



Nora's wish

Dancer-turned-actor Nora Fatehi wants a film to be made on her life which she says is a roller-coaster ride

LEISURE | P2



Tightening control

North Korea puts surveillance cameras in schools and workplaces, and is collecting biometric information from its citizens to monitor its population closely

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Bullish outlook

IMF raises India's growth projection to 6.8 per cent from its January forecast of 6.5 per cent

BUSINESS | P11



Maxwell takes a break

RCB all-rounder Glenn Maxwell decides to take a break from IPL due to his poor form with the bat

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Baripada hottest place at 43.6°C

Bhubaneswar: Many parts of Odisha reeled under gruelling heatwave conditions, with as many as 18 places recording temperatures above 41 degrees Celsius, Tuesday. Baripada town in Mayurbhanj district was the hottest place at 43.6 degrees Celsius. The Capital City simmered at 41.9 degrees Celsius. IMD sources said 29 places recorded daytime temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius, bringing normal life to a grinding halt during the peak period. The daytime temperature, they said, is likely to reach 45 degrees Celsius between April 18 and April 20 in some places.

5 killed in lightning

Kendrapara: At least five people, including a boy, were killed in lightning strikes at different places in the district, Tuesday. They were identified as Ambika Mallick of Biraswati village, Asutosh Jena, 17, of Bangari village, Purnachandra Chhatoi, 75, of Pundilo village and Shiba Prasad Sahu, 62, of Birijanga village, and Anil Kumar Behera of Saliancha village. All the deceased were farming when they were struck by thunderbolts. The next of kin of the deceased will receive ₹4 lakh ex-gratia amount following submission of post-mortem reports, an official said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



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MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	72943.68 ↓ 456.10
NIFTY	22147.90 ↓ 124.60
DOLLAR	83.61 ↑ ₹0.14
EURO	88.96 ↓ ₹0.09
GOLD	₹73,024 ↑ ₹747
SILVER	₹83,570 ↓ ₹281

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	41.9°C	40.8°C
Min Temp	26.5°C	26.0°C
Humidity	65%	67%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST: DRY WEATHER VERY LIKELY



THE GIANT ROLLS ON: Thousands of devotees pull the Rukuna Rath of Lord Lingaraj on the occasion of Ashokastami in Old Town, Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

PHOTO: MAUSAM NANDA

29 Naxals killed in Chhattisgarh encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanker, April 16: At least 29 Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district, Tuesday, police officials said.

Three security personnel suffered injuries in the fierce gun-battle, and a large quantity of weapons were also recovered from the spot, they said.

The gunfight took place at around 2 pm in Hapatola forest between Binagunda and Koronar villages under Chhotethiya police station limits, when a joint team of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxal operation, IGP (Bastar Range) Sundarraaj P said.

The operation was launched based on inputs about the presence of senior cadres of north Bastar division of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) Shankar, Lalita, Raju and others, he said. "Bodies of 29 Maoists along with a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, SLR, Insas and .303 rifles, were recovered from the spot," the IG said.

Polling in the Naxalite-hit Bastar Lok Sabha seat will take place April 19 in the first phase, while the Kanker constituency, part of the Bastar region, will vote in the second round of general elections, April 26.

RAM TO RESCUE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The BJP-led NDA is hoping to come back to power at the Centre this time by piggy-riding the perceived credibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi among the electorate. That is the precise reason why the party chose to name its manifesto (Sankalp Patra) as 'Modi ki Guarantee', and it will not be a surprise if every NDA candidate in this election seeks vote in the name of Modi, saying it will help him become the prime minister for the third consecutive time.

However, a recent pre-poll survey by CSDS-Lokniti has claimed that the very credibility of Modi's persona stems mostly from the Ayodhya Ram Mandir issue, while there is growing dissatisfaction among the voters over the lackluster performance of the country in crucial areas of economy, job creation, and social security, despite Modi remaining at the helm of the government for the past 10 years.

The BJP seems to be well aware of popular mood and preferred to dodge the temptations to match the promises made by others in its manifesto which was released belatedly. 'Modi ki Guarantee', observers say, is devoid of any definite economic roadmap while making lofty promises of employment and



infra boost, the latter being a primary employment generator, which are ostensibly not likely to be endorsed by the electorate this time, if the pre-poll survey over the same is any indication.

According to the survey, an overwhelming 24 per cent each considered price rise/inflation and increasing unemployment the least popular initiatives of Modi government, followed by poverty alleviation (10 per cent) and dealing with corruption/scams (seven per cent). Even among NDA voters, the government's achievement in employment generation had just about 12 per cent takers.

Many people, who took part in the survey, chose 'Ayodhya Ram Mandir' as the government's 'most admired work' over any other 'achievement'.

Nevertheless, the survey findings mirror the country's poor

show in the World Happiness Index (WHI) 2024 released last month wherein India continued to rank 126 (among 143 nations) for the second consecutive year, some notches above Afghanistan which is at the bottom.

The report is prepared after taking into consideration factors like per capita income, health outcomes, and social support.

India's rank in the WHI has deteriorated over the years. Starting with 111 in 2013, the country has consistently been going down and was a dismal 139 in the 2021 report.

The decline happened irrespective of successive governments, which is NDA, and apparent economic progress, and India being one of the fastest-growing economies in the world in the last several years.

Though an overwhelming 48 per cent of respondents in the CSDS-Lokniti survey preferred Modi as the next prime minister, outshining Rahul Gandhi at 27 per cent, their preference was prompted by the euphoria over Ayodhya Ram Mandir (23 per cent).

It seems more than Modi's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat' or appeal for another mandate to shape the destiny of India for the next 1,000 years, 'Lord Ram' remains the rallying point for BJP, vis-a-vis NDA's political fortunes.

Dilip Ray among 21 BJP Assembly picks

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The BJP Tuesday released the names of 21 candidates for the Odisha Assembly elections, including that of former Union Coal Minister Dilip Ray.

While releasing the second list of candidates for the Odisha Assembly elections, the party nominated Ray from the Rourkela Assembly seat.

At least five turncoats who recently joined the BJP after quitting the BJD also got BJP tickets.

They are Amarendra Dash (Jagatsinghpur), Dambaru Sisa (Chittrakonda), Kalilash Kulesika (Laxmipur), Bhadrav Hansdah (Saraskana) and Jagannath Nudruka (Bissam Katak).

Ray will fight against Labour Minister and BJD candidate Sarada Nayak from the Rourkela seat. The party also changed two candidates who were named in the previous list. Surama Padhi was replaced by Tapas Ranjan Marthia in the Ranpur Assembly segment, while the party nominated Chaitanya Nandibali in place of Chaitanya Hantal in the Pottangi Assembly segment.

Two women candidates - Surama Padhi and Sanjali Murmu (Bangiriposi) - also figure in the list of 21 candidates released by BJP. With this, the BJP has so far announced the names of 131 candidates out of 147 Assembly segments in Odisha. P3

State's Animesh shines at UPSC, bags 2nd rank

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 16: Odisha's Animesh Pradhan secured second rank in the prestigious civil services examination 2023 the results of which was announced by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Tuesday.

The top rank was bagged by Aditya Srivastava, while Donuru Ananya Reddy got the third rank in the all India examinations.

Animesh, a graduate (B'Tech) in computer science from the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela had preferred sociology as his optional subject, the examination body said.

According to reports, Animesh hails from Bhalugadia village of Talcher in Angul district. Earlier, he had cleared the Odisha Civil Services Examination.

Prajanandan Giri from Odisha has secured 24th rank in the exam, while three others from the state have been placed in the top 100 all India rank. They include Ayushi Pradhan (rank 36), Jayashree Pradhan (rank 52) and Abhimanyu Malik (rank 60). Besides, 15 candidates from the state have successfully cleared the exam. They include Amritanshu Nayak (AIR 110), Jaswant Malik (AIR 115), Padmanav Mishra (AIR 176), Shubhra Panda (AIR 204), Tania Mishra (AIR 269), Ananya Rana



(AIR 280), Tanisha Mishra (AIR 303), Rashmi Pradhan (AIR 319), Biswajit Panda (AIR 343), Priyanka Priyadarshini (AIR 387), Santosh Kumar Patra (AIR 409), Sourav Das (AIR 466), Rakesh Kumar Sahoo (AIR 575), Siddhant Besra (AIR 800) and Rashmi Paikra (AIR 881), reports stated.

Meanwhile, Chief minister Naveen Patnaik, in a post on 'X' said, "Congratulate all the successful candidates from Odisha who have cleared UPSC examination. May they work with dedication to take welfare initiatives to the grassroots. Wish them bright careers ahead."

A total of 1,016 candidates (664 men and 352 women) have qualified the examination and have been recommended by the Commission for appointment to various services.

Among the finally qualified candidates, the top five comprises three men and two women candidates, it said. P3

Your morning coffee may be over half million years old

ASSOCIATED PRESS

That coffee you slurped this morning? It's 600,000 years old. Using genes from coffee plants around the world, researchers built a family tree of the world's most popular type of coffee, known to scientists as Coffea arabica and to coffee lovers simply as 'arabica.'

The researchers, hoping to learn more about the plants to better protect them from pests and climate change, found that the species emerged around 600,000 years ago through natural crossbreeding of two other coffee species. "In other words, prior to any intervention from man," said Victor Albert, a

biologist at the University at Buffalo who co-led the study.

These wild coffee plants originated in Ethiopia but are thought to have been first roasted and brewed primarily in Yemen starting in the 1400s. In the 1600s, Indian monk Baba Budan is fabled to have smuggled seven raw coffee beans back to his homeland from Yemen, laying the foundation for coffee's global takeover.

Arabica coffee, prized for its smooth and relatively sweet flavor, now makes up 60% - 70% of the global coffee market and is brewed by brands such as Starbucks, Tim Horton's and Dunkin'. The rest is robusta, a stronger and more bitter coffee made from one of ara-



bica's parents, Coffea canephora.

To piece together arabica coffee's past, researchers studied genomes of C. canephora, another parent called Coffea eugenioides, and more than 30 different arabica plants, including a sample from the

1700s — courtesy of the Natural History Museum in London — that Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus used to name the plant.

The study was published Monday in the journal Nature Genetics. Researchers from Nestlé, which owns several coffee brands, contributed to the study.

The arabica plant's population fluctuated over thousands of years before humans began cultivating it, flourishing during warm, wet periods and suffering through dry ones. These lean times created so-called population bottlenecks, when only a small number of genetically similar plants survived.

Today, that renders arabica coffee plants more vulnerable to dis-

eases like coffee leaf rust, which cause billions of dollars in losses every year. The researchers explored the makeup of one arabica variety that is resistant to coffee leaf rust, highlighting sections of its genetic code that could help protect the plant.

The study clarifies how arabica came to be and spotlights clues that could help safeguard the crop, said Fabian Echeverria, an adviser for the Center for Coffee Research and Education at Texas A&M University who was not involved with the research. Exploring arabica's past and present could yield insight into keeping coffee plants healthy — and coffee cups full — for future early mornings.

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SHANNON LEE CALLS FOR BAN ON GUNS IN FILM SETS

Actor and martial artiste Brandon Lee's sister Shannon Lee is calling for live guns to be banned from film sets in the aftermath of her brother's death while filming *The Crow* and the fatal shooting of cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during the shooting of *Rust*.

OLIVIA SHARES HER BEAUTY SECRETS

American model and actress Olivia Culpo has opened up about some of her beauty secrets, insisting that she's never gone under the knife. The 31-year-old feels that happiness ultimately comes from within.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You may pick up the hammer and chisel today. No, you're not taking up sculpture; you're finally giving in to your spouse's demands to take some home improvement measures. It's in your interest to be speedy and focused, as you are the guilty party, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
There is a strong possibility of receptivity and sensitivity in your love life. On the down side, your negativity may lead to mediocre results. You are a fire-fighter when it comes to others' problems, but can forget digging a well for your own home, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
Emotional and material security will hold equal importance today. You want to be in love, but you know that love can't buy you dough. In academics, you will be able to solve whatever problems you set your mind on. Your spare time will be spent on devising methods of making the best use of your knowledge.

CANCER
In all likelihood, this is going to be a fairly easy day for you, says Ganesh. The only tough part of the day would be how to spend it. There will be hardly anything to do, anyone to talk to. Ideally, this is what you would call a perfect day.

LEO
Call it an epiphany of sorts, but today promises to be a day of revelations for you. Finally, things fall into place as your Odyssey nears its end, and you come to terms with your hidden talents, says Ganesh. Follow your heart and dive into the bottomless pool of your imagination.

VIRGO
Ganesh predicts that your writing skills will possibly help you vent your feelings without offending others. You will successfully complete your pending assignments. Great success will knock at your door in anything and everything you undertake today, predicts Ganesh.

LIBRA
Health is always a key issue, and today, you may have to pay some special attention to the same. It may be some elderly person in the family, or even you. Take the time to give it your full attention in order to avoid any further complications. You may do well to undergo a physical examination yourself. Remember, health is wealth. Take care.

SCORPIO
The target is locked in and the arrow is shot. It is only a matter of time before Cupid celebrates and hits the bull's eye and you find yourself in the mush of things. Sentiments and romance will be the order of the day. There is a good chance that marriage proposals or new relationships will find their footing today, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Appreciation for all that excellent work you have put in is a no-go for you! Yet, you stand to gain nothing by losing heart. While the acknowledgement you look for has been delayed, Ganesh says it has not been denied and is in the offing already.

CAPRICORN
New projects and partnership will keep you busy today, says Ganesh. If a meeting is scheduled, you may be praised vociferously for your ability to make the right decision at the right time. You may also bag rewards for the commendable efforts you'd put in the past.

AQUARIUS
If Elvis Presley is who you dreamed of being, today may be your day! You seem to impress one and all, and even money flows in! You play smart today and everything seems to work in your favour. Take care, says Ganesh, things may not be as they seem.

PISCES
You can probably count your chickens before they hatch today, for it is likely that every nest-egg you expect to mint money will. A good day to trade in the stock markets as well, as long as you keep in mind that the horns of a rampaging Bull market can be every bit as deadly as the paws of a lumbering Bear market, says Ganesh.



Guests, performers and organisers pose at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Tuesday, on the second and concluding evening of 46th Baisakhi festival. The summer event was organised by City-based socio-cultural organisation Chinta O Chetana. OP PHOTO

Nora wants a film on her life

Mumbai: Dancer-turned-actress Nora Fatehi, who is one of the popular celebrities in showbiz, shot to fame with her enthralling dance numbers like *Dilbar*, *Kusu*, *Kamariya* and *O Saki* among others. The diva has also portrayed several acting-oriented characters. With a lengthy career in this profession, the actress has had her fair share of hardships. Recently, she stated that her life is worthy of being made into a film. During an interview with *News 18 Showsha*, Nora reflected on her past experiences and stated that she has a story to share with the audience.

She said she wants everyone to know about this 'random girl' who arrived at the 'most random place' and overcame all obstacles to become well-known in the film industry by picking up a new language.

She said, "I have a story, and one day, I would want to make a movie and talk about how this random girl named Nora belonging to the most random place in the world and who's not even Indian came to Bollywood, assimilated, learned the language and broke barriers. She acted in a bunch of films with some good actors."

She further added, "People told her that she won't be able to make it, but she made it happen and became a global star. This is my story. I think my life is worth of being documented in a film."



Mouni's cryptic note on people's perceptions

Mumbai: Kareena Kapoor Khan is a phenomenal actress. She has dominated the Hindi film industry for nearly 25 years. She has showcased her versatility by playing diverse roles across genres such as romance, thriller, and comedy. Her recent performance in *Crew* garnered immense praise from both audiences and critics. It's evident that she will continue to rule hearts for many years to come.

While she has millions of fans, not many people know that Bebo is also a fangirl. Yes, she admires none other than Gillian Anderson.

Mumbai: Actress Mouni Roy posted a mysterious message on her social media discussing how people form opinions about each other based on their social media posts. She recently shared the message on her Instagram story.

The message displayed on Mouni's Instagram story read, "Social media gives us a perception of access to people's lives without a relationship with them. So we think we know people based on what they choose to share. It's a warped view. There are a million layers to a person that will never be revealed by the posts they make." The message has also appeared on *Reddit*, and internet users have begun guessing what it might be regarding.

Mouni will appear in the upcoming movie *Love Sex Aur Dhokha 2*, directed by Dibakar Banerjee. The film explores the intricacies of relationships and reveals the unseen sides of love in today's internet age. With a captivating story and strong acting, the movie aims to explore the themes of love, betrayal, and the impacts of technology on our lives. Produced by Ektaa R Kapoor and Shobha Kapoor; the movie is scheduled for release April 19, 2024.

Anderson is an American actress known for her work in film, television, and theatre. She gained international recognition for her role as FBI Special Agent Dana Scully in the series *The X-Files*. She has also starred in notable projects such as *Crooked House*, *Scoop*, and *The Crown*.

Recently, the official Instagram handle of Netflix UK & Ireland paid tribute to the Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning actress by sharing a montage of her performances. The caption read, "Today, for no reason other than every day is a good day for this, we'd like to declare National Gillian Anderson Day!" The *Omkara* actress totally agreed with this sentiment and shared the post on her Instagram stories. She added, "No one like Gill," along with fire, red heart, and G.O.A.T emojis.

