



## Multifaceted career

Actor Priyanka Chopra discusses her 10-year journey straddling multiple film industries

LEISURE | P2



## Middle East on edge

Iran's foreign minister says Tehran is investigating an overnight attack on Iran, adding that so far a link to Israel had not been proven

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Russian oil binge

Russia becomes top crude oil supplier to India during fiscal year 2023/24 for a second year in a row

BUSINESS | P11



## Vinesh impresses

Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat secures Paris Olympics berth in women's 50kg category with a strong show at the Asian Olympic Qualifier

SPORTS | P12

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 21 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | SUNDAY APRIL 21 2024

12 PAGES + SUNDAY POST | ₹5.00



**HEAT BUSTER:** A traffic official is seen near 120 Infantry Battalion campus in Bhubaneswar, Saturday, wearing an air-conditioned helmet. The headgear, expected to bring the temperature down by about 15 degrees Celsius, has been introduced by the Twin City Commissionerate Police to keep the personnel cool and focused amid soaring temperatures

PHOTO: MANORANJAN MISHRA

## BJD, Cong name nominees for polls

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) announced candidates for nine more Assembly seats, while the Congress named 16 more MLA and three MP nominees for the upcoming polls in the state, Saturday.

The BJD dropped the sitting MLAs of Champua, Remuna, Kendrapara,

Anandpur, Barchana, and Simulia from contesting the upcoming election.

BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik surprised many by nominating actress Varsha Priyadarshini, who joined the party Thursday, to contest the Barchana Assembly seat, replacing sitting MLA Amar Satpathy, who was also vying for the seat for his son.

Varsha is the ex-wife of sitting Kendrapara MP Anubhav

Mohanty, who quit the BJD and joined the BJP.

The Congress picked Dulal Chandra Pradhan, Binod Bihari Nayak and Debokanta Sharma for Sambalpur, Keonjhar and Aska Lok Sabha seats, respectively.

The 16 Assembly candidates include Shipra Mallick for Kendrapara, Gyan Ranjan Patnaik for Pipili, Krushna Sagaria for Jayadev and Sonali Sahoo for Khurda. P3

## Boudh, Baripada hottest in country at 45.2° Celsius

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** Several parts of Odisha reeled under severe heatwave condition Saturday with the mercury breaching the 43-degree Celsius mark at 10 places, the Met department said.

According to the evening bulletin issued by the IMD here, Boudh in western Odisha and Baripada in the northern region were the hottest places in the country, as both recorded a maximum temperature of 45.2 degrees Celsius. Nuapada registered 44 deg Celsius, followed by Talcher and Bolangir (43.6 deg C each), Nayagarh, Angul and Keonjhar (43.5 deg C each), Jharsuguda 43.2 deg C and Hirakud 43.1 deg C.

The IMD forecasts no major change in the maximum temperatures during the next 24 hours in Odisha. It has issued an orange warning, as heatwave to severe heatwave conditions is very likely at one or two places in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Angul, Boudh, Cuttack and Keonjhar, Sunday.



## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I can only tell you who I voted for, but I can't tell you who will get my vote

## AAP sees conspiracy for Kejriwal's 'slow death'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 20:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Saturday alleged that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is being pushed towards a 'slow death' inside Tihar jail by denying him insulin and consultations with his doctor.

Kejriwal, who has Type-II diabetes, has been asking for insulin and a video conferencing with his family doctor but his requests are being denied by the jail administration, party spokesperson Saurabh Bharadwaj said in a press conference.

"I want to say with full responsibility that a conspiracy is underway for the slow death of Kejriwal," Bharadwaj claimed citing blood sugar readings of the Chief Minister in jail.

He also slammed the Tihar administration, BJP, Centre and Delhi LG for allegedly denying insulin to Kejriwal and said the Delhi Chief Minister had been suffering from diabetes for the last 20-22 years.

Friday, the Chief Minister's

counsel senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi said Kejriwal has not been administered insulin to control his sugar levels since his arrest, terming it 'shocking' and 'alarming'.

