor and two women, belonging to the squad of wanted rebel Misir Besra laid down their arms in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district Thursday, police said.

The Naxals were operating in Saranda, Asia's densest Sal forest, in Kolhan region in southern Jharkhand where security forces have mounted a major operation against the red rebels.

"Fifteen Maoists have surrendered Thursday. They were operating in Saranda and were squad members of CPI (Maoist) politburo member Misir Besra, who carries a bounty of ₹1 crore on his head," a senior police officer told PTI.

West Singhbhum is considered to be one of the worst left-wing extremist-affected districts in the country. It had witnessed 46 Maoist-related incidents, resulting in 22 deaths last year.

"It is a big achievement and will contribute significantly to conducting free and fair elections in Singhbhum constituency without an element of fear," West Singhbhum Deputy Commissioner Kuldeep Chaudhary told PTI.

"Due to continued operations and facilitative security environment in the disturbed areas and outreach of the security forces, local dasta (squad) members have been motivated to leave out the team and join their families and lead a normal life in mainstream society," a statement from the police headquarters said.



international



Biden has totally lost control of the Israel situation
DONALD TRUMP | FORMER US PRESIDENT

BIG MOVE

In an apparent bid to woo Indian tourists back to the Maldives, a major tourism body in Male has announced that it will hold roadshows across key Indian cities



of the day quote

Turkish police have seized the third largest haul of cocaine in the country's history
ALI YERLIKAYA | MINISTER OF INTERIOR OF TURKEY

Mr. Assange has already paid a significant price and enough is enough. There's nothing to be gained by Mr. Assange's continued incarceration in my very strong view and I've put that as the view of the Australian government
ANTHONY ALBANESE | AUSTRALIAN PM

The daily assault on the human dignity of Palestinians is creating a crisis of credibility for the international community
ANTÓNIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

Iranian threat puts Middle East on edge

REUTERS

Moscow, April 11: Russia urged countries in the Middle East to show restraint and warned against travelling to a region on edge over an Iranian threat to strike Israel, while Germany's Lufthansa extended a suspension of flights to Tehran.

Iran has vowed revenge for the April 1 airstrike on its embassy compound in Damascus that killed a top Iranian general and six other Iranian military officers, escalating tensions in a region already shaken by the Gaza war.

"Right now it's very important for everyone to maintain restraint so as not to lead to a complete destabilisation of the situation in the region, which doesn't exactly shine with stability and predictability," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told at a news briefing. "We call on all countries in the region to exercise restraint."

Conflict has spread across the Middle East since the eruption of the Gaza war, with Iran-backed groups declaring support for the Palestinians waging attacks from Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. Tehran has avoided direct confrontation with Israel or the United States, while declaring support for its allies.



IRAN HAS VOWED REVENGE FOR THE APRIL 1 AIRSTRIKE ON ITS EMBASSY COMPOUND IN DAMASCUS THAT KILLED A TOP IRANIAN GENERAL AND SIX OTHER IRANIAN MILITARY OFFICERS, ESCALATING TENSIONS IN A REGION ALREADY SHAKEN BY THE GAZA WAR
CONFLICT HAS SPREAD ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST SINCE THE ERUPTION OF THE GAZA WAR, WITH IRAN-BACKED GROUPS DECLARING SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS WAGING ATTACKS FROM LEBANON, YEMEN AND IRAQ

Israel has not claimed responsibility for the April 1 attack, for which Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Wednesday Israel "must be punished and it shall be", adding that it was tantamount to an attack on Iranian soil.

US President Joe Biden said Wednesday Iran was threatening to launch a "significant attack in

Israel", and that he had told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that "our commitment to Israel security against these threats from Iran and its proxies is iron-clad".

Iran is the third-largest oil producer in the OPEC group and oil prices rose after jumping a dollar a barrel in the previous session. Wednesday, an

Iranian news agency published an Arabic report on the X platform saying the air space over Tehran had been closed for military drills, but then removed the report and denied it had issued such news.

In an apparent response to Khamenei, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Wednesday that Israel would respond if Iran attacked Israel from its own soil. Russia's foreign ministry told citizens they should not travel to the Middle East, especially to Israel, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

Lufthansa said Wednesday it had stopped flights to Tehran and Thursday extended the suspension until probably April 13. Lufthansa and its subsidiary Austrian Airlines are the only two Western carriers flying into Tehran, which is mostly served by Turkish and Middle Eastern airlines.

Austrian Airlines, which is owned by Lufthansa and flies from Vienna to Tehran six times a week, said it was still planning to fly on Thursday but was adjusting timings to avoid crew having to disembark for an overnight layover. There was no immediate word from other international airlines. Iranian air space is also a key overflight route for Emirates' and Qatar Airways' flights to North America.

'Stable ties serve common interests'

The relations between India and China have been frozen except for trade ties ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 11: China Thursday said that "sound and stable ties" serve the common interests of China and India as it reacted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks that for New Delhi, ties with Beijing are important and the "prolonged situation" at the borders should be addressed urgently.

In an interview with Newsweek magazine, which described India's rise as "unstoppable", Prime Minister Modi expressed hope that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, the two countries will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquility at their borders.

"China noted Prime Minister Modi's remarks," Chinese spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here when asked for her reaction to Modi's interview. "Sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond," she said.

In his interview, which is the first to be given to a US magazine in the recent past, Modi said that for India, the relationship with China is important and significant. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us. Stable and peaceful relations between India and China

are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," he said.

On the boundary question, Mao reiterated China's oft-repeated stand that it does not "represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly".

However, India has maintained that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal. She said both countries maintain close communication through diplomatic and military channels on handling issues related to the border situation and have made positive progress.

"We hope that India will work with China, approach the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, keep building trust and engage in dialogue and cooperation, and seek to handle differences appropriately to put the relationship on a sound and stable track," she said.