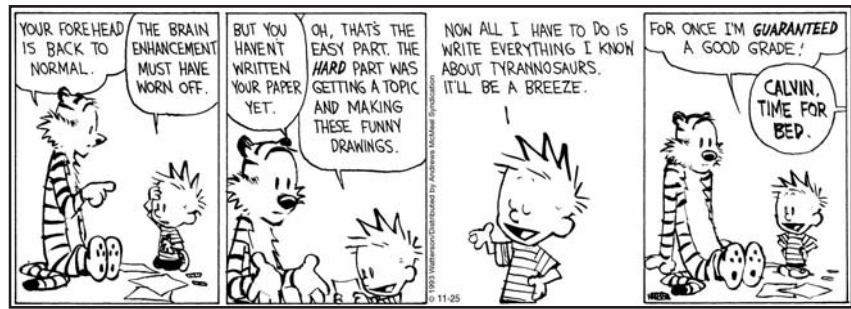
AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

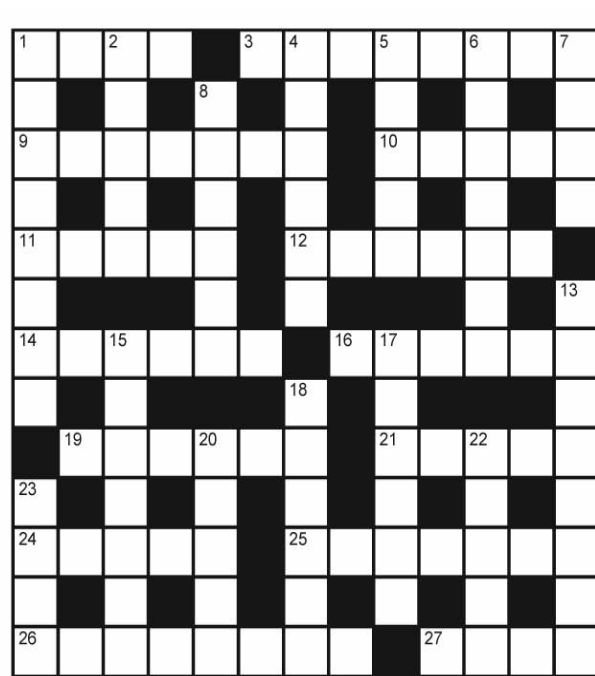


BREVITY



FUN post

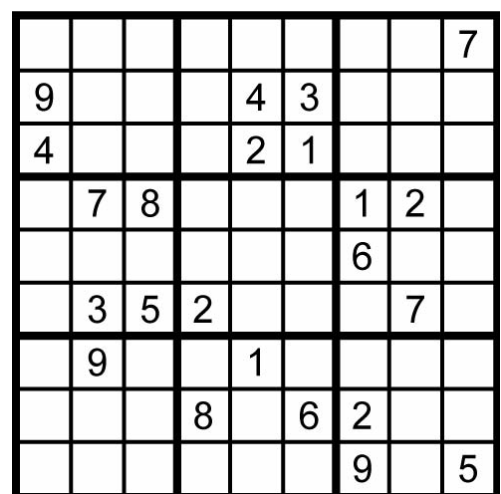
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Blowgun missile
 - 3 Frozen dessert (3,5)
 - 9 Explore the reefs
 - 10 Poplar variety
 - 11 VCR button
 - 12 Panther cat
 - 14 Kind of duty
 - 16 Mistake fixer
 - 19 Unpolished
 - 21 Clean, as a spill (3,2)
 - 24 Surmise
 - 25 Family identity
 - 26 Target part (5,3)
 - 27 Dairy product
 - 6 Utilises condition
 - 7 In perfect condition
 - 8 Hockey player
 - 13 Future sight?
 - 15 Like a kitten
 - 17 Comment
 - 18 Largest of the Channel Islands
 - 20 Woes for toes
 - 22 Cook an egg
 - 23 Tree branch
- Down**
- 1 Circumspect
 - 2 Origins
 - 4 Young and inexperienced
 - 5 Origami bird

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CAR FEST PREP

A preparatory meet, chaired by district Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain, for the Rath Yatra in progress at Puri Circuit House, Tuesday



BIJU BABU: ACE AVIATOR & SON OF THE SOIL

Biju Patnaik, the legendary leader and one of the chief architects of modern Odisha, has proved his worth through his unique, brave and revolutionary strides. The maverick leader, who is fondly addressed to as Biju Babu, was a great visionary, ace aviator and the tallest figure in Odisha's political landscape. The stalwart was born in a cultured, reputable freedom fighter family at Anand Bhawan in Tulsipur area of Cuttack March 5, 1916. His father Laxminarayan Patnaik and mother Ashalata Devi instilled in him the grit and encouraged him on his daredevil deeds from early childhood. On his 27th death anniversary, OrissaPOST pays rich tributes to the epitome of Odia pride and honour...

Biju Babu was not only an erudite scholar but also an adventure lover and travel freak with aeronautics as his most favourite hobby. Biju had started his schooling in Mission Primary School (now Christ Collegiate School) at Cuttack and joined Ravenshaw Collegiate School in 1927. After completing matriculating with first division, he started his Intermediate in Science at famous Ravenshaw College in 1932.

Biju Babu was inspired by Gandhiji since his college career and became a fan of him during the latter's Khadi Tour to Odisha. He dropped his BSc Degree to start training as a pilot at Aeronautic Training Institute

of India, Delhi Flying Club. He had made extensive tours to countries like UK, USA, erstwhile USSR, Paris, Indonesia and several other countries. What made him more famous as an avid cyclist was his astounding 4,500-mile journey on cycle from Cuttack to Peshawar in 1932 that was aimed at spreading the message of humanity. He had played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle. He air-dropped leaflets on 'Quit India Movement' for Indian soldiers, who were fighting against Myanmar as part of the British Indian armed forces. He also helped in ferrying freedom fighters from one place to another during the Independence strug-

gle. Biju Babu founded Kalinga Airlines that operated the Dakota planes in the early years of Independence. These planes played a significant role in Indonesia. In 1953, Kalinga Airlines merged with the Indian Airlines. In an extraordinary act of daredevilry and large-heartedness, he had risked his life to bring the then Indonesian Premier Sutan Sjahrir to New Delhi by plane at the time of Indonesian freedom struggle in 1947.

In 1950, the Indonesian government rewarded him with a piece of forest land and a palatial building which he did not accept. Biju Babu was given an honorary citizenship of Indonesia and awarded the title of 'Bhoomi Putra' – a recognition rarely given to a foreigner. Biju Babu was married to Gyan Patnaik, who belonged to Punjab. Gyan too was a pilot.

Biju and Gyan had named the Indonesian President Sukarna's daughter 'Megawati', which means goddess of clouds. She later became Indonesia's first female president - Megawati Sukarnoputri.

He was elected as a member of the Legislative Assembly in Odisha, representing the North Cuttack constituency.

Biju Patnaik became the Chief Minister of Odisha at the age of 45 June 23, 1961. He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Kendrapara in 1977 and became

Union Minister of Steel & Mines until 1979. He was also re-elected



twice to the Lok Sabha in 1980 and 1984. He served as the Chief Minister of Odisha for two consecutive terms from 1990 till his death in 1997. He spent two years in jail after the Emergency was declared in 1975. He was one of the first among the opposition leaders to be arrested during the Emergency.

Biju Babu's contribution to industry and education was significant as he is

known to have spearheaded several projects such as setting up Kalinga Airlines, Paradip Port, Regional Engineering College (now NITR), Kalinga tubes, Kalinga Refractories, Talcher Thermal Power Station, Balimela Hydel Project, HAL, Sunabeda, Bhubaneswar Airport, OUAT, Sainik School, Bhubaneswar, Kalinga newspaper and others. He supported and boosted the industrial and academic growth of the state of Odisha. Biju Babu breathed his last at the age of 81 years, April 17, 1997.



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



21% picks have criminal cases against them

New Delhi, April 16: A total of 250 candidates (21 per cent) in the fray for the second phase of the Lok Sabha election have criminal cases against them, with three facing murder charges, according to an analysis of self-sworn affidavits of the contestants by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and the National Election Watch.

The analysis was carried out on 1,192 of the 1,198 candidates contesting in the second phase of the election.

LS POLLS PHASE-2

Of these 1,192 candidates, 21 per cent or 250 candidates are named in criminal cases, with 14 per cent or 167 candidates facing serious criminal charges, according to the analysis.

Three candidates have murder cases lodged against them, while 24 are implicated in attempt to murder cases, it showed.

Twenty-five candidates have declared cases related to crimes against women and one of them faces rape charges under section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Twenty-one candidates are linked to cases of hate speech, the analysis showed.

It also showed that 52 per cent of the 87 seats scheduled to go to polls in the second of the seven-phase elections are 'red alert' constituencies.

'Negligent driver' blamed for Jajpur bus mishap

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The bus accident in Jajpur district in which at least five people were killed and 40 others injured was mainly due to the negligence of the driver, Additional Transport Commissioner (Road Safety) Lal Mohan Sethi said after a preliminary investigation at the accident site, Tuesday.

The West Bengal-bound passenger bus from Puri fell off the flyover at Barabati in Jajpur district Monday evening.

Stating that the bus was in

'good condition', having been registered in 2020, Sethi said the fitness certificate for the vehicle was also issued in March 2024.

"The accident might have taken place either due to rash driving or while overtaking a vehicle from the left side or the driver using a mobile phone while driving," Sethi said.

This apart, the official said the driver didn't apply brakes leading to the bus falling off the 15 feet high bridge.

"There was also no engineering deficiency. There were proper

barricades on the flyover and required signage," he said, adding that a criminal case will be filed against the driver.

Meanwhile, the authorities of the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack said that 46 people were brought from the accident site of which 19 injured were presently undergoing treatment at the hospital.

The remaining people were discharged after initial treatment. Of the 19 injured persons, five were in the ICU. Two of the injured persons admitted to the ICU were stated to be very crit-

ical, a hospital official said.

While the identity of the deceased persons was yet to be ascertained, the official said most of the passengers were from the neighbouring West Bengal.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced ₹3 lakh ex-gratia for the kin of each deceased and free treatment to the injured.

Meanwhile, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed grief over the bus accident and said her government would provide assistance to those affected in the mishap.

She announced that compensation would be paid to the next of kin of those, originating from West Bengal, killed in the accident and injured people as per rules.

The CM also said that the state administration is sending officials, materials, and ambulances to the accident site in Odisha for assistance.

The state administration, Paschim Medinipur and Purba Medinipur district officials are fully involved in relief assistance, the Bengal CM added.

CSE 2nd rank holder Animesh wishes to work for betterment of state

Pradhan, who hails from Talcher town in Angul district, is currently employed with the Indian Oil Corporation refineries division in the national capital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Animesh Pradhan lost his mother to cancer only last month but it did not deter him to continue with his interview preparation for the Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2023 and secure the second rank in the prestigious test, results of which were announced by the UPSC Tuesday.

"I wish to work for the betterment of my state's people, especially those from the marginalised communities and backward areas," said the 24-year-old UPSC qualifier from Odisha.

"The result has been very fulfilling. I thank my parents for my success. It is like a dream come true," an elated Pradhan, who got the second position his maiden attempt, told PTI.

"I lost my mother to cancer last month when the interview for the civil services examination was going on. I lost my father in December 2015. I was studying in Class XI then. Their loss is irreplaceable to me," he said.

Pradhan, hailing from Talcher town in Angul district, is currently employed with the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) refineries



division in the national capital.

As an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Pradhan wishes to work for the people of his state Odisha.

"I have given IAS as my first preference. I hope to get my home

10 women among top 25 qualifiers

The top 25 candidates out of the 1,016, who qualified the prestigious Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2023 the results of which were announced by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Tuesday, comprise 10 women and 15 men.

While Aditya Srivastava, Animesh Pradhan, Donuru Ananya Reddy, PK Sidharth Ramkumar and Ruhani bagged the first, second, third, fourth and fifth positions respectively, Sriшти Dabas stood sixth, Anmol Rathore seventh, Ashish Kumar eighth, Nausheen ninth and Aishwaryam Prajapati 10th in the prestigious examination. Kush Motwani bagged the 11th rank, Aniket Shandilya 12th, Medha Anand 13th, Shaurya Arora 14th and Kunal Rastogi stood 15th in the exam conducted by the UPSC. Similarly, Ayan Jain, Swati Sharma, Wardah Khan, Shivam Kumar and Akash Verma bagged the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th ranks, respectively. While Pururaj Singh Solanki got the 21st rank, Anshul Bhatt bagged the 22nd position. Saurabh Sharma, Prajnanandan Giri and Ritika Verma secured the 23rd, 24th and 25th positions, respectively, the UPSC said.

She studied at the Kendriya Vidyalaya in his home district and graduated in engineering in computer science from National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela.

Pradhan, who had opted sociology as his optional subject for

BJP nominees for 21 Assembly seats

The BJP Tuesday announced the names of candidates for 21 Assembly seats in the state. Earlier, the party had declared nominees for 112 of the 147 Assembly seats in Odisha.

SL.	ASSEMBLY	CANDIDATE
1	Rourkela	Dilip Ray
2	Patna (ST)	Akhil Chandra Naik
3	Saraskana (ST)	Bhadav Hansdah
4	Rairangpur (ST)	Jolen Barda
5	Bangriposi (ST)	Sanjali Murmu
6	Karanjila (ST)	Padmacharan Halbrua
7	Jharigam (ST)	Narsingh Bhadra
8	Dabugam (ST)	Somnath Pujari
9	Rajanagar	Lalit Behera
10	Balilkuda-Ersama	Saty Sarathi Mohanty
11	Jagatsinghpur	Amarendra Dash
12	Kakatpur (SC)	Baidhar Mallick
13	Ranpur	Surama Padhy
14	Sanakhemundi	Uttam Panigrahi
15	Mohana (ST)	Prasanta Mallik
16	Bissam Cuttack (ST)	Jagannath Nundruka
17	Rayagada (ST)	Basanta Ullaka
18	Laxmipur (ST)	Kailash Kulesika
19	Kotpad (ST)	Rupu Bhadra
20	Pottangi (ST)	Chaitanya Nandibali
21	Chitrakonda (ST)	Dambaru Sisa

UPSC, said he did not attend any coaching classes for the exam.

"I started preparing for the civil services exam in 2022. I used to study for 5-6 hours. I did not take any coaching to prepare for the examination," he said. Pradhan had mentioned 'parliamentary debating', 'media advocacy and journalism' and 'free-style dancing' as his hobbies, according to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

Aditya Srivastava topped the civil services examination 2023, with Pradhan and Donuru Ananya Reddy getting the second and third ranks respectively.

A total of 1,016 candidates (664 men and 352 women) have qualified the examination and have been recommended by the commission for appointment to various central services.

Devotees throng City to celebrate Ashokastami



As per the schedule, 'Mangala Alati' was performed at 5am, followed by 'Abakasha' and 'Sahanamela' rituals.

The bronze idols of 'Chandrasekhar' (representative idol of Lord Lingaraj), Devi Rukuna and Ananta Basudev were taken to the chariot in the ceremonial Pahandi. After completion of the rituals, the chariot was pulled by the devotees along the two-kilometer long stretch—marking the annual sojourn of the Lord to Mausī Maa abode in Rameshwar Temple. 'Bahuda Yatra,' the return journey of the Lord will take place April 20.

Earlier, Commissionerate Police had issued traffic advisory for the convenience and safety of the people.

As per the advisory, no vehicles were allowed on Rath Road from Mausī Maa Chhak. They were diverted either towards Museum Chhak or Vivekananda Marg.

Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) made arrangements for drinking water, first-aid and emergency health services for the devotees. Lingaraj Temple and the chariot were also decorated by BMC. A bhajan programme was also arranged on this occasion.

GOVERNOR RAGHUBAR DAS AND CHIEF MINISTER NAVEEN PATNAIK WISH PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Thousands of devotees from across the state gathered in the old town area of the City to celebrate Rukuna Rath Yatra on the occasion of Ashokastami Tuesday.

Amid chanting of hymns, beating of drums and blowing of the conch, devotees pulled the chariot of Lord Lingaraj with zeal and fervour.

Governor Raghubar Das and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik wished people and sought Lord's blessings upon all on this occasion. Taking to X, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said, "Heartiest greetings and best wishes to all on the occasion of Holy Ashokastami and Rukuna Rath Yatra of Lord Shri Lingaraj. May the blessings of Mahadev be upon all. May everyone's life be filled with happiness and prosperity."

Temp rises above 41°C at 18 places

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 16: With the temperature rising in the state, at least eighteen places witnessed day temperature at 41 degrees Celsius or above, Tuesday.

According to evening bulletin of the regional centre of India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Bhubaneswar, Baripada was the hottest place in the state for second day with maximum (day) temperature of 43.6 degrees Celsius. The district headquarters of Mayurbhanj registered 41.4 degrees Celsius Monday.

The maximum temperature soared to 42 degrees Celsius or more in five places and 40 degrees or more in as many as 29 places in the state Tuesday.

Baripada was followed by Nuapada and Parlakhemundi with 42.4 degrees Celsius and Talcher and Boudh with 42 degrees Celsius.

Bhubaneswar, which was second highest Monday with 41.2 degrees, saw the mercury further rising to 41.9 degrees Celsius Tuesday.

The IMD said the day temperature is very likely to rise by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius at many places in the state during next two days due to northwesterly/westerly dry air and high solar insolation.

Maximum temperature is likely to be more than 40 degrees Celsius or above at many places and above normal by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius in some districts during next four days.

The Met office has forecast



that hot and humid condition is very likely to prevail at one or two places in the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapada, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati.

It has advised the people to take precautionary measure while going outside during day time between 11am and 3pm. The people have also been asked to avoid alcohol, tea, coffee and carbonated soft drinks.



SPECIAL RITUALS: On the occasion of Ashokastami, Sri Lokanath is carried in a palanquin to Jagannath Ballava Matha in Puri, Tuesday

Emergency response training at Tata Steel Kalinganagar

Bhubaneswar: A six-day long 'Emergency Response Training Programme on Training of Trainers (TOT)', by Security department of Tata Steel Kalinganagar (TSK) in collaboration with National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India was inaugurated Tuesday. The training programme is an initiative on capacity building by creating a pool of master trainers who in turn would further train the shop floor employees. The event was inaugurated by TSK chief of Electrical Maintenance Ajit Kar in the presence of TSK chief Corporate Services Debdoot Mohanty, TSK chief of Safety Operations RS Mishra and 3rd Bn NDRF Munduli deputy commandant Dhananjay Kumar who was heading the NDRF team. TSK chief of Security Prakash Sanjay was the head coordinator of the programme. Senior officials of TSK, NDRF and Central Industrial Security Force (Kalinganagar) were present on the occasion. As many as 44 officers including five lady officers from various Tata Steel locations (Jamshedpur, Kalinganagar, Meramandal) and from different raw material procurement locations participated in the event.

'Coldwaves' due to climate change risk ocean creatures

The effects of ocean warming are profound and well-documented. But sometimes changes in the patterns of winds and ocean currents cause seawater to suddenly cool, instead. And due to this, even the most resilient life forms can be at risk.