The ED had Thursday claimed before the court that Kejriwal was eating food high in sugar like mangoes and sweets every day, despite having Type-II diabetes, to create grounds for medical bail.

The Delhi CM, however, refuted the ED's claims by asserting before a court that the food he consumed was in conformity with the diet chart prepared by his doctor.

"Out of 48 meals sent from home, only three times mangoes were there...", Singhvi told the court. Bharadwaj said Kejriwal was allowed by the court to use a machine in the jail to monitor his daily blood sugar levels.

"Overall, it was a conspiracy to finish Kejriwal by damaging his organs and when he comes out of jail after 2-4 months he goes for treatment of kidney, heart and other organs," said Bharadwaj, who holds the portfolio of Health in Delhi government.

## Man abducts, kills minor nephew

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Titilagarh, April 20:** A 14-year old boy was kidnapped and strangled to death by his uncle over ₹3 lakh ransom demand at Belpada village under this police limits in Bolangir district, police said Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Rehan Bag, son of Kamanidhi Bag of Belpada village under this police limits. The accused was identified as Rohan Bag. The incident has spread shockwaves in the area.

The matter came to the fore after police arrested the killer uncle and took him to the crime spot for scene recreation, Saturday. Police also exhumed the decomposed body of the minor and sent it for post-mortem.

Later, police produced the accused in the court from where he was remanded to judicial custody after the magistrate rejected his bail plea. A case (166/24) under Sections-302 and 366 of IPC was registered in this connection.

The accused admitted to his crime during the interrogation. He confirmed that he strangled his nephew to death after he failed to get ₹3 lakh as ransom from the latter's father, April 14. Later, he buried



the body near a creek close to the village and fled the scene.

However, police zeroed in on him after a letter written by Rohan demanding ransom was handed over to the former by the victim's father.

Police said that the victim's father Kamanidhi Bag had lodged a missing complaint at Titilagarh police station about his son went missing from home, April 14. Police registered a case over the complaint and launched an investigation.

Police found the involvement

of Rohan in the missing of the boy during probe when his father handed over a letter demanding ransom to the police. The letter mentioned that Kamanidhi's son will be released only after he pays ₹3 lakh.

Police formed a technical team for further probe on the basis of the letter. Police and the team found the involvement of Rohan in the boy's missing and picked him up for interrogation.

He was brought over to the police station where he admitted to the kidnapping and murder of his nephew.

## Cong man alleges 'love jihad' after daughter's murder

AGENCIES

**Bangalore, April 20:** The gruesome murder of a Karnataka corporator's daughter has become the latest flashpoint between the Congress and the BJP. The Congress leader's daughter was stabbed seven times by a former student of the college she was attending in Hubballi. Cops suspect that he murdered her because she rejected his advances.

Neha Hiremath, 23, was a first-year student of Master of Computer Applications and Fayaz Khondunalk was earlier her classmate. While the state's ruling party has tried to project it as an incident from a personal angle, the BJP has said it shows the deterioration of law and order in the state. Union Minister and Dharwad Lok Sabha BJP candidate Pralhad Joshi suspected that there was a 'love jihad' angle behind the incident.

What has exacerbated the state government's troubles is the girl's father also calling the crime



a 'love jihad' case. Niranjan Hiremath, a Congress corporator, claimed "The gang had conspired for a long time. They had planned either to trap her or to execute her. They have been threatening her in that backdrop. However, the girl had not heeded to their threats."

"Love jihad spreading, take care of your girls," he added.

The Congress said that the state has the best law and order and the BJP was trying to impose the Governor's rule in Karnataka.

Meanwhile, a large group of right-wing activists have also been protesting outside Hubballi's Vidyanager police station and shouting slogans. Similar protests, calling for severe punishment for the Muslim accused, have been reported in various other places.

## Current plastic production threatens 1.5°C limit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 20:** If the current rate of plastic production continues, it could use up the global carbon budget to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by as early as 2060 or no later than 2083, according to a new study.