Meanwhile, Modi's remarks were welcomed by the official media here, which termed it a "gesture of goodwill". "In a welcome move that may give a timely boost to the development of peaceful and stable China-India relations, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed the wish for the two neighbouring countries to 'urgently' resolve their long-standing border disputes," the state-run China Daily said in its editorial.

SHORT TAKES

Avalanche kills 3

Berlin: An avalanche near the Austrian ski resort of Soelden Thursday killed three people from the Netherlands who were on a skiing and hiking trip, authorities said. Another person was rescued and taken to a hospital. Police said a group of 17 people from the Netherlands, accompanied by four Austrian mountain guides, was climbing toward a mountain refuge, the Martin-Busch-Huette, at about 2,500 metres (8,200 feet) above sea level when the avalanche, which was about 80 metres (262 feet) wide, hit just before 11 am. The mountain rescue service said that three members of the Dutch group were killed, the Austria Press Agency reported.

Two pilots dead

Cavite (Philippines): A Philippine navy training helicopter crashed near a seaside city, killing the two pilots on board and narrowly missing a fruit market and neighbourhood, where some horrified residents ran for their lives, officials and witnesses said Thursday. Nobody on the ground was injured when the Robinson R22 helicopter crashed near early-morning market goes and residents in Cavite City, 21 kilometres (13 miles) south of Manila.

10 drown in Pak

Peshawar: As many as 10 people celebrating Eid drowned when their boat capsized in the Indus River in northwest Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Thursday, authorities said. The tragedy took place in the Kund Park region of Nowshera district where people, who gathered in large numbers to celebrate Eid festivities, drowned in the river at the confluence of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces, rescue officials said.

China sanctions 2 US defence companies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, April 11: China Thursday announced rare sanctions against two US defence companies over what it called their support for arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory to be recovered by force if necessary.

The announcement freezes the assets of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and General Dynamics Land Systems held within China.

It also bars the companies'

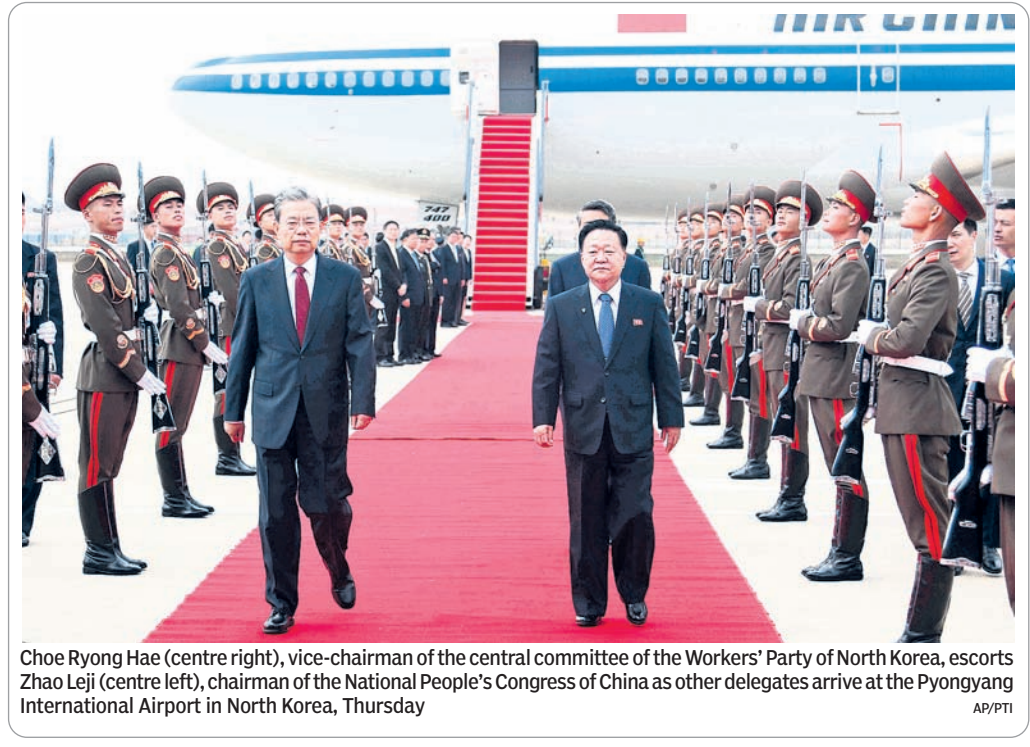


management from entering the country.

Files show General Dynamics operates a half-dozen Gulfstream and jet aviation services operations in China, which remains heavily reliant on foreign aerospace technology even as it attempts to build its own presence in the field.

The company also helps make the Abrams tank being purchased by Taiwan to replace outdated armour intended to deter or resist an invasion from China. General Atomics produces the Predator and Reaper drones used by the US military.

Chinese authorities did not go into details on the company's alleged involvement with supplying arms to Taiwan.



Choe Ryong Hae (centre right), vice-chairman of the central committee of the Workers' Party of North Korea, escorts Zhao Leji (centre left), chairman of the National People's Congress of China as other delegates arrive at the Pyongyang International Airport in North Korea, Thursday

Key power plant near Kyiv destroyed by Russian strikes

REUTERS

Kyiv, April 11: Russian missiles and drones destroyed a large electricity plant near Kyiv and hit power facilities in several regions of Ukraine Thursday, officials said, ramping up pressure on the embattled energy system as Kyiv runs low on air defences.

The major attack more than two years since Russia's full-scale invasion completely destroyed the Trypilska coal-powered thermal power plant near the capital, a senior official at the company that runs the facility said. Footage shared on social

media showed a fire raging at the large Soviet-era facility and black smoke belching from it. Reuters was able to confirm the location of the video as the Trypilska station.

