



Self-assessment

Actor Parineeti Chopra says she is very bad at PR game which cost her a few good projects

LEISURE | P2



Middle East escalation

Explosions echoed over an Iranian city in what sources described as an Israeli attack, but Tehran played down the incident

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Electric air taxis by '26

InterGlobe Enterprises, the parent company of IndiGo, and US-based Archer Aviation will launch all-electric air taxi service in India

BUSINESS | P11



Gukesh among leaders

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh secures comprehensive win over Nijat Abasov and regains share of the lead at Candidates chess meet

SPORTS | P12

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12 PAGES | ₹5.00

SHORT TAKES

White tigress 'Sneha' dies at Nandankanan

Bhubaneswar: A 14-year-old white tigress 'Sneha' died at her enclosure in Nandankanan Zoological Park on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar Friday, officials said. The tigress fell ill Thursday and was under medication. She was administered saline and medicines but died Friday morning. According to officials, apart from her old age ailments, she could have been afflicted with the prevailing intense heatwave. **P3**

Vice Admiral Tripathi to be new Navy Chief

New Delhi: Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, who is a communication and electronic warfare specialist, will take charge as the new Navy Chief April 30 when incumbent Admiral R Hari Kumar retires. An alumnus of the Sainik School Rewa, Vice Admiral Tripathi is currently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff and he will be the senior-most officer in the Navy when Admiral Kumar demits office. The government followed the seniority principle while appointing him to the top post. **P3**

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Nothing complicated. Just read these abuses against your party in front of the media, and you'll be indicted

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	73088.33 ↑ 599.34
NIFTY	22147.00 ↑ 151.15
DOLLAR	83.48 ↓ ₹0.06
EURO	88.92 ↓ ₹0.29
GOLD	₹72,501 ↓ ₹182
SILVER	₹ 83,114 ↓ ₹159

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	41.4°C	42.7°C
Min Temp	27.0°C	27.0°C
Humidity	64%	64%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

HEAT WAVE TO SEVERE HEAT WAVE CONDITION



FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY: Women voters show their ink-marked fingers after casting votes for Lok Sabha elections, at Barwada Village in Jaipur, Friday

PTI PHOTO

63% polling in biggest phase

The 2024 general elections, the world's biggest democratic exercise, began Friday with millions voting to elect 102 MPs across 21 states and Union Territories in the first of the seven phases. In the high stakes political battle the ruling BJP is aiming for a hat-trick, while the Opposition parties have called it a fight for the very survival of democracy in the country. With nearly 63 per cent polling reported till 9 pm, the fate of eight Union ministers, two former chief ministers, one former governor and several key leaders has been sealed in EVMS amid stray incidents of violence.

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 19: A voter turnout of nearly 63 per cent was recorded in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections covering 102 seats across 21 states and Union Territories amid sporadic incidents of violence at some places and an accidental explosion of a grenade launcher shell in Chhattisgarh that left a CRPF jawan dead.

The Election Commission said polling for the first and biggest phase of the seven-phase elections remained largely peaceful. Voters braved the heat in most parts while at some places, they

Zero voter turnout

Kohima: Polling personnel in six eastern districts of Nagaland waited for nine hours in booths, but not one of the four lakh voters of the region turned up following a shutdown call given by an organisation to press for its demand for 'Frontier Nagaland Territory' (FNT). Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio Friday affirmed that the state government does not have any problem with the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation's (ENPO) demand for FNT as it has already recommended autonomous powers for the region. The ENPO is the apex body of seven tribal organisations of the eastern region.

waited patiently in pouring rain as the world's largest poll exercise got underway at 7 am.

The National Democratic alliance (NDA) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a stronger majority for a third consecutive term, while the constituents of Opposition INDIA bloc are hoping for a rebound after facing reverses in the 2014 and 2019 elections.

Tripura recorded the highest turnout of 80.17 per cent, followed by West Bengal at 77.57, Meghalaya 74.21 per cent, Pondichery 73.50 per cent, and Assam 72.10.

FIRING IN MANIPUR

Imphal: Incidents of intimidation and firing were reported from at least two places in Inner Manipur constituency during voting for the Lok Sabha polls, officials said Friday. At Thamnappokpi under Moirang constituency in Bishnupur district, armed men fired several rounds in the air near a polling booth prompting voters to flee, police said, adding additional security personnel were rushed to the spot to contain the situation. Unidentified armed men also intimidated election agents of a particular political party at different places and asked them to leave the polling stations, they said. **P8**

Tamil Nadu, where the BJP is trying to make inroads, was among the seven states and three Union Territories where polling was held for all seats. Assembly elections were also held simultaneously in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. The tentative figure at 9 pm of voter turnout of 62.37 per cent is likely to go upwards when reports from all polling stations are obtained, the EC said, adding voters reaching polling stations till the end of polling hour are allowed to cast their vote.

Among the voters were first-timers, many newlywed couples who came in their traditional at-

Violence in Bengal

Kolkata: Sporadic incidents of violence marred the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Bengal's three parliamentary constituencies, with a 77.57 per cent voter turnout till 9 pm and several injuries reported as TMC and BJP workers clashed mostly in the violence-prone Cooch Behar seat. The TMC and BJP lodged around 100 and 50 complaints respectively, which are related to poll violence, voter intimidation, and assaults on poll agents in the initial hours of polling, as claimed by sources from both parties. Most complaints originated from Cooch Behar.

tires, physically-challenged people and some elderly persons carried on stretchers and wheelchairs.

Besides Tamil Nadu, polling was held for all seats of Uttarakhand (5), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Meghalaya (2), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1), Mizoram (1), Nagaland (1), Pondichery (1), Sikkim (1) and Lakshadweep (1). Voting was also held in 12 seats of Rajasthan, eight in UP, six in MP, five seats each in Assam and Maharashtra, four in Bihar, three in West Bengal, two in Manipur, and one seat each in Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir and Chhattisgarh.

2 killed, 7 missing in Mahanadi boat capsized



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 19: At least two persons were killed and seven others, including four women and three children, were missing as the boat they were travelling in capsized in Mahanadi in Jharsuguda district Friday, police said.

The incident took place when around 50 passengers hailing from Kharsia area in neighbouring Chhattisgarh were returning in the boat after visiting a temple in Patharseni Kuda in Bargarh district.

The boat capsized as it was about to reach Sarada Ghat in Bengali police station in Jharsuguda district, a police officer said.

Local fishermen rescued 35 passengers and brought them

to the riverbank, he said, adding that police and fire services personnel rescued seven more passengers.

Seven other passengers are still missing and a search operation has been launched, the police officer said.

"The missing persons comprised four women and three children. The search and rescue operation will continue till the last person is located," Northern Range IG Himansu Lal said. The IG said four teams have been formed and at least five scuba divers along with two underwater search cameras have been deployed in the search operation.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced an ex-gratia amount of ₹4 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased.

Nearly half of China's major cities are sinking

REUTERS

Singapore, April 19: Nearly half of China's major cities are suffering 'moderate to severe' levels of subsidence, putting millions of people at risk of flooding especially as sea levels rise, according to a study of nationwide satellite data released Friday.

The authors of the paper, published by the journal Science, found 45 per cent of China's urban land was sinking faster than 3 mm per year, with 16 per cent at more than 10 mm per year, driven not only by declining water tables but also the sheer weight of the built environment.

With the country's urban population already in excess of 900 million, "even a small portion of subsiding land in China could



therefore translate into a substantial threat to urban life," said the team of researchers led by Ao Zuru of the South China Normal University.

Subsidence already costs China more than 7.5 billion yuan (\$1.04 billion) in annual losses, and within the next century, nearly a quarter of coastal land could actually be lower than sea

levels, putting hundreds of millions of people at an even greater risk of inundation.

"It really brings home that this is for China a national problem and not a problem in just one or two places," said Robert Nicholls at the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of East Anglia. "And it is a microcosm of what is hap-

pening around the rest of the world."

The northern city of Tianjin, home to more than 15 million people, was identified as one of the worst-hit. Last year, 3,000 residents were evacuated after a 'sudden geological disaster' that investigators blamed on water depletion as well as the construction of geothermal wells.

Many of China's old coal districts have also suffered as a result of over-mining, with authorities often forced to inject concrete into the crumbling shafts to reinforce land.

The problem is not limited to China. A separate study published in February said around 6.3 million square km of land across the globe was at risk. Among the worst-hit countries

is Indonesia, with large parts of the capital Jakarta now below sea level. Nicholls said vulnerable cities could learn lessons from Tokyo, which sank by about 16 feet until it banned groundwater extraction in the 1970s.

"Subsidence mitigation should be looked at very seriously, but you can't stop all of it so you are talking about adaptation and building dykes," he added.

Of the 44 major coastal cities suffering from the problem, 30 were in Asia, according to a 2022 Singapore study. "It is a problem of urbanisation and population growth - larger population density, more water extracted, (and) more subsidence," said Matt Wei, a geophysics expert at the University of Rhode Island.

Infosys founder's 5-month-old grandson to earn ₹4.2cr dividend

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: Ekagrah Rohan Murthy, NR Narayana Murthy's five-month-old grandson who was gifted a whopping 15 lakh shares by the Infosys founder recently, is set to earn ₹4.20 crore, thanks to the IT company declaring a bumper final and special dividend totalling ₹28 per share.

Murthy had gifted 15 lakh shares to Ekagrah valued at a staggering ₹240 crore at that time, making the five-month-old the youngest millionaire shareholder of India's second-largest IT company. Thursday, the Infosys board recommended a final dividend of ₹20 per share and additionally a special dividend of ₹8 per share

for financial year 2024.

"With this, the total payout over FY20-FY24 will be 85 per cent of free cash flow, in line with our capital allocation policy announced earlier," Infosys said in its Q4 earnings release.

The record date for the purpose of the annual general meeting and payment of final dividend and special dividend is May 31, 2024. The dividend will be paid July 1, 2024, Infosys informed.

Back-of-the-envelope calculations show that with the dividend at the rate of ₹28 per share, youngest millionaire Ekagrah is set to earn ₹4.2 crore. Ekagrah - the third grandchild of Narayana Murthy - is the son of Rohan Murthy and his wife Aparna Krishnan.

leisure

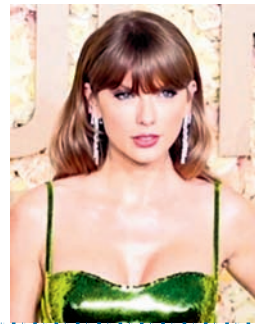


DUNST SEES SIGNS FROM HER LATE GRANDMOTHER

Actress Kirsten Dunst has revealed she sees signs from her late grandmother in the form of hummingbirds. The 41-year-old said one of the birds landed on her car on the day her beloved relative passed away and she has since seen them at key moments in her life.

TAYLOR SWIFT STILL CAN'T FORGIVE KIM KARDASHIAN

Pop superstar Taylor Swift has dropped a huge hint that she still can't forgive reality TV star Kim Kardashian for their headline-grabbing feud - by working her (Kim's) name into the title of a song on her (Taylor's) new album *The Torture Department*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you will focus your lens on the one you've taken a fancy to! You are high on energy, but low on commitment to work. It won't be surprising if your bosses are miffed. But still, says Ganesh, it's a day of flowers and love notes.

TAURUS
There ain't no mountain high enough and there ain't no valley deep! Today, you will find yourself on an invincible run. You might be your own worst enemy today, if you waste your effort and energy for unproductive purposes. Overall, it is smooth sailing today and Ganesh advises you to stay focussed.

GEMINI
Today, your emotions will cloud your ability to reason. You may try to find a refuge in devotional and spiritual activities. A visit to a couple of religious places may help you restore your peace of mind. A laid-back mindset will work wonders for you today.

CANCER
Today is a fabulous day for your love life. Your happiness may make a few people go green with envy, but they can do you or your relationship no harm, so ignore them. However, it may be important for you to make sure that you safeguard your reputation.

LEO
Even an emperor, when struck with an ailment, is not a pretty sight. Bearing this in mind, today you shall make health your number one priority, says Ganesh. You will do wise to chart out some sort of a workout regime for yourself, and inculcate a sense of discipline in maintaining it, even if it is anything as simple as a thrice-a-week routine.

VIRGO
The day will bring unexpected changes and pleasant surprises. You may hit the road with your loved ones, and the journey will not only be exciting but also calm your nerves. Overall, a bright, happy day to make most of, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
It's time to take what is already good, and turn it into something better. Take this day as a day to bring about improvements in your life and yourself. You may also consider taking up some extra courses in the evening. Maybe it's time for a salsa lesson, or learn how to toss a few Italian delicacies. Small crash courses go a long way in enhancing your efficiency, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO
You might just blow your fuse today, warns Ganesh. Anger will melt all sense and sensibilities. But if logic does prevail eventually, things may just improve as the day passes. Ganesh says it is high time you awakened your softer side.

SAGITTARIUS
A demanding day today, as you find yourself in charge of arranging and attending high-voltage meetings. Those dealing in stock and share will have profitable returns in the afternoon. But don't count your chickens before they hatch, says Ganesh. Wait till the evening to count those wads of notes.

CAPRICORN
As the day begins, you may get a strong urge to leave everything and set off on a backpacking trip. So strong the wanderer in you may be now that it may even momentarily take over the famed Goat caution. Yet alas, this being only a fleeting moment, you may soon don your dapper avatar, and head to work.

AQUARIUS
It's family time, and your near and dear will be mighty pleased. You will pamper and fuss over them, and will even pull funny faces to make them smile. Your love and affection will undoubtedly pay off, and come back to you in more ways than one.

PISCES
You have been neglecting your health of late, a fact which is hammered home by your ill-fitting trousers today! So, while you ignored the adage of prevention being better than cure, you could still make a stitch in time to save nine! Head for the gym, and watch those calories, says Ganesh.

I'm very bad at PR game: Pari

Mumbai: Parineeti Chopra, who is currently basking in the good responses to her movie *Amar Singh Chamkila*, recently opened up about her film journey.

Speaking about her recent string of flops, the actress, also known as Pari to her fans, maintained that her PR game was never on point and that she was never the 'right place at the right time' kind of person.

During her interview with an entertainment portal, the *Saina* actress added, "See, I am the same actor, the same face, the same talent, the same everything. Plus, I have a very big problem. That is that my PR game sucks. I'm very bad at PR, I'm very bad at being in the right places at the right lunches and dinners where these work opportunities are created. Projects are created at these

events. And I'm not at those events."

In the same interaction, Parineeti also asserted that she wants to be a spokesperson for such artists who only believe in their talent. "I want to be the spokesperson for that group of actors, talented actors who are sitting at home. But we should all get an equal opportunity. I want that," she shared. AGENCIES



Vidya on key to happy married life

Mumbai: Vidya Balan is always a bit private with her personal life. The actress has been married for over a decade to film producer Siddharth Roy Kapur. During a recent interview, the actress discussed the secrets behind a happy married life and shared why it is important to keep relationships private.

Vidya, who is currently enjoying the appreciation pouring in for her latest release *Do Aur Do Pyaar*, shared that a marriage should be a matter of two people and a third person should not be aware of how the two married people feel about each other.

During an exclusive interview with *India Today*, the *Kahaani* actress had a candid chat about the key to a happy married life.

The actress said, "To realise that marriage is between two people and should remain

between two people at all times, whatever it takes to achieve that, communication, and sharing, is very crucial."

Emphasising the importance of keeping marriage relationships private, Vidya added, "It's so deliciously layered, intricate, intimate, and personal that no third person can know what one feels for the other. There is a beautiful line in the film that says, 'Just show up every day.' That's the relationship."

AGENCIES



RANVEER ADVISES FANS ON DEEFAKE

Mumbai: A day after his deepfake video went viral on the internet, criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi over unemployment and inflation, actor Ranveer Singh has reacted to it, saying, "deepfake se bacho dostonnnn."

An AI-generated video of the Band Baaja Baaraat actor shows him endorsing the Congress for the Lok Sabha polls.

The video is originally from the actor's recent visit to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, along with Kriti Sanon, for Manish Malhotra's fashion show at Namoo Ghat.

In the deepfake video, we can hear Ranveer's altered voice, saying, "Modi ji ka purpose yahi hai, unka uddesh yahi tha ki wo celebrate kare hamara dukhi jeevan, hamari berozgaari, or hamari mehngai ko. Kyunki jo bharatvarsh hai wo anyay kaal ki taraf aise badh rahe hain, utni speed se badh rahe hain, lekin hame hamare vikas or nyay ko maangna kabhi nahi bhoolna chahiye."

A few days back, actor Aamir Khan's fake advertisement by a political party went viral on the internet.

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. IANS



Adil regrets being part of Kabir Singh

Mumbai: Adil Hussain, known for playing versatile characters, has worked across diverse genres. The actor also played a crucial role in Shahid Kapoor's romantic-drama *Kabir Singh*. In a recent interview with the AP Podcast YouTube channel, Adil expressed his views on the film.

While recalling signing *Kabir Singh* without even reading the script, the actor confessed that he regrets doing the movie. Adil was asked if considering the success of *Animal*, this was going to be the new trend. He opined, "I really hope not. I think I saw a part of that film. That's the only film in my life that I did without reading the script,

without watching the Telugu movie it was based on. And I went to see *Kabir Singh* in Delhi and after 20 minutes, I just walked out. The only film that I have regretted doing till date is *Kabir Singh* because I think it is misogynist and makes me feel small as a human being."

In the same breath, he added, "I didn't even dare to watch *Animal* so I can't comment on that. I heard stories from trusted friends but unless I watch it, I can't comment. I feel everybody has a right to make a film the way they want. I would defend his (Sandeep Reddy Vanga) freedom to make a film. But I disagree with him completely."