The study by the United States' Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) comes ahead of the fourth round of United Nations negotiations for an international treaty to end plastic pollution in Ottawa, Canada, during April 23-29.

It is estimated that global plastic production today accounts for around 12 per cent of total demand for oil and 8.5 per cent of

total demand for natural gas.

Greenhouse gas emissions during primary plastic production come from burning fossil fuels for heat and electricity, and other processes that don't involve burning. About 75 per cent of these emissions happen before the plastic is even formed.

Burning fossil fuels is the primary reason for the increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which are driving up global temperatures.

The study suggests that primary plastic production needs to decrease by around 12 to 17 per cent per year starting in 2024 to avoid breaching the 1.5 degrees Celsius limit set by the Paris Agreement.



In 2019 alone, primary plastic production generated about 2.24 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO<sub>2</sub>e), which is 5.3 per cent of total global green-

house gas emissions (excluding agriculture and LULUCF (Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry)).

In contrast, the global avia-

tion sector produced 0.6 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2019, while the entire global transport sector, including aviation, produced 8.3 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e.

Under a conservative growth scenario (2.5 per cent per year), GHG emissions from primary plastic production would more than double to 4.75 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO<sub>2</sub>e) by 2050, accounting for 21-26 per cent of the remaining global carbon budget for a 50 per cent chance of staying below the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold.

At a growth rate of 4 per cent per year, emissions from primary plastic production would increase more than threefold to 6.78 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e, accounting for 25-31 per cent of the remaining global carbon budget, the study said.

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	40.5°C	40.5°C
Min Temp	27.5°C	26.5°C
Humidity	79%	70%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**

NO MAJOR CHANGE



# leisure



## RIHANNA REGRETS SHOWING OFF TOO MUCH SKIN

Singer-songwriter Rihanna has reflected on some of her past fashion choices, expressing regret over certain aspects. She revealed that one of her current 'fashion icks' is showing off too much skin, reports *People magazine*.

## DRAKE USED AI-GENERATED VOICES FOR HIS DISS TRACK

Rapper Drake dropped a track on his social media titled *Taylor Made Freestyle*. The song features AI vocals from Tupac Shakur and Snoop Dogg on a stopgap between diss records as he awaits Kendrick Lamar's response to his latest release *Push Ups*, reports *Variety*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

**ARIES**  
Today is an ordinary day, it is business as usual, but there will be some progress. You can while away your time doing petty chores. And, Ganesha says, while day-dreaming think about that coveted home, as that's how the first plans materialise.

**TAURUS**  
The stars are very auspiciously disposed towards you, announces Ganesha. You have an exceptionally bright and enjoyable day ahead of you. All events and situations will work in your favour. If you are pursuing higher studies you will perform brilliantly.

**GEMINI**  
It is a day filled with joy and happiness on the home front. You will spend a lot of time with children. You will complete long pending household projects as well as take an interest in ironing out differences between family members, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Your speech will today explode your thoughts. You will ponder over new deals and decide to act only after much thought. Ganesha feels that you met with success in your ambition to achieve a breakthrough.

**LEO**  
You will feel a little uneasy today. You will feel that nothing is going right. You will try to organise yourself and concentrate your scattered energies today. This phase of uncertainty will be gone in a few days, assures Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Today is a day for introspection and you will find yourself in a pensive mood. Ganesha advises you to search for the inner peace that you want. Stay calm to discover the hidden treasures within you. In the evening you will be glad to help someone who is in need of it.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says you will be able to spend ample time with your loved ones and may even taken them out for lunch or dinner which will bring you more closer to them. You will even try to please them by showering them with gifts and presents today.

**SCORPIO**  
There's always a first time, and today is the day when you would seal a profitable deal for your new business venture. However, close the deal only if it is beneficial for a long term. Be cautious and watch your steps carefully to avoid any unfortunate situation.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You may have to make important decisions of life today, says Ganesha. Remember, haste makes waste, so take every decision only after thinking about its long-term consequences or end results. Be patient.