Surface temperatures can plummet rapidly — by 10°C or more over a day or two. When these conditions persist for several days or weeks, the area experiences a 'coldwave', which is the opposite of more familiar marine heatwaves.

When a killer 'coldwave' manifested along South Africa's southeast coast in March 2021, it killed hundreds of animals across at least 81 species. More worrying still was the fact these deaths included vulnerable manta rays and even specimens of notoriously robust migratory

bull sharks. In southern Africa, bull sharks, whale sharks and manta rays have previously washed up dead following such sudden cold events, especially over the past 15 years.

Certain wind and current conditions can cause the sea surface to cool, rather than warm. This happens when winds and currents force coastal waters to move offshore, which are then replaced from below by cold water from the deep ocean. This process is known as upwelling.

In some places, such as California on the US west coast, upwelling happens regularly along hundreds of kilometres of coastline. But localised upwelling can occur seasonally on a smaller scale, too, often at the edges of bays on the east coasts of continents due to interactions of wind, current



and coastline. Analysis of long-term wind and temperature data along the south-eastern coast of South Africa and the Australian east coast revealed an increasing trend in the number of annual

upwelling events over the past 40 years.

During the extreme upwelling event along the south-

east coast of South Africa in March 2021, at least 260 animals from 81 species died. These included tropical fish, sharks and rays.

To investigate the ramifications for marine fauna, tracking devices were tagged at bull sharks to record depth and temperature. Tracking data showed that bull sharks actively avoid areas of upwelling during their seasonal migrations up and down the coast, even when upwelling isn't too intense.

Some sharks take shelter in warm, shallow bays until the water warms again.

Others stick close to the surface where the water is warmest, and swim as fast as they can to get out of the upwelling.

But if marine coldwaves continue to become more sudden and intense, fleeing or hiding may no longer be enough even for these tough beasts. For example, in the event in South Africa that caused the death of manta rays and bull sharks water temperatures dropped from 21°C to 11.8°C in under 24 hours while the overall event lasted seven days.

This sudden, severe drop paired with the long duration made this event particularly deadly. If future events will continue to become more severe, mass deaths of marine life could become a more common sight — especially along the world's mid-latitude east coasts.

LABANYA NATYA MAHOTSAV – 2024 CONCLUDES



CAPTIVATING ACT: A scene from Odia play *Saria* staged on the second evening of the event at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Tuesday. Written by Debendranath Dash and directed by Satya Jena (Tunu), the drama was presented by host organisation Labanya Theatre, Bhubaneswar. Theatre director Prasanta Mohapatra and TV and film actress Manisha Rath led the cast of the show.

Inform steps on mob lynching in 6 weeks: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The Supreme Court Tuesday asked various state governments to apprise it in six weeks on the action taken in incidents of mob lynching and cow vigilantism.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai, Aravind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta posted for hearing after six weeks a plea filed by a women's organisation seeking directions to states to take immediate action in consonance with a 2018 verdict of the apex court to effectively deal with incidents of lynching and mob violence against Muslims by cow vigilantes.

"We find that most of the states have not filed their reply affidavits to the writ petition giving instances of mob lynching. It was expected of the states to at least respond to what action has been taken in such cases. We grant six weeks' time to the states that have not filed their replies and also give details of steps taken by them in such cases," the bench ordered.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW), an organisation linked to the Communist Party of India (CPI) in which notices were issued last year to the Centre and the DGPs of Maharashtra,



Odisha, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana seeking their responses to the plea.

During the hearing, advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for one of the states, said that in Madhya Pradesh there was an incident of alleged mob-lynching but the FIR was registered for cow slaughter against the victims.

Pasha submitted, "If the state is to deny the incident of mob lynching, then how can 2018 verdict in Teheesen Poonawalla case will be followed?"

Senior advocate Archana Pathak Dave, appearing for one of the states, said that in the writ petition there is specific averment made that Muslim men are mob lynched and there is no mention of mob lynching of people of

other religion. "The relief sought cannot be religion specific," she said.

Pasha submitted this is the reality of the society and incidents against particular communities can be brought before the court.

The bench asked Dave to observe restraint in her submissions, and said, "Let's not go into the incidents on the basis of religion. We should focus on the larger cause."

The top court posted the matter for hearing after summer vacation and ordered that states should file their replies on the steps take to check mob lynching.

The PIL referred to several incidents of mob violence, the most recent being the killing of a 55-year-old truck driver named Jaharuddin, June 28, 2023 in Bihar's Saran district on suspicion of carrying beef. It said the killing happened on the heels of two such incidents in Maharashtra's Nashik.

The PIL sought direction to the Centre to provide a minimum uniform amount to the victims of such violence in addition to the compensation determined by the respective states after considering factors like the nature of bodily injury, psychological injury and loss of earning, including loss of employment opportunities and legal and medical expenses.

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Man held 11 months after wife's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, April 16: Police here successfully cracked the murder mystery of Banalata Jena, 24, a resident of Bada Anandapur village under this block in Bhadrak district and arrested her husband who dumped her body in a forest after killing her 11 months ago.

The accused was identified as Kishore Kumar Jena, 30, a resident of Bada Anandapur village, Bhadrak SDPO Sourav Otta informed in a press conference Monday. Police recreated the crime scene Sunday, he added.

According to sources, there was a domestic dispute between Kishore and his wife Banalata. While Banalata was talking to different persons over the phone, Kishore objected to it. Banalata did not deviate from her action despite repeated warnings by Kishore. The rift between the couple widened with each passing day.

An argument broke out between the couple April 17, 2023, which turned ugly and in a fit of rage, Kishore thrashed Banalata to death, and kept her body hid-

den at home.

At night, Kishore wrapped the body with polythene and took it on a bike with the help of one of his friends to a nearby forest. He then dumped it inside the rural forest under Soro police station limits.

Later, Kishore lodged a missing complaint at Basudevpur police station April 18, 2023 about his wife's disappearance.

Police recovered Banalata's body from forest the same day and registered a case of unnatural death in this regard. On the other hand, as per the complaint of Reena Jena, the mother of the deceased, a murder case (225/23) was registered 23 April, 2023 at Basudevpur police station.

After investigating the case for 11 months, finally the police cracked the murder mystery and arrested the accused husband. Along with Bhadrak Sadar SDPO Sourav Otta, Basudevpur PS IIC Lopamudra Naik and investigating officer Bhagyajeet Naik were also present in the press conference. According to police sources, the person who helped Kishore in committing the crime is still at large.



WATER WOES: Despite proximity to Hirakud reservoir, residents of Cheruapada and Sriramnagar under Sambalpur Municipal Corporation (SMC) reserve space by keeping buckets and pots in order to collect water from the lone tube well in the area, Tuesday

Illegal gun factory busted; 3 arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 16: The police in Sambalpur district Tuesday claimed to have busted an illegal firearms manufacturing unit at Basupali village under Jamankira police limits in Sambalpur and arrested three persons in this connection.

The accused were identified as Bidyadhar Pradhan, 56, alias Ilo of Basupali village, Ganesh Singh, 39, and Arun Bhoi, 22, of Badrama in the district. Later, a case was registered in this connection and the accused were produced in the court.

Around 22 rifles including a twin barrel type, three wooden butts, four gun barrel making machines, six bottles of gun powder, two oil bottles, three hundred pellets, small iron bullets and other gun making materials were seized from the spot apart from two mobile phones.

"A special team of police conducted the raid and recovered 21 single-barrel rifles and one double-barrel rifle, and apprehended three persons," Sambalpur SP Mukesh Kumar Bhamoo told reporters at a press meet held at the district police headquarters here, Tuesday afternoon.

SUKINDA MEGA DRINKING WATER PROJECT

Shoddy work forces villagers to knock on Lokayukta's door

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 16: The state government's plan to supply drinking water from Brahmani river to 52 villages in Sukinda mining area of Jajpur district has gone haywire pushing the locals to lodge a complaint with the Lokayukta alleging sub-standard works.

The mega drinking water project was taken up with funds worth ₹101.24 crore sanctioned by Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBADC). Residents of Sukindagarh panchayat -- Amalendu Behura, Panchajit Das, Tushar Ranjan Das, Hamid Khan, Khirud Nayak and Susant Kumar Mohanta -- alleged sub-standard work as the project has gone haywire and the pipelines laid for the project popping out in most places.

They further alleged that Nagarjun Construction Company, a private consultancy agency which was implementing the project, is responsible for the sub-standard works. Owing to undue favour shown to the firm by the departmental officials, the agency has used sub-standard materials in the construction works and laid the pipelines without properly digging the ground. However, the agency has been paid the bill as department officials termed the project works as satisfactory.

The residents suspect that



heavy kickbacks have exchanged hands in the implementation of the project as they lodged complaints with the chief executive officer (CEO) of OMBADC as well as with the district Collector and the state Lokayukta.

Drinking water supply is a priority area where OMBADC funds are spent. Accordingly, ₹235.9 crore was sanctioned for three projects in the mining-hit Sukinda region of Jajpur district. Accordingly, a plan outlay of ₹79.85 crore was made for Sukinda-1 project for mining affected Kalipani and adjoining 24 villages, ₹54.81 crore for Sukinda-2 project for 19 villages and ₹101.81 crore for Sukinda-3 project for 52 other villages.

The Rural Water Supply & Sanitation (RWSS) department has claimed that drinking water supply has been made available to the concerned villages after completion of first and second projects. However, locals have alleged that the agency's shoddy implementation of the project using sub-standard materials is the reason behind the delay in water supply.

According to the complaint filed before the Lokayukta, HDP

pipes of 90 mm and 110 mm have been laid under the ground. The pipes are required to be laid by digging the ground for a metre but the pipes have been laid at many places by digging only a foot deep. As a result, pipelines have popped out of the ground at many places.

The agency has siphoned off crores of government funds by making false claims that the pipes have been laid one metre below the ground. The engineers' authority spotted these irregularities during supervision. Acting on its report, the engineer-in-chief in his letter-7228, dated August 28, 2019 directed the superintendent engineer of Cuttack RWSS Circle to visit the spot and take necessary steps in this regard.

The engineers' authority also found that the steel items used in the project were sub-standard and informed the RWSS department. Accordingly, the engineer-in-chief of RWSS in a letter-6033, dated July 15, 2019 directed the consultancy agency to remove all steel items from the construction work.

However, the agency managed to take some departmental officials into confidence and implemented the project in a shoddy manner. When contacted, Chief Engineer Motilal Tiwari of RWSS department, who visited the spot two days back for an inquiry, said necessary steps will be taken after availability of the probe report.

Injured wild boar enters Keonjhar pharmacy shop

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 16: Panic spread after an injured wild boar entered the Keonjhar town from a nearby forest at about 9am Tuesday and took shelter in a pharmacy shop near the District Court here.

Taken aback, three pharmacists on duty in the medicine shop ran outside to save their lives and informed the Forest department after trapping it inside by downing the shutter.

The Forest department staff along with Rapid Response Team



(RRT) headed by Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Jitendra Behera rushed to the spot with a wildlife rescue vehicle (Rakshak) and rescued the injured boar. Later, the boar was

taken to a veterinary hospital for treatment in the old town.

After the news spread, scores of people gather near the shop to witness the live rescue operation being carried out by the

Sadar rangers.

Though it is not known where the boar came from, Forest officials suspected it might have come from Baras hill near Kodipasha under Sadar forest range.

ACF Behera said "The boar might have been injured in an accident while crossing the road and sustained injury in the face. It came into the town for shelter. After its rescue and treatment, the animal was released in Sidhamath forest." However, it is also suspected that the boar may have been injured by poachers after a long chase.

2 sisters drown; toddler dies after falling into tank

PNN & AGENCIES

Baripada: Two girls drowned in a pond in Mayurbhanj district Tuesday, police said. The incident happened in Pratappur village in the Barasahi police station area, they said. Surekha Nayak (15) and Lily Nayak (17) went to bathe in the village pond when the mishap happened, they added. A case of unnatural death was registered, and the bodies were sent for post-mortem examination, police said. In another unfortunate incident, a 13-month-old child died Sunday after falling into a water tank in Bahuband Colony village under Udala police station limits in Mayurbhanj district. The deceased child was identified as Vikas, son of Mochiram Ho of the village. Vikas was playing on the veranda of the house while Mochiram's wife was busy with household chores. The toddler while crawling fell into a water tank nearby. Later, the kid's body was found in the water tank.

Measures in place to save Bhitarkanika wildlife from heat wave, poaching, fires

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 16: The authorities of Bhitarkanika National Park have taken adequate measures to prevent poaching and forest fires, and protect animals from the scorching heat.

DFO of Rajnagar Mangrove Forest and Wildlife Division, Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav, stated that the anti-poaching squad has been deployed at vulnerable points within the Kanika forest range to extinguish fires inside the Bhitarkanika National Park area.

With the rise in mercury levels and high humidity during the daytime, many wildlife faunas, especially wild boar and spotted deer, typically seek water from nearby ponds and other water bodies in villages located at the fringes of Bhitarkanika



National Park to quench their thirst.

Sources indicate that hoofed animals often cannot find sufficient sweet water to quench their thirst as the water bodies and ditches within the forest generally dry up in the hot summer months.

The Forest department has made all necessary arrangements to protect wildlife from the scorching heat and humidity during the summer. Arrangements have been made

to ensure there is adequate drinking water so that animals do not become dehydrated and do not stray from the forest into human habitation within the fringes of Bhitarkanika National Park.

Existing ponds along with ditches have been renovated under the Bhitarkanika forest block to alleviate water scarcity and provide sufficient water for hoofed animals and wild boars, ACF-in-charge of Kanika Forest Range, Manas Kumar Das said.

Similarly, steps are being taken at the Dangamal Crocodile Research Centre to provide a better cooling environment for nearly a hundred crocodile hatchlings housed at the hatchery. Since reptile hatchlings are more susceptible to heat, Forest personnel have ensured there will be zero casualty due to the heat wave, Das said.

3 die in separate road accidents

PNN & AGENCIES

Angul/Keonjhar, April 16: The driver of a bus was killed and five passengers seriously injured after it collided with a dumper in Angul district Tuesday morning, police said.

Around 25 passengers were on the bus, which was heading to Puri from Chhattisgarh's Korba, when the accident happened on NH-55 near Jarapada Square, they said. The dumper was parked on the roadside and the bus hit it from the rear, police said. The injured passengers were admitted to the district hospital, they said.

In Keonjhar, two persons were killed while another sustained critical injury after a speeding truck ran over them on NH-20 near the Dhruapada area, police said.

According to reports, the truck ran over one Tapas Nayak, a transgender person who died on the spot, and while trying to flee the spot, it hit two persons on a motorcycle. The impact of the crash was such that the motorcycle caught fire. On being informed, Town police reached the spot, rescued the injured persons and doused the fire with the help of the fire brigade, they said.

MKCG DOCTORS CONDUCT RARE SURGERY ON 9-YR-OLD



Cushing syndrome is an extremely rare disorder with a prevalence of less than one in two lakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, April 16: A group of doctors in government-run MKCG Medical College and Hospital here performed laparoscopic bilateral adrenalectomy of a 9-year-old girl child, who was suffering from Cushing syndrome, a very rare disease, for the first time in the state.

Cushing syndrome is caused due to a rare genetic disease called primary pigmented nodular adreno-

cortical disease (PPNAD), an extremely rare disorder with a prevalence of less than one in two lakh. The doctors took around three hours to perform the laparoscopic surgery April 9, said a doctor.

"This might be the first such case in the state and our doctors successfully treated the girl. The condition of the girl is now good and she will be in the hospital for some days for observation," said Suchitra Dash, superintendent of the medical college and hospital.

After visiting the patient Monday, principal of the medical college Santosh Kumar Mishra and the superintendent thanked the team of doctors for conducting successful laparoscopy of the patient, which was a very difficult task.

The condition is characterised

by small to normal-sized adrenal glands containing multiple small cortical pigmented nodules. In this disease, both adrenal glands above kidney secrete excess hormone cortisol and if not treated early it leads to cardiac disease and stroke and early death.

The treatment is by removal of both side adrenal glands and lifelong supplementation with low-dose steroids, said P Ravi Kumar, professor, endocrinology department.

This was a very challenging operation performed by a team of doctors consisting of paediatric surgeons, urologists, anaesthesia, and paediatrics departments.

Besides, parent department endocrinology provided support for steroids throughout the surgery, said Manas Ranjan Dash, associate professor, of paediatrics surgery, who led the team.

Ravi Kumar said the patient from Khandadeuli village in Ganjam district was admitted to the endocrinology department April 4. She was suffering from excessive weight, acne and high blood pressure. After thoroughly investigating, she was diagnosed to be a case of Cushing syndrome, he said.

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E-mail - itcell41stbn@itbp.gov.in **Date: 15.03.2024**

// NOTICE //

Regimental No. 140561672 Constable(GD) Jay Prakash Soren, 'SPT' Coy, 41st Bn ITBP, S/o Sh. Raghunath Soren, Permanent Resident of Vill- Dhadichua, PO- Jhupabandi, Tehsil-Kusumi, Police Station - Badampahar, Distt- Mayurbhanj (Odisha), Pin- 757047 is hereby informed that you were sent for 15 days Earned leave w.e.f. 20.11.2023 (FN) to 04.12.2023 (AN). You were supposed to report back for duty at 41st Bn ITBP on 04.12.2023 (AN) but you failed to report for duty on due date and continuously overstaying from leave w.e.f. 04.12.2023 (AN) without any prior permission of competent authority. Vide this office Memorandum No. 6749-51 dtd 14.12.2023 & 6977-79 dtd 30.12.2023 you were directed to report back for duty immediately at BHQ, 41st Bn, I.T.B.P, but you have failed to do so till date. As per provision contained under section 72 & 73 of ITBPF Act-1992, apprehension roll was also issued to the Superintendent of Police, Distt- Mayurbhanj (Odisha) vide this office letter No. 74-85 dtd 11.01.2024 to apprehended you and hand over to Commandant, 40/41st Bn, I.T.B. Police, but you were not apprehended by the Police authority.