"We need air defence and other defence support, not eye-closing and long discussions," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Telegram, condemning the attacks as "terror". The Russian defence ministry said it hit fuel and energy facilities in Ukraine in what it described as a massive retaliatory strike using drones and high-precision, long-range weapons from air and sea. The strikes were a response to



Ukrainian drone attacks on Russia's oil, gas and energy facilities, it said. Kyiv's appeals for urgent air defence supplies from the West have grown increasingly desperate since Russia renewed its long-range aerial assaults on the Ukrainian energy system last month.

The attacks, which hammered thermal and hydroelectric power plants, have caused fears about the resilience of an energy system that was hobbled by a Russian air campaign in the war's first winter. Ukraine's air force commander said air defences took down 18 of the incoming missiles and 39 drones. The attack used 82 missiles and drones in total, the military said.

The destroyed power plant outside Kyiv, a major power supplier for the Kyiv, Cherkasy and Zhytomyr regions, is the third and last facility owned by state-owned energy company Centrengo.

Russia, Kazakhstan battle record floods

REUTERS

Orenburg, Russia, April 11: The Russian city of Orenburg battled rising water levels Thursday after major rivers across Russia and Kazakhstan burst their banks in the worst flooding seen in the areas in nearly a century.

The deluge of meltwater has forced over 110,000 people from their homes in Russia's Ural Mountains, Siberia and Kazakhstan as major rivers such as the Ural, which flows through Kazakhstan into the Caspian, overwhelmed embankments.



Residents in the city of Orenburg said the waters of the Ural rose very swiftly and to far beyond breaking point, forcing them to flee with just their children, pets and a few belongings. "It came very quickly at night," Taisiya, 71, said in Orenburg, a city of 550,000 about 1,200 km (750 miles) east of Moscow. "By the time I got ready, I couldn't get out."

Whole areas of the city were underwater, and the Ural rose another 32 cm (13 inches) to 10.54 metres (34.6 ft), 124 cm (49 inches) above the level considered by local authorities as safe. Officials warned the river would rise further. The flooding has struck Russia's Urals and the northern Kazakhstan worst, though waters are also rising southern parts of Western Siberia, the largest hydrocarbon basin in the world, and in some places near the Volga, Europe's biggest river.

Vietnam sentences real estate tycoon to death in fraud case

LAN ILLEGALLY CONTROLLED SAIGON JOINT STOCK COMMERCIAL BANK BETWEEN 2012 AND 2022 TO ALLOW 2,500 LOANS THAT RESULTED IN LOSSES OF \$27 BILLION TO THE BANK, REPORTED STATE MEDIA VnEXPRESS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hanoi, April 11: Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan was sentenced Thursday to death by a court in Ho Chi Minh city in southern Vietnam in the country's largest financial fraud case ever, state media Thanh Nien said.

The 67-year-old chair of the real estate company Van Thinh Phat was formally charged with fraud amounting to \$12.5 billion — nearly 3 per cent of the country's 2022 GDP. Lan illegally controlled Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank between 2012 and 2022 to allow 2,500 loans that resulted in losses of \$27 billion to the bank, reported state media VnExpress. The court asked her to compensate the bank \$26.9

million. Despite mitigating circumstances — this was a first-time offence and Lan participated in charity activities — the court attributed its harsh sentence to the seriousness of the case, saying Lan was at the helm of an orchestrated and sophisticated criminal enterprise that had serious consequences with no possibility of the money being recovered, VnExpress said.

Her actions "not only violate the property management rights of individuals and organizations but also push SCB (Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank) into a state of special control; eroding people's trust in the leadership of the Party and State," VnExpress quoted the judge as saying.



The 2011 merger of a beleaguered SCB bank involved two other lenders. The banks have since become one of Vietnam's largest commercial banks by as-

sets. Former central bank official Do Thi Nhan was also sentenced Thursday to life in prison for accepting \$5.2 million in bribes.

Lan's arrest in October 2022 was among the most high-profile in an ongoing anti-corruption drive in Vietnam that has intensified since 2022. The so-called Blazing Furnace campaign has touched the highest echelons of Vietnamese politics. Former President Vo Van Thuong resigned in March after being implicated in the campaign.

But it's the scale of Lan's trial has shocked the nation. VTP was among Vietnam's richest real estate firms, with projects including luxury residential buildings, offices, hotels and shopping centres.

Analysts said the scale of the scam raised questions about whether other banks or businesses had similarly erred, dampening Vietnam's economic out-

look and making foreign investors jittery at a time when Vietnam has been trying to position itself as the ideal home for businesses trying to pivot their supply chains away from China.

The real estate sector in Vietnam has been hit particularly hard. An estimated 1,300 property firms withdrew from the market in 2023, developers have been offering discounts and gold as gifts to attract buyers, and despite rent for shophouses falling by a third in Ho Chi Minh City many in the city center are still empty, according to state media. In November, Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, Vietnam's top politician, said that the anti-corruption fight would "continue for the long term."

of the day quote

Our current economic growth performance, I would argue, (is) rather good. And the game now from here on is to be able to sustain it



SANJEEV SANAYAL | MEMBER, EAC-PM

There are a lot of sanctions that several countries have imposed on China. When we export from China to the US then there is 25 pc duty and the same thing when we export from India, there is only 5 per cent duty



RITESH GOENKA | MD, DAMSON TECHNOLOGIES

We would certainly like to see some growth even on this high base. So, hopefully, we will look at a ₹25,000 crore kind of number



PIROJSHA GODREJ | EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, GODREJ PROPERTIES

SHORT TAKES

CBDT issues FY25 interim action plan

New Delhi: The income tax department has come out with an interim action plan for 2024-25 fiscal year, which include identification of potential cases of prosecution, wherein there is short-payment of TDS and faster disposal of appeals. The action plan also stipulates timeline for approval of refunds, identification of cases where seized assets are due for release and release the same by June 30, 2024. It also called for finalisation of compounding proposals pending as March 31, 2024, and disposal of at least 150 appeals by June 30. Priority should be given to disposal of the appeals filed prior to April 1, 2020, followed by disposal of appeals filed after April 1, 2020, it said.