**CAPRICORN**  
Print and electronic media will attract your attention, if you're just planning to begin your career. Your spiritual and philosophical approach give you inner peace, and also inspire you to visit a holy place. Overall, you will have a balanced day, today, says Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS**  
You will feel deeply inclined towards development and research, today. Actions speak louder than words, and your efforts and overall growth will speak plenty about your character. Your romantic side will come to the fore today. You will be willing to do anything and everything to bring a bright smile on the face of sweetheart, feels Ganesha, all of it will get noticed. Enjoy the good times!

**PISCES**  
It is difficult for you to be part of one team and to work as a member on two teams, but today you can do anything you want. You will be able to show your expertise to your team today and will be praised by all. Women will make a profit today and will feel encouraged.

## Priyanka on straddling multiple industries

**New Delhi:** Priyanka Chopra is a master of many arts. She is an accomplished actor, producer, singer, and entrepreneur. There is no denying that the star has wowed both Bollywood and Hollywood fans with her tremendous body of work. In a recent chat with a news agency, she talked about straddling both the film and television industries.

The actress expressed, "For me now, it's almost been 10 years. I've been straddling both industries in both worlds. It's very exciting to me to be able to work in any language and to be able to work in two of the largest film industries in the world, which are Bollywood and Hollywood. I love my job, and I love the medium that I've been

given, which is the arts, to tell stories and to move people."

Chopra, who lent her voice to the upcoming nature documentary film *Tiger*, also talked about the challenge she faced during the project. She shared, "When you are an actor, you are used to the audio-visual medium. And here, we are taking away the visual, and it is just the audio medium. I think the challenge really is to be able to convey emotions with just your voice and not do too much, but yet be able to find the right balance. I think I learned a lot from them about how to creatively tell me how much was enough. It is really something that excites me and enjoys me. It is challenging, but I really get excited by it."

*Tiger* will be released on Disney+ Hotstar April 22. P11



**Mumbai:** Actress Sunny Leone, who currently hosts the dating reality show *MTV Splitsville X5: ExSqueeze Me Please*, gave a piece of mind to those contestants who feel that physical violence is permissible on the show.

During the episode, Sunny firmly said, "Splitsville does not condone violence, when you raise a hand against somebody you are violating their personal space and breaking our rules. Mujhe pata hai bahot saare emotions nikal rahe hai but that doesn't mean we hit each other and fight like animals because that is what you guys were just now. I actually think that animals have a code of conduct better than what I

just saw. You are not allowed to hit each other, bhagwaan ne zabaan di hai woh use karo."

Her co-host, Tanuj also warned the contestants, as he said, "We understand there are unresolved issues but this is not the way, take this as the last and final warning from us."

*MTV Splitsville X5: ExSqueeze Me Please* currently streams on MTV and JioCinema.

**Sunny condemns physical violence**



## Sonali doesn't want to be slotted and boxed

**Mumbai:** Actress Sonali Bendre spoke about her role in the 1998 film *Duplicate*, co-starring Shah Rukh Khan and Juhi Chawla. In an interview, she said that her character in the film didn't turn out as expected, as she recalled how she felt reduced to a caricature rather than portraying the character as intended.

When asked about a film or project that left a lasting impact on her career, she said, "There was a film I was doing at that time called *Duplicate* where I was approached to play a grey character in some way. It was very exciting and challenging for me to portray that character. We started preparing for the role in that way and also started shooting it accordingly, but slowly, I felt I became a caricature and not really the grey character I was supposed to play."

She added, "Every time a duplicate song is played and people mention the film, the thing that I remember the most is the fact that how much a story can get derailed and how much you can start with something and where it goes. As time goes by, I wondered whether I misinterpreted something or if it was the other way around. But then, as you go forward, sometimes you do things for that paycheck, but in my second inning, I don't want to be slotted and boxed, and I want to do characters that break this stereotype."