2. Due to your continuous absence w.e.f 04.12.2023 (AN), a Court of inquiry (COI) was constituted by this office to inquire into the circumstances of your prolonged absence vide this office order No. 195 dtd 15.01.2024 in term of Section 74 (1) of ITBPF Act- 1992. On the basis of the findings and recommendations of COI, you have been declared 'Deserter' w.e.f. 04.12.2023 (AN) vide this office order No. 267-81 dtd 30.01.2024 in term of section 74 (2) of ITBPF Act-1992. A copy of the deserter order was also sent through registered letter to your home address. Apart from above, you were also issued a 'Show Cause Notice' vide this office letter No. 1194 dtd 02.03.2024.

3. Regtl. No. 140561672 Constable(GD) Jay Prakash Soren, 'SPT' Coy, 41st Bn ITBP, S/o Sh. Raghunath Soren is hereby again directed that you must report for duty at 41st Bn ITBP, Vikram Nagar Camp, Tartua, Odisha within 30 days from the publication of this notice in Newspaper or you may submit documents in your defense, failing which, it will be presumed that you have nothing to say on the matter and thereafter, necessary orders will be issued.

Sd./-Manoj Kumar Singh
 Dy. Comdt./Adjutant
 41st Bn. I.T.B. Police

CBC/19112/11/0017/2425

FOCUS MIDDLE EAST

END THE GAZA WAR



Israel can end this war soon and save those hostages who are still alive, having demilitarised Gaza and set the stage for an alternative to Hamas

The Iranian-Israeli war has now emerged from the shadows with the barrage of over 300 drones, rockets, and cruise missiles Iran launched at Israel. Along with the US military and other partners, the Israel Defense Forces were able to intercept 99% of them. Once again, the Israeli military demonstrated its superb capabilities, but US support was essential. Although Israel takes prides in being able to defend itself, circumstances have changed. When facing threats on seven fronts, as the IDF acknowledges, it is important that Israel had the help, and Israelis should recognise the value of being part of a coalition as they face Iran, its proxies, and their Russian backers.



Dennis Ross

WHILE ISRAEL MAY BE SUCCEEDING MILITARILY, IT IS LOSING POLITICALLY

If nothing else, Iran's attack should remind the Israelis that their war with Hamas is not being fought in an international vacuum and support from the outside matters. That war is now in its seventh month. Israel is succeeding in a tactical sense. It is dismantling Hamas' military infrastructure, and it has destroyed it as an organised fighting force, with 19 of 24 Hamas battalions no longer existing.

That is an important achievement. Regrettably, this tactical success has come at a high cost in Palestinian civilian lives and to Israel's image internationally. So, while Israel may be succeeding militarily, it is losing politically.

Clausewitz's famous maxim that "war is the continuation of policy with other means" does not seem to be guiding Israel's strategy. Yes, Hamas forced this war on Israel; and, yes, Hamas posed an unprecedented military challenge by being embedded in hundreds of miles of tunnels beneath Gaza's civilian population. But Israel required a strategy whereby it could defeat Hamas militarily without losing the world's sympathy in the process. A military campaign with the political objective of ensuring that Hamas could neither threaten Israel again nor remain in power rested on a central premise: to have the time and political space required to defeat Hamas, Israel would need to meet Gazans' hu-

manitarian needs and minimise their suffering.

There may have been no way to avoid the cruel dilemma that Israel faced: how to defeat Hamas as a military force without Palestinians dying in terrible numbers. But there were viable options for creating humanitarian corridors for evacuations from northern to southern Gaza in the first two weeks after 7 October, when Israel launched an intense bombing campaign. Following that, it was essential for Israel to ensure deliveries of the humanitarian assistance needed to address Palestinians' housing, food, water, and medical needs. And, if Hamas acted to divert that assistance, as it did, Israel had an obligation to stop that and provide security for the distribution of aid.

This was not just a moral obligation; it was a strategic imperative that the international community not come to believe that Israel was indifferent to Palestinian suffering. And yet that perception has taken hold, with the result that Israel is held solely responsible for stopping the war. It is as if Hamas has no responsibility, when Hamas leaders should have been pressured by the US and the international community to leave Gaza to spare the public. For too many, the recent Israeli airstrike that killed a group of World Central Kitchen aid workers was not a tragic accident but the result of a campaign that too often seems prone to hitting military targets regardless of the costs to Palestinians.

A few weeks into the war, I wrote that I did not favour a ceasefire, because it would allow Hamas to survive, reconstitute

itself, and try for another 7 October. Those who said Israel should not respond other than in a limited, targeted way failed to understand that the perception that Hamas had gotten away with inflicting such a terrible price on Israel would have invested its ideology of "resistance" (and commitment to the destruction of Israel) with enormous credibility throughout the Middle East.

Regardless, Israel still needed a strategy that not only minimised the humanitarian suffering but also was tied to a clear and achievable objective. Bad statecraft is always tied to objectives that can neither be achieved nor framed in a way that makes support for them possible. Elimination of Hamas was never in the cards, any more than the elimination of ISIS has been for the US. Rescuing the vast majority of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas since 7 October was never possible by military means.

But the permanent demilitarisation of Gaza – so that it could never again be a platform for attacks against Israel – was possible. It still is, and it needs to be Israel's strategic objective. In its discussions with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet, US President Joe Biden's administration should focus not just on how to deal with the remaining four Hamas battalions in Rafah but on reaching an agreement on how much is enough to achieve demilitarisation. In reality, Israel is not far from being able to declare success, end the war, and get its hostages back while many remain alive.

Israel should condition its def-

inition of sufficient demilitarisation on the creation of mechanisms by which the US, European donors, and Arab states ensure that all aid flowing into Gaza is monitored from entry to storage to end use. The Israelis can condition all reconstruction assistance (as opposed to humanitarian aid) on Hamas not being in power – no one will invest in rebuilding if it is – and on the credible functioning of the monitoring mechanisms.

Ensuring that Hamas can never return to power requires a Palestinian alternative to it in Gaza. The Palestinian Authority is too weak and too corrupt to play that role soon. Once credibly reformed so that it has the capacity for decent governance, however, the PA can and must fill the void. With Hamas essentially defeated militarily and the public in Gaza wanting life restored, Arab states could play a transitional role in administration and providing security. From my conversations with a number of Arab leaders, I know that they are prepared to play an unprecedented role in Gaza, including by deploying troops, provided that their involvement is a bridge from the end of the war to a viable Palestinian alternative. They don't want Hamas to come back, but they also don't want to be in Gaza forever.

With the exception of the extreme right, no one in Israel wants to be stuck in Gaza, responsible for 2.4 million Palestinians, and facing a likely insurgency. Israel can end this war soon and save those hostages who are still alive, having demilitarised Gaza and set the stage for an alternative to Hamas.

And it needs to do so. It is bad enough that 55% of Americans disapprove of Israeli action in Gaza. What is worse is that this war is becoming a crucible for how the next generation thinks about Israel. Given that, and given that Iran has again demonstrated that it is the issue, Israel needs to bring the war in Gaza to an end. Its military defeat of Hamas allows it to do so soon.

The writer is a fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

What Guarantee

Witness and stand back from Nature, that is the first step to the soul's freedom.

SRI AUROBINDO



The real reason for the inordinate delay in the release of the BJP's manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls seems to be getting clear now. It looks like the whole thing has been meticulously planned so as not to face the electorate on burning issues confronting their daily lives and hide the ruling party's failure to keep its electoral pledges since 2014. This has been brought home by the loud protests made by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) 15 April that the BJP manifesto has no mention of the minimum support price (MSP) at the formula suggested by the Swaminathan Commission. It termed the manifesto an "open challenge" against farmers and farm workers. The SKM's allegation that the manifesto is silent on agrarian crisis in the country, while farmers' suicides continue unabated, has exposed the inanities and false hopes about a distant future contained in the manifesto. Despite the tall promises, the manifesto has no mention of MSP at C2+50 per cent as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission, guarantee on procurement, farmers' suicides and loan waiver. It merely says the BJP government will continue to increase MSP from time to time without any reference to inflation. Other political parties in their election manifestos have been categorical on the agrarian crisis and the need for remunerative MSP. On the other hand, PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi of ₹6,000 per year for farmers means a meagre ₹500 per month to a farmer household. The stark reality is that over 4 lakh persons, including one lakh farmers and 3 lakh daily wage workers have committed suicide since the Modi government took over in 2014 till 2022. The ruling dispensation, the SKM alleges, did not provide debt relief of a single rupee to farmers and farm worker households despite the promise the BJP made in its 2014 election manifesto. The irony is that under the BJP, commercial banks have written off ₹14.55 lakh crore to corporate houses during the past nine years. The government's insensitivity to small farmers is borne out by the fact that it does not address the serious issue of agrarian crisis whereas 30 farmers on an average commit suicide daily across the country.

In fact, the BJP's manifesto hardly promises anything for farmers. It merely talks about a continuing increase in MSP of crops "from time to time." This is what the government has been doing anyway. What is even worse is that the 2024-25 Interim Budget, unlike the one five years ago, did not announce any hike in the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi payout. The conclusion one can draw from it is that the BJP is so confident of winning the polls by relying on the PM's image and its rabidly communal campaign based on the Ram temple construction that it does not want to rake up the memories of the revolt of farmers against the Modi government's anti-farmer farm laws by touching on farm issues. The protests against the three farm laws were one of the most serious challenges the Modi government had to face in its 10 years. It had to repeal them. No wonder it merely iterates the government's existing programmes, including self-reliance in pulses and edible oils, establishing clusters for production of essential TOP (tomato, onion, potato) vegetables and promoting natural farming.

That is not all. The BJP manifesto seems unwilling to explain why the government failed to deliver on its promises such as 2 crore jobs every year, ₹15 lakh in every bank account, stopping atrocities on Dalit and Adivasi women, 100 smart cities, bullet trains, cleaning the Ganga and five trillion dollar economy by 2022. On the issue of giving a fitting rebuff to China for encroaching on Indian territories, the government is evasive, while the External Affairs Minister is following an ostrich-like policy by denying that encroachment has taken place at all.

All these, it appears, have prompted the BJP to leave no scope for debate on its performance, giving the electorate barely any time to look at its record in the form of its election manifesto before casting their votes. A disorganised Opposition and a larger than life image of the PM, the party's main face, created by a compromised television media, are the basis of such confidence. But all that hardly does any service to the poor and needy.

IN JEST THIS

Great way to let your anger dissipate

Have you ever written an angry email or text message and then decided to delete it? Perhaps it sounded like this: "You are such a terrible listener! I wish you would just shut up sometimes and do some listening. But you love the sound of your own voice!"



Melvin Durai

HAVE YOU EVER WRITTEN AN ANGRY EMAIL OR TEXT MESSAGE AND THEN DECIDED TO DELETE IT?

You deleted it because, although it captured your feelings and you still believe in its accuracy, you're not quite ready to switch therapists.

Over the last five years, I've written at least a dozen online messages that I decided to delete, mostly because I thought my words would not convince the idiots I was arguing with that I was less idiotic than them.

As it turns out, this might be a great way to let your anger dissipate. A group of Japanese researchers have found that if someone insults you and makes you angry, an effective way to respond is to write your reaction on a piece of paper and toss the paper away.

"We expected that our method

would suppress anger to some extent," said lead researcher Nobuyuki Kawai of Nagoya University. "However, we were amazed that anger was eliminated almost entirely."

In their research study, Kawai and his graduate student Yuta Kanaya asked college students and other participants to write brief opinions on social issues such as whether smoking in public should be outlawed. The participants were told that doctoral students would evaluate their writing, but what they didn't know was that the doctoral students had been instructed to evaluate them harshly. Not only did the doctoral students give them low scores on intelligence, interest, friendliness, logic, and rationality they also added an insulting comment: "Who wrote this gibberish — one of the Kardashian sisters?"

Actually, the insulting comment was this: "I cannot believe an educated person would think like this. I hope this person learns something while at university."

(In other words, the typical reaction of a college admissions officer after reading a student essay.)

After the participants had received their negative evaluations, they were asked to write their thoughts on the feedback. To allow them to express themselves freely, they were told that no one, not even the researchers, would read what they write.

One group of participants was told to either toss the paper in a trash can or keep it in a file on their desk. A second group was told to shred the document or put it in a plastic box.

The participants were asked to rate their anger after the insult and after they had either disposed of or kept the paper. Only those who discarded the paper in the trash can or shredded it saw their anger return to the initial level. Those who kept a copy of their paper experienced only a small decrease in their anger.

The researchers believe their findings could be useful in a

number of situations. Indeed, imagine you're in a meeting at work. Your boss says something that makes you very angry. You immediately start writing your feelings on a sheet of paper — "What a moron!" — and the boss thinks, "At least someone is paying attention."

When you go home, your teenage daughter says something that makes you very angry. Instead of expressing your anger verbally, you write it down.

"What are you doing?" your daughter asks. "Are you keeping a record of everything I say? Is this going to be in your memoir?"

You just smile and say, "Maybe."

Soon you are taking notes all the time. Someone cuts you off in traffic; you dictate a note into your phone. The cashier at the store gives you the wrong change; you write down the B-word (bird-brain). Your doctor says you need to lose weight; you pull out a pen and write, "You too, buddy. You're no flagpole."

WISDOM CORNER

There's no reality except the one contained within us. That's why so many people live an unreal life. They take images outside them for reality and never allow the world within them to assert itself.

HERMANN HESSE

Envy, propelled by fear, can be even more toxic than anger, because it involves the thought that other people enjoy the good things of life which the envier can't hope to attain through hard work and emulation.

MARTHA NUSSBAUM

Peace comes when you talk to the guy you most hate. And that's where the courage of a leader comes, because when you sit down with your enemy, you as a leader must already have very considerable confidence from your own constituency.

DESMOND TUTU

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1521: Martin Luther faces charges for his revolutionary religious writings. The German monk was a leading figure of the Protestant Reformation. As a result of the hearing before the Diet of Worms, he was excommunicated and declared an outlaw.

1961: A CIA-sponsored paramilitary group attempts to invade Cuba. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a failed attempt to overthrow the Cuban government. The United States government had ordered the CIA to plan Fidel Castro's overthrow.

1970: The Apollo 13 command module—carrying James A. Lovell, Jr., Fred W. Haise, Jr., and John L. Swigert, Jr.—entered Earth's atmosphere and splashed down, ending one of the most tense chapters in space history; four days earlier an oxygen tank had exploded, threatening the lives of the three astronauts.

1975: Cambodia's ruling Lon Nol government collapsed, and the communist forces of the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, entered Phnom Penh and forcibly dispersed its citizenry into rural areas.

1978: Mir Akbar Khyber's assassination triggers a communist coup in Afghanistan. The communists introduced a series of reforms, such as equal rights for women and universal education. These achievements were undone soon after by the outbreak of several wars.

1982: Canada Act proclaimed. The Canada Act, also known as the Constitution Act, took effect on this day in 1982, establishing certain individual rights, preserving parliamentary supremacy, and making Canada a wholly independent, fully sovereign state.

LOL

Knitting & driving

A policeman spots a woman driving and knitting at the same time. Driving up beside her, he



shouts out the window... "Pull

over!" "No," she shouts back, "a pair of socks!"

Cautious optimism

Sir, Janet Yellen's recent visit to China signifies a nuanced approach by the Biden administration towards improving relations with Beijing. Despite the cautious optimism surrounding the visit, it's evident that resolving longstanding trade issues between the two economic powerhouses will require sustained dialogue and effort. Yellen's emphasis on addressing unfair trade practices, particularly China's overcapacity in industries like electric vehicles and solar panels, underscores the core concerns of the US. These discussions, including meetings with Vice-Premier He Lifeng in Guangzhou, highlight the importance of balancing economic growth for both nations. The agreement to initiate exchanges to combat money laundering demonstrates a tangible outcome of the discussions, signaling willingness from both sides to cooperate on certain fronts. However, the complexity of the issues at hand, such as overcapacity, suggests that reaching comprehensive agreements will take time. Moreover, the differing perspectives on critical matters like green energy and military support for Russia highlight the challenges in aligning interests between the US and China. Premier Li Qiang's emphasis on market-economy norms and combating climate change reflects China's priorities, which may diverge from those of the US in certain areas. The evolving geopolitical landscape, including Russia's strategic cooperation with China and the implications for countries like India, adds another layer of complexity. With upcoming elections in both the US and India, the trajectory of international relations in the region remains uncertain.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

'Deadly' Underwood

Sir, The death of England's former left-arm spinner Derek Underwood takes away one of the game's most outstanding practitioners of the craft. 'Deadly' Underwood bagged 297 scalps in 86 Tests, the highest ever for an English spinner. He revelled on uncovered pitches commonly used for much of a 24-year First Class career from 1963 to 1987. Cricket lovers will recall his magnificent spell of 7-50 over arch-rival Australia in the 1968 Oval Test when the match was heading for a draw. He and wicketkeeper Alan Knott forged a lethal combination for Kent and England. Unfortunately, their involvement in Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket and the rebel tour of South Africa cut short their Test careers.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

Orissa POST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Ram Navami celebration: New battleground for BJP, TMC

WITH THE BJP-RSS MAKING DEEP INROADS IN WEST BENGAL OVER THE YEARS, THE RAM NAVAMI FESTIVAL, PREVIOUSLY CELEBRATED IN LIMITED POCKETS OF THE STATE, HAS EXPANDED IN SCALE AND PROMINENCE OVER THE PAST DECADE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 16: In the aftermath of the Ram temple inauguration at Ayodhya, the upcoming Ram Navami celebrations in West Bengal April 17 are poised to become a political battleground, with the saffron camp organising large-scale events across the state to showcase 'Hindu unity' before the Lok Sabha polls.

With the first phase of elections scheduled April 19 and the second April 26, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has alleged that the BJP intends to stoke communal tensions.

With the BJP-RSS making deep inroads in West Bengal over the years, the Ram Navami festival, previously celebrated in limited pockets of the state, has expanded in scale and prominence over the past decade.

Following the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya earlier this year, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) has planned an extensive Ram Mahotsav programme from April 9 to April 23, culminating on Hanuman Jayanti.

In recent years, Ram Navami rallies in the state have escalated into major political issues due to communal riots, with the ruling TMC and opposition BJP accusing each other of inciting violence.

As the BJP aims at consolidating Hindus before the polls, the TMC, not ready to cede



ground to the saffron camp, is also doing its bit as the state government declared a holiday on Ram Navami for the first time and the party planning rallies across the state.