Benz sales at peak

New Delhi: German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz Thursday reported its highest-ever retail sales in a financial year in India in 2023-24, driven by strong demand for its SUV range. The company sold 18,123 units last fiscal, a growth of 10 per cent over 16,497 units in the 2022-23 fiscal. "We achieved the best-ever month, highest-ever quarter and best-ever fiscal in India. This trust reflects in the unmatched desirability for Mercedes-Benz in India, resulting in an overwhelming customer response," Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said in a statement. In the January-March period this year, the automaker sold 5,412 units, an increase of 15 per cent over 4,697 units in the first quarter of last year.

Bharti Hexacom IPO

New Delhi: Shares of Bharti Airtel's arm Bharti Hexacom will make its stock market debut Friday, after successfully completing the initial public offering last week. Bharti Hexacom's initial public offering received 29.88 times subscription on the last day of bidding April 5. "Trading members of the exchange are hereby informed that effective from Friday, April 12, 2024, the equity shares of Bharti Hexacom Limited shall be listed and admitted to dealings on the exchange in the list of 'B' group of securities," as per a BSE notice dated April 10. The issue price for the public issue is ₹570 per share.

TPEM, Shell ink pact

New Delhi: Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Thursday said it has tied up with Shell India Markets to collaborate in establishing public charging stations across India.



I assure you that the worst is behind us, and we have already stabilised our operations, with our on-time performance (OTP) increasing to 89 per cent on 9 April 2024 (second highest among all Indian airlines)

VINOD KANNAN | CEO, VISTARA

THE TASTE COMPANY ENTERS UAE

Hyderabad-based The Taste Company, which is into the ready-to-eat food segment, Thursday announced it has forayed into the overseas markets by launching its products in the UAE. The company is also gearing up to expand its operations to the UK, the US and Singapore, a release said



ADB ups India's growth hope

INDIA TO REMAIN MAJOR GROWTH ENGINE IN APAC REGION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7 per cent, from 6.7 per cent earlier, saying the robust growth will be driven by public and private sector investment and improvement in consumer demand.

In its April edition of the Asian Development Outlook, ADB said India would remain "a major growth engine" in the Asia and Pacific region.

For the 2025-26 fiscal, ADB has projected India's growth at 7.2 per cent. Growth will be robust despite moderating in FY2024 and FY2025, it said.

The growth estimates for the current fiscal is lower than 7.6 per cent estimated GDP expansion in 2022-23 fiscal. Strong investment drove GDP growth in the 2022-23 fiscal as consumption was muted, ADB said.

The Manila-based multilateral institution in December last year projected the Indian economy to expand by 6.7 per cent in the 2024-25 fiscal. "The economy grew robustly



ADB expects Indian GDP growth at 7% for FY25
For 2025-26 fiscal, ADB projects growth at 7.2%

in fiscal 2023 with strong momentum in manufacturing and services. It will continue to grow rapidly over the forecast horizon. Growth will be driven primarily by robust investment demand and improving consumption demand. Inflation will continue its downward trend in tandem with global trends," said the Asian Development Outlook.

The RBI last week had said GDP growth in the current fiscal is projected at 7 per cent on expectations of normal monsoon, moderating inflationary pressures and sustained momentum in manufacturing and services sectors.

The triggers for growth in FY2024 will come from higher

capital expenditure on infrastructure development both by central and state governments, rise in private corporate investment, strong service sector performance and improved consumer confidence.

Growth momentum will pick up in FY2025, backed by improved goods exports and an increase in manufacturing productivity and agricultural output, the ADB said.

The Indian government's efforts to boost infrastructure development, while undertaking fiscal consolidation and providing an enabling business environment will help in increased manufacturing competitiveness to augment exports and drive future

Notwithstanding global headwinds, India remains the fastest growing major economy on the strength of its strong domestic demand and supportive policies

MIO OKA | COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR INDIA, ADB

growth, ADB Country Director for India Mio Oka said.

ADB said exports are likely to be relatively muted this fiscal, as growth in major advanced economies slows down but will improve in FY2025.

Imports will out-grow exports in 2024-25, driven by strong domestic demand especially for capital goods and intermediate goods.

"Monetary policy is expected to remain supportive of growth as inflation abates, while fiscal policy aims for consolidation but retains support for capital investment. On balance, growth is forecast to slow to seven per cent in FY2024 but improve to 7.2 per cent in FY2025," it said

To boost exports in the medium term, India needs greater integration into global value chains, ADB added.

A healthy rise of 17 per cent

ADB's growth forecast for the current fiscal is in line with the projections made by RBI

MFs SIP investments rise to ₹2L-cr in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: Buoyant economic outlook and increased market participation helped drive the inflows in the mutual fund industry through systematic investment plans or SIPs route to record ₹2 lakh crore in 2023-24, marking a rise of 28 per cent year-on-year.

In comparison, an inflow of 1.56 lakh crore was witnessed through this route in 2022-23, ₹1.24 lakh in 2021-22 and ₹96,080 crore in 2020-2021, data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

Moreover, mutual fund SIP contribution has seen over four-fold rise during the last seven years. It was ₹43,921 crore in 2016-17.

Additionally, SIP book has also grown consistently from ₹14,276 crore in March 2023 to an all-time high of ₹19,270 crore in March 2024, indicating a growth of 35 per cent.

The SIP contributions consistently exceeding ₹19,000 crore for two straight months in February and March this year signal a shift towards a more disciplined investment strategy among investors.

The investors' confidence in mutual funds continues, which is reflected by the SIP accounts hitting a record high of 8.4 crore in March 2024.