Adil will next be seen in Janhvi Kapoor starrer action-thriller *Ulajh*. AGENCIES



FUN post

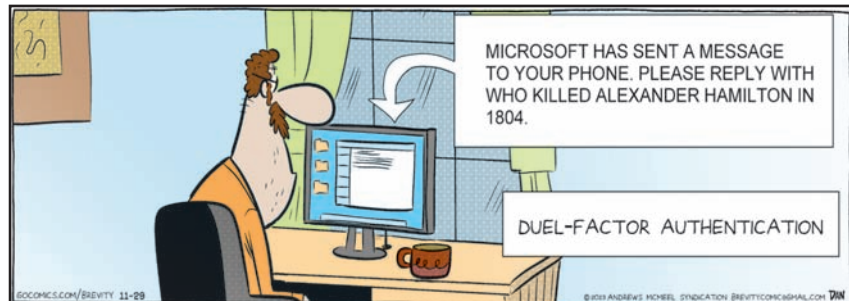
PEANUTS



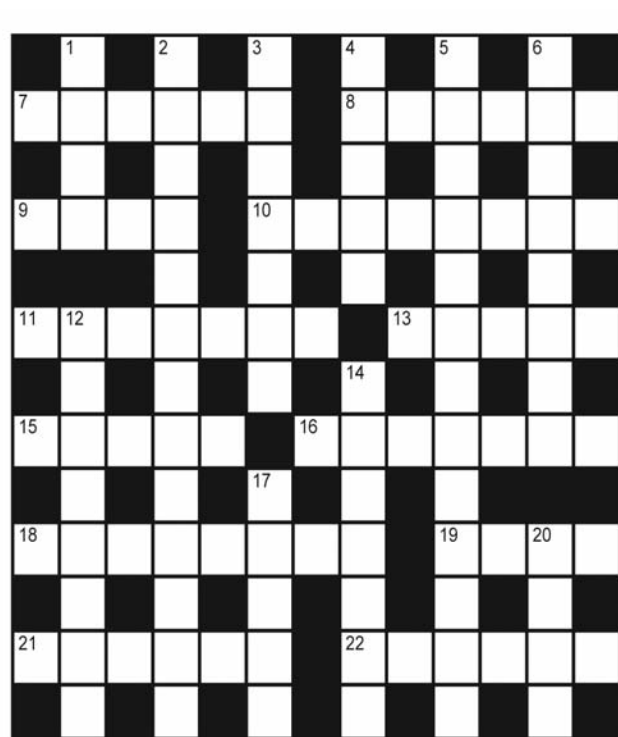
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Red deer
 - 8 On the boat
 - 9 Kind of moss
 - 10 Manacle
 - 11 Cheat
 - 13 Last Supper cup
 - 15 Concentrate
 - 16 Dreamy
 - 18 Speed less than that of sound
 - 19 Distress signal
 - 21 Surrender (4,2)
 - 22 Modernise
- Down**
- 1 Identical
 - 2 Holding an important position
 - 3 No way to be taken
 - 4 Clever
 - 5 Expensive pianos (7,6)
 - 6 Writing on the wall
 - 12 Mystery genre
 - 14 Deep resentment
 - 17 Straight-billed marsh bird
 - 20 Detest

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.

	7			1				
2				8	6			
4			5	2				3
	3			7			1	9
	8	3	4				9	
					9		5	
	1	7						3

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

S	P	E	S	S	A
A	P	P	R	O	X
W	R	E	S	T	L
E	B	B	T	I	D
L	E	P	A	C	
B	O	A	S	T	T
S	E	A	R	H	
I	S	L	E	D	
O	S	O	I	M	A
E	M	B	A	R	A
S	W	E	E	T	

SUDOKU

6	4	1	9	3	7	8	2	5
9	2	5	6	8	4	3	7	1
3	8	7	1	2	5	4	6	9
4	6	9	3	7	2	5	1	8
7	1	8	5	9	6	2	3	4
2	5	3	8	4	1	7	9	6
1	7	6	2	5	8	9	4	3
5	3	2	4	1	9	6	8	7
8	9	4	7	6	3	1	5	2

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Children take part in an art competition at Bhanjakala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Friday



downtown

BJD accuses Sarangi of using children in poll campaigns



PTI & PNN

Bhubaneswar, April 19: The ruling BJD Friday moved the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) seeking action against BJP's Bhubaneswar MP candidate Aparajita Sarangi for alleged misuse of children in poll campaigns.

"It has come to our notice that Sarangi has been using small children in BJP election meetings and rallies for political gains. This is a clear violation of ethical norms and the rights of children, who should not be exploited for mere political interests of any party," the BJD wrote in its memorandum.

The party also alleged in its petition that similar violations are being repeated by the BJP candidate.

She had earlier engaged underage children in election campaigning in the Jantni Assembly segment in Khurda district in adverse weather conditions, the BJD claimed.

This time, the BJP candidate

A delegation of the BJP also met the Chief Electoral Officer and submitted a petition alleging that the ruling BJD has violated the model code of conduct by using the police in its favour

has placed the party scarf on a child's shoulder while campaigning along with the BJP's Bhubaneswar Ekamra MLA candidate Babu Singh, the BJD alleged.

Seeking immediate and strict action against Sarangi, the BJD urged the CEO to ensure that she does not use children or infants in any form in her political rallies or events.

"Such actions should serve as a deterrent to others and uphold the sanctity of our democratic process," it added.

The regional party April 15 had also lodged a complaint against BJP's Kendrapara Lok Sabha candidate Baijayant Panda for allegedly using children during an election campaign at Tikanpur panchayat under Garadpur block the previous day.

Meanwhile, a delegation of the BJP also met the CEO and submitted a petition alleging that the ruling BJD has violated the model code of conduct (MCC) by using the police in its favour.

In a petition, the party mentioned that some locals put a poster before Law Minister Jagannath Saraka over drinking water scarcity during his visit to Bissam Cuttack under the Muniguda area in Rayagada district recently.

"At this time, some people, who were accompanying the minister, attacked the locals. The minister remained a mute spectator. Though five days have passed since the victims filed a complaint, the police have not taken any action yet," the BJP petition alleged.

The saffron party said that police inaction is a clear violation of the model code of conduct.

The party demanded that stringent action be taken against the minister, attackers, and the police at the earliest.

The BJP delegation led by party spokesperson Satyabrata Panda also informed the CEO that some policemen, affiliated to the Havildar Sangha, were seen holding BJD flags and singing the song 'Naveen Babu, Ane Tuma Fan' (Naveen Babu, we are your fan).

"We expect an impartial role of police during the elections," Panda said.



STREET THEATRE: An artiste performs during Sahi Jata in Puri, Friday

PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

Balasore man held in 3 qtl marijuana haul

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 19: The Commissionerate Police Friday arrested a notorious narcotics smuggler and recovered a whopping three quintals of marijuana (ganja) which he was supposed deliver to receivers in neighbouring Jharkhand.

Interestingly, the police said Rahul Sethi, the alleged smuggler, was intercepted with the narcotics consignment in his car when he was on his way to meet his three associates lodged in the Jharpada jail.

A senior officer at the anti-nar-

cotics cell of the City police, which made the detection, said apart from the narcotics consignment having street value of around Rs 3 lakh, the cops have also seized two cars (used for peddling drugs) Rs 14,000 and three mobile phones of Sethi, a native of Balasore.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Sarat Kumar Sahoo said Sethi had been evading arrest since long. During interrogation, the police learnt that he had procured the Marijuana consignment from Chittrakonda area of Malkangiri, and was supposed to deliver it to some peddlers in Jharkhand.

Sahoo said the anti-narcotics cell sleuths were tipped off about Sethi's movement early Friday and accordingly laid a trap near Pahala area. Upon spotting his car, the waiting police team stopped the vehicle and swiftly rounded up Sethi. During a search of the vehicle, the contraband was found concealed in hidden chambers below the seats.

During interrogation, Sethi allegedly told the police that he had planned to meet his associates- Rajesh Das, Ravi Shankar Das and Kishore Prasad Das at Jharpada Jail. They are all natives of Jharkhand and presently

lodged at the jail in some offence. The cops are still trying to find out why would Sethi take the risk of visiting the prison inmates with a massive consignment of narcotics in his car.

Meanwhile, Sahoo said Sethi was in touch with narcotics syndicates in big cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. He would splurge his earnings from the crime on luxury hotels and vacation trips.

The Commissionerate Police booked the accused under Sections 20 (B) (II) (C) and 29 of NDPS Act and produced him before a special court for remand.

Dharitri scribe attacked

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 19: In yet another instance of the deteriorating law and order situation in the Capital City, a journalist with leading Odia daily, Dharitri, was violently attacked by a group of three unidentified men over petty reasons Thursday midnight, leaving him grievously injured.

The incident occurred at around 12.45 am when Saroj Jena, a sports journalist with the daily, was returning home from office.

Jena said the three men crashed their scooter on him from behind near a SBI ATM kiosk on the Kalpana-Badagada road when he was walking towards his home in Badagada Brit Colony. "I protested and asked them to drive carefully. Hearing this, the trio halted the scooter and drove towards me aggressively. They parked the scooter, and while two of them



held me tightly, the other hit me repeatedly on the head with a brick," Jena said in his complaint to the Badagada police.

The attackers then fled the spot, leaving Jena bleeding profusely. Later, a PCR van took an injured Jena to Capital Hospital. Jena had suffered serious head injuries, apart from injuries to other parts of his body.

Sources in Badagada police station said the three attackers, who were said to be locals, have been identified. And efforts are on to nab them.

Meanwhile, convenor of united forum of journalists Lingaraj Sahoo has said that journalists have become vulnerable to attack by miscreants in the absence of the Journalist Protection Act.

"If this is the situation in the Capital City, the plight of journalists in rural areas can be well gauged," Sahoo said while condemning the incident in strong words.

Sneha dies at Nandankanan



PIC: IFS SUSANTA NANDA

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 19: A 14-year-old white tigress Sneha died at her enclosure in Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) on the outskirts of the

Capital City here Friday, officials said.

The white tigress fell ill Thursday and was under medication. She was administered saline and medicines but died in the morning.

According to the official, apart from her old age ailments, she could have been afflicted with the prevailing intense heatwave conditions.

Born to Royal Bengal Tiger Nishan and white tigress Kusum March 1, 2010, Sneha delivered three cubs, Mousumi (female), Chinu (male) and rare melanistic Vicky (male), August 5, 2016, and Luv and Kush during her second pregnancy.

On March 28, 2021, she gave birth to three normal male cubs, Rakesh, Rocky and Banshi.

Earlier in October 2022, the zoo had lost 11-year-old white tigress Bijaya, who succumbed to a cancerous growth in her lungs.

A five-year-old white male tiger named Subhranshu also died due to liver-related ailments in October 2019.

Official sources said the zoo had 27 tigers, including seven white and three melanistic tigers, till July 2023.

Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi to take charge as Navy Chief

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 19: Vice Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, who is a communication and electronic warfare specialist, will take charge as the new Navy Chief April 30 when incumbent Admiral R Hari Kumar retires.

An alumnus of the Sainik School Rewa, Vice Admiral Tripathi is currently serving as Vice Chief of the Naval Staff and he will be the senior-most officer in the Navy when Admiral Kumar demits office.

The government followed the seniority principle while appointing him to the top post in the Navy. Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, currently serving as Chief of Personnel, is tipped to be the next Vice Chief of Navy.

Born May 15, 1964, Vice Admiral Tripathi was commis-

sioned into the executive branch of the Indian Navy July 1, 1985. A communication and electronic warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 30 years.

Prior to taking over as Vice Chief of Navy, he had served as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

Vice Admiral Tripathi has commanded Indian Naval Ships Vinash, Kirch and Trishul. An alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Vice Admiral Tripathi has undergone courses at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Naval Higher Command Course, Karanja and Naval Command College in the US.

He is a recipient of the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) and Nau Sena Medal (NM).



National Archives of India's monthly talk

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 19: A monthly talk programme was held at the eastern region of the National Archives of India here.

On the occasion, renowned researcher and history professor Susmit Prasad Pani gave a summary discussion on 'Cultural Nationalism and Indian Nationalist Thought' and discussed in detail the need for nationalist thought in the current scenario.

Pani discussed religion, caste community, food and clothing. He also discussed how Indian nationalist ideas influenced the country's freedom movement.

The event was chaired by Satya Narayan Mishra, Assistant Director of Archives who highlighted the importance of the programme in archives and its culture and history.

On the occasion, Ramachandra Karan delivered the welcome speech and Jayanthi Sahoo delivered vote of thanks.

How ancient Roman tiles are helping Pompeii to power a villa

Pompeii is shining a light on mysterious rites of ancient Rome thanks to terracotta-style solar roof tiles installed on one of its most famous villas. The traditional-looking tiles have solar photovoltaic cells inside, allowing the UNESCO World Heritage Site to preserve its aesthetics while generating clean energy to illuminate its frescoes.

And though the project is in its early stages, experts say the tiles could one day help historic city centres across Italy turn green.

The tiles look exactly the same as the ancient (Roman) ones, found in archaeological sites and cities across the Mediterranean. Pompeii director Gabriel Zuchtriegel told AFP. "But while Pompeii is a unique site due to its vast size and complexity... I hope this will not be a unique project," said Zuchtriegel, who wants the site near Naples to be a real-life lab for sustainability.

The scheme wed emerging technologies with an extraor-

dinary mural unearthed in 1909 under deep layers of volcanic ash at the Villa of the Mysteries, which was buried along with the rest of the city when Vesuvius erupted nearly 2,000 years ago.

The mural depicts female devotees of Dionysus -- the god of wine and revelry -- engaged in mysterious rites.

They have intrigued scholars for decades, with some historians suggesting they are evidence that the lady of the villa was a priestess whose slaves took part in cult rituals.

Terracotta varnishes

The fresco, which covers three walls and is one of the best preserved in Pompeii, is illuminated by special LED lights designed to bring the deep red, purple and gold images to life, while not damaging the painted surfaces.

The lights are powered by electricity generated by the solar panels, which were installed in October. Ahlux, the Italian com-



pany behind the lights, patented the system in 2022 and produces both curved and flat panels varnished in terracotta tones.

The solar panels on the villa's roof are flat and lie between traditional ceramic curved tiles.

They cover 70 square metres (750 square feet) of roof, produce a maximum of 13 kilowatt-hours and are linked to an ecologically-friendly sodium battery, according to project manager Alberto Bruni.

Pompeii, which gets over 15 hours sunlight a day in peak summer, intends to extend their use to other villas in the archaeological site, he said.

Augusto Grillo, the founder of Ahlux, said the tiles are about five percent less efficient than a traditional solar panel.

"This nominal loss is compensated however by the fact that our panels heat up less in summer," while traditional ones

are covered by glass, and can lose efficiency on very hot days, he said. "The performance ends up being very similar," he said.

Red-tiled cities

Various institutions have expressed interest in the tiles, from Rome's MAXXI modern art museum to the 17th century Pinoteca Ambrosiana museum in Milan, Grillo said.

"The problem is finding the funds," he said, adding that many of Italy's famous historic buildings are public or owned by Catholic institutions.

The cost is a bit more than the price of a new roof and traditional panels put together -- though the solar tiles, which last between 20 to 25 years, serve double duty, because they function as a roof too, Grillo said.

Project manager Bruni said the cost of the panels "is coming down", meaning they may be able to play a part in the wider ecological transition.

Italy is under pressure to make

red-roofed cities such as Florence or Bologna greener as part of efforts to combat climate change.

The European Union aims to reduce carbon emissions by 55 percent compared with 1990 levels by 2030, and will have to upgrade existing buildings to do so.

That is a mammoth challenge for Italy, where some 60 percent of buildings are in the worst two energy categories, compared to 17 percent in France and six percent in Germany, according to Italian Constructors' Association ANCE.

"There needs to be some national and perhaps European co-investment to make sure that the very, very ambitious timelines have a chance of being respected," Angelica Donati, president of the youth constructors' association ANCE Giovani, told AFP.

"We have the most beautiful cities in the world, which means we need much more thoughtful interventions, and quickly. There's a lot to be done".



Boudh hottest at 44.3°C

STATE SWELTERS AS MERCURY TOUCHES 40°C AT 32 PLACES

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 19: Boudh in western Odisha recorded the highest temperature in the state at 44.3 degrees Celsius, followed by 44.2 degrees Celsius in Baripada.

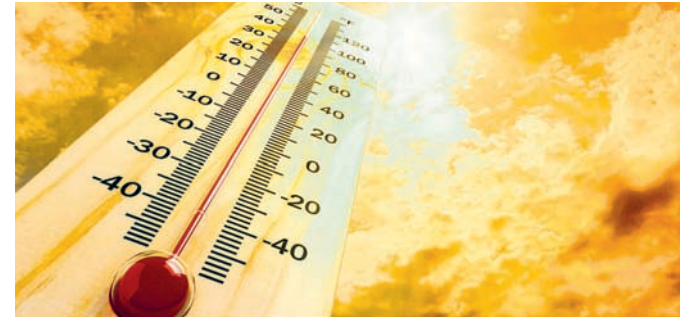
The weather office had issued an Orange Warning for 18 districts and Yellow Warning for five other districts.

Ten other stations registered maximum temperature at or above 43 degrees Celsius, including Jharsuguda (43.8), Angul (43.7), Titlagarh (43.5), Bolangir, Bhawanipatna, Malkangiri and Nayagarh (43).

As many as 32 places recorded maximum temperature at or above 40 degrees Celsius.

Bhubaneswar recorded the maximum temperature of 41.4 degrees Celsius, while it was 42.6 degrees Celsius in neighbouring Cuttack city.

The IMD has forecast that



heatwave conditions will prevail in Odisha till April 21. "The maximum temperature is very likely to be 40 degrees Celsius or above at most places and above normal by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius in some districts over the next two days," the IMD said in a bulletin.

The IMD also said the state may expect some relief from the heatwave conditions due to thunderstorms from Saturday.

The IMD predicted that the prevailing heatwave conditions

would continue in the state for at least the next four days.

"We expect the peak phase of the heatwave within the next two days, with temperatures reaching 45 degrees Celsius at some places like Angul, Kalahandi, Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Boudh and Nayagarh," weather scientist Umashankar Das said.

Meanwhile, SRC advised to take precautionary measures while going outside during day time between 11am and 3pm.

Avoid alcohol, junk food for healthy liver: Panigrahi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 19: Stressing the fact that 90 per cent of liver diseases are preventable, doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, Friday, said that one needs to avoid alcohol, processed and junk foods, and undergo screening at regular intervals to keep the liver healthy.