Sachindranath Singha, VHP's national assistant secretary, stated, "This year we are observing the Ram Mahotsav festival. On the day of Ram Navami on April 17, we will organize programmes or rallies across all gram panchayats and municipal wards in the state. We have lined up more than 5,000 programmes statewide."

He added, "The Ram Navami programme across the state will be a demonstration of Hindu might and unity. Hindu unity transcends politics; it's about faith in Lord Ram." Singha clarified that the rallies and programmes would not involve

weapons, except those organised by traditional Akharas, where carrying weapons is a customary ritual.

To a query about BJP's participation in the rallies, Singha noted, "Anyone can participate in Ram Navami rallies in their individual capacity." BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar confirmed the party's involvement, stating, "Every year we participate in Ram Navami programmes. This year too, there will be no change. Party workers and leaders will participate as devotees of Lord Ram."

A senior BJP leader, speaking anonymously, expressed hopes of political gains from Hindu consolidation through the Ram Navami events. He said, "To achieve our target of 25 seats, there is a need for Hindu consolidation, and Ram Navami

celebrations will indeed help us in doing that."

In the 2019 elections, the BJP secured 18 seats, while the TMC won 22 and the Congress two. Until recent years, Ram Navami was not widely celebrated in Bengal which is traditionally associated more with the Durga Puja festival. However, since 2016, coinciding with the BJP's rise in the state, the festival has gained momentum.

Despite its growing popularity, Ram Navami celebrations have been marred by violence in 2017, 2018, and 2023, with communal riots erupting due to clashes between groups over processions and rallies.

The TMC accused the BJP of orchestrating the riots, a claim dismissed by the BJP, which attributed the violence to TMC's appeasement politics. This year,

Banerjee alleged that the BJP plans to instigate riots during the Ram Navami rallies. "As elections approach, the BJP plans to trigger communal riots during Ram Navami rallies. I urge all citizens not to fall into this trap," she said at various election rallies.

The TMC also plans to organise rallies in various parts of the state. In Howrah, where communal riots occurred last year during Ram Navami, the TMC will host a major rally on April 17.

The TMC has urged the Election Commission to ensure that the religious festival doesn't become a platform for polarisation. "We don't believe in mixing politics with religion. The people of the state will reject the BJP's communal politics," TMC spokesperson Shantanu Sen said.

Senior CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty warned that such celebrations would "only sharpen competitive communalism in the state, which both the TMC and the BJP desire." Political analyst Subhamoy Maitra believes that the Ram Navami celebrations, bolstered by the Ram Temple event, will provide the BJP with significant political leverage ahead of the elections.

"It will be an advantage for the BJP in the state, as they are a seasoned player on this pitch of Hindu polarisation. The TMC might engage in competitive communalism, but the outcome remains uncertain," he observed.

Maha farmer forced to cut down 300 trees



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar April 16: A farmer in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar was forced to cut down 300 sweet lime trees amid an acute water shortage in the drought-prone Marathwada region.

Rajendra Lembhe felled the 11-year-old trees on his farm in Murma village of Paithan tehsil Saturday after two wells he sourced water from became dry.

Lembhe said, "It was painful to cut down the trees with a JCB machine. But I had no way out. I have a 300-foot-deep bore well and a 70-foot-deep well, but both have gone dry in the last three months."

There has been no significant rainfall in the region since August last year, he said. Lembhe said he tried to save the trees by sourcing water from tankers but could not bear the expenses.

"A tanker with a capacity of 5,000 litres costs ₹1,000. I could water the trees for 15 to 20 minutes through drip irrigation," he said. A tanker transports 25,000 litres of water to Murma in a week, but it is not nearly

Rajendra Lembhe felled the 11-year-old trees on his farm in Murma village of Paithan tehsil Saturday after two wells he sourced water from became dry. Lembhe said he tried to save the trees by sourcing water from tankers but could not bear the expenses

enough, he said.

"I purchase a drum of water for ₹50 and require two to three drums per day as I have seven members in my family," he said. Maharashtra ranks first in the country in sweet lime cultivation, with 21,525 hectares being used in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar and 14,325 hectares in Jalna.

"Water is hardly available for farming. Sweet limes are grown in Paithan and Ghansawangi talukas. We have been appealing to farmers not to cut down fruit trees. However, amid water shortage, 30 to 35 per cent of fruit plantations are in danger," said Sanjay Patil, an expert from Krishi Vigyaan Kendra Badnapur.

Mamata hits out at PM

Mamata Banerjee claimed that if the BJP returned to power no more elections would be held in the country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



"Only the TMC is fighting the BJP in Bengal, while the other two opposition parties are working with it. We are with the INDIA bloc at the national level, but in Bengal, TMC must win to save the country."

Banerjee claimed that if the BJP returned to power no more elections would be held in the country. "There will be the rule of one man and one party," she claimed.

The Chief Minister also took on the Election Commission, accusing it of not allowing the state government to rebuild the houses damaged by a storm in Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Alipurduar. "Let the polls be over; we will rebuild those houses," she said.

Claiming that the BJP-led government at the Centre did nothing for the ailing tea gardens of northern West Bengal, she said, "Our government has reopened 59 tea gardens and gave land rights to the workers who have been living there for decades."

Banerjee alleged that some BJP members shouted "chor-chor", targeting her convoy in the Chalsa area of the district. "Just imagine their audacity. I am not even drawing my MP pension. I don't take any salary. I travel in my own car and do not use a government vehicle. I wear simple clothes and lead a simple life. I even pay for expenses such as a cup of tea," she said.

'Compensation for Covid deaths is not bounty'

DURING THE PANDEMIC, THE STATE GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED A COMPREHENSIVE PERSONAL ACCIDENT COVER OF ₹50 LAKH TO EMPLOYEES WHO WERE ON ACTIVE DUTY RELATING TO SURVEY, TRACING, TRACKING, TESTING, PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND RELIEF ACTIVITIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: Compensation for the death of Covid-19 warriors was not a bounty, and cases seeking ex-gratia cannot be dealt with casually, the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court said while dismissing a petition filed by the widow of a hand-pump helper who died during the pandemic.

A division bench of Justices Ravindra Ghuge and R M Joshi said there was nothing "perverse or erroneous" in the order passed by the Maharashtra government rejecting the woman's application seeking compensation of ₹50 lakh.

A copy of the judgment passed March 28 was made available Tuesday. The order was passed



on the petition filed by Kanchan Hamshette from Nanded district, who sought ex-gratia of ₹50 lakh from the government as her husband, who she claims was deployed by the government, had died after getting infected with the coronavirus.

During the pandemic, the state government introduced a comprehensive personal accident cover of ₹50 lakh to employees who were on active duty relating to survey, tracing, tracking, testing, prevention, and treatment and relief activities.

Hamshette, in her plea, stated that her husband, who died in April 2021, was performing a task that fell in the category of essential services. She sought the High Court to quash a communication the state government had issued in November 2023 rejecting her application.

The court, in its order, said there can be no debate that such cases must be dealt with sensitivity, care and caution. "On the one hand, such cases have to be scrutinised thoroughly, but on the other hand, it has to be kept in

mind that cases which are not qualified for payment of ₹50 lakh as ex-gratia cannot be entertained as if such amounts are a bounty," the court said.

If such cases are dealt with casually and compensation amounts granted, people ineligible for such compensation would receive ₹50 lakh from the taxpayers' money, it said. The High Court accepted the government's contention that the petitioner's husband was a handpump helper and was not employed for COVID-19 duty by any competent authority.

IMBROGLIO IN BENGAL VARSITIES

Former VCs, senior professors form panel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 16: A group of former vice-chancellors and senior professors from West Bengal's state-run universities has announced the formation of a citizens' committee aimed at resolving the ongoing issues in university functioning.

Former VC of North Bengal University Omprakash Mishra said that the committee, comprising renowned academics and legal experts, will address issues such as the roles of the Governor and chancellor, confusion and overlaps in their powers, and compliance with constitutional and regulatory frameworks.

Members include former UGC chairman Sukhdeo Thorat, Supreme Court senior advocate Jose P. Verghese, Sudhansu Bhusan from NUEPA, and Sibaji Pratim Basu from Vidyasagar University, he said.

The committee plans to engage with stakeholders, including students, faculty, alumni, and government officials, to compile a comprehensive white paper. "This committee, having nationally known experts in their respective fields, will meet all stakeholders, students, teachers and non-teaching staff of the institutes, distinguished alumnus, various teacher bodies, academics and other constitutional experts, higher education ministry officials and also seek audience with the governor, who is the ex-officio chancellor, and the education minister to prepare a white paper," Mishra said.

This document will be made public and presented to the higher education department and the Governor's office after one-and-a-half months, he added. The forum, despite its past affiliation with TMC, emphasised the urgency of ending the year-long absence of permanent VCs in 31 state universities, impacting academic and administrative functions.

While the committee's recommendations may not be binding, they aim to provide valuable guidance for resolving the crisis, Mishra added.

Mumbai philatelist turns back time with collection of 4 lakh stamps

JADHAV'S COLLECTION BOASTS AROUND FOUR LAKH POSTAGE STAMPS AND 80,000 PICTURE POSTCARDS AND ARTEFACTS COLLECTED OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: Walking into Umesh Jadhav's humble flat in suburban Kandivali is like time travelling, with pieces of the past in the form of postage stamps, picture postcards and artefacts from around the world in every corner.

You will have to mind your step as you gingerly make your way through a maze of books, Buddha statues, collections of

cricket and WWE cards, Japanese dolls, paintings, lighters, beautiful perfume bottles, watches and coins.

"My house is a mini museum and whoever wants to visit is welcome, it's an open house. Whenever there is a programme in the housing society, my friends bring visitors to admire my collection," said the 65-year-old retired Central government officer.

Jadhav's collection boasts around four lakh postage stamps



Philatelist Umesh Jadhav at his flat in suburban Kandivali, in Mumbai. PTI PHOTO

with Helvetia written on it. "I initially sourced stamps from friends and relatives, but once I started earning, I spent nearly 30 per cent of my income on expanding my collection of stamps, postcards and artefacts. These are all my prized possessions, this is my gold," he said.

At the age of 15, Jadhav had 3,000 stamps, and in his days studying at Siddharth College in south Mumbai, he came across stamp dealers. "Once I joined philatelic societies, I realised the value of stamps, some of which cost ₹10,000. This got me excited and I started focusing on my collection," he said.

Jadhav has exhibited his collection at various programmes and won medals. "I first exhibited my collection titled 'Atlas-

A Book of Maps' in 1994. Each stamp in the collection depicted maps. I won a bronze medal in my first attempt at the Nehru Centre and have participated in philatelic exhibitions ever since. Over the years, I have won 12 medals, including seven bronze, four silver and a gold medal," he said with pride.

The oldest stamp in Jadhav's collection is the 1841 Great Britain (GB) Queen Victoria Red Brown, a set of five imperforated stamps, worth around 1300 British Pounds (Rs 1.30 lakh).

"I also have a collection of Bombay picture postcards, which is very special to me. The city is my jaan and I want to hold a special exhibition to showcase my Bombay collection," he said with a huge smile.





ROURKELA SET FOR BIG FIGHT

THOUGH THE CONGRESS HAS ANNOUNCED BIRENDRANATH PATNAIK AS ITS CANDIDATE FROM THERE, THE SEAT IS LIKELY TO WITNESS A STRAIGHT FIGHT BETWEEN RAY AND NAYAK



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 16: Rourkela Assembly segment is going to witness a close contest between two heavyweight candidates - former Union minister Dilip Ray of BJP and state Labour Minister Sarada Prasad Nayak of BJD.

Ray is a former central and state minister and three-time MLA from Rourkela, while Nayak is seeking his fourth term in the constituency.

Though the Congress has announced Birendranath Patnaik as its candidate from there, the seat is likely to witness a straight fight between Ray and Nayak.

After his name was announced by BJP, Ray said, "The people of Rourkela have a special bond with me and the BJP. I feel this time BJP will form the government in the state."

Ray had won the seat twice - 1985 and 1990, and lost to Prabhat Mohapatra of Congress in 1995.

Similarly, Sarada won the seat in 2004 and 2009 but lost to Ray in 2014. However, he again got the party nomination in 2019 and defeated the BJP's Nihar Ray. Sarada had polled 60,877 votes securing 47.29 per cent votes thereby increasing BJD's vote share by 7.78 per cent. Nihar

had got 50,417 votes, securing 39.17 per cent votes but interestingly BJP's vote share had fallen by 9.2 per cent.

"Defeating Nihar was not easy because the vote difference was just 10,460. This should have been much higher because Sarada was a bigger name against Nihar. So, this time Dilip Ray will beat Sarad Nayak by at least double the margin," said a supporter of Ray.

Sarada is known for his organisational ability as he is known as a 'grassroots politician'. For Ray it is his fan base, which is very significant in number. While Sarada's biggest bane will be the dissension against him, his advantage is the strong BJD cadres. Ray will definitely face some ugly questions on several issues that are appearing on social media these days.

"I don't think that Sarada has only dissension; he also has a strong cadre base on the ground," said a lecturer of political science.

Asked about his future plan, Ray said, "Many major projects like the bridge on Brahmani, hospital and even the airport are over. Smart city works are not progressing because the corporation election is necessary and we will definitely do that."



Several leaders and workers of BJP and Congress from Kalahandi district joined BJD at Sankha Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday



Congress MP nominee for Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat, Bhujabal Majhi, takes out a rally with his supporters during his visit to Malakangiri, Tuesday



Former Telkoi MLA Vedavyas Nayak left BJD and joined BJP with his supporters at a merger meeting held in Bhubaneswar in the presence of BJP leader Sajjan Sharma, Tuesday

Triangular fight in Boudh

BJD has fielded five-time MLA and former Assembly Speaker Pradip Kumar Amat, also a minister now, while advocate Naba Kumar Mishra is contesting on a Congress ticket. BJP has fielded Harbhanga block vice-chairman Saroj Pradhan from this constituency

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, April 16: A triangular contest is very likely in Boudh Assembly constituency even as Biju Janata Dal (BJD) hopes to retain the seat for the sixth time, according to a report.

The regional party has fielded five-time MLA and former Assembly Speaker Pradip Kumar Amat, also a minister now, while advocate Naba Kumar Mishra is contesting on a Congress ticket. BJP has fielded Harbhanga block vice-chairman Saroj Pradhan from this constituency.

All the three parties have intensified their campaigning after announcement of the names of the candidates.

BJD has reposed faith on Amat who is hopeful of winning this seat for the sixth time. However, the opposition parties have alleged that the district is yet to witness any development in the sec-



tors like education, healthcare, drinking water supply, and transport and communication.

They further alleged that Amat is responsible for the lack of development in the region.

The opposition BJP and Congress are getting battle ready to corner Amat in the upcoming elections.

This time, BJP has fielded youth leader Saroj Pradhan, who has been campaigning vigorously to grab the seat. Saroj was successful in turning the panchayat election to his favour as he and his wife emerged victorious despite the ruling party's immense political clout in the district. While his wife became the

chairperson of Harbhanga block, he became the vice-chairman.

He left no stone unturned to get a BJP ticket as there was intense lobbying for the seat. He established contacts with people through door-to-door visits. His public outreach helped him become the BJP candidate.

His supporters are of the opinion that the result of the upcoming elections will go in favour of Saroj.

CPI had fielded Abakash Sahu as its candidate in 2019 elections after Congress and CPI entered into a seat sharing deal. However, this time Congress has not entered into any deal and fielded advocate Naba Kumar Mishra as its candidate from this seat after he defected to Congress from BJD.

Later, he became the district president of the Congress party and worked to strengthen the party organisation. He has now intensified his campaigning too.

Pruthvi Ballav confident of maiden electoral victory

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Embarking on his inaugural electoral campaign in his late father and former chief minister JB Patnaik's Begunia Assembly segment in Khurda district, 58-year-old Pruthvi Ballav Patnaik expressed optimism about clinching victory in his maiden election bid.

Patnaik, who was named as the Congress candidate for Begunia, had declined the party ticket in 2019, but has now embraced the opportunity after extensive groundwork since the 2022 panchayat polls, party sources said.

Though JB Patnaik was chief minister thrice from 1980 to 1989 and again from 1995 to 1999, Pruthvi had initially shown little interest in politics.

Pruthvi's mother Jayanti Patnaik, a four-time MP, was the first chairperson of the National Commission for Women and also served as the president of AICC's women wing, Mahila Congress. Explaining his change of

PRUTHVI EMPHASISED THE GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT WITH BOTH BJD AND BJP, CITING THEIR FAILED ALLIANCE TALKS AND DELAYED CANDIDATE ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR BEGUNIA

heart, Pruthvi cited his enhanced preparation and grassroots engagement in Begunia since 2022.

"I was then not prepared for the election. Now, I have prepared the ground and have been working with people at the grassroots level in Begunia since the 2022 panchayat polls. Our organisational base is quite strong now," he said.

He emphasised the growing disillusionment with both the ruling BJD and BJP, citing their failed alliance talks and delayed candidate announcements for Begunia.

Pruthvi asserted that the Congress is well-positioned to capitalise on this discontent, buoyed by strong grassroots support and a palpable desire for more accessible representation. "We are certainly better placed.

This is because the people have lost confidence on both the BJD and the BJP for their nexus. They first said that they would go for an alliance. So far, both the parties have failed to announce names of their candidate for Begunia. We will perform well and win the polls with people's support," Pruthvi added.

Asked whether he was nominated by the party, Pruthvi said he had applied online for the party ticket. The Congress subsequently conducted a survey and finalised his candidature after a thorough assessment.

He highlighted the disconnect between local BJD and BJP leaders and the constituency's needs, pledging to emulate his father's commitment to being present and accessible to the people.

"People want their MLA to be with them like my late father JB Patnaik. Nowadays, people don't get an opportunity to see their MLA. During visits to villages, I have been telling people that I will remain with them all along," he said.

200 complaints received from political parties, claims ECI

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 16: Election Commission of India (ECI) Tuesday said that approximately 200 complaints have been filed by various political parties and candidates at the level of ECI and across states.

"Of these, action has been taken in 169 cases," the ECI said. It said that the total complaints received from BJP were 51, out of which action has been taken in 38 cases, complaints from Congress were 59, with action taken in 51 cases while complaints received from other parties were 90, out of which action has been taken in 80 cases.