On the work front, Sonali will soon be seen in *The Broken News Season 2*. AGENCIES



## RAJKUMMAR ADDRESSES PLASTIC SURGERY RUMOURS

**Mumbai:** Actor Rajkumar Rao addressed the recent buzz surrounding plastic surgery rumours sparked by viral photos from Diljit Dosanjh's concert.

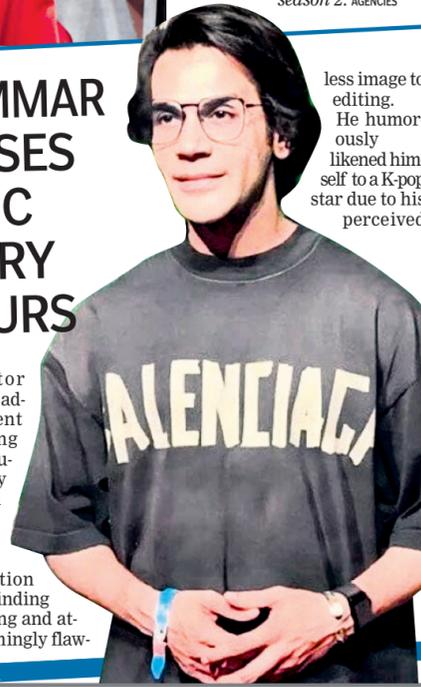
Rao clarified that the speculation was unfounded, finding the debate amusing and attributing the seemingly flaw-

less image to editing. He humorously likened himself to a K-pop star due to his perceived

perfection. Reflecting on his journey, he recounted initial criticisms about his appearance, with industry insiders doubting his ability to land lead roles. However, after the success of *Kai Po Che!*, he sought dermatological advice for the first time, discovering facial fillers to address perceived imbalances. The actor found the confidence boost transformative, particularly in roles like those in *Stree* and *Badhaai Do*.

He defended his decision, asserting control over his appearance and likening it to other cosmetic procedures like hair transplants. As long as enhancements are not excessive and maintain his identity, the *Stree* actor sees no issue in embracing them for personal confidence.

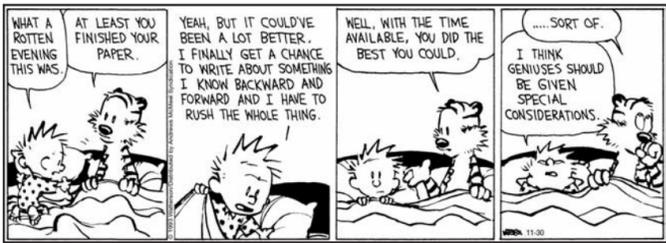
On the work front, Rajkumar Rao will be next seen in his latest film, *Srikanth Aa Raha Hai Sabki Aankhein Kholne*. AGENCIES