This was revealed during a patient awareness and interaction programme organised at Gastroenterology department of AIIMS on the occasion of World Liver Day, Friday. The programme was aimed at spreading awareness among people about liver diseases and the significance of adopting healthy

WORLD LIVER DAY AT CITY AIIMS



lifestyle.

The event witnessed participation of over 200 patients and their relatives at the OPD of the

Gastroenterology department. Gastroenterology department's additional professor Manas Kumar Panigrahi highlighted

that around 4,000 to 5,000 patients are visiting the department every month. Out of them, approximately 1,500 seek consultation for liver-related issues. Since more than 90 per cent of liver diseases are preventable, Panigrahi stressed the importance of avoiding alcohol, processed & junk foods, undergoing screening, receiving hepatitis B vaccination, and doing regular exercise.

Speaking on the occasion, AIIMS Executive Director Ashutosh Biswas emphasised the crucial role of lifestyle choices in preventing liver diseases. Biswas cautioned against the indiscriminate use of over-the-counter medications or complementary and alternative medi-

cinics for liver ailments, urging patients to seek proper medical advice from physicians.

Head of the department Subash Chandra Samal along with faculty members, senior residents and staffers actively participated in the event, underscoring the department's commitment to promoting liver health and disease prevention.

Significantly, this year's World Liver Day theme - 'Keep your liver healthy and disease-free' - resonates with the department's ongoing efforts to raise awareness and provide specialised care to patients. As part of its continuous commitment, the department conducts a dedicated Liver OPD every Wednesday for old referred patients.

Climate activists urge parties to support rehab programmes



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 19: 'Youth4Water India' has urged political parties in the state contesting the general elections to commit to special rehabilitation and support programmes for the youths who are most vulnerable to climate change impacts.

'Youth4Water India', a campaign initiated by Water Initiatives, WaterAid India, and 68 other organisations, has released a 23-point manifesto for political parties contesting the elections.

"The manifesto was prepared based on interviews and focus-group discussions involving 100 youths from Odisha coasts, especially from villages that are facing the wrath of an invading sea. It was then supported by inputs from experts. Our experience of working with such villages for more than three decades also helped strengthen the manifesto," WI convener Ranjan Panda said.

"Odisha is one of the highly vulnerable geographies in the world when it comes to climate change impacts and sea-level rise that could displace thousands of people from more than 300 villages. While many vil-

lages are already submerged under the sea, many more are on the verge of being taken over. Putting up a strategy to deal with such a situation has become essential. With this manifesto, we urge upon each political party to support a 'Strategy for Inclusive Rehabilitation of Climate Displaced Communities,' that we have already suggested to the state government for implementation," added Panda, popularly known as waterman of Odisha.

"Besides covering a host of suggested initiatives that can help vulnerable youths, this manifesto also covers 'water, sanitation and hygiene' for those who choose to stay back and for the ones who choose to move," WaterAid technical specialist Bikash Pati, who was also involved in guiding the survey, said. Dhanevar Mallow of Astarang area who is actively involved in the survey demanded safe drinking water, safety of women, who are migrating to different places, involvement of youths in eco-restoration initiatives and provisioning local employment opportunities for youths who want to stay back in their native areas.

CUO VC's thrust on preserving biodiversity

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 19: A two-day International Conference on 'Recent Advances of Biodiversity and Agriculture for a Sustainable Future' organised by the Department of Biodiversity & Conservation of Natural Resources of the Central University of Odisha (CUO) began at the main campus of the university, Friday.

CUO Vice-Chancellor and chief patron of the conference Chakradhar Tripathi inaugurated the event. Others present on the dais were Sarat Kumar Pradhan, additional director general, Crop Science, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi as the chief guest, Saroj Kant Barik, former director of National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, and Professor of Botany, NEHU, Shillong, SP Adhikary, former VC of FM University and reputable plant scientist and Amarendra Narain Mishra, former VC of Khallikote University, Berhampur and others.

Speaking on the occasion, the CUO VC said that India and biodiversity are interrelated to each other since Vedic period. "In ancient times, we used to conserve our biodiversity system very systematically. The world health system is deteriorating and the cause is we are not following our traditional practices. Our society always is a mixture of culture and ecology. Our perception towards ecosystem was superb. Now it's time to revive our tradition. We have to revive the traditional pattern of conserving ecosystem and biodiversity and should follow the old principle of 'Live and let Live'," he said.

ZIQITZA ODISHA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME 2024

ZHL honours ambulance staff, their children

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 19: Ziqitza Healthcare Limited (ZHL) who manages 108 ambulance services in the state organised Ziqitza Odisha Scholarship Programme 2024 and honoured 15 exceptional children of its staff members who achieved top scores in Class X and XII examinations at Jaydev Bhawan here Friday. ZHL also celebrated the outstanding dedication of 46 ambulance employees and their support teams for exemplary service.

ZHL Marketing and Communications head Sophia Madhavan inaugurated the event.



The occasion was graced by ZHL state head Sabyasachi Biswal and other dignitaries.

Addressing the gathering, Biswal remarked, "Ziqitza Healthcare Limited and its employees are steadfast in their commitment to serving the cit-

izens of Odisha with utmost care. Be it navigating in non-motorable roads to transport patients, donating blood during critical times or displaying unwavering dedication during natural disasters, our crew members have consistently

demonstrated unparalleled resolve in serving people. Their noble acts are a testament to their selflessness."

Poojarini Kamila, a student who scored 93 per cent in matriculation, received the top honour among the awardees. Her father, Chandan Kamila, is a 108 ambulance driver from Balasore. Truptimay Mahanta, daughter of Alok Kumar Mahanta from Mayurbhanj, secured second place with 90.17 per cent. Dibyanjan Khuntia came in third with 88.33 per cent. His father Sanjay Kumar Khuntia, an Emergency Medical Technician works under 108 ambulance services in Keonjhar.

IF AI STEALS OUR JOBS, WHO'LL BE LEFT TO BUY STUFF?

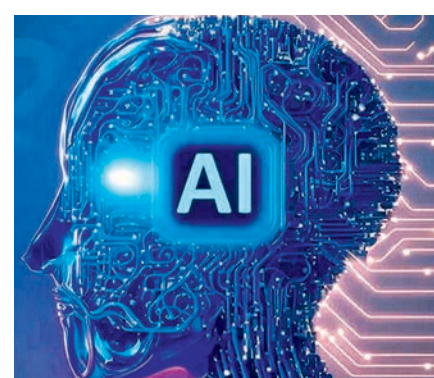
Tech titans Google, Microsoft, IBM, Cisco and SAP employment websites along with professional services major Accenture, among others, formed a consortium to explore the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on IT job roles.

The joint effort will enable workers to find and access relevant training programmes and, according to the companies, is expected to help more than 95 million people around the world over the next 10 years.

The jobs that AI can do are multiplying by the day. While this may be frightening for some workers, economics, which is often called the 'dismal science', does offer a rosy outlook. While advancements in AI potentially herald a future with no limits on production and income, the implications for workers, may not be as scary as initially feared.

In an economy-wide view (economists call this 'general equilibrium'), all resources of capital and labour combine to produce all goods and services. Technology then boosts productivity, removing the limits set by resource constraints. However, a study of consumer demand (so-called microeconomics) says that consumption depends on an individual's income, and only 'labour' consumes.

The crux is this: Increased productivity is ultimately pointless if there is no market for the goods and services being produced. Author Ruchir Sharma has argued that no country can grow faster than the rate of growth of its population. Since India has a large population where consumers are expected to grow for the next decade or so, the focus of global managers seems justified.



Yet, the data is confusing. Even in a metropolis like Delhi, the minimum salary, on average, is about ₹17,500 per month. It is lower in smaller cities and towns. While the population is large, economic theory cannot answer the quandary of where is India's purchasing power to drive global growth. Since 2008, the world economy has been on a

limited growth path despite massive "pump priming" to stimulate spending by the US, China and other governments in a typical Keynesian response.

Yet, after the COVID-19 pandemic, global growth, according to the International Monetary Fund, slowed from an estimated 6.1 per cent in 2021 to 3.4 per cent in 2022 and 2.8 per cent in 2023.

Economics has good news for workers fearing joblessness due to the rise of AI - only labour consumes, and the value of consuming population is growing.

So here is the conundrum. In developed countries, technological change, particularly AI, seems to indicate no limits on production. On the other hand, the future seems to lie with countries with large populations but limited purchasing power. Consumption requires not only income, as economist JM Keynes rightly noted, but also another critical element: time. Yet, more than time-saving technology is needed to solve the problem.

There are two potential solutions. One is to shift consumers to where the income is generated or advanced technology is available by allowing for immigration (a political no-no). The second is to shift the production base to where consumers are in abundance via foreign direct investment which combines production, technology and global sourcing of re-

sources. This is why emerging market economies matter.

Returning to the original question of what workers will do when technological miracles do all the work - Amazon suffered embarrassment in running "just walk out" stores with no employees when it emerged earlier this month that a thousand or so workers sitting in India were remotely doing much of the work ascribed to AI. Amazon may however eventually succeed in running such stores without so many humans being involved.

But what if there is no one to enter such stores and buy from them? The limits to growth in the visible future seem to lie not in capital and technology but in people. So, with big apologies to Marx - people of the world procreate, you have nothing to lose except global stagnation. PM

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Lower Suktel: Distress of the displaced

Ironically, those who sacrificed and submerged everything they owned to quench the thirst of the district, are now facing the ruthless summer, parched in hot tin huts, waiting for water

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, April 19: Once the Lower Suktel Dam comes up, thousands of acres of farmland in this perennially drought-prone district will be irrigated. Drinking water woes of many towns and villages in the district will be a thing of the past. Economic development will blossom with accelerated growth, and Bolangir will be transformed from a backward to a developed district.

Harping on such development, the government promised to make all kinds of arrangements for the displaced people of 29



villages under the project-affected Loisingha and Bolangir blocks.

Pinning their faith on the government, thousands left their homes and ancestral lands. However, since the day they left their villages, life has become miserable for them.

As irony would have it, those who gave up everything they had to alleviate the water woes in the district, are now unable to get even a handful of water in the scorching summer season. The oustees are now living a life of struggle in Lower Suktel

Temporary Rehabilitation Colony at Kusmel under Loisingha block.

The oustees recall the humble yet easy life they were living in their villages. Residents of Banchhorpali, Gadashankar, Durguripali, Podhamunda, Koindapali and Bijapati under Loisingha block had never known such scarcity of water with Suktel river flowing nearby. They had their own wells and ponds in their backyard and tube wells in their houses.

But today, they are living a miserable life after being displaced. Their new address is

Lower Suktel Temporary Rehabilitation Colony in Kusmel about 15km from the district headquarters of Bolangir.

For the past nine months, 32 homeless families have been living there in temporary houses with tin roofs. In the absence of any source of drinking water, they have to walk every morning and evening about one-and-a-half kilometres to Phatabahal village to collect water. In the scorching summer now, they have to visit Phatabahal at least six times every day.

Women of the houses and some schoolchildren walk the long distance every day to collect water. The tube well in the rehabilitation colony has run dry adding to their woes. Despite repeated demands to supply water through tankers, the administration has remained silent.

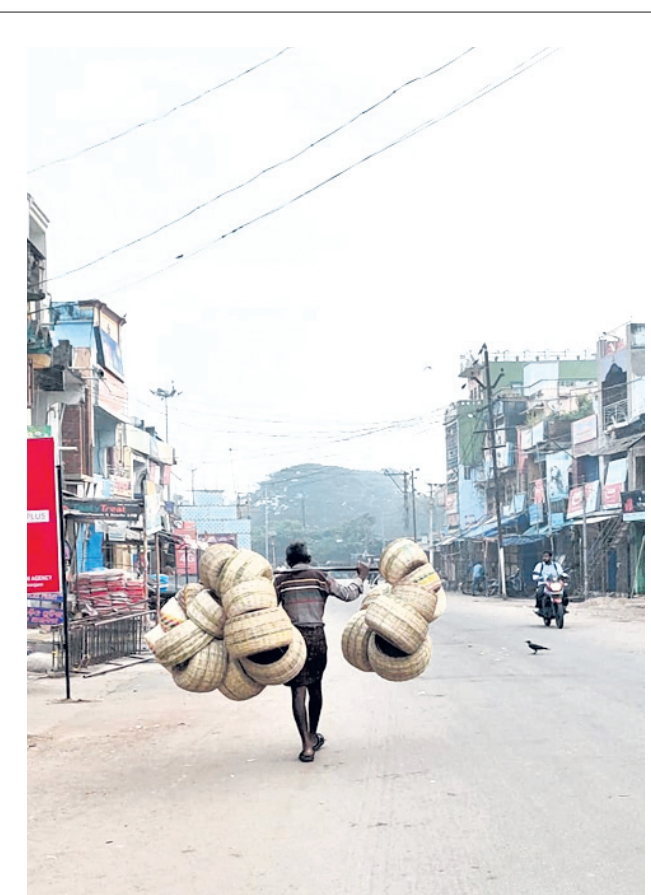
The displaced have alleged that they have been cheated. Neither the administration nor the politicians lend an ear to listen to their grief.

With the mercury rocketing, the temporary tin houses are

turning unbearably hot with temperatures beyond 44-45 degrees Celsius making life difficult. People are living under the trees all day instead of staying in the temporary houses.

The administration provided assistance of up to ₹5 lakh to the displaced families before they were rendered homeless. They were promised homestead land, pucca houses, and guaranteed employment. However it appears, all such hopes of the helpless oustees have fallen victim to the administration's dementia. The children of the displaced have not seen blackboards for the last nine months. There is no school near the colony.

A few days ago, District Collector Gaurav Shivaji Isalwar visited the Lower Suktel Temporary Rehabilitation Colony and promised to solve the basic problems. However, drinking water is yet to reach them. As per sources, rehabilitation colonies in Jhankarpali, Kusmel, Gedabanji and other locations are suffering also from grave drinking water problems.



FOR A LIVING: A street hawker selling bamboo ware walks along a deserted road as shops remain closed amid a blistering heatwave at Buguda in Ganjam district, Friday
OP PHOTO

Sr clerk in Vig net



POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, April 19: Sleuths of the Vigilance department arrested Friday here Rabintra Nath Pady, the senior clerk in the office of the block education officer (BEO) at Harbhanga in this district. He was caught red-handed while accepting ₹20,000, the first installment of a total bribe amount of ₹40,000 from a school teacher. Officials said that the entire amount was recovered from Pady.

Officials said that the teacher Anusuya Nayak was being harassed by Pady for the last six months. She had been requesting him to process a file. However, Pady was adamant that unless he was paid ₹40,000, he would not process it. Finding no other option available, Anusuya lodged a complaint with the Vigilance department.

Accordingly a trap was laid and Anusuya arrived at Pady's office with ₹20,000. The moment she paid the amount to Pady, the Vigilance sleuths swooped in and arrested Pady and recovered the entire amount from him.

Following the arrest, Vigilance officials have raided two places belonging to Pady to find out whether he has accumulated wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income. A case (No. 8/2024) has been registered against Pady under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act 2018, officials said.

Man held for killing sexagenarian

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paikamal, April 19: Police arrested Friday Mahadeb Bariha for allegedly killing a 65-year-old man by bludgeoning his head with a stone following an altercation Wednesday. The incident took place at Bhubaneswar village under this block in Bargarh district. The body of the deceased, identified as Purnachandra Sahu, was recovered from a sparsely forested area, police said. Both the deceased and the alleged murderer belonged to the same village.

Officials said that Purnachandra and Mahadeb were involved in a heated argument Wednesday at



Bhubaneswar market. While they were returning home, Mahadeb allegedly picked up a large stone lying on the road and used it to smash Purnachandra's head. The latter died on the spot. Then Mahadeb returned home.

In the meanwhile,

Purnachandra's family members launched a frantic search for him as he did not return home. The same day his son Hirachand lodged a missing complaint at the Paikamal police station.

The next day Hirachand continued to search for his father and he found the latter's body in a

pool of blood under a tree just 150 metres away from Bhubaneswar-Cherimunda road. Police then visited the spot along with a forensic team and a sniffer dog. They also sent the body for post-mortem.

During investigation, police got the information that Purnachandra and Mahadeb were involved in an argument. They detained Mahadeb for questioning. During interrogation, Mahadeb confessed to his crime and the cops arrested him. Later a case (No-105/24) was registered at the Paikamal police station in this regard and the accused was forwarded to court Friday, informed IIC, Sushant Kumar Badhei.

State govt suspends Excise superintendent

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 19: The state government suspended Kendrapara district Excise Superintendent, Debi Prasad Mishra, Friday for dereliction of duty.

Acting on the inquiry report of the Joint Commissioner of the Excise department, the state government placed Kendrapara Excise Superintendent under suspension for negligence in his duty.

Additionally, the District Collector of Kendrapara had also submitted an inquiry report to the state government

against the Excise superintendent, Excise Commissioner Narasingh Bhol said

Joint Commissioner of the Excise department, Ramchandra Mishra, conducted an inquiry into the allegations made against the district Excise superintendent and other staff in a bribery case.

Complainant Ashish Mishra said his father, who had obtained licenses for two IMFL shops, wanted to transfer them into his name and accordingly submitted all the relevant documents. Excise Superintendent Mishra allegedly had demanded a bribe to transfer the license into his name.

Couple sentenced to life for murdering minor kid



PNN & AGENCIES

Balasore, April 19: Special Judge, OPID and Additional Sessions Judge, Biswajit Das convicted Friday a couple for murdering their differently-abled minor child and sentenced them to life imprisonment. The judge also imposed a fine of ₹5,000 on each of the convicts. Failure to pay the penalty will result in an additional jail term of six months for each of the convicts.

The convicts, identified as Ganesh Jena and his second wife, Pratima Jena, are residents of Chandmaripadia village under Sahadevkhunta police station limits in this district. They had strangled their minor son to death August 5, 2022. The couple then dumped the body under the Nuajodi bridge.

When the victim's grandmother did not find the kid for a substantial period of time, she guessed something amiss. She lodged a complaint about her missing grandson at the Sahadevkhunta police station.