TIDBITS Stellantis achieves major export feat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: Global automotive major Stellantis plans to make India a hub for exports of electric vehicles initially targeting Southeast Asian markets, according to a senior company official. Stellantis India Thursday commenced exports of its Made in India 'E-C3' electric car with the shipment of 500 units to Indonesia and is seeking to leverage on India's cost competitiveness in manufacturing to increase its overseas shipments. "We will be the first 'multinational OEM' in India to achieve this feat (to export EVs). We also have plans for a couple of other markets, Nepal and Bhutan. This is just the start...The plan is to take it from there," Stellantis India CEO & MD Aditya Jairaj told PTI. Stressing on the significance of commencement of exports of the E-C3, he said, "We have a dedication to the government-led 'Make in India' initiative. We are focusing on this as a very important aspect for Stellantis as a company." Moreover, he said, "This is also aligned with Citroen's ambitions of democratising electric mobility. The idea of this is to increase adoption of sustainable and clean modes of transportation." Stellantis, which was formed after the merger of Italian-American conglomerate Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and French PSA Group, currently sells its Jeep and Citroen brands in India.



Edelweiss Alt completes acquisition of L&T Infra Development Projects



Mumbai: Edelweiss Alternatives Thursday announced that it has completed the ₹6,000 crore deal to acquire L&T Infrastructure Development Projects (LTIDPL), which owns various road assets and power transmission lines. The deal to buy LTIDPL, a joint venture where infra major L&T had a 51 per cent stake and its partner Canada Pension Plan Investment Board had the rest, was first announced in December 2022. The Edelweiss arm is buying 100 per cent ownership in the JV and will get a portfolio comprising seven road assets spanning 4,400 lane-km and a 960 circuit km power transmission line, according to a statement. After this acquisition, the infra platform's overall portfolio will go up to 26 assets, comprising 5,000 lane-km of roads, 1,800 ckm of power transmission assets and 813 MWP of renewables, with a cumulative annual revenue of ₹3,000 crore, it added.

Telecom tariff hike imminent

ANALYSTS EXPECT 15-17% RISE POST ELECTION WITH AIRTEL AS BIGGEST BENEFICIARY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: The telecom industry is expected to take a 15-17 per cent tariff hike post general elections, according to an analyst report that termed the tariff increase in the sector as "imminent" with Airtel as the biggest beneficiary.

The general election in the world's largest democracy is scheduled to be held in seven phases between April 19 and June 1, and results will be declared June 4.

"We expect the industry to take a 15-17 per cent tariff hike post the elections," a report by Antique Stock Broking said, as it described the tariff hike as imminent and Bharti as the biggest beneficiary.

The last hike of about 20 per cent was in December 2021, it said.

Offering a break-up of ARPU (Average Revenue Per User) for India's second largest telco, the brokerage note said Bharti's industry-leading current ARPU of ₹208 is set to go up to ₹286 by end of FY27.

This will be driven by a tariff

in central government capital expenditure in FY2024 compared to the previous fiscal year together with transfers to state governments will boost infrastructure investment. A new government initiative to support urban housing for middle-income households is expected to further spur housing growth. Private investment is expected to get a boost with stable interest rates.

"With inflation moderating to 4.6 per cent in FY2024 and easing further to 4.5 per cent in FY2025, monetary policy may become less restrictive, which will facilitate rapid uptake of bank credit. Demand for financial, real estate and professional services will grow while manufacturing will benefit from muted input cost pressures that will boost industry sentiment. Expectations of a normal monsoon will help boost growth of the agriculture sector," ADB said.

Unanticipated global shocks such as supply line disruptions to crude oil markets and weather shocks that impact agriculture output are key risks to India's economic outlook, it said.

For developing economies in Asia and the Pacific, ADB forecast GDP to expand by 4.9 per cent on average this year, as the region continues its resilient growth amid robust domestic demand, improving semiconductor exports, and recovering tourism.

Sunoil import at record in March

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: India imported a record crude sunflower oil of 4,45,723 tonne in March, taking advantage of lower prices, while the country's total edible oil imports reached 11.49 lakh tonne in the month, industry body SEA said Thursday.

Crude sunflower oil imports stood at 1,48,145 lakh tonne in March 2023, while total edible oil imports were 11.35 lakh tonne a year ago.

India is the world's largest consumer and importer of edible oils. With the rise in global prices of palm oil, the demand for soft oils - sunflower and soybean oil - has increased in the last two months.

"India imported a record quantity of sunflower oil in the last two months, February 2,97,000 tonne and in March received the highest monthly quantity of 4,46,000 tonne," the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said while releasing the latest data.

Crude soyabean oil imports have risen to 2,18,604 tonne compared to the previous months but remained lower than 2,58,925 tonne in March 2023.

Among palm oils, import of crude palm oil (CPO) declined to 3.81 lakh tonne in March this year from 5.51 lakh tonne in the year-ago period, while RBD palmolein shipments too fell to 93,799 tonne from 1.69 lakh tonne.



hike contributing ₹55, upgradation of 2G customers to 4G contributing ₹10, and customer upgradation to a higher data plan (both 4G and 5G) and moving to post-paid delivering ₹14 gain.

"We expect Bharti's subscriber base to grow at about two per cent per annum, against the industry growth of one per cent per annum," it said.

The brokerage expects Sunil Mittal-led Airtel to ride its best financial performance phase in over a decade driven by tariff hike, 2G upgradation, strong growth of enterprise and Fibre-to-the-Home, and a fall in capex post the 5G rollout, over the next three years.

"While challenges do exist as Bharti has chosen a different 5G rollout path versus key competitors, we believe it is unlikely to dent Bharti's subscriber base or growth significantly. We also believe valuations do not reflect the emerging highly positive macro telecom sector environment," it noted.

Bharti has guided for a capex of about ₹75,000 crore over FY24-26, including the 5G rollout, it

said, adding that post the rollout, the capex intensity is likely to fall significantly.