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

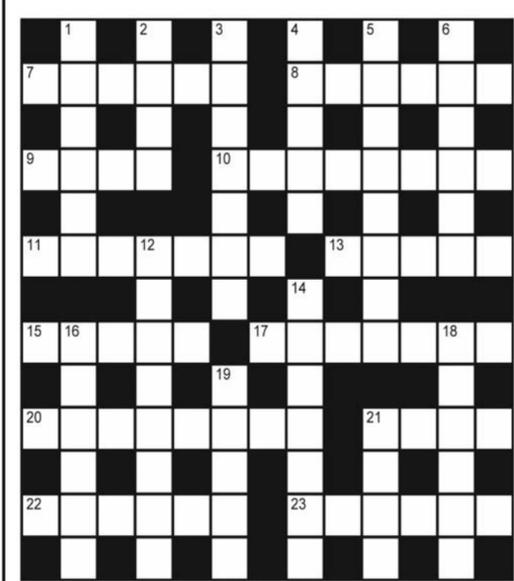


### BREVITY



### FUN post

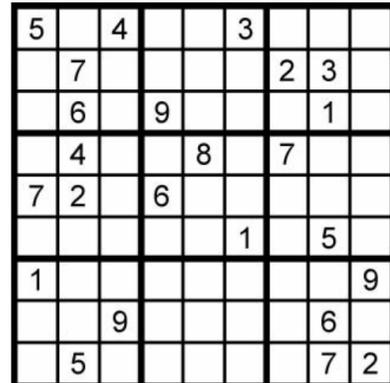
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Term of office
  - 8 Excrete
  - 9 Chisel
  - 10 Budgie, for one
  - 11 Little sound
  - 13 Vascular growth
  - 15 Antsy
  - 17 Recipe
  - 20 Break up
  - 21 Zero
  - 22 Flamethrower fuel
  - 23 Kind of tree
  - Down**
  - 1 Einstein was one
  - 2 Chinese boat
  - 3 Harbour
  - 4 Short statement
  - 5 Photo finish place?
  - 6 Impertinent
  - 12 Unrest
  - 14 Fall asleep (4,3)
  - 16 Boring tool
  - 18 Lacking friends
  - 19 Mild, as weather
  - 21 Unfeeling

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

**ANNUAL DAY**

Students of School of Raga Sangeet perform during the annual function of the institution at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

PI: BIKASH NAYAK



## 43 devotees to donate trees for Puri chariots



AGENCIES

**Puri, April 20:** At least 43 devotees from Nayagarh and Ranpur have agreed to donate their seasoned trees for construction of chariots for the upcoming Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath and His siblings in the Holy City here to overcome the present shortage of Phasi timber logs, official sources said Saturday.

This was revealed during a high-level coordination meeting, presided over by Revenue Divisional Commissioner (RDC) Ranjan Kumar Dash, to discuss the necessary preparations for the annual Rath Yatra to be held July 7.

The Debasnana Purnima will be observed May 10, followed by the Rath Yatra July 7, Bahuda Yatra (return car festival) July 15, and Suna Besha July 17.

The meeting also addressed concerns regarding the current state of health services and power supply in the town.

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration reported that the timber required for the construction of three chariots is being sawed at the government sawmill in Khapuria, Cuttack. Chariot construction will commence from the auspicious Akshaya Tritiya. The temple administration has approached the Tamil Nadu government to procure quality sandalwood for the deities.

Cloth for covering the three chariots has been procured, while ropes for pulling the chariots have been provided by the Odisha State Coir Corporation.

The meeting resolved to provide life insurance to

all devotees. The next of kin of who lose their lives in mishaps during the Rath Yatra will be given ₹5 lakh, which also covers the temple servitors.

Special sunstroke treatment units will operate in each primary health centre (PHC), and six beds will be available at the district headquarters hospital (DHH) to address heatwave conditions, Health department officials said.

Adequate healthcare services, including ambulances, doctors, and support staff, will be deployed. The meeting directed Tata Power to ensure continuous power supply at the earliest.

The civic body has been tasked with drain cleaning and sanitation work. Additionally, the meeting addressed the supply of essential commodities, piped water, and town-wide illumination.

Corporate houses will provide over 40 lakh drinking water bottles for distribution among devotees during the mega festival, compared to 25 lakh bottles provided last year.

Railway officials have assured the operation of more special trains during the festival. Puri SP Pinak Mishra stated that over 1,000 officers and 180 platoons of police force were engaged in last year's Rath Yatra. Special emphasis will be placed on effective crowd control, regulation of vehicular traffic and parking, as well as the security of devotees, VIPs, and the deities.

District Magistrate Siddharth Shankar Swain, IGP (Central Range) Sanjay Kaushal and officials from all departments attended the meet.

## BJD, CONG ANNOUNCE MORE CANDIDATES

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) announced candidates for nine more Assembly seats, while the Congress named 16 more MLA and three MP nominees for the upcoming polls in the state, Saturday.

BJD dropped the sitting MLAs of Champua, Kendrapara, Anandpur, Barchana, and Simulia from contesting the upcoming election.

Among the sitting MLAs who were denied tickets is the party's founding member and former minister Amar Prasad Satpathy who has served as an MLA for six terms.