Police initiated an investigation into the incident. During interrogation, Ganesh and Pratima confessed to their crime. Police arrested the two and also recovered the body of the victim where it had been dumped.

Ganesh and Pratima were tried under different sections of the IPC, including 302, 120B, 201, and 34. The court, after examining 15 witnesses and 16 exhibits, pronounced the verdict. Public Prosecutor Pranab Kumar Panda informed.

Kerang Fabric project aims to revive age-old tribal heritage

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 19: INTACH's Odisha chapter has unveiled the Kerang Fabric project with an aim to revive the age-old heritage and ancient tradition of the Gadabas of Koraput.

At an event held in Bhubaneswar to mark World Heritage Day, Thursday, Gadaba tribal women, dressed in Kerang sarees, showcased the revival of this ancient tradition.

The use of handwoven clothes made from Kerang fiber by the Gadaba and Bonda tribes has a long history and holds a significant place in their culture and mythology. Women from these tribes wear clothes crafted from the bark of the Kerang plant, which grows in the wild.

Tribal men and women collect the bark, soak it in water from nearby hill streams, sun-dry it, and extract the fiber. They then use various vegetable dyes before weaving them into patterns that have been followed for centuries.

Gadaba women typically wear full-length cloth or sarees adorned with colourful stripes, covering their entire bodies, while Bonda women wear a small piece of cloth called 'Ringa', which wraps around the lower part



REPRESENTATIONAL PIC

of the body in a specific customary manner.

These vibrant fabrics can last for generations, with a usable life span of a century. Weaving the Kerang fabric is a rite of passage for every Gadaba girl; she wears it during her marriage and is also draped in it when she passes away.

However, this ancient tradition was dwindling. In INTACH's 2020 study, it was discovered that hardly any villages had existing looms, and none of the Gadabas were engaged

in making the Kerang fabric.

INTACH initiated a passion project to revive this dying tradition, selecting four villages in Lamtaput block and providing looms and assistance to the villagers.

The project was spearheaded by INTACH's Odisha State Convener, AB Tripathy, a retired IPS officer, who proposed it to INTACH's headquarters in Delhi.

After approval, Sanjib Chandra Hota, a retired IAS officer, led the project along with other INTACH members PC Mahapatra, Convener of the Koraput Chapter, Anil Dhir, and Rajendra Padhee.

The team interacted with Gadaba tribesmen in different villages through workshops and open discussions. The report was released by Justice Sashikanta Mishra, a judge of the High Court of Orissa, in the presence of Vandana Manchanda, Head of INTACH's Heritage Crafts and Community Division.

Hota, the Project Leader, stated that the Koraput district administration and the Odisha government have agreed to provide proper and adequate support to ensure that this ancient tradition of the Gadabas does not vanish.



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FOCUS ECONOMY

WORLD BANK'S CHALLENGES



Ever since the Bank launched its recent reform process in late 2022, divisions between the Global North and Global South have threatened to weaken an organization accustomed to decision-making by consensus

fied platform for GPGs jointly governed by all shareholders, as opposed to earmarking their contributions for specific projects, which has historically contributed to fragmentation and ineffectiveness. Allocations will then be made according to a transparent framework for defining and measuring cross-border externalities. With this approach, the Bank can help tackle urgent global challenges while retaining its credibility and effectiveness.

Lastly, delivering more GPGs must be integrated with the broader goals of sustainable development and poverty eradication, so that they reinforce each other. After lengthy negotiations, the board members have decided that uncommitted funds and reflows from donor contributions earmarked for the GPG platform will revert to the Bank's general lending pool after the agreed commitment period.

This design provides clients additional financing for domestic development needs and ensures clear accountability for GPG investments during the initial stage. Moreover, such an instrument will not undermine calls for a general capital increase, which is still urgently needed and remains the most financially efficient, inclusive, and sustainable way to recapitalize the World Bank.

In the long run, there is no conflict between financing GPGs and eradicating poverty – on the contrary, if we fail on one, we will fail on the other. As World Bank President Ajay Banga put it, "We cannot endure another period of emission-heavy growth." That is why the Bank, having taken an important step toward making its financial model fit for "eradicating poverty on a livable planet," must continue along the path of reform.

Michael Krake is World Bank Group Executive Director for Germany. Wempi Saputra is Executive Director of the World Bank Group of Southeast Asia.

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We are two of the 25 members of the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors, which collectively represents 189 member countries with divergent interests. So, in addition to holding management accountable, we perform the difficult balancing act of building global consensus on a day-to-day basis. When members see eye to eye, the World Bank is a global public good (GPG) – one of the few places where all countries can strive to find common ground.

But ever since the Bank launched its recent reform process in late 2022, divisions between the Global North and Global South have threatened to weaken an organization accustomed to decision-making by consensus. The main point of contention is how, given scarce development finance, the World Bank can help countries eradicate poverty, boost shared prosperity, and protect their people and natural assets from transboundary crises such as climate change and pandemics. After all, there cannot be one (poverty eradication and shared prosperity) without the other (protection of the global commons) – it must be all or nothing.

Nevertheless, we made important progress: a new vision and mission, a redesigned corporate scorecard, \$50 billion in new lending capacity, innovative new funding instruments for raising additional donor contributions, an expanded crisis, and a new approach to creating and disseminating knowledge.

But a central question remained unanswered: Should the Bank use its core product – financing – to nudge countries toward investments and reforms that supply GPGs? On one hand, underinvestment in GPGs, which tend to be complex and costly to deliver, is widespread. For example, countries are generally not compensated for the carbon stored in their forests, and thus lack the will or ability to conserve them. And yet, encouraging such investment is divisive because it necessarily disincentivizes

other types of spending.

Last week, we answered that question by approving a groundbreaking Framework for Financial Incentives. Recognizing the potential methodological pitfalls, members approached the question with care, especially because this would be the first time that the use of contributions to the Bank's balance sheet would be ring-fenced in this way.

The Framework will allow donors making new voluntary financial contributions to the World Bank to earmark them for projects that generate positive cross-border externalities. Crucially, funds will be ring-fenced for GPGs only for a defined period, after which the funds will be added to the World Bank's general lending pool.

Coalescing around four principles helped us reach consensus on this new instrument. First, financial incentives are crucial to increasing investment in GPGs. While the poorest countries have access to grants and interest-free loans through the World Bank's International Development Association, middle-income countries borrow on non-concessional terms.

In recent years, member countries have used more than a third of their financing from the World

Bank to invest in projects that deliver GPGs. But initiatives that benefit the global community are often passed over in favor of those that meet domestic needs. This must change. If the aim is to promote investments and reforms that have positive cross-border effects, then the global community should bear at least some of the cost.

Second, the Bank's funding model must be updated to encourage voluntary contributions. Whereas fresh contributions to multilateral development banks (MDBs) such as the World Bank have declined over the past decade, funding for specialized "vertical funds" has surged by 95%. The Bank needs innovative funding instruments that offer donors a clearer line of sight between their contributions and the end results, which is one reason why vertical funds have been so successful at raising money.

At the same time, the Bank must retain its multilateral character and protect client countries' "ownership" of their investments. The trade-off between providing accountability to donors and allowing client countries to set their own strategies provoked the longest debate among the Board.

A consensus emerged that donors will contribute to a uni-



Michael Krake and Wempi Saputra

COUNTRIES ARE GENERALLY NOT COMPENSATED FOR THE CARBON STORED IN THEIR FORESTS, AND THUS LACK THE WILL OR ABILITY TO CONSERVE THEM

Encourage only what leads quickly to the Lord and serves His divine purpose

THE MOTHER



Damning Indictment

In a significant development in a more than decade-old Case, the Supreme Court has handed a major victory to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) by overturning its earlier directive. Previously, the apex court had ordered DMRC to pay an arbitration award of ₹8,000 crore to Anil Ambani's firm, Delhi Airport Metro Express Ltd (DAMEPL).

The court's reversal is a damning indictment of the arbitral process, citing a "huge miscarriage of justice". Consequently, the execution proceedings in the Delhi High Court were halted, and DMRC was absolved of the obligation to make the exorbitant payment. Moreover, the court directed the refund of amounts already deposited by DMRC, aiming to restore both parties to their pre-verdict positions.

The legal dispute originated from a "concession agreement" dating back to 2008, governing the construction, operation and maintenance of the Delhi Airport Metro Express Line. Tensions escalated when DAMEPL terminated the contract in 2012, claiming "unresolved structural defects by DMRC". In the ensuing legal battle, DAMEPL won in 2017, leaving DMRC with an exorbitant liability of ₹8,000 crore-plus to be paid to the Anil Ambani firm. Now, that case is closed.

But the ruling does underscore one important aspect for us to ponder: the unpredictability and complexity inherent in arbitration disputes involving government entities and private firms. A case that dragged on for 12 years also shows how slow and meandering the judicial processes in India. Even more significantly, it prompts serious reflection on the accountability and transparency of government babus in presenting their case effectively and fairly, especially in matters of public interest and significant financial implications.

Forest officers call for probe into colleague's death

Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officers are deeply troubled by the recent suicide of a colleague in Meghalaya. The Chief Conservator of Forests, N. Luikham, tragically took his own life by hanging in his official residence recently. This unfortunate event has sparked a demand from the central unit of the IFoS Association for a thorough probe into the circumstances leading to Luikham's death, and for accountability for those who may have contributed to his decision.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

Sources informed DKB that the association Secretary General Suneesh Buxy has written to Meghalaya Chief Secretary Donland Phillips Wahlang, claiming that Luikham had been falsely accused by a junior colleague last month of sexually harassing her and was under stress and mental trauma because of these allegations. Buxy, reportedly, attributed these allegations to pressure from a powerful mining lobby against whom Luikham had taken a stand. Despite an inquiry yielding no substantive evidence against the officer, the damage to his reputation had been done.

The ramifications of the officer's death are felt deeply by the entire IFoS community, resonating as a blow to the morale of officers nationwide. The association has called for a CBI investigation into Luikham's suicide. The officer's erstwhile colleagues insist on swift and decisive action to hold accountable any individuals found to have played a role in perpetuating the circumstances that led to the tragedy.

EC puts pressure on Gujarat govt to fill key IPS positions

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has put the spotlight on the Gujarat government. With the nomination for 26 Lok Sabha seats and five Assembly seats underway, the poll panel has directed the state government to swiftly submit a list of IPS officers to fill vacant positions in the state immediately.

This move comes in the wake of the model code of conduct being enforced, which mandates that state governments seek the Election Commission's approval before making any appointments or promotions. Such measures aim to prevent any undue influence on the election process.

The vacancy situation in key posts, including the Surat Police Commissioner and three range Inspector Generals, along with positions like Superintendent of Police of Kheda and Mehsana, has been lingering for more than two months. The delay, observers say, is attributed to various factors, such as four IPS officers proceeding on Central deputation last year and five officers being placed on leave reserve by the Election Commission due to their extended postings in a single Lok Sabha constituency for three years.

Of course, another factor for the delay, which is obviously not mentioned, is that senior Gujarat government appointments are made only after a green signal from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). But now with the Election Commission at the helm, the appointments will be implemented swiftly.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

- The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone. HENRIK IBSEN
- Always think of what is useful and not what is beautiful. Beauty will come of its own accord. NIKOLAI GOGOL
- Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1808: Napoleon III, president of the Second Republic (1850-52) and emperor of France (1852-70), was born in Paris.
- 1871: Japan's first government-operated postal service opened between Tokyo and Osaka.
- 1912: Navin Field (later called Tiger Stadium) in Detroit and Fenway Park in Boston officially opened as both hosted their first professional baseball games; Tiger Stadium closed in 1999, leaving Fenway as the oldest baseball stadium in Major League Baseball.
- 1919: In an ongoing dispute over the possession of Vilnius, Polish forces drove out Russia's Red Army—which had previously ousted the newly established Lithuanian government—and occupied the city.
- 1924: Finalizing the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's Grand National Assembly voted to adopt a full republican constitution, with General Mustafa Kemal, who had first proclaimed the Turkish republic about six months earlier, becoming the first president of the republic.
- 1968: Pierre Elliott Trudeau of the Liberal Party became prime minister of Canada; in that post, he discouraged the French separatist movement, oversaw the formation of a new constitution, and established relations with China.

SPECTRUM POLITICS

Make foreign policy a poll issue

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in an interview that elections in India are festivals of our democracy. It is true that across the country, people are in a festive mood and are excited about exercising their fundamental right. An avid political commentator had put it in different, slightly derisive words, "Indian politics is electionised not much democratised".

His observation pointed to elections round the year in some part of the country or the other. As India has three-tier governance – Centre, states and local governments, elections for any one of the tiers is happening somewhere in the country throughout the year.

Obviously, several issues and features of Indian politics come up during elections. The issues that matter to voters, and the features, mainly the organising principles, are manifested during elections. But does foreign policy issues figure in the campaigns of political parties, at least the national parties? From the reports in the press, opinion polls, voters' surveys, it is evident that foreign policy is not a priority. This

contradicts with India's aspirations of becoming a Vishwa Guru or a Vishwa Bandhu.

Before we scan the issues in the manifestoes of the political parties, we should learn why voters are not interested in foreign policy. Indian voters like those in many developing countries do not have much interest in internationalism for a variety of reasons. I will list only a few. Many Indians, for lack of adequate resources, cannot travel and explore the world. Second, the lack of enough international outlook, many people in India do not comprehend that international communities comprising both state and non-state actors influence each country in multiple ways.

The external influence over the countries has intensified under the ongoing process of globalisation. So far, the global outlook has been the prerogative of the big powers – Europeans, Americans and Russians. This is because of their superior economic and military might. Chinese and Indians are new entrants. Ironically, China has the resources but not many likeable ideas that will enable it to play

a credible international role. India has the ideas drawn from its rich civilisation and enduring democracy, but lacks resources. Also, India, a vast country with the biggest population in the world, consisting of 28 states, is like the European Union of 27 countries. Both Union of India and the European Union get too embroiled in their internal matters with little enthusiasm and energy left for internationalism.

Foreign policy making is left to an elite club of bureaucrats and so-called experts. Voters hardly influence the making of foreign policy. New Delhi like Brussels fails to realise that playing an international role will enhance the internal strengths. It is a truism that foreign policy of any country is a function of its domestic strengths which are also called determinants. An improved international engagement, which New Delhi seems to seek, requires the backing of domestic heft. India, therefore, needs to internationally position itself which is commensurate with its national strengths and strategies.

Communication between political parties – Ruling and the

Opposition is essential in a democracy. Respect for dissent in domestic and foreign policy is a hallmark of a robust democracy. That said, there could be divergent opinions and approaches in policies including the foreign policy.

At any rate, it is advisable to make foreign policy an issue in elections. This will enhance the domestic determinants of India's foreign policy. Political parties should be willing to share their foreign policy strategies with their voters. Before they do so, they need to educate themselves on the world affairs.

Let us note that Prime Minister Modi made a reference to Katchatheevu, an islet between India and Sri Lanka. That is the way to mobilise voters on a foreign policy issue regardless of whether it was the right cause to take up. This is an example of how to use foreign policy in a competitive electoral process. And this is the way to become a world power.

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism

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DK Giri

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTIES – RULING AND THE OPPOSITION IS ESSENTIAL IN A DEMOCRACY

Acting on AI

Sir, As we find that virtual reality is the future of social networking, we march forward in the right direction. It is notable to find that artificial intelligence is the tool for universal success, and social media play a pivotal role in promoting various aspects of life in a simple and clear way. Facebook is used mostly in the subcontinent, and it is a tribute to the service provider as so many people go tempting towards the most popular social media. Life without the Internet, an innovative technology, seems almost unimaginable for most people in India. Today, the Internet is intrinsic to media and communications, entertainment, politics, defence, business, banking, education, and administrative systems as well as social interaction. The Internet disentangles this extraordinarily complex information and communication technology from its place in our daily lives, allowing it to be examined anew. The writing is on the wall for a makeover to provide people with a wide range of knowledge within the walls of a personal computer.

MR Jayanthi, EAST MUMBAI

Festival of democracy

Sir, As we disembark into the festival of democracy, namely the general elections, we touch upon various aspects as voters and responsible citizens of India. Voting is our birth right, and we need to exercise our franchise without fail. Your vote matters in building the future nation, and the young generation faces responsibilities in this direction. On the one hand, public opinion signals public preferences and potential voting behaviours to policymakers. This impact should be greater under more stable democratic institutions. There is no doubt that voters are the kings. Democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people. In a democracy, the final decision-making power must rest with those elected by the people. What needs significant improvement, however, is voter registration, registry clean-up, and voter awareness and education. There lies the real success of democratic election procedures. It is indeed a festival of democracy in India, as a country that is sometimes called 'the land of festivals' has also been treating a critical component of a democratic society as a festival.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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Schools in WB to have early summer vacation



The Met department has forecast that heatwave or hot and discomforting weather conditions in Kolkata and its surrounding districts will continue for at least the next five days

AGENCIES

Kolkata, April 19: The West Bengal government has declared an early summer break for state-run and aided schools from April 22 in view of the prevailing heat wave conditions.

A notification by the school education department said apart from students, the teaching and non-teaching staff of the schools will be on leave during the period, unless directed otherwise by the election authorities in light of the Lok Sabha elections.

“Considering the prevailing heatwave situation, the competent authority has decided to prepone the summer vacation in the schools under your administrative jurisdiction with effect

been turned into camps for security forces as also booths, the summer vacation had been scheduled from May 6.

Education Minister Bratya Basu said private schools are also being requested to bring forward the summer holidays in the interest of students.

A school education official said the total number of holidays apart from weekend off days and public holidays should not be beyond 65 for a school,

Lawyers allowed to skip advocates' gown

Kolkata: As the summer heat refuses to abate with day temperatures in the city hovering around 40 degrees Celsius, lawyers have been exempted from wearing "advocates' gown" at the Calcutta High Court by a direction of Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam. A high court notification said that upon consideration of the ongoing inclement weather combined with heatwave, the Chief Justice has directed that lawyers are exempted from wearing advocates' gown till the end of the summer vacation to give relief to the lawyers. "Taking note of the weather, wearing of Advocates' gown is exempted till the Court reopens after Summer Vacation June 10," the notification said. Summer vacation at the Calcutta High Court will commence from May 19.



from April 22 except for schools in hill areas of Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts, wherein the existing academic schedule may continue until further order," the notice issued by school education secretary to the presidents of primary education and secondary boards said.