ECI said that with a month completed since the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into effect March 16, they are broadly satisfied with the compliance of the code by political parties and



that campaign by various parties and candidates has remained largely clutter-free.

The ECI said that during the one-month period, 16 delegations from seven political parties met the Commission to lodge their complaints on alleged violations of MCC and related matters.

"Many delegations met in the states at the level of Chief Electoral Officer. All political parties have been treated at par, time given to all even at short notice and their grievances pa-

tiently heard," it said.

The ECI said that during the last month, the e-guidelines plugging gap in-law have been issued, on complaint from AAP against anonymous advertisements in hoardings-cum-billboards in the Delhi Municipal Commission area without giving names of the publisher.

"Giving wider amplitude to the meaning of 'pamphlet and poster' in the existing law by including hoardings, guidelines have been issued to Chief Secretaries of all states and UTs mandating the clear identification of printer and publisher on printed election-related material including hoardings, ensuring accountability and transparency in campaign communications," it said.

The ECI has also got FIR lodged against remarks made by Anitha R Radhakrishnan,

DMK leader towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi while on a complaint from Congress and AAP, the directives were issued to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to stop the transmission of the government's Viksit Bharat Message on Whatsapp post announcement of elections.

The EC also said that a total of 2,68,080 complaints have been filed on 'eVigil', the Commission's portal on violations for citizens. Of these, action has been taken in 2,67,762 cases and 92 per cent were resolved in less than 100 minutes.

"Due to the efficacy of eVigil, there is a substantial reduction in illegal hoardings, defacement of property, campaigning beyond permissible time, deployment of vehicles beyond permitted ones," the EC added.



BJD leader Santosh Khatua, an aspirant for Nilagiri Assembly seat, displaying show of strength as workers from five panchayats of Bahanaga block in Balasore district take out a bike rally in support of his candidature, Tuesday

of the day quote

India has been the fastest growing economy in the last three consecutive financial years and this growth can continue in the coming years as well

It is one of the intent or initiative of India to ensure that debris-free space missions are conducted so as to ensure the sustainability of space. I would like to make this initiative a declaration today, possibly this can be discussed and debated in the coming days

I went to Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Harayan, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh. I want to tell you - it is not true that the media and social media is projecting. But the truth is that the 10-year rule of the BJP government is being questioned by the people

SHORT TAKES

IAF veteran Dalip Singh Majithia dies

New Delhi: Veteran air warrior Squadron Leader (ret'd) Dalip Singh Majithia, who joined the Indian Air Force during the tumultuous years of World War II and distinguished himself as a "fearless aviator" during his career, has died. He was 103. The centenarian, who had "over 1,100 flying hours to his name", including missions in aircraft such as Hurricanes and Spitfires, passed away at Uttarakhanda's Rudrapur in the early hours of Tuesday, IAF sources said. He was affectionately called 'Maji' by his fellow air warriors. Sqn Ldr Majithia's leadership skills were forged and tested in the crucible of war, they said.

Minor fire in North Block

New Delhi: A minor fire broke out at North Block, which houses the ministries of Home Affairs and Personnel, in the high-security Raisina Hills here Tuesday but no one was injured and no file was damaged, a Home Ministry spokesperson said. The cause of the fire appears to be a short circuit in the electrical equipment on the second floor of the building and it was contained within 20 minutes by the joint efforts of CISF, CPWD and Delhi Fire Services.

Soren moves bail petition

Ranchi: Former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren moved a bail petition before a special court in Ranchi Tuesday, alleging that his arrest by the ED was politically motivated and part of a well-orchestrated conspiracy to coerce him to join the BJP. The special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court fixed April 23 as the next date of hearing after the Enforcement Directorate sought time to file a reply to it.

Sullivan's visit to India postponed

New Delhi: US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan has postponed his visit to India this week in view of the evolving situation in West Asia following escalating hostilities between Israel and Iran. It was the second time this year that Sullivan deferred his trip to India. West Asia has been reeling under increasing tensions after Iran carried out the first direct attack on Israel by firing hundreds of drones and missiles early Sunday.



The Prime Minister came to Kerala and spoke about the progress report. But the BJP does not have the courage to present the progress report of its 10-year-rule and face the people

PINARAYI VJAYAN | KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

ALL SET FOR 'SURYA TILAK'

At noon on Ram Navami Wednesday, the Sun's rays will fall on the forehead of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, a 'Surya tilak' of the deity made possible by an elaborate mechanism involving mirrors and lenses



Top court pans EVM critics

The apex court was hearing a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of the votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), an independent vote verification system which enables an elector to see whether his vote was cast correctly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The Supreme Court Tuesday deprecated criticism of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and calls for reverting to ballot papers, saying the electoral process in India is a "humongous task" and attempts should not be made to "bring down the system". It also recalled how polling booths were captured in the era of ballot papers to manipulate election results.

The top court was hearing a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of the votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), an independent vote verification system which enables an elector to see whether his vote was cast correctly.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta was critical of the argument that many European countries have gone back to ballot papers after having tried out voting machines.

"This is a humongous task. No European country can do this. You talked about Germany but what is the population there. My home state West Bengal is far more populous than Germany. We have to repose faith and trust in the electoral process. Don't try to bring down the system like this," Justice Datta told advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms'.

Bhushan had pitched for a return to ballot papers while citing the German example. The bench said there were roughly



VVPAT is a system that allows voters to verify if their vote has been cast correctly and counted towards the candidate they intended to support

The VVPAT produces a paper slip that is securely stored and can be accessed in case of any disputes or discrepancies

In light of the concerns and doubts raised by the Opposition regarding the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) system, petitions have been filed demanding the cross-verification of each vote cast

98 crore registered voters in India. "There will be some mismatch in vote count due to some human errors but it can be countered and checked," it said. Justice Khanna, while referring to booth capturing in the past, said, "Mr Bhushan, we are all in our 60s. We have seen what used to happen earlier when there were no EVMs. We don't need to tell you."

Maintaining that he is not casting any aspersion on the Election Commission or saying that EVMs have been manipulated, Bhushan said his only point is that these polling machines can be tinkered with. Normally, human interven-

tion in a process creates problems including bias, while machines, without any wrong human intervention, work properly and give accurate results, Justice Khanna told Bhushan. Bhushan said he also wants that every voter should be allowed to collect the paper slip of his vote cast from the VVPAT machine and drop it into the ballot box. He also sought reversal of the poll panel's decision to replace the transparent glass on VVPAT machines with an opaque glass through which a voter can see the slip only when the light is on for seven seconds. He alleged that two public

SALMAN KHAN HOUSE FIRING

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: Two men arrested in connection with firing at Salman Khan's residence were prima facie hired by the Lawrence Bishnoi gang and the investigation so far suggested they conducted a reconnaissance around the actor's house three times before executing the plan April 14, officials said Tuesday. The duo Vicky Gupta (24) and Sagar Pal (21), originally from

Duo hired by Bishnoi gang

Chamaparan in Bihar, were apprehended late Monday night from Mata No Madh village in Gujarat's Kutch district.

The investigation suggested that they carried out the firing for monetary considerations. A senior Gujarat Police officer said Gupta and Pal were hired by the gang of incarcerated gangster Lawrence Bishnoi to open fire at Khan's house in Bandra. A Mumbai Police officer said, "The investigation so far sug-



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde with actor Salman Khan and his father Salim Khan

More details have emerged during the investigation which suggested the duo was spotted near Hotel Taj Lands End in Bandra, just a km away from Khan's house, between February 29 and March 1, a Mumbai Police official said.

Police suspect that one of the accused, Pal, came into contact with members of the Bishnoi gang in Haryana during his two-year stay, he said, adding that Gupta later joined him there.

EC bans Surjewala from campaigning

New Delhi: The Election Commission Tuesday reprimanded Congress leader Randeep Surjewala over his alleged derogatory remarks against BJP MP Hema Malini and barred him from campaigning for 48 hours. This is the first campaign ban imposed by the poll body in this Lok Sabha election cycle. The Election Commission had last Tuesday issued a show-cause notice to Surjewala for his alleged "undignified, uncivilised and vulgar" remarks against Malini.

Six dead as boat capsizes in Jhelum

Srinagar: A boat carrying mostly school children capsized in the Jhelum river on the outskirts of the city Tuesday, leaving six people dead, officials said. The incident took place around 8 am in Gandbal Nowgam area here and six people have been pulled out of the river whose water level had risen over the last couple of days due to incessant rains in the Kashmir valley. The exact number of people on the boat was not clear. Deputy commissioner, Srinagar, Bilal Mohi-ud-Din Bhat, said six people have died and their bodies have been retrieved.

'Smoking, consumption of alcohol linked to sperm DNA damage'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Unhealthy lifestyle and social habits such as smoking, consumption of alcohol and processed food and excessive use of cell phones can cause damage to sperm DNA, experts at AIIMS, Delhi said.

They said that many people are also not aware that infertility, recurrent abortions in women and birth defects in children may happen because of poor sperm quality in men.

The father's role in conception and embryo development cannot be ignored, Dr Rima Dada, Professor at the Department of Anatomy, AIIMS, said, adding that sperm has minimal antioxidants and its DNA repair machinery is silent.

"Thus, unhealthy lifestyle and social habits like smoking, alcohol consumption, excessive use of cell phones, processed foods, nutritionally depleted diet rich in calories, obesity and exposure to environment pollutants induce seminal oxidative stress and cause sperm DNA damage," Dr Dada said.

Besides, delayed age of marriage and conception further leads to deterioration in sperm quality, the doctor said at a press conference at the AIIMS. With advancing age, the sperm DNA quality declines and this may lead to accumulation of de novo germline mutations and epimutations which means damaged sperm can result in congenital malformations, child-



Many people are also not aware that infertility, recurrent abortions in women and birth defects in children may happen because of poor sperm quality in men, according to the experts

hood cancers, autosomal dominant disorder and complex behaviour disorders like autism, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder in children. Dada further said, "Earlier studies from our lab have shown high levels of DNA damage are associated with failure to conceive spontaneously and recurrent pregnancy losses," she said in a statement. Men need to be aware that their habits and psychological stress leave an epigenetic mark and signature on their sperm.

Dr Dada said, adding, "Leading a healthy lifestyle and doing yoga daily improve mitochondrial and nuclear DNA integrity." "Yoga results in increased ex-

pression of genes coding for antioxidants and anti-inflammatory genes and genes coding for DNA repair mechanism. Yoga increases the expression and activity of Telomerase, coupled with the reduced oxidative stress and maintenance of sperm Telomere length and thus, prevents accelerated ageing of sperm." "In addition, oxidative damage to sperm organelles is reduced and this aids in embryo development. Regular practice of yoga improves DNA quality and thus, reduced genetic and epigenetic disease burden in offspring, and positively impacts health trajectory of the offspring," Dr Dada said.

Aamir Khan lodges FIR against Congress

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 16: Hindi film industry superstar Aamir Khan, who was last seen in 'Laal Singh Chaddha', is taking action against a fake advertisement by a political party.

The actor has filed an FIR with Mumbai Police against a fake Congress advertisement. The said advertisement has a deep fake video of Aamir created by artificial intelligence, and it targets the ruling BJP over their promise of ₹15 lakh in the account of every citizen.

It is an alleged AI-generated deep fake video that uses a clip from an episode of the Aamir Khan-hosted TV show 'Satyamev Jayate' which was telecast 10 years ago.

The official spokesperson of Aamir Khan has issued a statement saying that the actor has initiated legal action and has reported the matter to the authorities. The spokesperson said: "We want to clarify that Mr Aamir Khan has never endorsed any political party throughout his 35-year career. He has dedicated his efforts to raising public awareness through Election Commission public awareness campaigns for many past elections. We are alarmed by the recent viral video alleging that Aamir Khan is promoting a particular political party."

The spokesperson further mentioned: "He would like to clarify that this is a fake video and totally untrue. He has reported the matter to various authorities related to this issue, including filing an FIR with the Cyber Crime Cell of the Mumbai Police.

Patanjali Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj 'katha' enters 7th day



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj 'katha' series, organised by Baba Ramdev's Patanjali Yogpeeth in Haridwar, entered its seventh day, Monday.

On the occasion, Swami Govind Dev Giri Maharaj said India is already a world guru and there is no need to make it a world guru, but the world will recognise this only when its Army is strong and citizens are prosperous.

"In today's world, work can't be done with money alone, but without money, big tasks come to a halt. This has been experienced by modern-day saints like revered Swami Ramdev Ji Maharaj and Acharya Balkrishna Ji Maharaj, who themselves have sought donations and carried out the work of human service and nation-building. But when the goal is high, similar means are necessary to fulfill it, and for gathering resources, there is a need for money. Then Patanjali began the endeavour for national service," he said.

During the narration of the Shivaji Maharaj katha, he paid homage to the valour and bravery of the great Maratha warrior king, stating that what seemed almost impossible to everyone, Shivaji Maharaj accomplished that.

"Shahistekhan was surrounded by lakhs of soldiers in the Lal Mahal in Pune. Taking 258 Mavlas with him, how Shivaji Maharaj entered the fort and safely came out was a miracle. Taking advantage of the chaos and darkness, Shahistekhan entered the janankhana and somehow saved his life but his fingers were cut off, and his son Fazal Khan was killed. This was the country's first surgical strike conducted by Shivaji Maharaj, in which 55 Mughals were killed and six Marathas attained martyrdom."

The programme was attended by senior members of the Patanjali group, including Padmasen Arya, Chancellor of Patanjali University, Prof Mahavir Agrawal, Head of Human Welfare Department, Sadhvi Acharya Devapriya, Deputy Chancellor of Acharyakulam and Dr Ritambhara, Chief Central Coordinator of Bharat Swabhimam among others.



Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong will stay in the Cabinet as senior minister after stepping down as the leader of the government on May 15
LAWRENCE WONG | SINGAPORE DEPUTY PM

DEVASTATING FLOODS

More than 2,000 houses were flooded in Kazakhstan's northernmost region as of Tuesday, authorities said, while across the border in Russia, Kurgan and Tyumen provinces were also evacuating thousands of people due to the deluge



of the day quote

India is in favour of the expansion of UN Security Council membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, as this is the only way to achieve genuine reform of the Security Council and make it legitimate, representative, responsive and effective
RUCHIRA KAMBOJ | PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE UN

Russia's actions violate a principle of the United Nations Charter and the principle of the inviolability of national borders
OLAF SCHOLZ | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

Military buildup, including nuclear and missile development, has been accelerating in areas surrounding Japan and attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force are growing
FUMIO KISHIDA | JAPAN PM

SHORT TAKES

Clean chit to ex-ISI chief

Islamabad: Pakistan's former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) director general Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid has been exonerated by the inquiry commission established to investigate the 2017 sit-in by a hardline religious group here and Rawalpindi, it emerged Tuesday. An extremist group Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) held a siege of Islamabad in 2017, demanding the expulsion of the French ambassador due to the publication of blasphemous cartoons in that country. Later a panel of the Supreme Court led by current chief justice Qazi Faez Isa in a verdict in 2019 ordered to investigate the protest and identify the perpetrators.

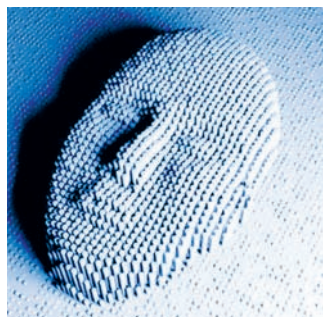
Pakistan, Saudi to deepen ties

Islamabad: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Tuesday agreed to expedite their bilateral investment negotiations with the foreign minister of the Gulf kingdom pledging support for the cash-strapped country's efforts to attract foreign investors to rebuild its fractured economy. Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah arrived in Pakistan with a high-level Saudi delegation Monday and addressed a joint press conference along with Pakistan counterpart Ishaq Dar after high-level talks focused on Saudi investment in the country. To a question, he refused to give the exact volume of the investment or sectors being considered for business but was all praise for the government's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), a joint civil-military body created last year to attract investment in the country.

Rains lash UAE

Dubai: Heavy rains lashed the United Arab Emirates Tuesday, flooding out portions of major highways and leaving vehicles abandoned on roadways across Dubai. Meanwhile, the death toll in separate heavy flooding in neighboring Oman rose to 18 with others still missing as the sultanate prepared for the storm. The rains began overnight, leaving massive ponds on streets as whipping winds disrupted flights at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel and the home of the long-haul carrier Emirates. By the evening, over 120 millimeters (4.75 inches) of rainfall had soaked the city-state — the typical average for a year in the desert nation — with more expected in the coming hours.

UK to criminalise creation of sexually explicit deepfakes



Deepfake refers to images and videos made to look hyper-realistic, with the victim usually unaware and unable to give their consent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 16: Despicable people who create sexually explicit deepfakes will face prosecution under a new law going through its parliamentary journey, the British government said Tuesday.

Deepfake refers to images and videos made to look hyper-realistic, with the victim usually unaware and unable to give their consent. Under the new offence, those who create such images without consent face a criminal record and an unlimited fine. If the deepfake content is then shared more widely, offenders could be sent to jail.

"The creation of deepfake sexual images is despicable and completely unacceptable irrespective of whether the image is shared," said Laura Farris, UK

Minister for Victims and Safeguarding. "It is another example of ways in which certain people seek to degrade and dehumanise others - especially women. And it has the capacity to cause catastrophic consequences if the material is shared more widely. This government will not tolerate it. This new offence sends a crystal-clear message that making this material is immoral, often misogynistic, and a crime," she said.

Last year, reforms in the UK's Online Safety Act criminalised the sharing of "deepfake" intimate images for the first time. The new offence, which will be introduced through an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, will mean anyone who makes sexually explicit deepfake images of adults maliciously and without consent can now also face prosecution. It will apply to images of adults as the country's law already covers this behaviour where the image is of a child under the age of 18.

The Ministry of Justice said the Bill, which continues its passage through Parliament, is also creating a range of new criminal offences to punish those who take or record intimate images without consent — or install equipment to enable someone to do so.