Satpathy was elected to the Barchana Assembly seat six times, twice from the Janata Dal, once from the NCP, and three times as a BJD candidate.

He served as MoS for Agriculture in the Naveen Patnaik government from 2000 to 2002 and as the government Chief Whip in the Assembly from 2017 to 2019.

BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik surprised many by nominating actress Varsha Priyadarshini, who joined the party Thursday, to contest the Barchana Assembly seat, replacing sitting MLA Amar Satpathy, who was also vying for the seat for his son.

Varsha is the ex-wife of sitting Kendrapara MP Anubhav Mohanty, who quit the BJD and joined the BJP.

The party also named former minister Ganeshwar Behera, who recently resigned from the Congress and joined the BJD, as a candidate for the Kendrapara Assembly seat, denying party tickets to sitting MLA Sashi Bhusan Behera, who had served as MoS



Finance in the Naveen Patnaik government.

Sashi Bhusan was a member of the Rajya Sabha from 2012 to 2014 and served as a MLA from what is now Jayadev Assembly constituency.



This time, the BJD nominated noted trade union leader and former independent MLA Sanatan Mahakud to contest the Champua Assembly seat, replacing sitting MLA Minakshi Mahant.

However, the party renominated

sitting MLA Basanti Hembram from Karanjia Assembly seat.

The ruling party has so far announced candidates for 135 Assembly seats in six phases and is yet to finalise the candidates for the remaining 12 Assembly seats.

Meanwhile, Congress picked Dulal Chandra Pradhan, Binod Bihari Nayak and Debokanta Sharma for Sambalpur, Keonjhar and Aska Lok Sabha seats, respectively.

The 16 Assembly candidates include Shipra Mallick for Kendrapara, Gyan Ranjan Patnaik for Pipili, Krushna Sagaria for Jayadev and Sonali Sahoo for Khurda.

Congress has cancelled the earlier nomination of three Assembly candidates and a Lok Sabha candidate and given those to new candidates.

## Naveen leads BJD's star campaigners' list

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik and senior party leaders Kartik Pandian, Pranab Prakash Das, Debi Prasad Mishra and Manas Mangaraj are among the list of 40 star campaigners announced by the party for the upcoming polls, Saturday.

A host of ministers, for-

mer ministers, MLAs, and cine stars have also found place in the list.

Senior leaders Pratap Keshari Deb, Atanu Babysachi Nayak, Arun Kumar Sahoo, Sanjay Dasburma, Pradip Amat, Sasmit Patra, Muzibulla Khan, Pritiranjana Gharai, Sulata Deo, Bijay Nayak, Srimayee Mishra and Elina Das are among the 40 star campaigners list.

## HK, S'pore red flag 'cancer-causing' ingredient in MDH, Everest products

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 20:** Food regulators in Hong Kong (HK) and Singapore have warned people against using four products from two big spice brands – three from MDH and one from Everest – over the presence of ethylene oxide at 'levels exceeding the permissible limit'.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified ethylene oxide as a 'Group 1 carcinogen'.

In a statement posted on its website April 5, the Centre for Food Safety (CFS), Hong Kong's food regulatory authority, said that three spice products of MDH – Madras Curry Powder (spice blend for Madras Curry), Sambhar Masala (Mixed Masala Powder), and Curry Powder (Mixed Masala Powder) – along with Everest's Fish Curry Masala contain 'a pesticide, ethylene oxide'.

Both MDH and Everest Foods were yet to comment on the food regulators' claims. Under its routine food surveillance programme, the CFS took the products from three retail outlets in Hong Kong.

"The test results showed that the samples contained a pesticide, ethylene oxide," said a CFS spokesperson.

Meanwhile, the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) also ordered a recall of Everest's Fish Curry Masala due to the presence of ethylene oxide at levels 'exceeding the permissible limit'.

The SFA posted a release on its website April 18 that said it has directed the importer, Sp Muthiah & Sons Pte. Ltd., to recall the products. The recall is ongoing.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, 'ethylene oxide is a human carcinogen. It causes cancer.'