Earlier, in view of the elections and keeping in mind that many schools in the northern parts of Bengal have already

calculating both summer and puja vacations and the Christmas-New Year week.

“The earlier notification had specified that summer holidays will be from May 6 till June 2. And though the last notification did not specify a possible date of re-opening, I think June 3 will be the day of re-opening. We will intimate about the tentative re-opening date in the next notification,” he added.

WBCHSE notifies semester system in state-run schools

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 19: The West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education (WBCHSE) has issued a notice announcing the adoption of a semester system of education for Classes XI and XII in all state-run and state-aided schools.

In the notification dated April 18, addressed to school heads and teachers, WBCHSE president Chiranjib Bhattacharya said the council is introducing the semester system for class 11 starting from the academic session 2024-25, and for Class XI from the 2025-26 session.

Under the new system, the Higher Secondary or 10+2 course now comprises four parts - semester 1, 2, 3, and 4. Class XI has been redesigned as semester 1 and 2, while Class XII has been restructured as semester 3 and 4, the notice said. The notice, in accordance with the state education policy, encourages schools to offer guidance and opportunities for students to undertake challenging coursework, participate in extracurricular activities, and engage in summer projects with higher educational institutions.

It also recommends internship programmes during summer vacations, allowing students to pursue subjects of their choice by collaborating with corporate firms, publishing houses, and media houses. The education policy, formulated by an empowered committee, has agreed to retain the existing 4+4+2+2 structure, where students spend four years in the foundation stage, followed by another four years in upper primary (preparatory stage), and two years (Classes IX and X) in secondary education.

BHAVNAGAR LS SEAT HEATS UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhavnagar, April 19: The stage is set for a fierce contest in Bhavnagar's Lok Sabha constituency as the BJP and the AAP gear up for the forthcoming elections.

This seat is important because it is one of the two constituencies in Gujarat where AAP competes with the BJP.

The BJP has named Nimuben Bamhaniya, a local leader and former Mayor of Bhavnagar Municipal Corporation as its candidate. Bamhaniya, who also serves as the BJP prabhari for Junagadh city, has a strong following in the region, particularly among the Koli community.

On the Opposition front, the AAP has fielded Umesh Makwana, the current MLA from Botad.

Makwana, known for his philanthropic efforts, including distributing over six lakh food packets during the COVID-19 lockdown, adds a dynamic edge to the race.

During a visit to Gujarat, Makwana's campaign recently received a boost from Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Bhavnagar is also a constituency where the Kshatriya community showed their resentment against senior BJP leader Parshottam Rupala.

Tensions flared April 17, during a BJP election meeting in Bhavnagar, marked by the dramatic resignation of Ravirajsinh Gohil, Vice President of the BJP's Yuva Morcha for Talaja Taluka. Gohil went up on the stage and tendered his resignation.

Matters escalated as a group of Kshatriyas displayed black

BJP, AAP set for electoral showdown



Bhavnagar is a constituency where the Kshatriya community showed their resentment against senior BJP leader Parshottam Rupala

political winds. Since 1991, the Bhavnagar Lok Sabha seat has remained a stronghold of the BJP. The constituency encompasses seven Assembly segments: Talaja, Palitana, Bhavnagar Rural, Bhavnagar East, Bhavnagar West, the SC-reserved seat of Gadhada, and Botad.

However, the Congress has also shown significant presence, capturing the seat five times since the first election in 1962. In the most recent 2019 elections, Bharatiben Shiyal of the BJP won with a substantial majority.

flags and chanted slogans during Union Minister Mandaviya's speech in the city.

This incident makes Bhavnagar the fifth district in Saurashtra to witness disruptions at BJP election gatherings.

The protests stem from anger within the Kshatriya community over alleged derogatory remarks made by the BJP's Rajkot candidate, Parshottam Rupala, targeting the community.

Bhavnagar, a key district in the southeastern Kathiawar and Saurashtra region, has a rich history dating back to its establishment in 1743 by Maharaja Bhavsinhji. Historically, the Bhavnagar seat has seen varied

capturing the seat five times since the first election in 1962. In the most recent 2019 elections, Bharatiben Shiyal of the BJP won with a substantial majority.

Bhavnagar has approximately 17.68 lakh eligible voters, with the Koli caste playing a pivotal role in determining the electoral outcomes.

As candidates from both major parties, along with the AAP's entry into the fray, begin their campaigns, the electorate of Bhavnagar is poised for a pivotal decision that could influence the region's political landscape. The constituency, with a population of over 2.3 million, has a diverse demographic that includes rural voters.

IIT Roorkee team finds giant ancient snake fossil in Gujarat

THE SNAKE FOSSIL, NAMED VASUKI INDICUS, AFTER VASUKI, THE MYTHICAL SNAKE OFTEN DEPICTED AROUND THE NECK OF THE HINDU GOD SHIVA, INHABITED THE REGION OF PRESENT-DAY GUJARAT DURING THE MIDDLE EOCENE PERIOD

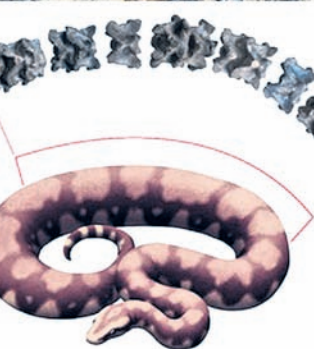
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Roorkee, April 19: A team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee, Friday announced the discovery of an ancient snake species, believed to be one of the largest ever to have roamed the Earth around 47 million years ago.

The snake fossil, named Vasuki Indiclus, after Vasuki, the mythical snake often depicted around the neck of the Hindu god Shiva, inhabited the region of present-day Gujarat during the Middle Eocene period.

The 11 to 15-metre-long snake belonged to the now-extinct Madtsoiidae snake family but represented a unique lineage from India, said the team of researchers led by Sunil Bajpai and postdoctoral fellow Debajit Datta.

The researchers said that the shape and size of these verte-



brae suggest that Vasuki Indiclus had a broad and cylindrical body, hinting at a robust and powerful build, and was a stealthy predator. “This discovery is significant not only for under-

standing the ancient ecosystems of India but also for unravelling the evolutionary history of snakes on the Indian subcontinent,” said Sunil Bajpai, Department of Earth Sciences, IIT Roorkee.

The team found the ancient giant's fossils in the Panandhro Lignite Mine in Kutch, Gujarat. Among these fossils, 27 vertebrae were exceptionally well-preserved, with some even found connected or articulated, like jigsaw puzzle pieces.

“Vasuki Indiclus isn't just any snake we're talking about; its size rivals that of Titanoboa, a massive snake that once roamed the Earth and holds the title of the longest snake ever known,” the team said.

“It underscores the importance of preserving our natural history and highlights the role of research in unveiling the mysteries of our past,” Prof Sunil added.



West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee with party candidates Yusuf Pathan and Abu Taher Khan during an election campaign rally for Lok Sabha elections in Murshidabad

35 Jains set to embrace monkhood in Gujarat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 19: As many as 35 persons from the Jain community, including an 11-year-old boy and a wealthy couple, will embrace monkhood in Gujarat April 22, a religious trust said Friday.

A five-day initiation ceremony for community members from Gujarat and Maharashtra began Thursday at "Adhyatma Nagri" (spiritual city) on the Sabarmati Riverfront and will conclude April 22.

According to a release by Shree Adhyatma Pariwar, a Surat-based trust, 35 persons will receive 'diksha' from revered Jain monk Acharya Vijay Yogtilakurishvarji Maharaja.

Of the 35 persons, ten are under the age of 18 years, with the youngest being an 11-year-old boy, the release stated. One of the children embracing monkhood is 13-year-old Surat resident Het Shah.



Het left his studies nearly two years ago to perform 'Updhan Tap', where one has to live like a monk away from home for 47 days.

“Het found it difficult to balance school and spiritual activities and left his studies nearly two years ago to be with our gurus. He then expressed his desire to shun worldly life. Though he is our only child, we accepted his wish, as we were also convinced there is nothing better than a monk's life.” Het's mother Rimpal Shah said. Also renouncing worldly possessions are five couples who will shut their business and lock their homes after receiving 'diksha'.

Festival celebrates magic of fountain pens

Pens of various brands from India and abroad were put on display, inviting attendees to marvel at the intricate craftsmanship and timeless elegance of these writing instruments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 19: In this digital age dominated by touch-screen devices, the fountain pen may seem like a relic of the past. However, for a community of pen enthusiasts, these elegant instruments are more than just a writing tool – they embody a timeless tradition of craftsmanship and creativity.

A three-day fountain pen festival named Pen Mahotsav was hosted jointly by the Pen Club and Kisalay Events at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (CCR), Kolkata, from April 12 to April 14.

A group of men has organised the festival in order to revive the use of fountain pens and

create awareness among people about the environment-friendly aspect of such pens.

Walking through the festival, visitors were greeted by a dazzling array of pens, ranging from affordable ones to exquisite collectors' items valued at 1 lakhs of rupees.

For fountain pen lovers it is like heaven. It is like a festival for us all,” Tarak Dey, a fan of fountain pens, said while visiting the event, 'Pen Mahotsav'.

According to pen collector Abhijit Bandyopadhyay, Kolkata has a long history of fountain pen lovers.

“Pen shows are also organised in Chennai, Bangalore and Mumbai. But it is unique here because a lot of enthusiasts come



and purchase pens – right from ordinary pens to costly ones, which run into lakhs,” said Bandyopadhyay, who is a professor at West Bengal's Burdwan University.

The event, being held for three years in a row, has become a cherished gathering for hoi polloi and aficionados alike. “Fountain pens are ergonomi-

cherished childhood memory or discover a newfound appreciation for the art of handwriting.

Beyond the nostalgia and craftsmanship, the festival also highlighted the environmental benefits of fountain pens.

Unlike their disposable counterparts, fountain pens are reusable, offering a sustainable alternative to single-use plastics.

By promoting the use of fountain pens, organisers hope to raise awareness about the environmental impact of disposable pens and encourage more eco-friendly writing habits.

One of the organisers, Prasenjit Guhait, said, “We have seen and used pens that were available at ₹3 or ₹4 in our childhood days. Today, children don't know what a fountain pen is. So we thought of organising such a festival to spread awareness among people, especially children.”

For many visitors, the event was not just an opportunity to peruse the latest offerings but also a chance to reconnect with a

Firing, EVM damage in Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal/Churachandpur, April 19: Incidents of firing, intimidation, destruction of electronic voting machines (EVMs) at some polling booths and allegations of booth capturing were reported from conflict-hit Manipur that recorded a turnout of over 68 per cent in the first phase of Lok Sabha polls Friday.

Both the BJP and the Congress accused each other of unleashing violence and breaching the election Model Code of Conduct. The state which has been reeling under the conflict of ethnic violence since May last year has traditionally seen a very high voter turnout. In 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the state recorded a turnout of 82 per cent.

Voting took place in two constituencies—Inner Manipur (32 Assembly segments) and Outer Manipur (15 Assembly segments)—Friday while polling in the remaining 13 Assembly segments in the Outer Manipur constituency will take place April 26 in the second phase.

“A voter turnout of 68.82 per cent has been recorded. While the Inner Manipur constituency has recorded 72.3 per cent turnout, the poll percentage in Outer Manipur stood at 61.98 per cent,” said Pradeep Kumar Jha, Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur.

Keirao constituency in Imphal East district recorded the high-



An EVM was set ablaze at Moirangkampu Sajeb in Khurai constituency in Imphal East district and a 65-year-old man was shot at by unidentified gunmen

Moirangkampu Sajeb in Khurai constituency in Imphal East district and a 65-year-old man was also shot at by some unidentified gunmen. There has also been vandalism in at least one more polling station, in Uripok in Imphal West,” an official source said.

“He was standing near a polling station when some armed assailants opened fire. He has been taken to a hospital in Imphal for treatment,” a police official said.

Booth level officer for Moirangkampu Sajeb, Surbala Devi said, “Suddenly two men came and asked for polling agents of the Congress and the BJP. They took the Congress agent outside by holding his hand. Then the two men fired shots at him from inside the car.”

In a separate incident, armed men also fired several rounds in the air near a polling booth in Thamnepokpi under the Moirang assembly constituency in Bishnupur district, prompting voters to flee, police said. They said additional security personnel were rushed to the spot to contain the situation.

Police officials also said that some unidentified armed men intimidated election agents of a particular political party at different places, including Uripok and Iroishemba in Imphal West district, and asked them to leave the polling stations.

est turnout among all the 32 constituencies of Inner Manipur with 83.81 per cent.

For Outer, Chandel which has both Naga and Kuki voters recorded the highest turnout with 85.54 per cent turnout. Kuki-dominated Henglep in the Churachandpur district recorded an 80.70 per cent voter turnout while Saikul recorded the lowest with just 19.46 per cent.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh's

constituency Heingang recorded an 80 per cent turnout followed by BJP candidate Thounaojam Basanta Kumar Singh's Nambol constituency, which recorded 79.88 per cent.

According to sources, incidents of EVMs being destroyed were reported from at least four polling booths by unidentified miscreants in Imphal East and Imphal West.

“An EVM was set ablaze at



BJD's Rayagada district observer Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak, district president N Bhaskar Rao, candidate for Koraput Lok Sabha Constituency Kausalya Hikaka and candidate for Rayagada Assembly constituency Anusaya Majhi during a road show organised in Rayagada, Friday

Star player Tirkey aims at scoring winning goal for BJD

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 19: Hockey India president, former India captain and Rajya Sabha MP till 2018 star player Dilip Tirkey now aims at scoring a winning goal in the electoral field as the Biju Janata Dal's (BJD) Lok Sabha candidate from Sundargarh constituency, where hockey is not just a sport but a way of life.

Tirkey contested the Sundargarh seat in 2014 but lost to BJP's Jual Oram. Ten years later, the star, who helped put the tribal dominated area on the world hockey map, is confident the result will be different this time and voters will back not just him but Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik who has made such a significant contribution to promoting the sport.

“A lot has changed in the last 10 years. A lot of development work has been done in Odisha, be it in education, health or sports,” Tirkey, who has played more than 400 international matches for India, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

“The Odisha government has changed the image of the state by making it a sporting hub of the country with high performance centres, state-of-the-art training facilities and hosting big tournaments. The sports loving people of Sundargarh and Odisha will not forget this while voting,” the 46-year-old added.

Tirkey, the first from Odisha to play for India seniors in 1995, is a household name in hockey-loving Sundargarh. Seeing a boy from Saunamara village in the district play for India and captain the national team was a game changer. He was the first to make it big globally. Since then, Sundargarh district has produced several players such as Lazarus Barla and Birender Lakra who have represented India at the World Cup and Olympics.

“Odisha has made itself a strong presence in the world sports map in the last decade. The world's largest hockey stadium, Birsam Munda Stadium, has been built in Rourkela and last year the Men's Hockey World Cup matches were also successfully held there,” Tirkey said.

He didn't contest in 2019, when Oram returned as MP from Sundargarh, and was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 2012 to 2018.



I have worked very hard as a player and will do so in politics as well. Players can be successful politicians. Sports mean hard work and discipline which is necessary in politics also

DILIP TIRKEY | BJD NOMINEE FOR SUNDARGARH LS

The love for hockey looming large in the backdrop, Tirkey said the sportsperson in him will make him a better politician and MP too.

“I have worked very hard as a player and will do so in politics as well. Players can be successful politicians. Sports mean hard work and discipline which is necessary in politics also. Along with this, there is a need for patience which I have maintained throughout my career,” he said. “I have been in politics for a long time and have been closely associated with the people of Sundargarh in the last decade. I have been with them, have attended their social, sports, cultural and religious programmes,” Tirkey said.

His experience as a Rajya Sabha MP will also be very useful to him now, he said.

“Sitting among the stalwarts in the Rajya Sabha has been a great experience for me. For the first time, a player was sent to Rajya Sabha from BJD, which was a big achievement for me,” he added. Tirkey said the absence of an alliance with the BJP will not affect his party's chances in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Odisha.

“BJD does not need an alliance in Odisha because people have unwavering faith in the leadership of Naveen Patnaik who will be seeking a sixth term. He has completely changed the image of Odisha. Similarly, Modi ji also does not need a BJD alliance at the Centre,” he said. On being asked whether he would leave the post of Hockey India president if he wins the election, Tirkey said, “Hockey is my passion and it has given me a lot. Former wrestling federation president Brijbhushan Sharan Singh was also an MP from Gonda, so there is nothing that MPs cannot remain in the sports federation.”



Congress candidate for Koraput Lok Sabha seat Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka files nomination at the Collector's office in Koraput, Friday



Sitting MLA and BJP nominee from Sundargarh Assembly seat Kusum Tete presenting her report card highlighting her achievements at a press meet held in Sundargarh, Friday

Elderly man throws EVM on ground

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Haridwar, April 19: An elderly voter in Uttarakhand's Haridwar Friday threw an electronic voting machine (EVM) on the ground, demanding voting take place through ballot paper, police said.

The EVM was a bit damaged but it was not replaced as it continued to function, they said.

Randhir, 70, was taken into custody after information was received about the incident at booth number 126 of the Jwalapur Inter College polling station, police said.

He picked up the EVM when his turn to vote came and threw

it on the ground, shouting that he opposes EVMs and elections should be conducted through ballot paper only, they said and added it is suspected that the man is mentally ill.

Randhir was released after a few hours of detention, Jwalapur Deputy Superintendent of Police Shantanu Parashar said and added that EVM, though damaged, kept functioning and polling took place.

No complaint was lodged with police by polling officials against Randhir, he said

A person present in the booth said Randhir picked up the EVM and threw it, leaving polling officials and people stunned.