The government has also reclassified violence against women and girls as a national threat, meaning the country's police must prioritise their response to it, just as they do with threats like terrorism. Residents reported an inter-



Smoke billows out of the Old Stock Exchange, Boersen, in Copenhagen, Denmark, Tuesday

AP/PTI PHOTO

Israeli tanks push back in northern Gaza

REUTERS

Cairo, April 16: Israeli tanks pushed back into some areas of the northern Gaza Strip Tuesday which they had left weeks ago, while warplanes conducted air strikes on Rafah, the Palestinian last refuge in the south of the territory, killing and wounding several people, medics and residents said. Residents reported an inter-

net outage in the areas of Beit Hanoun and Jabalia in northern Gaza. Tanks advanced into Beit Hanoun and surrounded some schools where displaced families have taken refuge, said the residents and media outlets of the militant Palestinian group Hamas. "Occupation soldiers ordered all families inside the schools and the nearby houses where the tanks had advanced to evacuate. The soldiers detained many



men," one resident of northern Gaza told Reuters via a chat app. Beit Hanoun, home to 60,000 people, was one of the first areas targeted by Israel's ground of-

fensive in Gaza last October. Heavy bombardment turned most of Beit Hanoun, once known as 'the basket of fruit' because of its orchards, into a ghost town comprising piles of rubble. Many families who had returned to Beit Hanoun and Jabalia in recent weeks after Israeli forces withdrew, began moving out again Tuesday because of the new raid, some residents said.

Tensions rise in Australia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sydney, April 16: A teenager has been accused of wounding a Christian bishop and a priest during a church service in the second high-profile knife attack to rock Sydney in recent days, leaving communities on edge, leaders calling for calm and a besieged church urging against retaliation.

The 16-year-old was overpowered by the shocked congregation at Christ the Good Shepherd Church after he allegedly stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and the Rev. Isaac Royel during a service Monday night that was being streamed online.

Police have not commented on reports that the boy's fingers were severed by parishioners in the Orthodox Assyrian church in suburban Wakeley, but confirmed his hand injuries were 'severe.'

Video of the attack spread quickly on social media and an angry mob converged on the church demanding vengeance. They hurled bricks, bottles and fence boards at police, who temporarily barricaded the boy inside the church for his own safety. Many in the crowd chanted "an eye for an eye" and "bring him out."

Several people including police officers required hospital treatment following the hours-long riot. The church said in a statement Tuesday it "denounced re-



taliation of any kind." Police stood guard around mosques in parts of Sydney Tuesday after reports that text messages were circulating urging the Assyrian Christian community to retaliate against Muslims.

Sydney's Lakemba Mosque, Australia's largest, has hired additional private security for the next week after receiving fire bomb threats Monday night. Police and community leaders said public anxiety had been heightened by a lone assailant's knife attack in a Sydney shopping mall on Saturday that killed five women and a male security guard who attempted to intervene. The 40-year-old assailant, Joel Cauchi, had a history of mental illness and trouble with women and a

fascination with knives. He was shot dead by police.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged the public not to take the law into their own hands. "We understand the distress and concerns that are there in the community, particularly after the tragic event at Bondi Junction on Saturday," Albanese said, referring to the Westfield Bondi Junction shopping mall.

"But it is not acceptable to impede police and injure police doing their duty or to damage police vehicles in a way that we saw last night," Albanese added.

New South Wales Police Commissioner Karen Webb Tuesday declared the church attack a terrorist incident, but not the shopping mall rampage. The

Video of the attack spread quickly on social media and an angry mob converged on the church demanding vengeance
Police stood guard around mosques in parts of Sydney Tuesday after reports that text messages were circulating urging the Assyrian Christian community to retaliate against Muslims

declaration gives police expanded powers to stop and search people, premises and vehicles without a warrant.

Webb said the teen's comments and actions pointed to a religious motive for the attack. She didn't detail the wording of the comments that led her to believe he had been religiously motivated. Ten Network television reported the boy had told churchgoers who restrained him, in Arabic: "If they didn't insult my Prophet, I wouldn't have come here."

New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said state police were urging social media platforms to shut down accounts posting misinformation that incited violence since Monday's stabbing. "New South Wales Police and community leaders have been battling misinformation spreading around the web inciting community members to rush to particular religious facilities and mosques and churches on the hint or the rumor of some kind of violent activity taking place," Minns told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

NK buying Chinese surveillance cameras



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul (South Korea), April 16: North Korea is putting surveillance cameras in schools and workplaces and collecting fingerprints, photographs and other biometric information from its citizens in a technology-driven push to monitor its population even more closely, a report said Tuesday.

The state's growing use of digital surveillance tools, which combine equipment imported from China with domestically developed software, threatens to erase many of the small spaces North Koreans have left to engage in private business activities, access foreign media and secretly criticise their government, the researchers wrote.

But the isolated country's digital ambitions have to contend with poor electricity supplies and low network connectivity. Those challenges, and a history of reliance on human methods

of spying on its citizens, mean that digital surveillance isn't yet as pervasive as in China, according to the report, published by the North Korea-focused website 38 North.

The study's findings align with widely held views that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is stepping up efforts to tighten the state's control of its citizens and promote loyalty to his regime. These efforts were boosted by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which the North imposed stringent border controls that were maintained for three years before a cautious reopening in 2023.

New laws and recent reports of harsher punishments suggest that the government is cracking down on foreign influence and imported media, likely helped by fences and electronic monitoring systems installed on the border with China during the pandemic.

Breast cancer to cause a million deaths a year by 2040: Report

IN 2020, WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD ON AVERAGE HAD A 1 IN 12 RISK OF BEING DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER BEFORE TURNING 75 YEARS OLD AND THIS INCIDENCE IS RISING, RESEARCHERS FOUND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Breast cancer is now the world's most common carcinogenic disease with the ailment likely to cause a million deaths a year by 2040, according to a new Lancet Commission on breast cancer.

Around 7.8 million women were diagnosed with breast cancer in the last five years until 2020 and about 685,000 women died from the disease the same year, it said. Further, in 2020, women around the world on average had a 1 in 12 risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer before turning 75 years old and this incidence is rising, researchers found.

They estimated that cases of breast cancer cases will increase from 2.3 million in 2020 to more than 3 million by 2040, with low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) being "disproportionately affected". By 2040, deaths due to the disease will be a million a year, the team added.

"This is neither acceptable nor inevitable as action now can prevent many of these future cancers," the authors wrote. Knowledge gaps, such as un-



known numbers of women with metastatic breast cancer in which the cancer spreads to other parts, continue to prevent effective action, they said.

The scale of suffering associated with breast cancer, along with other costs, is not well-measured, with the society and

polymakers only seeing the 'tip of an iceberg,' the authors of the commission said.

"Recent improvements in breast cancer survival represent a great success of modern medicine," said the commission's lead author, Charlotte Coles, University of Cambridge,

UK, referring to 40 per cent reduced deaths due to the disease achieved in some high-income countries (HICs).

"However, we can't ignore how many patients are being systematically left behind," said Coles. The commission builds on previous evidence, presents new data, and integrates patient voices to shed light on a large unseen burden, according to the authors.

It points to 'glaring inequities' and suffering from symptoms, despair and financial burden due to breast cancer, which are often 'hidden and inadequately addressed'.

Laying out recommendations for tackling these challenges in breast cancer, the commission suggested better communication between patients and health professionals as a crucial intervention that could improve

quality of life, body image, and adherence to therapy, and positively impact survival.

"Women's fundamental human rights have historically been accorded lesser respect than men's in all settings, with implications for patient agency and autonomy," said Reshma Jaggi, Emory University School of Medicine, US.

"Every healthcare professional should receive some form of communication skills training. Improving the quality of communication between patients and health professionals, though seemingly simple, could have profound positive impacts that extend far beyond the specific setting of breast cancer management," Jaggi said. "Patients should be encouraged to exercise their voices, choosing their level of involvement in care decisions," she added.

of the day quote

India has been the fastest growing economy in the last three consecutive financial years and this growth can continue in the coming years as well. The next 25 years will be very critical for India



NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
UNION FINANCE MINISTER

As far as NSE's IPO is concerned, once it gets a green signal from the regulator SEBI, we will get our draft red herring prospectus done and submit it to them



ASHISH KUMAR CHAUHAN
MD AND CEO OF NSE

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the government and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Their vision in introducing the Production Linked Incentive programme has been instrumental in encouraging OEMs like us to establish a manufacturing footprint in India



SOM SATSANGI | HPE INDIA SVP AND MD

SHORT TAKES

CIL capex rises 6.5% in FY24

New Delhi: State-owned CIL Tuesday said its capital expenditure increased by 6.5 per cent to ₹19,840 crore in FY24. The company's capital expenditure was ₹18,619 crore in FY23. Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a statement. It accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output. "CIL achieved 120 per cent target satisfaction over the year's capex target of ₹16,500 crore. For the fourth fiscal on sequence CIL's capex breached the budgeted target," the PSU said. CIL is aiming to have adequate infra in place to evacuate increased quantities of coal produced in future. This includes setting up first mile connectivity projects with coal handling plants and silos; rail sidings, rail lines and roads.

Zomato brings large order fleet

New Delhi: Online food delivery platform Zomato on Tuesday introduced India's first large order fleet, designed to serve orders for a gathering of up to 50 people for group events like parties. The company's CEO Deepinder Goyal shared the announcement on X. "Today, we are excited to introduce India's first large order fleet, designed to handle all your large (group/party/event) orders with ease. This is an all electric fleet, designed specifically to serve orders for a gathering of upto 50 people. Such large orders were earlier served by multiple regular fleet delivery partners, and the customer experience wasn't what we really aspired for. These new vehicles should solve most of the problems our customers face while placing large orders on Zomato," Goyal said in the post.

Windfall tax on crude oil up

New Delhi: The government has hiked the windfall tax on crude oil to ₹9,600 per metric ton with effect from Tuesday from ₹6,800 earlier, as part of its fortnightly revision. Upstream oil exploration and production companies ONGC and Oil India Ltd stand may lose as they will not get the full benefit of rising international prices for their crude. However, the government on the other hand will get more resources to finance its social welfare schemes for the poor and keep its fiscal deficit in check. The government had first imposed the windfall tax on crude oil in July last year.



Despite many gloomy predictions, the global economy has held steady, and inflation has been returning to target

PIERRE-OLIVIER GOURINCHAS
IMF'S CHIEF ECONOMIST

Middle East jitters drag markets down for 3rd day

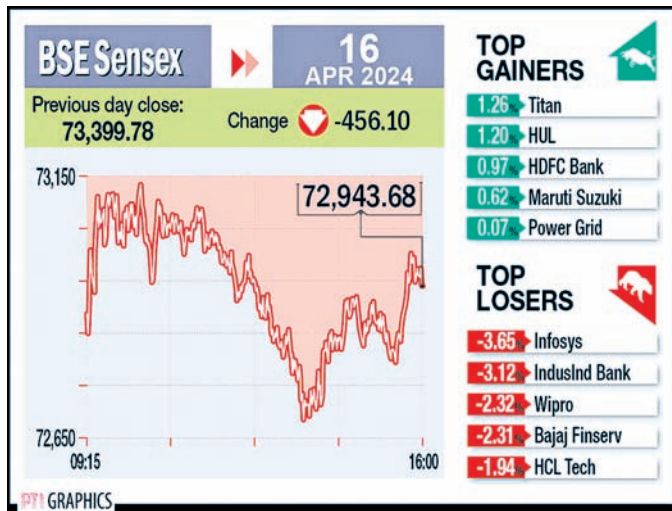
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 16: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty continued to slump Tuesday dragged down by heavy selling in IT stocks amid weak global trends and fears of escalating tensions in the Middle East. Outflow of foreign fund also dented investors' sentiment. Continuing its downtrend for the third day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 456.10 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 72,943.68. During the day, it slumped 714.75 points or 0.97 per cent to 72,685.03. The NSE Nifty declined 124.60 points or 0.56 per cent to finish at 22,147.90.

From the Sensex basket, Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, and Larsen & Toubro were the major laggards.

Titan Company, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Maruti, ITC, Power Grid and Reliance Industries were the gainers.

"The domestic market sustained its consolidation trend for the third consecutive day, amid apprehensions regarding geopolitical tensions and drop in the probability of a rate cut in the short-term. Heightened concerns arose following stronger-than-anticipated US retail sales, amplifying the assumption that the US Federal Reserve might delay rate cuts, leading to a notable uptick in the dollar index and US bond yields. The IT sector saw the most significant decline, primarily due to expectations of earnings being affected by the weak discretionary spending in the US and muted do-



Investors lose ₹7.93 lakh crore

New Delhi: Investors' wealth tumbled ₹7.93 lakh crore in three days of market crash amid escalating tensions in the Middle East and weak global trends. In the past three days, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,094.47 points or 2.79 per cent.

mestic Q4 results," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.57 per cent and midcap index advanced 0.05 per cent.

Among the indices, IT declined 2.32 per cent, teck (2.09 per cent), bankex (0.50 per cent), metal (0.36 per cent), capital goods (0.26 per cent) and commodities (0.24 per cent).

Energy, consumer discretionary, healthcare, industrials, consumer durables, oil & gas, and power were the gainers.

Stock markets would remain closed Wednesday for Ram Navami.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were quoting in the red. Wall Street ended in negative territory Monday.

Israel's military chief said Monday that his country will respond to Iran's weekend attack, but he did not elaborate on when and how as world leaders urged against retaliation, trying to avoid a spiral of violence in the Middle East.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.26 per cent to \$89.87 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹3,268 crore Monday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark tanked 845.12 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 73,399.78 Monday. The NSE Nifty declined 246.90 points or 1.10 per cent to finish at 22,272.50.

Central Bank of India gets new Regional Head

BHUBANESWAR: Deputy General Manager, Shrish Kumar Sharma has joined as the new Regional

Head of Central Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Region. Sharma started his banking career in 1992. Prior to this, he was heading the Regional Office of Dhanbad in

2022-23. Thereafter he has acquired vast experiences working in different capacities in different places of West Bengal. Apart from this, he has gained wide experience of working in different capacities in different places of Bihar, Ranchi and Chandigarh. In his 30 years of banking experience he has been serving the customers directly. During his tenure as the Regional Head he is likely to give more emphasis on MSME, Retail, SHG, CD Ratio, CASA, Social Security Schemes, UPI, successful implementation of the schemes approved by Central and state governments and to bring development in grassroots level.

Petrol sales up 7%, diesel declines 9.5% in April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: India's petrol consumption soared 7 per cent in the first half of April but diesel sales were down 9.5 per cent ahead of the onset of a harsh summer season that is set to crank up fuel demand, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed Tuesday.

Petrol sales of three state-owned firms, which control 90 per cent of the fuel market, rose to 1.22 million tonnes during April 1 to 15 when compared to 1.14 million tonnes of consumption in the same period last year.

Diesel demand dropped 9.5 per cent to 3.14 million tonnes.

While petrol sales were up mostly due to an increase in use of personal vehicles on the back of a price cut, crop harvesting season as well as the onset of summer which will increase the



demand for air conditioning in cars is likely to reverse the trend in diesel demand.

Petrol and diesel prices were last month reduced by ₹2 per litre, ending a nearly two-year-

IPHONE EXPORTS FROM INDIA ALMOST DOUBLE

Apple's iPhone exports from India almost doubled to \$12.1 billion in 2023-24 from \$6.27 billion in the preceding fiscal, trade intelligence platform The Trade Vision said Tuesday. This surge underscores the broader impact of Apple's presence on the industry, driving growth and innovation in the Indian manufacturing ecosystem, the company stated.



India to add 13K km of new highways in FY25: Report

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 16: India is expected to maintain its rapid pace of road construction with the addition of up to 13,000 kilometres in the financial year 2024-25, an increase of 5 to 8 per cent over the previous year, according to a report released by rating agency ICRA Tuesday.

"The pace of execution in this fiscal will be supported by a healthy pipeline of projects at above 45,000 km as of March 2024, increased capital outlay by the government and focus on completion of projects by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways," the rating agency's report states.

During the 10-year tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government over 90,000 kilometres of national highways have been built which is almost twice that constructed in the preceding 10 years, according to the official figures.

Government investment in highway infrastructure shot up to ₹2.4 lakh crore in 2022-23 from ₹51,000 billion crore in 2013-14.

"Road execution was impacted in the first half of 2023-24 on account of the prolonged monsoon in certain geographies. However, the execution situation started improving from September 2023 with road construction witnessing a year-on-year surge of 30 per cent in the second half of 2023-24, enabling an overall growth of around 20 per cent in FY24 (to 12,349 km from 10,331 km in FY23)," ICRA Vice-President and Sector Head Corporate Ratings Vinay Kumar said.

ICRA expects the road construction momentum to sustain in FY2025 as well, Kumar added.

IMF raises India's growth projection to 6.8% in 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 16: The International Monetary Fund Tuesday raised India's growth projection to 6.8 per cent from its January forecast of 6.5 per cent citing bullish domestic demand conditions and a rising working-age population.

With this, India continues to be the fastest growing economy of the world, ahead of China's growth projection of 4.6 per cent during the same period.

"Growth in India is projected to remain strong at 6.8 per cent in 2024 and 6.5 per cent in 2025, with the robustness reflecting continuing strength in domestic demand and a rising working-age population," said the latest edition of the World Economic Outlook released by the IMF ahead of the annual spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank.

At the same time, growth in emerging and developing Asia is expected to fall from an estimated 5.6 per cent in 2023 to 5.2 per cent in 2024 and 4.9 per cent in 2025, a slight upward revision compared with the January 2024 WEO Update.

IMF in its January update had projected 6.5 per cent growth for India in 2024.

"Growth in China is projected to slow from 5.2 per cent in 2023 to 4.6 per cent in 2024 and 4.1 per cent in 2025, as the positive effects of one-off factors — including the post pandemic boost to consumption and fiscal stimulus — ease and weakness in

the property sector persists," the IMF said.

Global growth, estimated at 3.2 per cent in 2023, is projected to continue at the same pace in 2024 and 2025.

The forecast for 2024 is revised up by 0.1 percentage point from the January 2024 WEO Update, and by 0.3 percentage point from the October 2023 WEO, the IMF said.

Policymakers should prioritize steps toward greater economic resilience such as strengthening government finances and revitalising economic growth prospects, said Pierre-Olivier

Gourinchas, chief economist of the IMF.

"We also project less economic scarring from the crises of the past four years, although estimates vary across countries. The US economy has already surged past its pre-pandemic trend. But we now estimate that there will be more scarring for low-income developing countries, many of which are still struggling to turn the page from the pandemic and cost-of-living crises," Gourinchas said.