"We estimate a capex of about ₹75,000 crore over five years starting FY27, a significant drop from about ₹19,000- ₹20,000 crore per annum current run-rate for the wireless business, while the total India capex including wireless, DTH, FTTH/ FWA, and Enterprise is likely to decline from the current ₹26,500 crore per annum run rate to ₹23,000 crore per annum (ex-spectrum/ AGR payment)," it said.

The decline is "stark" as a percentage of revenue (down to 12 per cent from the current 21 per cent), given the long-term revenue growth of 10 per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) primarily driven by ARPU growth that has been assumed.

The top two telecom players in India have been gaining subscriber market share over the last almost 5.5 years, at the expense of Vodafone Idea and state-owned BSNL - the former due to its financial woes and the latter its execution troubles.

"While Vodafone Idea is down from 37.2 per cent in September 2018 to almost half at 19.3 per cent in December 2023, Bharti's market share is up from 29.4 per cent to 33 per cent during this period. Jio is the biggest gainer rising from 21.6 per cent to 39.7 per cent," it said.

TEMP SOARS

Beverage, ice cream makers expect sales surge

The makers are launching new products keeping in mind the evolving consumer preferences and also investing substantially on promotions and expansion of the channels this season

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 11: With a gradual rise in temperature and the start of heatwave, FMCG and dairy firms selling cola-based fizzy drinks, juices, mineral water, ice creams and milk-based beverages expect a spike in sales and have ramped up their production and stocks to meet the anticipated consumer demand.

Beverages major PepsiCo said summer months are naturally the most favourable season for its category and it is "optimistic" that its portfolio of brands will continue to delight consumers during the period.

The company which owns brands as - Pepsi, 7up, Mirinda, Mountain Dew, Slice, Gatorade & Tropicana, has launched campaigns taking on board leading

stars such as Ranbir Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna, Hrithik Roshan, Mahesh Babu, Kiara Adani and Nayanthara to woo consumers.

"We are excited about our high octane 2024 summer campaigns which have been rolled out over March and April. Our early read is that consumers are responding very positively to all our campaigns," said a PepsiCo India Spokesperson.

FMCG major Dabur India expects a stronger and longer summer would be good for the company's summer-centric products, particularly for its beverages and glucose portfolio.

"We have started building inventory for the same, both at the retail and stockist end," said Dabur India Ltd Head of Sales Anshul Gupta.



We will launch 30 new products this summer, mainly in ice cream and yogurt categories, as we expect a 25-30 per cent rise in consumer demand. With IMD's prediction of above-normal temperatures and a hot summer this year, we are expecting a multifold surge in demand for these categories

MANISH BANDISHI | MD, MOTHER DAIRY FRUIT & VEGETABLE

Anticipating demand in the summer season, Dabur has expanded capacity at its beverage plant at Pantnagar, in Uttarakhand.

"In addition, a new unit has been set up in Indore for beverages and in Jammu for aerated fruit beverages to gear up for the summer demand," he said.

Coca-Cola India said it is always attuned to market dynamics and consumer preferences and is also ramping up production.

"As the summer season approaches, we are adopting a segmented approach and strategically ramping up distribution to stay connected with our consumers and embrace this time of year," said a Coca-Cola India Spokesperson.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted prolonged heat waves this summer, especially between April and June.

Havmor Ice Cream, now part of South Korean confectionery company LOTTE Wellfood Co, said predictions for this year is also to be one of the warmest years, like the previous year and expect the category's momentum to continue.

"To cater to the growing demand, we have increased the production capacity in the existing factories and will be ready to service more demand through our upcoming factory in Pune

starting July- August 2024," said Havmor Ice Cream Managing Director Komal Anand.

The company has plans to introduce 12 new flavours during the season. Moreover, "considering the current K-wave among consumers, we are also expanding the LOTTE range by adding new Korean-inspired products in the coming months," said Anand.

While another maker Baskin Robbins India said amidst a growing demand for high quality and differentiated ice cream products and rising temperatures around the country, it is well positioned to meet consumer expectations during the season.

"Our strategic innovations coupled with the new plant have enabled us to move up the ladder on customer preferences. This approach will see us bring in not just new flavours for the season but also introduce several new exciting formats that are ideal to snack on," said Mohit Khattar, the CEO of Graviss Foods, which is the master franchise for Baskin Robbins in South Asia.

MUMBAI PUMMEL RCB

LSG challenge awaits faltering Delhi Capitals



(From L): Suryakumar Yadav dispatches a shot ball for a boundary, Jasprit Bumrah reacts after dismissing a Royal Challengers Bengaluru batter and Ishan Kishan pulls one for a maximum during his innings, Thursday

Mumbai, April 11: Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan provided the fireworks with the bat after Jasprit Bumrah's magical five-wicket haul (5/21) as Mumbai Indians pummeled Royal Challengers Bengaluru by seven wickets for their second win in the IPL here Thursday.

Kishan went ballistic to make 69 off just 34 balls (7x4, 5x6) and Suryakumar dazzled with a 19-ball 52 with four sixes and five fours, as Mumbai Indians overhauled RCB's 197-run target in

just 15.3 overs.

RCB huffed and puffed but put up a challenging 196/8 courtesy skipper Faf du Plessis (61, 40b, 4x4, 3x6), Rajat Patidar (50, 26b, 3x4, 4x6) and Dinesh Karthik's 23-ball 53 not out (5x4, 4x6) but the total proved to be far from enough.

The tone for an aggressive reply on a placid deck was set by Kishan, who tore into Mohammed Siraj to collect 23 runs off the India pacer's second over, hammering him for three sixes and a four.

The onslaught continued when

RCB introduced Glenn Maxwell in the sixth over, with the MI opener swatting two fours and a six to race to his first fifty of the season off only 23 balls.

Kishan once again forged a vital stand for Mumbai in company of Rohit Sharma, with the pair putting on 101 runs off 53 balls for the first wicket.