Lone voter casts her vote in remote Arunachal dist

AGENCIES

Itanagar, April 19: The unique Malogam polling station in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh recorded 100 per cent polling with the lone female voter, exercising her constitutional right on Friday, officials said.

The 44-year-old Sokela Tayang cast her vote around 1pm, a district official said.

For the single voter, a team of polling officials trekked nearly 40 km on foot through treacherous terrain and set up a voting booth in the remote polling station.

“I am delighted to exercise my franchise and thanked the election authorities for giving me the opportunity to cast my vote,” Sokela said.



According to the election official, very few families reside in Malogam, and all the others except for Tayang are registered voters in other polling booths. But she was not willing to go to other booths to cast her vote.

“It is not always about num-

bers but it is to ensure that every citizen gets his or her voice heard. Sokela Tayang's vote is a testament to our commitment to inclusivity and equality,” said Chief Electoral Officer Pawan Kumar Sain.

The village falls under the

For the single voter, a team of polling officials trekked nearly 40 km on foot through treacherous terrain and set up a voting booth in the remote polling station

Hayuliang Assembly constituency in Anjaw district bordering China and in the Arunachal East Lok Sabha seat where as many as six candidates are vying for their electoral luck.

The main contest, however, is between Bosiram Siram of the Congress party and sitting MP Tapir Gao of the BJP. Dasanglu Pul, the BJP MLA from the

Hayuliang Assembly constituency retained the seat this time by winning it unopposed. In the last elections in 2019, Gao won the seat -- one of the two constituencies in Arunachal Pradesh -- garnering over 1.5 lakh votes. He defeated Lowangcha Wanglat of the Congress party who got 83,935 votes.

In the 2014 elections, the polling booth at Malogam had two voters. The other was Tayang's estranged husband Janelum Tayang, who, however, transferred his name to another booth in the constituency.

Tayang doesn't live in the village and her connection to Malogam is tenuous as her daughter and son study in colleges elsewhere. Of the total 2,226 polling stations in the state, 228 can be reached only by foot.

national

of the day quote

The issue of the Ram temple in Ayodhya is now over, and no one is discussing it anymore. During a meeting, some women pointed out and complained that although the idol of Lord Ram has been installed, goddess Sita's idol is not there

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP (SP) CHIEF

Rahul Gandhi believes in the politics of appeasement. He represents dynastic rule and engages in vote bank politics

JP NADDA | BJP CHIEF

The BJP does politics for the sake of nation building and not merely to come to power

RAJNATH SINGH | BJP LEADER

SHORT TAKES

AI suspends Tel Aviv flights

New Delhi: Air India Friday said its flights to and from Tel Aviv will remain suspended till April 30 amid tensions in the Middle East. The airline operates four weekly flights between the national capital and the Israeli city. "Air India flights to and from Tel Aviv will remain suspended until 30th April 2024, in view of the emerging situation in the Middle East. We are continuously monitoring the situation," an airline spokesperson said in a statement.

Nalin Prabhat to head NSG

New Delhi: Senior IPS officer Nalin Prabhat has been appointed as the chief of National Security Guard (NSG), the country's counter-terrorism force, according to a Personnel Ministry order. Prabhat, a 1992 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Additional Director General in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Popularly known as the 'black cats', the federal contingency force NSG was raised in 1984.

NCB appoints new vigilance officer

New Delhi: The Narcotics Control Bureau Friday appointed a new vigilance officer following completion of the tenure of incumbent officer Gyaneshwar Singh, the IPS officer who headed a special enquiry team (SET) that probed the role of its former Mumbai zonal director Sameer Wankhede following the drugs-on-cruise case of 2021.



The so-called double engine in Bihar meets with frequent accidents, causing the train cars to decouple

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

FLIGHTS DISRUPTED

Indian airlines' flight operations to Dubai have been impacted, with Air India, Air India Express and SpiceJet either cancelling or rescheduling their services due to restrictions at the busy airport in the Emirates



Women voters show their fingers after casting votes for Lok Sabha elections, in Nagaur district



An elderly voter gets her finger marked before casting her vote for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, at a polling station in Sonitpur district



Voters take selfie after casting their vote for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Jabalpur

Chhagan Bhujbal opts out in Nashik



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 19: Senior NCP leader and Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal Friday said he has decided not to seek ticket from the Nashik Lok Sabha constituency so as to end the deadlock over the seat also coveted by the ally Shiv Sena.

The sitting MP from the north Maharashtra constituency, Hemant Godse, belongs to the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Speaking at a press conference here, Bhujbal said during the seat-sharing talks with the ruling allies Shiv Sena and BJP, NCP chief and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar staked claim to the Nashik seat, saying that his party had more MLAs in the region.

"When we were asked about the candidate, the name of former MP (Chhagan Bhujbal's nephew) Sameer Bhujbal was proposed. But (BJP leader) Amit Shah said I should contest even though I had not asked for a ticket," he said.

CM Shinde, however, demanded the seat as the incumbent MP is from his party, Bhujbal added. No decision was taken for three weeks while the opposition MVA's candidate had already started campaigning, he said.

"I asked deputy CM Devendra Fadnis and state BJP president Chandrashekar Bawankule about the announcement of Sameer Bhujbal's candidature, and both said the BJP leadership wanted me to contest," the senior minister said, claiming that "all sections of society expressed support for my candidature for the development of Nashik" but his name was not announced.

"To end the deadlock, I have decided to withdraw from the race. The Mahayuti alliance should declare the candidate soon, otherwise we may face difficulty winning the seat," Bhujbal added.

Doordarshan changes flagship logo to saffron

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 19: Doordarshan has changed the logo of its news channel DD News from red to saffron. The logo came into effect April 16. In a social media post, DD news said that their values remain the same and are now available in a new avatar. "Get ready for a news journey like never before. Experience the all-new DD News. We have the courage to put Accuracy over speed, facts over claims, Truth over sensationalism. Because if it is on DD News, it is the truth," the post added.

This development has drawn condemnation, with some questioning the move. Vijay Thottathil, an Indian National Congress (INC) supporter, said that this was an attempt to saffronise India. "Save India from saffronisation, No Vote for BJP," he said.

Earlier, Doordarshan has been criticised by the BJP for being a pro-government channel that does not give space for the Opposition. During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, in which the Narendra Modi government came into power, Doordarshan was accused of censorship by the BJP over an edited inter-



view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In fact, Modi himself tweeted, "I feel very sad to see our national TV channel struggling to maintain its professional freedom." Manish Tewari, former Minister of Information and Broadcasting, said that DD's autonomy and editorial decisions were guaranteed by the Parliament. However, the situation changed significantly after the BJP government came into power. In 2015, the assistant director of Doordarshan was transferred from Ahmedabad to Andaman after the Gujarati channel of the national broadcaster aired a news item regarding Jashodaben, PM Narendra Modi's wife.

Doordarshan telecasted a BJP event in 2018, in which

Union Home Minister Amit Shah unfurled the national flag at the party headquarters in Delhi. According to guidelines, DD and All India Radio are mandated live coverage to only government events, and not political parties. Doordarshan had not given any other political party, including the Congress, this benefit.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the same year created a furore after Doordarshan cut into an advertisement during Tyagaraja Aradhana—a musical event honouring Telugu saint-composer Tyagaraja. She said, "Yo @DDNational what! You couldn't wait for a few moments more for the Pancharatna Krithi-s to be completed. Advertisement

Kejriwal rejects 'high-sugar food' charge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: Accusing the Enforcement Directorate of being "petty" and "politicising" what he ate, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Friday asserted before a court that the food he consumed was in conformity with the diet chart prepared by his doctor and sought insulin to be administered to him in jail.

The embattled politician moved a fresh petition before the court for a direction to the jail authorities to allow him access to insulin to keep his 'alarming' sugar levels under control. Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, his counsel, said Kejriwal has not been administered insulin to control his sugar levels since his arrest, terming it "shocking" and "alarming".

"The applicant is suffering from diabetes for the last 22 years. From 2012, he has been administered insulin every day

and seek bail on medical grounds. "ED claimed that I want to increase my blood sugar levels to get bail. Am I going to risk paralysis to get bail? Whatever food I have is as per the diet chart prepared by my doctor prior to arrest," Senior Advocate Abhishek Singhvi told the court.

Referring to the ED's claim about the politician eating mangoes, sweets, aaloo-poori etc regularly, he said these had been provided to him only a few times. "The allegation is that I have been consuming mangoes... Out of 48 meals sent from home, only three times mangoes were there. No mangoes have been sent after April 8. Mangoes have been made to look like sugar bullets. Their sugar level (glycemic index) is much less than brown rice or white rice," Singhvi told the court.

Kejriwal has been allowed to have food cooked at home in jail.

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Yes Bank co-founder gets bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 19: A special court here Friday granted bail to Yes Bank co-founder Rana Kapoor in the ₹466.51 crore bank fraud case, paving the way for him to walk out of jail after four years.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Kapoor in March 2020 in a money laundering case, and he has been booked in eight cases related to fraud at the bank. The banker has now secured bail in all the cases.

Kapoor's lawyer Rahul Agarwal said they were trying to complete the bail formalities to facilitate his release as early as possible.

The court has granted bail to Kapoor in the CBI's case against him and Avantha Group promoter Gautam Thapar for allegedly indulging in criminal conspiracy, criminal breach of trust, cheating and forgery for diversion of public money to the tune of ₹466.51 crore.

SC seeks reply on plea challenging CAA rules

The top court also ordered that the fresh plea be tagged with those pending on the issue



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: The Supreme Court Friday sought replies of the Centre and the Assam government on a plea challenging the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024, meant to operationalise and regulate the process of grant of Indian citizenship to non-Muslim migrants who came from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan before December 31, 2014.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice JB Pardiwala took note of the submissions of a lawyer representing petitioner Hiren Gohain, a Guwahati resident, and issued notices to the state government and the union ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs.

The top court also ordered that the fresh plea be tagged with those pending on the issue. The latest plea on the hugely contentious issue said, "The uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam has caused huge demographic changes in Assam. The indigenous people, who were once the majority, have now become a minority in their own land." Recently, the bench, while re-

fusing to stay the operation of the CAA Rules, asked the Centre to respond to the applications seeking a stay on their implementation till the apex court has disposed of the pleas challenging the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.

Gohain, in his plea, said the CAA Rules, 2024 are "ultra-vires to the Constitution" as they are "palpably discriminatory, manifestly arbitrary, illegal and against the basic structure of the Constitution".

"It is stated that the impugned Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 violates the petitioners' fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (right against discrimination on basis of religion, race, caste etc), 19 (freedom of speech and expression), 21 (right to life and personal liberty) etc of the Constitution," it said.

Gohain said he has filed the plea in his personal as well as in representative capacity of a majority of the indigenous people living in Assam and seeks enforcement of their fundamental rights.

Raising the issue of "uncontrolled" influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam, the plea said it was not a communal issue.

Adultery a ground for divorce, not child's custody: HC

The petitioner's counsel, Indra Jaising, submitted to the court that the woman had multiple affairs, and hence, it would not be proper to hand over the custody of the child to her

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 19: Adultery can be a ground for divorce but not for granting custody of a child, the Bombay High Court said while granting custody of a nine-year-old girl to her mother.

A single bench of Justice Rajesh Patil April 12 dismissed the petition filed by the man, son of a former legislator, challenging an order passed by the family court in February 2023



granting custody of his daughter to his estranged wife.

The couple tied the knot in 2010, and their daughter was born in 2015. In 2019, the woman claimed that she was removed from their home. The petitioner, however, alleged that his wife had left of her own volition.

The petitioner's counsel, Indra Jaising, submitted to the court that the woman had multiple affairs, and hence, it would not be proper to hand over the custody of the child to her. Justice Patil noted that the allegations of adulterous behaviour would have no bearing or doubt while de-

termining the matter of the child's custody.

"Not being a good wife does not necessarily mean she is not a good mother. Adultery can be a ground for divorce, however, the same cannot be a ground for not granting custody," the court observed.

The man, in his plea, claimed that it was in the child's best interest to live with him and his parents, as she was not happy with her mother and there were some behavioural changes in her.

Jaising told the court that the authorities at the girl's school had written emails to the petitioner's mother, raising concerns about her behaviour.

The High Court, however, refused to accept this and questioned why the school got in touch with the paternal grandmother when the parents were well-educated.

It noted that the petitioner's mother was a former legislator aspiring to contest the Lok Sabha elections.

"According to me, the school authorities have no reason to inform about the issues relating to the girl to the grandmother, who is a politician, when both the parents of the child are available, well-educated, and in fact, the mother of the child is a doctor," the court said.

Justice Patil noted that the girl was only nine, which is a pre-puberty age, and in such custody matters, the court must consider the welfare of the child as paramount. The girl was taken care of by her maternal grandmother, and her academic record during her custody with the mother was also good, he said.

"Therefore, according to me, there is no reason to change the custody from the wife to the husband," the court said.

of the day quote

The Security Council of 70 years ago does not reflect the realities of today, where we have 193 (Member States), where Africa does not have a permanent seat, Latin America does not have a permanent seat

LINDA THOMAS-GREENFIELD | US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN

At this point in time, India's economy is doing well. Growth at 6.8 per cent is very good. Inflation's coming down. Macro fundamentals look pretty good

KRISHNA SRINIVASAN | DIRECTOR (ASIA AND PACIFIC DEPARTMENT), IMF

The gag order has to come off. People are allowed to speak about me, and I have a gag order

DONALD TRUMP | FORMER PRESIDENT, US

SHORT TAKES

5 Japanese escape unhurt in bombing

Karachi: Five Japanese nationals had a lucky escape when their vehicle was targeted by militants in a suicide attack here in Pakistan's Sindh province Friday, police said. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) East Azfar Mahesar said the terrorists on a motorbike attempted to hit the van of the Japanese nationals near Murtaza Chorangi in Landhi. "All five Japanese remained safe. However, the private security guard with them was injured," he said. "The Japanese nationals were on the way to the Export Processing Zone from their residence in Zamzama, Clifton," he said. Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif denounced the attack on the Japanese nationals and praised the police for the quick response in foiling the attack. "We will not rest until terrorism has been completely eradicated. We will thwart every nefarious act of disturbing the law and order situation," the premier said.

22 killed in Syria

Beirut: An attack on pro-government fighters by suspected members of the Islamic State group in central Syria killed 22 pro-government fighters, an opposition war monitor and pro-government media reported Friday. Gunmen attacked a bus carrying members of the Quds Brigades, a government and Russian-backed faction of mostly Palestinian fighters in Syria, near the town of Sukhna late Thursday night. Sukhna was once an IS stronghold. There was no immediate claim of responsibility but both the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based opposition war monitor, and the pro-government radio station Sham FM said IS was behind the attack.

Blow to Trump

Washington: Donald Trump lost a bid Thursday to pause a string of lawsuits accusing him of inciting the US Capitol attack, while the former president fights his 2020 election interference criminal case in Washington. US District Judge Amit Mehta in Washington denied defense lawyers' request to put the civil cases seeking to hold Trump responsible for the January 6, 2021, riot on hold while the criminal case accusing him of conspiring to overturn his election defeat to President Joe Biden plays out. It's the latest legal setback for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, whose trial in a separate criminal case related to hush money payments made during the 2016 campaign began this week.



The European Union should take measures to help Finland put a stop to an influx of migrants via Russia

PETTERI ORPO | PM, FINLAND

KIM GETS NEW SONG

North Korea has released a new song praising leader Kim Jong Un for being a "friendly father" and a great leader", in a move that appears to be part of a propaganda drive to enhance his standing in the reclusive state



Two Indian students meet watery grave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 19: Two students from India who were studying at a university in the UK have been killed in a tragic drowning incident at a scenic waterfall in Scotland.

Police Scotland are yet to name the men from Andhra Pradesh in their 20s and a post-mortem is due to take place Friday.

The incident took place at the Linn of Tummel near Blair of Atholl in Perthshire Wednesday night when two men from a group of friends on an outing fell into the water and got into difficulty.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service sent boat teams and vessels to assist with the rescue efforts after their friends raised the alarm with the emergency services.

"Around 7 pm on Wednesday, April 17, we received a report of two men, aged 22 and 26 years, in the water at the Linn of Tummel waterfall near Blair Atholl," said a Police Scotland spokesperson.

"Emergency services attended and following searches in the area, the bodies of two men were recovered from the water. Enquiries are ongoing to establish the full circumstances however there would not appear to be any suspicious circumstances surrounding these deaths," the spokesperson said.

The Indian High Commission in London said the two students from Andhra Pradesh had "drowned in an unfortunate incident" and their bodies were found a little downstream.

Iran plays down Israeli attacks

THE WORLD HAS ITS FINGERS CROSSED AS IRAN'S STATE MEDIA HAS REPORTED EXPLOSIONS IN THE ISFAHAN PROVINCE, DAYS AFTER IRAN'S DRONE ATTACK ON ISRAEL SPARKED FEARS OF A MAJOR ESCALATION IN WEST ASIA

REUTERS

Dubai, April 19: Explosions echoed over an Iranian city Friday in what sources described as an Israeli attack, but Tehran played down the incident and indicated it had no plans for retaliation - a response that appeared gauged towards averting region-wide war.

The limited scale of the attack and Iran's muted response both appeared to signal a successful effort by diplomats who have been working round the clock to avert all-out war since an Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel last Saturday.

Iranian media and officials described a small number of explosions, which they said resulted from Iran's air defences hitting three drones over the city of Isfahan. Notably, they referred to the incident as an attack by "infiltrators", rather than by Israel,



obviating the need for retaliation. A senior Iranian official told Reuters there were no plans to respond against Israel for the incident.

"The foreign source of the incident has not been confirmed. We have not received any external attack, and the discussion leans more towards infiltration than attack," the official said.

Israel said nothing about the incident. It had said for days it was planning to retaliate against Iran for Saturday's strikes, the first direct attack on Israel by Iran in decades of shadow war waged by proxies which has escalated throughout the Middle East during six months of battle in Gaza.

The two longstanding foes had been heading towards direct confrontation since a presumed Israeli airstrike April 1 that destroyed a building in Iran's em-

bassy compound in Damascus and killed several Iranian officers including a top general.