"China's economy remains affected by the downturn in its property sector. Credit booms and busts never resolve themselves quickly, and this one is no exception. Domestic demand will remain lackluster unless strong measures address the root cause. With depressed domestic demand, external surpluses could well rise. The risk is that this will further exacerbate trade tensions in an already fraught geopolitical environment," he said.



Mutual fund assets soar 35% in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Mutual fund assets surged by ₹14 lakh crore or 35 per cent year-on-year to a record ₹53.40 lakh crore in FY24, propelled by the growing participation of retail investors and buoyant equity markets. This percentage gain was the highest since fiscal 2021 when the industry had grown by 41 per cent, the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) said in its annual report.

The robust gain in the industry's assets under management (AUM) was also replicated in the growth of investors in mutual funds, with the number of folios closing at a record high of 17.78 crore, adding an investor base of around 4.46 crore.

Women comprised about 23 per cent of investors, while men accounted for around 77 per cent.

The adoption of systematic investment plans (SIPs) continued to rise, with monthly net inflows touching about ₹19,300



crore in March 2024. For fiscal 2024, net inflows through SIPs stood at ₹2 lakh crore, showing increasing investor confidence and a disciplined investing approach.

"Fiscal year 2024 has emerged as a landmark period for the domestic mutual funds industry, witnessing a remarkable surge in AUM by nearly ₹14 lakh crore, reaching a record high of ₹53.40 lakh crore as of March 2024, compared to ₹39.42 lakh crore in March 2023," the report said.

Individual investors played a key role in driving the growth trajectory, especially in equity, hybrid, and solution-oriented schemes, which collectively accounted for nearly 58 per cent of the industry assets and 80 per cent of the folio count by March 2024. This shows the increasing participation of households in the capital markets through mutual funds.

Equity-oriented categories witnessed a growth of 55 per cent during fiscal 2024, reach-

ing ₹23.50 lakh crore in assets, driven by robust inflows and mark-to-market gains.

On the other hand, debt funds saw moderate growth of around 7 per cent during the fiscal to ₹12.62 lakh crore in assets. This came after experiencing contractions in the previous two fiscal years.

Within the equity segment, the flexi cap category emerged as the largest fund category, followed closely by large-cap funds, with multi-cap funds experiencing the highest growth rate of 85 per cent.

Hybrid funds crossed the ₹7 lakh crore mark with asset gains exceeding 50 per cent, driven by investors adopting an asset allocation approach and leveraging arbitrage opportunities in the market.

Passive funds continued to benefit from institutional investment flows, particularly into exchange-traded funds (ETFs). ETFs, as a category, have assets of ₹ 6.64 lakh crore as of March 2024.

SUGAR OUTPUT REMAINS SLIGHTLY LOWER: ISMA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The country's sugar production remained slightly lower at 31.09 million tonnes till April 15 of the ongoing 2023-24 season on lower output in Karnataka, according to industry body ISMA data released Tuesday.

Sugar production stood at 31.23 million tonnes in the same period of the 2022-23 season.

India is a major sugar producing country in the world. Sugar season runs from October to September. Currently, there are curbs on sugar exports for an indefinite period.

Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has revised the net sugar production estimate for 2023-24 season to 32 million tonnes.

As per ISMA's latest data, sugar production in Maharashtra, the country's leading producing state of sweetener, remained higher at 10.92 million tonnes till April 15 of the current season, as

against 10.59 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

Similarly, production in Uttar Pradesh, the country's second largest sugar producing state, rose to 10.14 million tonnes from 9.67 million tonnes in the said period.

However, in the country's third largest sugar producing state of Karnataka, the production remained slightly lower at 5.06 million tonnes till April 15 of the ongoing 2023-24 season, as against 5.49 million tonnes in the year-ago period.

Sugar production remained lower both in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu at 9.19, 000 tonnes and 8,60,000 tonnes, respectively, in the said period.

ISMA said the pace of closure of sugar mills in the first fortnight of April this year has been much higher than last year. About 128 mills have closed their operations till April 15 of this season, as against 55 mills in the year-ago period.

Security issues plague Paris Games

FRANCE ASKS FOR COPS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM 46 COUNTRIES TO INCREASE SURVEILLANCE AHEAD OF OPENING CEREMONY



LET THE GAMES BEGIN: Greek actresses and models pose with the Olympic flame which was lit Tuesday in Ancient Olympia

AP PHOTO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, April 16: The talk before the opening ceremony of the Olympics here ideally should be about its grandiose backdrop: A summer sun setting on the Seine river as athletes drift by in boats and wave to cheering crowds.

But behind the romantic veneer that this city has long curated, mounting security concerns already have had an impact

on the unprecedented open-air event. In January, the number of spectators allowed to attend the ceremony was slashed from around 6,00,000 to around 3,20,000.

Tourists were told they won't be allowed to watch the opening ceremony for free from riverbanks because the French government scaled back ambitions amid ongoing security threats. Then, March 24, France raised its security readiness to the highest level after a deadly attack

at a Russian concert hall and the Islamic State's claim of responsibility.

French President Emmanuel Macron has said the ceremony could be shifted instead to the national stadium at Stade de France if the security threat is deemed too high.

Security and transportation are the biggest concerns heading into the Paris Games, which run from July 26 to August 11. Around 30,000 police officers

are expected to be deployed each day, with 45,000 working during the opening ceremony. With its own resources stretched thin, France has asked 46 countries to help provide about 2,200 extra officers, many of whom will be armed. The French Defence Ministry also has asked foreign nations for a small number of military personnel, including sniffer dogs.

Tony Estanguet, the head of the Paris Games' organising

Olympic flame lit

Ancient Olympia (Greece): Even without the help of 'Apollo', the flame which is to burn at the Paris Olympics was kindled Tuesday at the site of the ancient games in southern Greece. Cloudy skies prevented the traditional lighting, when an actress dressed as an ancient Greek priestess uses the sun to ignite a silver torch - after offering up a symbolic prayer to 'Apollo', the ancient Greek sun god. Instead, a backup flame was used that had been lit on the same spot Monday, during the final rehearsal. From the ancient stadium in Olympia, a relay of torchbearers will carry the flame more than 5,000 kilometres (3,100 miles) through Greece until the handover to Paris Games organisers in Athens April 26. International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach said the flame lighting combined "a pilgrimage to our past in ancient Olympia, and an act of faith in our future".

committee, said there will be unprecedented security measures. "France has never deployed so many means for security," he said. "I have faith that the security services in our country will make the Games safe," Estanguet added.

Around nine million of the 10 million available tickets have been sold, organisers said, with 63 per cent of buyers from France. The top 10-selling sports in order are soccer, track and field, basketball, rugby sevens, volleyball, handball, beach volleyball, field hockey, tennis and water polo.

Work on the Olympic Village is almost complete. It will house more than 14,000 athletes and officials, with apartments holding a maximum of eight people.

Maxwell opts for indefinite IPL break

AUSTRALIAN SAYS HE NEEDS TO REFRESH HIMSELF MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY

AGENCIES

Bangalore, April 15: Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has decided to take an indefinite 'mental and physical' break from the IPL. He has blamed his wretched batting form for taking the decision.

Maxwell's absence from RCB's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here Monday was initially attributed to a finger injury he suffered during the previous game against Mumbai Indians. But he later admitted to dropping himself from the squad.

"It was a pretty easy decision. I went to Faf (du Plessis) and the coaches after the last game (vs Mumbai Indians) and said it was probably time we tried someone else (in his place)," Maxwell said in the post-match press meet.

"It's actually a good time to give myself a bit of a mental and physical break, get my body right. If I'm required to get in during the tournament, I can, hopefully, get back into a solid mental and physical space where I can make an impact," added the Australian.

This is the second time in his career that Maxwell has opted out of competitive cricket in order to gather himself. He had taken a similar break in October 2019, stating that he felt mentally and physically ruined at that time. The 35-year-old made his comeback a couple of months later.

In the ongoing IPL, Maxwell



has been quite underwhelming with the bat in the six matches he has played this season, contributing just 32 runs at an average of 5.33 and a strike-rate of 94. Twenty eight of those 32 runs came against Kolkata Knight Riders alone, helped to a great degree by two dropped catches.

"I have been in this situation in the past where you can keep playing and get yourself deeper into a hole. We have had a pretty big deficiency after the power play, which has been my area of strength over the last couple of seasons," Maxwell said.

"I felt like I wasn't contributing with the bat, and with the results and the position we find ourselves on the table, I think it's a good time to give someone else an opportunity to show their wares, and hopefully, someone can make that spot their own," a candid Maxwell informed.

The big-hitting Australian, however, is still hoping to return and make an impact in the later stages of the tournament.

"The management here has been outstanding. I don't think I've had a better six months in cricket leading into this tournament. So, it's frustrating when it ends up like this. But if I can get my body and my mind right, there's no reason I can't finish the tournament well if I do get another opportunity," Maxwell pointed out.

SHORT TAKES

Badosa sets up Sabalenka date

Stuttgart: Paula Badosa battled past Diana Shnaider 6-3, 6-4 to set up a match with friend and World No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka at the Porsche Grand Prix tennis tournament here Monday night. Shnaider fended off four match points before Badosa took her fifth opportunity at the clay-court tournament. Badosa's 10 double faults allowed Shnaider eight breakpoint opportunities. The 20-year-old Russian was unable to take advantage on any of them. Sabalenka has finished runner-up on her last three appearances here, losing the final to former No.1 Ashleigh Barty in 2021 and current No.1 Iga Swiatek in 2022 and 2023.

Slater collapses after being denied bail

New Delhi: Former Australia batter Michael Slater reportedly collapsed in a Queensland court after his bail application was rejected by the magistrate on domestic violence charges. The 54-year-old faces 19 charges, which include stalking, intimidation, assault occasioning bodily harm and choking or strangulation, relating to alleged offences between December 5, 2023, and April 12, 2024. Slater has denied all the allegations of violence against the complainant. His next court hearing is scheduled for May 31. Slater played 74 Tests and 42 ODIs for Australia between 1993 and 2001, scoring 5,312 runs in his eight-year career.

Nagal's appeal works

New Delhi: Top Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal received Tuesday a UK visa appointment after a plea on social media. Nagal took to 'X' Monday pleading to the UK visa authority for an appointment after he failed to get one. Nagal is set to play Wimbledon which is scheduled from July 1-14 at the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in London. However, soon after the tweet, the UK visa authority took swift action and cleared Nagal's request for an appointment. The 26-year-old Nagal achieved a new career-high men's singles ranking of 80 in the latest ATP rankings released Monday on the back of a solid performance in the Monte Carlo Masters. He was the third Indian player after Vijay Amritraj (1977) and Ramesh Krishnan (1982) to make it to the main draw. AGENCIES

GUKESH HOLDS ON TO JOINT TOP SPOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Toronto, April 16: Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh held on to the joint top spot with Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi after they played out an easy draw in the 10th round of the Candidates chess tournament here Monday. The all-Indian duel between R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi also ended in a draw while Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura defeated Firouza Alireza and Nijat Abasov respectively to come back within striking distance of the two leaders.

With just four rounds to come in the biggest event of the year, Gukesh and Nepomniachtchi have an identical six points each with Praggnanandhaa, Caruana and Nakamura close on their heels half-a-point behind.

Gujrathi, on six points, is sole sixth while for all practical purposes, Alireza and Abasov are out of the race with 3.5 and two points respectively.

Nepomniachtchi has not been taking many risks in the event with either colour. Due to his solid play he is the only player who is unbeaten after 10 rounds.

The 'Ruy Lopez' as white gave the Russian just an optical ad-

vantage after the opening and the 17-year-old Gukesh ensured parity with some timely exchanges leading to a rook and pawns endgame.

The contest was almost uneventful other than the opening part and in the endgame, the players exchanged another pair of rooks and a few pawns to reach a theoretically drawn position.

Praggnanandhaa has also been very solid with just a lone loss early in the second round against Gukesh. The 18-year old faced the Berlin defence by Gujrathi who equalised easily as black.

With three minor pieces and the Queen off the board early, the rook and opposite colour Bishop endgame did not quite offer chances to either player. The game was drawn after 39 moves.

In the women's section, Tinjie Lei of China ended the unbeaten run of Aleksandra Goryachkina of Russia and regained joint lead with compatriot Zhongyi Tan who played out a draw with Koneru Humpy. R Vaishali bounced back after a string of losses in a roller-coaster game with Nurgyl Salimov of Bulgaria. Humpy is currently occupying the fifth position with 4.5 points.

Chaubey lauds Kolkata's 'Big 3'

AGENCIES

Kolkata, April 16: The success of Kolkata's 'Big Three' - Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting - will not just have a massive impact on football but will also have a positive effect on the sport in the country. All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey said here Tuesday.

Seven months, four titles, and the 'Mecca of Indian football' was celebrating after Mohun Bagan's maiden League Winners Shield triumph following their 2-1 win over Mumbai City FC at the packed Salt Lake Stadium here Monday.

"Bringing home the ISL Shield, I-League, Super Cup and Durand Cup to West Bengal is a sign of new-age football in the state, and adaptability of these clubs to the newer norms of football," Chaubey said.

"The three giants of Kolkata enjoy enormous fan support in West Bengal, India and globally. I'm sure the success of Mohun



Bagan and East Bengal, along with Mohammedan Sporting joining the two in the ISL next season, will have a massive impact on Indian football," the AIFF chief added.

It all began with Mohun Bagan starting the season with their first Durand Cup title in 23 years, defeating arch rivals East Bengal 1-0 September 3 last year. East Bengal made amends to win the Super Cup, beating Odisha FC 3-2 January 29. It marked the end of their 12-year trophy drought.

Having faced multiple relegations, Mohammedan Sporting came back from oblivion to de-

AGENCIES

Kolkata, April 16: Jos Buttler (107 n o, 60b, 9x4, 6x6) spoiled Sunil Narine's (109, 56b, 13x4, 6x6; 2/30) all-round effort as table-toppers Rajasthan Royals (RR) defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by two wickets in a thrilling IPL encounter at the Eden Gardens here Tuesday. Needing 224 for victory, the visitors reached the target on the last ball of the game and it was Buttler who fittingly hit the winning stroke.

Buttler held the RR innings together with a 'Superman' effort as wickets fell at the other end. In the last three overs of the game, he farmed the strike alone as he plundered runs of Mitchell Starc, Harshit Rana (2/45) and Varun Chakravarth (2/36). It was indeed a special knock as except for Riyan Parag (34, 14b, 4x4, 2x6), none of the others could hold the innings together.

Despite suffering from cramps midway through his innings, Buttler ran hard for his ones and twos and sometimes even a couple of threes. None of the KKR bowlers could keep him quiet as he plundered runs at will.

Earlier Narine stole the show after KKR were put into bat. He opened the innings and was there

WRESTLERS FAIL TO WIN SINGLE MEDAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), April 16: Wrestler Rohit Dahiya lost his bronze medal bout to a top-ranked Uzbek grappler as India finished their Greco-Roman campaign at the Asian Championships without a single podium finish here Tuesday.

On a day when all other Indian Greco-Roman wrestlers continued to struggle, Dahiya (82kg) was the only one to enter the bronze medal round, but he lost to Mukhammadkodir Rasulov, ranked No.1, on points.

The other three wrestlers on show Tuesday, Parvesh (60kg), Vinayak Patil (67kg) and Ankit Gulia (72kg), were eliminated in the preliminary rounds.

However, Dahiya, who had represented the country in the 2022 World U-20 Championships in Sofia, despite losing his quarter-final bout to Japan's Yoshida Taizo on points 7-2, made it to the bronze medal round as the opponent he had lost to entered the final.

Chaubey stated.



Jos Buttler pulls a delivery to the fence during his match-winning innings Tuesday; (Inset): Sunil Narine

till the 18th over to power KKR to a formidable total. Despite losing Phil Salt (10) early on, Narine continued to dominate the RR bowlers. He reached his hundred in just only 49 balls and was involved in two crucial partnerships. Narine first put on 85 runs for the second wicket with Angkrish Raghuvanshi (30) and then added 51 runs for the fourth wicket with

Andre Russell (13) Not only did Narine pierce the field with ease, he also unleashed a relentless attack on R Ashwin (0/49) and Yuzvendra Chahal (1/54).

Finally, it took a Trent Boult (1/31) special to end Narine's innings as the Kiwi left-arm pacer nailed a perfect yorker that also broke the leg stump, causing some delay in the middle. The

other successful bowlers for RR were Avesh Khan (2/35) and Kuldeep Sen (2/46). Later, Rinku Singh's nine-ball unbeaten cameo of 20 with two sixes and one four took the KKR total past 200-mark. **Brief scores:** KKR 223 for 6 (Sunil Narine 109, Avesh Khan 2/35) lost to RR 224 for 8 (Jos Buttler 107 n o, Sunil Narine 2/30) by two wickets.

Palmer hat-trick helps Chelsea sink Everton

AGENCIES

London, April 16: Cole Palmer scored four goals to put Chelsea within touching distance of the Premier League's top six after a 6-0 win over Everton in a game played late evening Monday. The England international has been a shining light in an otherwise disappointing campaign for the Blues and moved level with Manchester City striker Erling Haaland's 20 Premier League goals in the race for the 'Golden Boot'.

Palmer killed the game as a contest as he completed his hat-trick inside 30 minutes before Nicolas Jackson also struck before half time.

Palmer scored with his left foot, head and right foot in the 13th, 19th and 29th minutes to become the first Chelsea player to score in seven successive home games. "It all happened so fast," Palmer told 'Sky Sports' after the game.

"We started well and I scored another hat-trick - buzzing. First one (goal) was my favourite, my right foot was a bit of a swinger," he added.

However, the night was not without drama for Chelsea as Palmer had to fend off teammates Jackson and Noni Madueke to score his fourth from the penalty spot.

"We cannot behave in this way. I told them this is the last time I accept this type of behaviour," said Mauricio Pochettino after his biggest win as Chelsea boss to date.

Despite an eight-game unbeaten PL run, Chelsea remain in ninth but are now just three points adrift of sixth-placed Newcastle with a game in hand to come.

And they will head into Saturday's FA Cup semifinal against City confident they can end the holders' quest for a second consecutive treble.