While Rohit (38, 24b, 3x4, 3x6) played second fiddle to both Kishan and Suryakumar, the former MI skipper also dished out some spectacular shots before he fell to a stunning one-handed diving catch at short fine leg

from Reece Topley off debutant Will Jacks.

Suryakumar, who was dropped by Glenn Maxwell at backward point on 15, went after Akash Deep in the 11th over to collect 24 runs with three sixes and one four.

Playing only his second game after comeback from injury, Suryakumar was aided by wayward RCB bowlers who presented him plenty of deliveries to knock himself into form and the World No.1 T20 batter obliged with a 17-ball fifty.

The contest, which saw par-

tisan crowds cheering loudly for both India stars Rohit and Virat Kohli, also witnessed booing of MI skipper Pandya intermittently.

As he walked out to bat, Pandya was hit by loud boos but a section also began chanting 'Hardik... Hardik' with Kohli immediately encouraging the fans to cheer for the India all-rounder. Hardik made it harder for the fans to boo him by smashing three sixes in his 6-ball 21 not out.

Earlier, Bumrah weaved his magic en route to a five-wicket haul before Karthik played a blinder in the death overs to take RCB close to 200. In a contest where his fellow pacers erred consistently, Bumrah's accuracy and mastery over variation helped him rule the roost once again.

Mixing up his fiery yorkers perfectly with sharp bouncers, Bumrah snaffled the in-form Kohli (3) early on to extend his ordinary run at this venue in the IPL.

Du Plessis and Patidar banished their poor run with their respective half centuries while putting on 82 runs for the third wicket, but Bumrah, who bowled three overs post the halfway mark, seemed to have broken the back of RCB's resistance with a terrific spell.

Karthik, who took a liking for Akash Madhwal (1/57) to collect 38 runs off his two overs, finished with five fours and four sixes. A little tentative at start, Patidar grew in confidence for his first fifty of the season to finish at 50 from 26 balls with three fours and four sixes, while du Plessis got his 61 from 40 balls, studded with four fours and three sixes.

BRIEF SCORES: RCB 196/8 (Faf du Plessis 61, Dinesh Karthik 53 n o, Rajat Patidar 50; Jasprit Bumrah 5/21) lost to MI 199/3 (Ishan Kishan 69, Suryakumar Yadav 52, Rohit Sharma 38; Will Jacks 1/24) by 7 wickets.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



table with the worst net run rate of -1.370.

Lucknow, April 11: Delhi Capitals' bowling unit will have to punch above its weight against an in-form Lucknow Super Giants, who will start as overwhelming favourites in an Indian Premier League match here Friday.

LSG, who sit on the third spot on the points table, seem to have all their bases covered even though rookie pacer Mayank Yadav, who bowls thunderbolts in excess of 150 kmph, is likely to miss the match because of an abdominal niggle.

The 21-year-old bowled just one over against Gujarat Titans before walking off the field, complaining of soreness last week. In Yadav's absence, another rookie pacer, Yash Thakur started with a five-wicket haul against GT. He will have the company of Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi among others.

LSG boasts of a strong opening pair of Quinton de Kock and KL Rahul. The flamboyant Nicholas Pooran has been in sensational form, adding meat to LSG's total at the far end of the innings. The major concern for the Lucknow outfit, however, remains Devdutt Padikkal who is yet to reach double digits.

The visitors, on the other hand, are looking like an outfit bereft of a Plan B as it became apparent in their 106-run hammering by Kolkata Knight Riders. The latest loss to a struggling Mumbai Indians has left them languishing at the bottom of the points

The primary worry is the composition of the Indian pace attack, which just lacks spunk. The onus will be on Khaleel Ahmed and old warhorse Ishant Sharma once again but the duo hasn't been able to deliver consistently. Mukesh Kumar is expected to be back from injury but he has also not set the stage ablaze with his performance. And, medium pacers Sumit Kumar and Rasikh Dar could well be lambs for slaughter against the likes of de Kock, Stoinis and Pooran.

To add to their woes, pace spearhead Anrich Nortje has been unable to shrug off the rust since coming off his injury, leaking runs at an economy of 13.43 in four outings.

DC has struggled to find the silver lining in their 2024 campaign barring skipper Rishabh Pant and Tristan Stubbs' form. The main issue is the team's lack of depth in Indian talent on the bench. This deficiency does not instill confidence in the team.

Prithvi Shaw got some much-needed runs but he needs to do more at the top. But, save Abhishek Porel, none of the uncapped Indian players have measured up, which has led to over-reliance on their overseas recruits who have also been stuttering.

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

Sindhu, Prannoy bow out of Badminton Asia C'ships



Ningbo (China), April 11: India's challenge at the Badminton Asia Championships ended after double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and HS Prannoy bowed out in pre-quarterfinals of their respective events here Thursday.

Sindhu, who is desperately seeking to rediscover her form ahead of the Paris Olympics, fought valiantly for an hour and nine minutes but was outperformed by sixth seed Han Yue of China 18-21, 21-13, 17-21. It was Sindhu's first loss against Yue against whom she had a flawless 5-0 record before Thursday's contest.

On her side, Yue never looked back from there on, keeping control of the proceedings to wrap up the first game in her favour.

A jolted Sindhu was in attacking mode in the next game and played aggressively to race to a 16-8 lead. Although Yue tried her best to claw her way back into the contest, Sindhu comfortably pocketed the second game.

But Sindhu let the momentum slip away after a good start in the decider, in which she led 8-4 initially. The Chinese played aggressively and indulged the Indian in long rallies to tire her, and it led to errors.

From 10-10, Yue raced to 17-10 before Sindhu pocketed a few points to reduce the margin to 20-17. Sindhu saved two game points, but eventually, the Chinese shut the door on the celebrated Indian shuttler.

PRANNOY VS CHUN-YI

Prannoy never looked confident even though he and his rival went neck and neck for the first eight points before Chun-Yi took a 11-7 lead at the break. Prannoy clawed his way back and level the scores at 15-15 before the Chinese Taipei shuttler pocketed three straight points from 18 apiece to take the lead.