Iran's response, with a direct attack on Israel, was unprecedented but caused no deaths and only minor damage because Israel and its allies shot down hundreds of missiles and drones.

CALLS FOR CALM

Allies including the United States had since been pressing hard to ensure any further retaliation would be calibrated not to provoke a spiral of hostilities. The British and German foreign ministers visited Jerusalem this week, and Western countries tightened sanctions on Iran to mollify Israel.

There was no word from Israel as to whether further action might be planned. Apart from direct strikes on Iranian territory, it has other ways of attacking, including cyber attacks and strikes on Iranian proxies elsewhere.

In a sign of pressure within Israel's hard-right government for a stronger response, Itamar Ben Gvir, the far-right national security minister posted a single word on X after Friday's strikes: "Feeble".

Countries around the world called for calm.

"In light of reports of strikes on April 19th, we urge all parties to work to prevent further escalation," foreign ministers of the Group of Seven industrialised democracies said in a joint statement at the end of a three-day meeting in Italy.

They also called for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the release of hostages held there by Hamas, an influx of aid for civilians in Gaza and for Israel to hold off from attacking Rafah, the last refuge for more than a million Gazans.

"It is absolutely necessary that the region remains stable and that all sides restrain from further action," European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said. Similar calls came from Beijing, Moscow and Arab states in the region.

Iran's response seems to indicate that Iran is seeking to step down off the ledge, minimise the impact of the attack, and perhaps walk back down the escalation ladder from here

JONATHAN LORD | HEAD (MIDDLE EAST SECURITY PROGRAMME), CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

US vetoes Palestinian call for UN membership



REUTERS

United Nations, April 19: The United States Thursday effectively stopped the United Nations from recognizing a Palestinian state by casting a veto in the Security Council to deny Palestinians full membership of the world body.

It vetoed a draft resolution that recommended to the 193-member UN General Assembly that "the State of Palestine be admitted to membership" of the UN. Britain and Switzerland abstained, while the remaining 12 council members voted yes.

"The United States continues to strongly support a two-state solution. This vote does not reflect opposition to Palestinian statehood, but instead is an acknowledgment that it will only come from direct negotiations between the parties," Deputy US Ambassador to the UN Robert Wood told the council.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the US veto in a statement as "unfair, unethical, and unjustified."

Palestinian UN Ambassador Riyad Mansour, at times emotional, told the council after the vote: "The fact that this resolution did not pass will not break our will and it will not defeat our determination. We will not stop in our effort."

The Palestinian push for full UN membership came six months into a war between Israel and Palestinian militants Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and as Israel is expanding settlements in the occupied West Bank, which the UN considers to be illegal.

Addressing the 12 council members who voted in favor of the draft resolution, Israel's UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan said: "It's very sad because your vote will only embolden Palestinian rejectionism even more and make peace almost impossible."

"START WITH GAZA" The Palestinians are currently a non-member observer state, a

Failure to make progress towards a two-State solution will only increase volatility and risk for hundreds of millions of people across the region, who will continue to live under the constant threat of violence

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

de facto recognition of statehood that was granted by the UN General Assembly in 2012. But an application to become a full UN member needs to be approved by the Security Council and then at least two-thirds of the General Assembly.

"We believe that such recognition of Palestinian statehood should not come at the start of a new process, but it doesn't have to be at the very end of the process. We must start with fixing the immediate crisis in Gaza," Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward told the council.

The UN Security Council has long endorsed a vision of two states living side by side within secure and recognized borders. Palestinians want a state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, all territory captured by Israel in 1967.

Algeria's UN Ambassador Amar Bendjama argued before the vote that admitting Palestinians to the United Nations would strengthen rather than undermine the two-state solution, adding: "Peace will come from Palestine's inclusion, not from its exclusion."

The Palestinian Authority, headed by Abbas, exercises limited self-rule in the West Bank. Hamas ousted the Palestinian Authority from power in Gaza in 2007.

Hamas condemned the US stance in a statement and called on the international community to "support the struggle of our Palestinian people and their legitimate right to determine their destiny."

SNIPPETS

Not sending any election observers to India, says US

Washington: The US is not sending any election observers to India but is eager to continue to deepen and strengthen its cooperation with partners in India, the State Department has said. "I'm not aware of the United States sending any observers. We generally don't, in the case of advanced democracies like in the case of India," Vedant Patel, Deputy Spokesperson of the State Department told reporters at his daily news conference Thursday. "We of course are eager to continue to deepen and strengthen our cooperation with our partners in India. And we're just going to let the election play out," he said. The 2024 Lok Sabha polls kicks off Friday with voting for 102 seats spread across 21 states and Union territories in the first of the seven phases of the world's largest electoral exercise. Responding to a question, he welcomed the idea of world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, playing a role in peace in either the Russia-Ukraine conflict or the war in Gaza. "In the context of Russia, Ukraine, if any country is interested in using its voice to further deter Russian aggression on the people of Ukraine, we certainly would welcome that," he said. "In the current ongoing context in Gaza, any country that believes that they can play a positive role in helping us get to a release of hostages, helping us get additional humanitarian assistance into Gaza, helping to defeat Hamas, they certainly should and are welcome to play that role," Patel said.



Brazil's President creates two new indigenous territories



Sao Paulo: President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva Thursday announced the creation of two new Indigenous territories for Brazil, bringing the total number of new reserves during this term to 10. The Cacique Fontoura reserve will be in Mato Grosso state and the Aldeia Velha territory will be in Bahia state. They will cover a combined total area of almost 132 square miles (342 square kilometers). Speaking at a ceremony in Brasilia, Lula's said Indigenous peoples should be patient as he seeks to fulfill his pledge of creating 14 new territories. Lula's predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, had encouraged widespread development of the Amazon - both legal and illegal - and made good on his pledge to not demarcate a single centimeter of additional Indigenous land. Lula took office in 2023 pledging to change that, but Indigenous rights activists hoped he would move faster. Last year, he demarcated six territories in April and two more in September.

China's new wing to 'fight, win' cyber wars

CHINA HAS PLOUGHED BILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTO MODERNISING ITS ARMED FORCES IN RECENT YEARS AS TENSIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER REGIONAL POWERS HAVE ESCALATED



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Beijing, April 19: China announced the creation of a new military cyber corps Friday, saying it would bolster Beijing's capacity to "fight and win" wars.

The Information Support Force will act as a "key support for coordinated development and application of network information systems", defence ministry spokesman Wu Qian said.

China has ploughed billions of dollars into modernising its armed forces in recent years as

tensions with the United States and other regional powers have escalated.

President Xi Jinping has also sought to bring the military more firmly under his control since rising to power a decade ago.

The new cyber force represents "a strategic step to establish a new system of services and arms and improve (China's) modern military force structure", Wu said.

He did not give details about its role but said the corps "bears

great responsibility in promoting high-quality development and the ability to fight and win in modern warfare".

Xi "extended warm congratulations" on the force's establishment at a grand ceremony in Beijing Friday, state broadcaster CCTV said.

Footage showed the Chinese leader clad in khaki military dress addressing a beaming cohort of officers in full regalia at an event enlivened by marching songs.

Xi said the force's founding

Moscow's missiles kill 8 Ukrainians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kyiv, April 19: Ukraine's air force claimed Friday it shot down a Russian strategic bomber, but Moscow officials said the plane crashed in a sparsely populated area due to a malfunction after a combat mission.

Neither claim could be independently verified. Previous Ukrainian claims of shooting down Russian warplanes during their more than two-year war have met with silence or denials from Moscow.

Meanwhile, Russian missiles struck cities in the central Dnipro region of Ukraine, killing eight people, including a 14-year-old girl and 8-year-old boy, and injuring 28, local officials said.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy repeated Kyiv officials' almost daily appeals for more Western air defense systems, again drawing a parallel with how Israel blunted a recent Iranian attack.

Missile and drone attacks can be thwarted, he wrote on social platform X: "This has been demonstrated in the skies over the Middle East, and it should also work in Europe."

We must resolutely obey the party's command (and) fully implement the fundamental principles and systems of the party's absolute leadership over the military

XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

was "a major decision" by the top echelons of the ruling Communist Party to "improve the modern military force system with Chinese characteristics", according to CCTV.

"We must resolutely obey the party's command (and) fully implement the fundamental principles and systems of the party's absolute leadership over the military," he said.

China's territorial disputes include its claim to the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which the United States has committed to helping defend.

Beijing also contentiously lays claim to almost the entire South China Sea, several islands also claimed by Japan, and areas along its ill-defined border with regional rival India.

of the day quote

We look forward to working closely with you and assure you of our support and commitment to energize our capacity development initiatives and exchange of knowledge and information between our SAls

GIRISH CHANDRA MURMU | COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

Over the last couple of years, we have strengthened our presence in South India expanding into Tier II and III towns. While we continue to penetrate deeper into remote towns in this market, we are exploring opportunities to expand further in select geographies outside the South market

LAKSHMINARAYANAN DURAISWAMY | MD OF SUNDARAM HOME FINANCE

The MAL-Haifa offerings will support agricultural practices that counter the vicious trend of water scarcity and also hugely enhance nutrient uptake and use efficiency in the plants

SAILESH C MEHTA | DFPC CHAIRMAN AND MD

FY24 RESULTS

Wipro profit falls

Bangalore: IT service company Wipro Friday reported 7.8 per cent year-on-year decline in its consolidated net profit for the March quarter to about ₹2834.6 crore, and cautioned that the macroeconomic environment remains "uncertain". The Bangalore-headquartered company, which recently saw a change of guard with Srinivas Pallia taking over at the helm as the new Chief Executive Officer, has given an IT Services revenue growth guidance in the (-)1.5 per cent to +0.5 per cent band for June quarter on a constant currency basis. Pallia asserted that the immediate priority for the company is to "accelerate growth" as he spelt out clear focus areas for the IT services firm, which has been lagging peers on performance and operational metrics quarter-after-quarter.

JFSL profit rises

New Delhi: Jio Financial Services Ltd (JFSL) Friday reported a 6 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to ₹311 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024 on the back of improvement in income. The financial services company, demerged from Reliance Industries Ltd, had reported a profit of ₹294 crore for the December quarter. On an annual basis, the company's consolidated net profit jumped multi-fold to ₹1,605 crore in FY24 against ₹31 crore in the preceding fiscal, Jio Financial Services said in a regulatory filing.

HDFC AMC net soars

New Delhi: HDFC Asset Management Company (AMC) Friday reported a 44 per cent jump in profit after tax at ₹541.1 crore in three months ended March 2024. In comparison, the company posted a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹376.1 crore in the year-ago period, the fund house said in a regulatory filing to the stock exchanges. The firm's total income surged by 33 per cent Year-on-Year (YoY) to ₹851 crore in the quarter under review from ₹637.8 crore in the January-March quarter of the financial year 2022-23 (FY23).

HZL profit drops

New Delhi: Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) Friday said its consolidated net profit declined 21 per cent to ₹2,038 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2024, mainly on account of lower zinc price. The company posted a consolidated net profit of ₹2,583 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal.



The strong growth momentum and the GDP projections for 2024-25 give the RBI a policy space to unwaveringly focus on price stability

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR OF THE RBI

NETFLIX SHARES SLIDE

Netflix shares fell Friday, as its surprise move to stop sharing subscriber additions and average revenue per member from 2025 sowed doubts in investor minds about growth peaking in some markets for the streaming pioneer



Stocks stage strong rebound

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 19: Stock markets rebounded from early lows to close higher Friday, snapping the four-day losing streak on heavy value buying in banking and auto shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 599.34 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,088.33. The index opened lower and tanked further 672.53 points or 0.92 per cent to hit a low of 71,816.46 in early trade. However, the index rebounded in the second half on value-buying in banking shares.

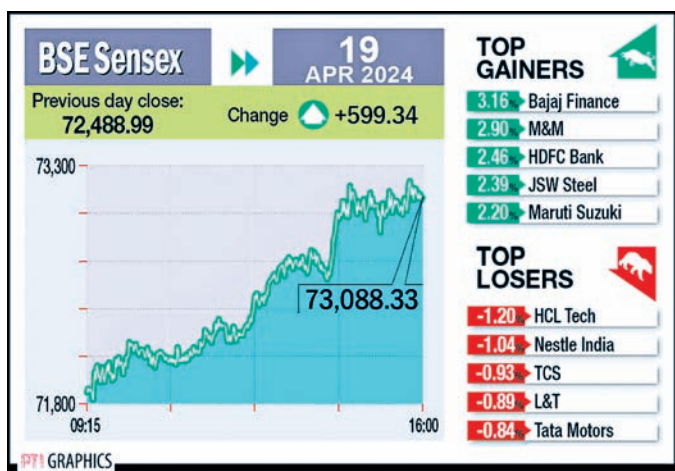
The NSE Nifty jumped 151.15 points or 0.69 per cent to close at 22,147. The broader index dropped to a low of 21,777.65 in early trade before paring its losses to end in the green.

From the Sensex basket, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, JSW Steel, Maruti, Wipro, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank and ITC were the major gainers.

Nestle India, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Motors and Infosys were among the laggards.

Infosys declined nearly 1 per cent after the company's revenue growth guidance for FY25 failed to meet market expectations. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European markets were trading in the red. Wall Street ended mostly lower Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent



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crude climbed 0.55 per cent to \$87.62 a barrel. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,260.33 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

"Despite global weakness, Indian markets staged a strong recovery driven by large-cap stocks, buoyed by the expectation of limited prospects of escalation following Israel's action against Iran. However, fragility persists with elevated oil prices, posing inflation risks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit

Financial Services.

"Nifty reversed a four-day losing streak to end higher," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.04 per cent.

Among the indices, bankex jumped 1.02 per cent and metal climbed 0.85 per cent. Financial services (0.83 per cent), consumer durables (0.78 per cent) and commodities (0.54 per cent) also gained. IT, telecommuni-

GOLD, SILVER HIT FRESH PEAKS

New Delhi: Gold and silver prices soared to fresh record high levels Friday with the precious metal breaching ₹74,000 per 10 grams mark here on bullish global trends. According to HDFC Securities, gold price jumped ₹400 to hit its lifetime high of ₹74,100 per 10 grams in Delhi. It had closed at ₹73,700 per 10 grams Thursday. Similarly, silver prices rose by ₹100 to hit a new peak of ₹86,600 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at a record high of ₹74,100 per 10 grams, up by ₹400 amid a positive trend in the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at \$2,390 per ounce, up by \$15 from the previous close.

Oil prices surge in global market



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 19: Oil prices surged by \$3 a barrel in the international market Friday amid reports of Israel launching a missile attack against Iran raising fears of escalating geopolitical tensions that could disrupt crude shipments.

The benchmark Brent crude price rose to around \$90 a barrel US West Texas hovered at around \$85 a barrel. The price of Brent crude had fallen to around \$87 per barrel Wednesday following higher US inventories and the decline in Chinese demand due to a slowing economy.

US media reports Friday said that Israeli missiles had hit sites in Iran. The attack was reported to be in retaliation to Iranian drone attacks on Israel carried out earlier.

However, Iran denied reports of the Israeli missile attack and claimed that the explosions heard were from the firing of its air defence systems. Since India imports over 85 per cent of its crude

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oil requirement, a sharp increase in global oil prices could lead to an increase in the country's oil import bill and weaken the rupee due to the larger outflow of foreign exchange.

The cheaper purchase of oil from Russia has helped India to reduce its oil import bill by 16 per cent to \$132.4 billion for the fiscal year 2023-24 from \$157.5 billion spent in the previous year.

The total quantity of oil imported in 2023-24 was 232.5 million metric tonnes (MMT) compared with 232.7 MMT in 2022-23 which is more or less the same level.

BIZ BUZZ

Canara Bank unveils new products, services

Bhubaneswar: Canara Bank Circle Office Bhubaneswar, a leading public sector bank in Odisha, has unveiled a series of new products and services April 19 at Bhubaneswar aimed at enhancing customer experience and streamlining banking operations. The event saw the launch of a healthcare-focused loan product 'Canara Heal' to meet the shortfall of hospitalisation expenditure while settling through TPA healthcare insurance claims of self and/or dependents. A customised savings account for women -- Canara Angel with unique feature like cancer care policy, pre-approved personal loan Canara ReadyCash and online loan against term deposit product Canara My Money. The launch ceremony was graced by the presence of Canara Bank's Executive Director, Bhavendra Kumar, along with Canara Bank State Head Jagdish Chander. Key features of the products were highlighted during the event. The latest product offerings reaffirm the banks' dedication to innovation and customer-centricity, setting new benchmarks in the banking industry.



two other foreign messaging apps - were also removed from the store on Friday, according to app tracking firms Qimai and AppMagic. The removal of the four apps suggests growing intolerance on the part of China's central government towards at least some foreign online messaging services that fall outside of its control. It also

Apple pulls WhatsApp, Threads from China app store

Washington: Apple said Friday it had removed Meta Platforms' and Threads from its App Store in China after being ordered to do so by the Chinese government, which cited national security concerns. Telegram and Signal - two other foreign messaging apps - were also removed from the store on Friday, according to app tracking firms Qimai and AppMagic. The removal of the four apps suggests growing intolerance on the part of China's central government towards at least some foreign online messaging services that fall outside of its control. It also signals less leeway for Apple in China. That said, other Meta apps including Facebook, Instagram and Messenger remained available to download, according to Reuters checks Friday. Many other popular apps developed by Western companies including YouTube and X were also available.



EPFO SUBSCRIBERS GROW BY 19% TO 1.65CR IN FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: Retirement fund body EPFO registered over 19 per cent growth year-on-year to 1.65 crore members in 2023-24, as per the latest payroll data, showing improvement in the employment situation in the country.

"In last 6 and half years alone, more than 6.1 crore members joined the EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) fold, indicating formalisation of the job market," a labour ministry official told PTI.

The data shows that the EPFO had added 61.12 lakh net subscribers in 2018-19, which increased to 78.58 lakh in 2019-20. However, it dipped to 77.08 lakh in 2020-21, mainly due to the pandemic effect and improved again to 1.22 crore in 2021-22 and 1.38 crore in 2022-23.