Prannoy started the second game on an aggressive note and raced to a 4-1 lead. It was then that Chun-Yi raised his game and turned the match on its head as the Chinese Taipei shuttler sealed the match with ease.

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Raphinha helps Barca edge past PSG

Paris, April 11: With his team trailing 1-2 and Paris Saint-Germain pushing hard for another goal, Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez's substitutions paid off immediately. Midfielder Pedri set up the equaliser for Raphinha within a minute of coming on at Parc des Princes stadium.

Then, two minutes after his introduction, central defender Andreas Christensen headed home from a corner to give Barcelona a 3-2 win in the first leg of their Champions League quarterfinal Wednesday.

Raphinha was the pick of Barcelona's players on the night, and the Brazil forward had scored twice before Christensen's 77th-minute goal.



STUNNING OUTING: Raphinha celebrates after scoring against PSG at Parc des Princes, Wednesday night

The imposing Christensen headed Ilkay Gundogan's corner from the left past Gianluigi Donnarumma from close range as the PSG goalkeeper stood rooted to his line instead of challenging for the ball.

Raphinha's lively performance and finishing contrasted with a lacklustre performance from Kylian Mbappe, who has scored a club record 251 goals for PSG but did not hit the target this time or make many of his trademark electric runs from deep.

Raphinha opened the scoring in the 37th and Ousmane Dembele equalised in the 48th against his former club. Three minutes later, midfielder Vitinha put PSG ahead from Fabian Ruiz's pass in a pulsating match

where Dembele hit the left post moments before Christensen's goal.

Raphinha curled Barcelona ahead after Donnarumma struggled with Lamine Yamal's slick right-wing cross, which the 16-year-old Spain winger exquisitely flicked with the outside of his left foot.

Sloppy defending from both sides followed. Mbappe's left-wing cross was hacked clear by Ronald Araujo and fell to Dembele, who cut inside Frenkie de Jong and slammed the ball past goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Vitinha was afforded too much space from Ruiz's pass, and slid a shot under his body.

Raphinha read substitute

Pedri's superbly weighted long pass and clipped a volley past Donnarumma, making it 2-2 in the 62nd ahead of Christensen's winner. Raphinha turned and stood still, arms crossed, defying the PSG crowd jeering him.

Atletico head Dortmund Atletico Madrid moved closer to returning to the Champions League semifinals with a 2-1 win over Borussia Dortmund in the first leg of the quarterfinals Wednesday.

Atletico took a first-half lead with goals by Rodrigo De Paul and Samuel Lino and outplayed Dortmund during most of the match, but the German team stayed alive thanks to a late goal by substitute Sebastian Haller.

Dortmund threatened in the end and twice hit the woodwork in the final minutes. The second leg will be played next Tuesday in Germany.

Dortmund, the 1997 European champion, are looking to return to the semifinals for the first time since 2012-13, when they lost the final to fellow German club Bayern Munich.

Atletico has won 29 of its last 32 home games across all tournaments. It was Simeone's 50th Champions League win. The result kept Atletico unbeaten in 18 knockout-round games at home in the Champions League — with its last defeat coming against Ajax in the quarterfinals in 1997.

Nagal goes down fighting, takes a set off No.7 Rune

Monte Carlo, April 11: Putting up a brave fight, India's Sumit Nagal took a set off World No.7 Holger Rune before losing his rain-hit second round match of the Monte Carlo Masters, here Thursday.

In an impressive show of grit and gumption, Nagal threatened to spoil Rune's party by taking the second set after the second round match, which was suspended due to rain Wednesday, resumed. However, he lost his serve twice in the final set.

The Indian qualifier was behind 1-2 against seventh seed Rune in the second set, when the heavens opened up. He lost 3-6, 6-3, 2-6 after battling hard for two hours and 11 minutes in the prestigious clay court event. Nevertheless, it was a memorable tournament for him as he became the first Indian to win a singles main draw match at a Masters event on clay.

He first humbled the eight seeded Flavio Cobolli in the qualifier, and then third seeded Facundo Diaz Acosta to sail into the main draw of the tournament. Nagal, then, stunned Italian Matteo Arnaldi in the first round.

Meanwhile, Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden had lost their round of 16 men's doubles match to Mate Pavic of Croatia and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador Wednesday. They lost 3-6, 6-7(6-8).

PRAGGNANANDHAA, VIDIT SCORE CRUCIAL WINS

Toronto, April 11: Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi scored crushing victories, while D Gukesh held on to the joint top spot with a draw in a brilliant sixth-round outing for the Indian men's team at the Candidates Chess Tournament here.

Praggnanandhaa prevailed over Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan, while Gujrathi got the better of Frenchman Alireza. Gukesh's draw came against American Hikaru Nakamura.

With eight rounds still remaining, the 17-year-old Gukesh



and Ian Nepomniachtchi continue to share the lead in the men's section with four points each in their kitty. Russian Nepomniachtchi, who is playing under the FIDE flag, played out a draw with top seeded American Fabiano Caruana.

There was disappointment for India in the women's competition as R Vaishali suffered a reversal, losing to Kateryna Lagno of Russia. Vaishali, who is the elder sister of Praggnanandhaa, now has a lot of ground to cover if she has to come back in the tournament.

Koneru Humpy also lost, to Tingjie Lei of China, while

Nurgul Salimova of Bulgaria found her nemesis in Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia.

Praggnanandhaa shares the third spot with Caruana on 3.5 points and Gujrathi is not far behind on the joint fifth spot alongside Nakamura with three points. It was the end of the road for Alireza and Abasov who both are reeling with just 1.5 points close to the half-way stage in the biggest event of the year.

With 4.5 points in her bag from six games, Zhongyi Tan seems to be running away in women's section and the only threat comes from Goryachkina who is a half-point behind.