The official informed that the net subscribers addition by the body increased by over 19 per cent to 1.65 crore in 2023-24 compared to 1.38 crore in 2022-23.

The net addition in EPFO subscriptions is an indicator of the extent of formalisation of the job market, and the coverage of social security benefits to the organised/ semi-organised sector workforce, the official opined. The biggest advantage of EPFO



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data is that this is administrative data, he pointed out.

During the nationwide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the net addition to EPFO subscriptions declined and turned negative in April-May 2020, which implies a net exit from the scheme, he stated. With the unlocking of the economy and easing of restrictions, the EPFO subscriptions bounced back swiftly, reaching 12.2 lakh in September 2020, he noted.

The net additional subscription witnessed a decline again in November 2020 and during the second wave of Covid-19 (April-June 2021). However, he said, the magnitude of the decline in both cases was less compared to April-May 2020.

The official also cited the surge of vacancies on the National

Career Service (NCS) portal in 2023-24.

The NCS Portal has undergone a remarkable evolution, witnessing a surge of over 214 per cent in job vacancies in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23 from about 35 lakh vacancies in FY23 to more than 1 crore vacancies in FY24, he added. Under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the NCS Project operates as a standalone initiative focused on bridging the gap between employers and job seekers.

Its primary objective is to revolutionise the National Employment Service by providing a wide range of employment-related services, including job matching, career counselling, and employability enhancement facilities, all conveniently accessible online.

Forex reserves dip by \$5.4bn

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 19: India's foreign exchange reserves fell by \$5.4 billion to \$643.16 billion as of April 12, according to the latest weekly data released by the RBI Friday.

This is the first time in 8 weeks that the foreign exchange reserves have recorded a fall after having touched lifetime highs in the preceding weeks.

Market analysts attribute the decline to the RBI actively releasing dollars in the market to curb the volatility in the rupee.

The Indian currency has tended to weaken as oil prices have been on the rise which has triggered an increase in the demand for dollars to finance costlier imports. The data released Friday showed that the foreign currency portion of the reserves fell by as much as \$6.51 billion in the week ended April 12.

However, there was an increase of \$1.24 billion in the value of gold assets held by the RBI which cushioned the fall of the forex kitty.

Central banks have also been buying gold in recent months as an investment in safe-haven assets amid geopolitical uncertainties triggered by the Middle East conflict. India's foreign exchange reserves had gone up by \$2.98 billion during the week ended April 5 to scale a new all-time high of \$648.562 billion.

DELHI TO GURUGRAM IN JUST SEVEN MINUTES

InterGlobe, Archer Aviation plan electric air taxis by 2026

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: InterGlobe Enterprises, the parent company of India's top airline IndiGo, and US-based Archer Aviation will launch an all-electric air taxi service in India in 2026, that will carry passengers from Connaught Place in the national capital to Gurugram in Haryana in just 7 minutes.

The 200 planes, each having 12 rotors, will cost around \$1 billion.

The cost of the seven-minute flight operated with the company's five-seater eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing) aircraft from Connaught Place to Gurugram in Haryana could be around ₹2,000 to 3,000, according to Archer Aviation executives.

Archer Aviation Founder and CEO Adam Goldstein Friday said discussions are going on with the US regulator Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the certification process for its aircraft is at an advanced stage.

The certification is expected next year and once that is in place, the process will be initiated for the certification by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

In an interview with PTI in the national capital, Goldstein said the company expects to start flights in India in 2026 and aims to have 200 of its Midnight planes for the operations.

Initially, Archer Aviation will be focusing on Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru. With its flight, the duration will be around 7



minutes from Connaught Place in Delhi to Gurugram and the cost could be ₹2,000 to 3,000. In a car, for the 27-kilometre distance, it would take around 90 minutes and the cost would be about ₹1,500, according to Goldstein. The five-seater Midnight air-

craft will be able to accommodate the pilot and four passengers. The plane, which will have six battery packs, will get fully charged in 30-40 minutes and one minute charge broadly translates to one minute of flight, its Chief Commercial Officer Nikhil

Archer Aviation will supply 200 electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft that can carry four passengers besides a pilot and operate just like helicopters but with lesser noise and better safety

Besides Delhi, the joint venture between InterGlobe and Archer Aviation will launch similar services in Mumbai and Bangalore to start with

Goel said. Archer Aviation will be having a joint venture with InterGlobe Enterprises and the final contours are being worked out.

The US-based company is also in discussions with various municipalities with respect to infrastructure and other aspects of the flight operations.

Goel said it will use the full strength of InterGlobe, which is a conglomerate, and the joint venture might choose partners for the eVTOL operations in India.

Discussions are also going on with respect to the real estate space required for vertiports or the launchpads and other infrastructure for starting the flight operations.

Archer Aviation will be opening its manufacturing facility in the US this year and initially it will have a capacity to produce up to 650 planes and the same will be enhanced to 2,000 planes.

To a query on whether the company will be looking at manufacturing the planes in India in the future, Goldstein replied in the affirmative.

RAHUL, DE KOCK LIFT LSG

Pant set for emotional homecoming vs SRH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 19: Openers KL Rahul and Quinton de Kock, who made classy fifties on a slow pitch, produced a chasing masterclass to power Lucknow Super Giants to a comfortable eight-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match here Friday.

Asked to bat first, Ravindra Jadeja came up with a solid unbeaten 57 (40b, 5x4, 1x6) before Moonen Ali (30, 20b, 3x6) and MS Dhoni (28 n o, 9b, 3x4, 2x6) went on a six-hitting spree to take CSK to a fighting 176/6. Ajinkya Rahane (36, 24b, 5x4, 1x6) too chipped in valuable runs at the top.

In reply, Rahul (82, 53b, 9x4, 3x6) and De Kock (54, 43b, 5x4, 1x6) batted with authority during their match-winning alliance of 134, the highest partnership for any wicket at the Ekana Stadium, as LSG scored 180/2 in 19 overs to recover from back-to-back loss and consolidate their position in the table.

Guilty of not capitalising on his starts, Rahul finally lived up to the expectations, while De Kock overcame a scratchy start to return with a half century. Chasing 177, Rahul was the aggressor as he played some magnificent strokes to give LSG a flying start.

The skipper was harsh on Deepak Chahar as he pulled the pacer for a six, before slapping him for another maximum over cover. He also hit him for a four off a slower delivery as runs came thick and fast. De Kock too smashed Tushar Deshpande for a maximum over deep mid-wicket as the powerplay yielded 54/0.

Rahul next sent a short-pitched ball from pacer Matheesha Pathirana (1/29) over the third man for another maximum and the bowler was left further demoralised when he dropped De Kock's catch at short third man off Jadeja (1/43) in the ninth over. After 10 overs, LSG were 89 for no loss.



Rahul notched up his 35th fifty before picking up a boundary to complete a 100-run opening stand with De Kock. The South African, who was subdued in the last three games, then reached his fifty in the 15th over. However, Nicholas Pooran (23 n o) came out with all cylinders blazing. A one-handed catch from Jadeja finally ended Rahul's fabulous knock but it was too late.

Earlier, Rahul was spot on with his bowling changes as the pacers put the CSK batters under pressure initially before spinner Krunal Pandya (2/16) tightened the noose in the middle overs.

Opener Rachin Ravindra's (0) awful run continued as left-arm pacer Mohsin Khan rattled his stumps, while Ruturaj Gaikwad (17) fell to Yash Thakur. Rahane, who opened the innings again, played some exquisite shots.

Jadeja, promoted to No. 4, picked a boundary off LSG debutant Matt Henry as CSK scored 52/2 in the first six overs. Owing to the slowness of the track, LSG skipper immediately introduced spinners Krunal and Bishnoi and the former struck in his second over, cleaning up Rahane.

CSK's man-in-form Shivam Dube too failed to fire with Stoinis

(1/7) justifying Rahul's decision to hand over the ball to him, striking in his first ball.

Krunal then returned to dismiss impact player Sameer Rizvi, who paid the price for his pre-meditated dance down the track as CSK lost half their side with 90 on board.

Jadeja, who played some cracking sweep shots, held one end up and completed his fifty with a six off Mohsin to bring out his trademark sword-wielding celebration. Rahul's decision to give another over to Bishnoi, however, backfired as Moeen slammed three sixes as 19 came off the 18th over before perishing.

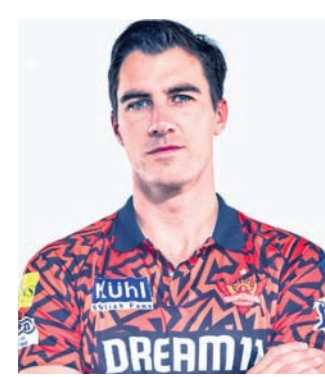
LSG paid the price for a sloppy overrate as Dhoni slammed a four and a six off Mohsin before smashing Thakur for another maximum. He finished the innings with two more fours as 19 came off the last over.

BRIEF SCORES

CSK 176/6 (Ravindra Jadeja 57 n o, Ajinkya Rahane 36, Moeen Ali 30, MS Dhoni 28 n o; Krunal Pandya 2/16, Marcus Stoinis 1/7) lost to LSG 180/2 (KL Rahul 82, Quinton de Kock 54, Nicholas Pooran 23 n o; Matheesha Pathirana 1/29) by 8 wickets.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, April 19: He walked on crutches in one of his first public appearances at Feroz Shah Kotla last year, but when an emotional Rishabh Pant walks out as captain of Delhi Capitals, he will need to put on his 'out of box' thinking cap to stop a marauding Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here Saturday.

Capitals have had a mixed season so far, but a couple of impressive wins against Lucknow Super Giants and Gujarat Titans have put them back in the mix with three wins and four defeats in seven outings so far.

Placed fourth in the IPL points table, Sunrisers Hyderabad have set a different template altogether with two of the highest-ever totals of 277/3 and 287/3, which will require lot of heart and skill to counter.

Hence, 'Captain Pant' will have to use his resources with extreme caution and guile on a Kotla track which will have good bounce and carry, for a change.

Travis Head (235 runs) will be keen to build on his 39-ball century and his partner Abhishek Sharma (211 runs) is no pushover either, with his penchant for taking aerial route during the powerplay.

Head and Abhishek's intimidating strike rates of 199 and 197 respectively will pose a serious challenge for pace trio of Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed and Mukesh Kumar.

Adding to the threat is Heinrich Klaasen also striking

at 199, who is one of the best finishers in international cricket with propensity to hit balls out of the stadium, which gives SRH's batting a scary look.

But Kuldeep Yadav's (economy of 6.06) left-arm wrist-spin could well prove to be a game changer and in Tristan Stubbs, Pant has got an ideal third spin option alongside Axar Patel (6.75).

Pant, who is himself getting back to the top of his game, wouldn't mind if he can win the toss and opt to bat. But David Warner's knuckle injury is a cause for concern for Pant and head coach Ricky Ponting although Jake Fraser-McGurk has impressed one and all in his first two matches.

While SRH's batting has been top-notch on belters, their bowlers have suffered a lot on those tracks with only skipper Pat Cummins (7.87) having an economy rate of less than 8 runs per over, which is considered good in today's day and age of T20.

However seasoned duo of Jaydev Unadkat (11.35) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (10.45), have both been average while spinners — wrist-spinner Mayank Markande (11.23) and left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed (ER 12.44) — have been sent on a leather hunt.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

DC vs SRH

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

GUKESH CRUSHES ABASOV, BACK AMONG JOINT LEADERS

Odisha FC sail into maiden ISL semis



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Toronto, April 19: Teenaged Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh produced another fantastic performance to crash through the defenses of Azerbaijan's Nijat Abasov and regain a share of the lead but R Praggnanandhaa and Vidit Gujrathi bowed out of contention after the 12th round of the Candidates chess tournament here.

With American Hikaru Nakamura scoring a victory over Firouza Alireza of France, it is now a three-way lead at the top. Gukesh and Nakamura joined overnight top-placed Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, who drew with Praggnanandhaa, on 7.5 points and these three are now followed by Fabiano Caruana of United States who is on seven points.

Praggnanandhaa is still fifth with six points with Gujrathi following him on five points. However, with just two rounds to come in the eight-player double round-robin tournament, it is almost impossible for the duo to finish on the podium.

In the women's section, the Chinese domination was cemented by Zhongyi Tan, who played a draw with Nurgyul Salimova of Bulgaria. Russian Kateryna Lagno was only able to squeeze half a point against another Chinese Tingjie Lei.

India's Koneru Humpy did well to hold Aleksandra

Goryachkina of Russia to a draw while R Vaishali scored her second straight victory at the expense of Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine.

With Tan on eight points, Lei is half a point behind. The trio of Humpy, Lagno and Goryachkina are a distant third on six points. Vaishali moved to 5.5 points to take the sixth spot, ahead of Salimova and Muzychuk.

The 17-year old Gukesh is only the second youngest in history to ever compete in a Candidates tournament and the last time someone younger played was way back in 1959 — when Bobby Fischer stormed into the chess world.

Black against Abasov and needing a victory desperately, the Indian did not disappoint in the Nimzo Indian defense game wherein the Azerbaijani was outwitted in all departments of the game.

Choosing side-variations wisely has been a hallmark of Gukesh's strategy throughout the event and yet again, he came out on top. Abasov may have thought he was better but as the game progressed into the middle game, Gukesh made some perfect manoeuvres to reach an endgame where white reeled under pressure with pawn weaknesses.

Gukesh won a pawn on the queen side and in the ensuing minor pieces endgame, his passed pawns were clearly superior.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 19: Odisha FC qualified for the semifinals of the Indian Super League (ISL) by beating Kerala Blasters FC by 2-1 at the Kalinga Stadium here, Friday. Accordingly, the Juggernauts have won their first-ever ISL playoff game, and thus made it to the semifinal for the first time in the competition's history.

They will now be competing against the Mohun Bagan Super Giant across two legs in the last-four clash for a place in the title clash April 23 and 28.

In a gripping encounter spanning across 120 minutes, the Juggernauts continued their unconquered streak at home despite a goal down in the game. After a barren first half, Lithuanian striker Fedor Cernych netted in the 67th minute to break the deadlock before Diego Mauricio and Isak Vanlalruatfela scored once each in the 87th and 97th minutes respectively to guide Odisha FC into the semifinals.

Kerala Blasters had come across plenty of scoring opportunities before they finally broke the deadlock. Though they secured the first lead in the game, it is inarguable that the Yellow Army squandered several chances in front of the goal in the build-up to Cernych's strike.



As the game progressed, Odisha FC began pushing forward to find breakthroughs themselves, leaving spaces open in their backline for the Kochi-based team to exploit upon.

They did exactly that, embarking on a fast strike with the help of Mohammed Aimen, who collected the ball a few yards outside of the box and delivered it for an onrushing Cernych. The striker shot the ball into the back of the net, getting the visitors a foot ahead in the match.

The home team replied with

a couple of goals, and incidentally both of them were starkly incidental in nature. Roy Krishna assisted both of them, squaring up passes from the right side of the box. With long balls coming from near the midline, Krishna picked them up and laid it for Mauricio and Isak who tapped them in similarly.

In the 87th minute, Krishna got behind the Kerala Blasters defensive line and laid out a pass for Mauricio that he scored to equalise the game leading the match into extra-time.

In the seventh minute of the

extra-time, Isak showed similar accuracy from the very same position from close range, dashing Kerala Blasters' hopes of a semifinal berth.

Earlier, Odisha FC club president Raj Athwal has expressed his delight over the team's performance throughout the season. "It's been a great season with so many positives to reflect upon. This has been our highest league finish and points tally as well as (we became) the first team qualify for the playoffs. We went 15 games unbeaten in all competitions."

Late arrival costs Punia, Sujet dearly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 19: In a huge setback for the Indian wrestling contingent at the Asia Olympic Qualifiers in Bishkek, two of the country's best wrestlers, Deepak Punia and Sujet Kalakal, will miss the continental event as they could not report for the weigh-in on time as their flight arrived late in the Kyrgyzstan capital owing to bad weather in Dubai.

While both Punia and Kalkal eventually managed to reach Bishkek after being stranded at the Dubai international airport due to incessant rain and flooding, they could not report for the mandatory weigh-in on time, according to sources. The sources added that the organisers did not allow late weigh-in despite



request from the Indian coaches. Punia (86kg), who had come close to winning a medal at the Tokyo Games, and Sujet (65kg), were on their way to Bishkek to participate in the Asia Olympic qualifiers — the second-last qualifying event for Paris Olympics — when a majority of the flights leaving Dubai got cancelled or delayed because of the flooding of the airport.

The duo, accompanied by Russian coach Kamal Malikov and physio Shubham Gupta, were forced to sleep on the floor and had no access to proper food due to the rain-induced crisis in Dubai.

"They were stuck at the Dubai airport since April 16 and it seems the chance of qualifying for Paris Olympics is slipping out of their hands as they are scheduled to compete tomorrow. They are not getting any flights to Bishkek. I am worried about them," Dayanand Kalakal, Sujet's father, had told PTI Thursday.

Deepak and Sujet were training in Dagestan, Russia from April 2 to 15 and decided to fly from Makachkala to Bishkek via Dubai. The last chance to qualify for Paris will be World Qualifiers in Turkey in May.

LALITENDU'S DEVOTION FOR CRICKET A BLESSING FOR KIDS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 19: One can commit to something for a period of time might be easy, but the commitment turns into devotion when one dedicates his life for something. And that's what Lalitendu Mohanty has done for cricket.

Lalitendu, a native from Sauri near Salepur in Cuttack district and currently residing in Bhubaneswar, has devoted himself to cricket and he has been coaching budding talents helping the state to get new stars.

Lalitendu, inspired from his mother, set his mind on cricket

in his childhood. He was coached under late B Krishnappa of Paralakhemundi. He completed his coaching course in Bangalore's National Institute of Sports, the academic wing of the Sports Authority of India.

He coached in Nagpur and in some nearby places before joining as a coach in Odisha Cricket Association in Cuttack, 1988-97. He later joined BCCI as a coach. After

few years, he worked at Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Govt of India for 30 years. His tenure at Department of Sports and Culture, Gajapati witnessed him working for the development of other sports.