Celebrating the timeless legacy, profound wisdom, and teachings of Lord Mahaveer

Inauguration of

# 2550<sup>TH</sup> BHAGWAN MAHAVEER NIRVAN MAHOTSAV

Chief Guest  
**Prime Minister of India**

**Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024 at 09:00 am**  
Bharat Mandapam, Delhi

In the august presence of

PrernaStrot Avm Pawan Sanidhya	Acharya Samraat
Shwetpichacharya <b>Shri Vidyanand Ji</b> Muniraj's Agyanuvarti	Pujya <b>Shri Dr. ShivMuni ji</b> M.Sa.'s Agyanuvarti Shraman Sanghiye Upadhyia
RashtrSant Paramparacharya <b>Shri PragySagar ji</b> Muniraj	Pujay <b>Shri Ravindra Muni ji</b> M.Sa. (Maharaj Sahab)
Acharya <b>Shri Jin Piyush Sagar Surishvar ji</b> M.Sa.'s Agyanuvarti	Yugpradhan Acharya <b>Shri Mahashraman ji's</b> Vidushi Shishya
Sadhvi <b>Shri Sulakshna Shri ji</b> M.Sa (Maharaj Sahab)	Sadhvi <b>Shri Annima Shri ji</b> M.Sa. (Maharaj Sahab)

*Special collaboration: Bhagwan Mahaveer Nirvan Mahotsav Samiti (Reg.) & Bhagwan Mahavir Memorial Samiti*

**All are invited!**

Watch the live telecast of the program on DD News

# BMC organises walkathon appealing citizens to vote

The primary objective of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation Programme (SVEEP) is to build a participatory democracy by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed decision during the elections



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** In a move towards building a participatory democracy, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) organised a walkathon for Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation Programme (SVEEP) with Khurda district administration Saturday. On this occasion, BMC appealed to all eligible citizens to

exercise their franchise in the upcoming elections. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Electoral Officer Nikunj Dhal said that it is necessary for voters to vote in large numbers not only in urban areas but also in rural areas. "Voting is a great festival of a democratic country like India. Every voter should be involved in this festival. If everyone votes, the government will be strengthened and the country will prosper," he added.

Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said that with the efforts of the Election Commission of India and the Chief Election Officer of the state, wider awareness is being created in various districts of the state including the Capital. "The more voters participate in the election process, the more accurate the count will be," he observed. The primary objective of SVEEP is to build a democracy based on participation by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed decision during the elections. Around 400 participants took part in the event. Among the dignitaries who graced the occasion were BMC commissioner Rajesh Kumar Patil, Khurda collector Chanchal Rana, Police commissioner Sanjeeb Panda and other personalities from the state. The programme started at 6am from Master Canteen and ended at BMC head office.



AN APPEAL TO VOTE: Students participate in a walkathon organised by Khurda district administration and BMC in Bhubaneswar, Saturday. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

# 2-DAY INT'L CONFERENCE AT CUO KORAPUT CONCLUDES

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** The School of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources (SBCNR) at the Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput concluded its two-day international conference on "Recent Advances of Biodiversity and Agriculture for a Sustainable Future" Saturday. The conference was held at

the university's main campus and brought together scholars and scientists to delve into critical topics surrounding biodiversity and agro-biodiversity. "Biodiversity and agro-biodiversity serve as vital resources crucial for both present and future generations as they are intricately linked to the life and livelihood of people," emphasised the speakers at the conference. The conference highlighted

the role of bio-prospecting in enhancing biodiversity conservation. By valuing natural resources, discovering medicinal compounds, and understanding ecosystem functions, bio-prospecting can promote sustainability while ensuring fair benefits for local communities and preserving indigenous knowledge. The concept of the bio-economy, which involves sustainable economic activities utilising bio-

logical resources, was also explored. By linking biodiversity with bio-prospecting, participants noted the potential to add values to resources such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and biotechnology. These practices align with circular economy principles, aid environmental conservation efforts, and enhance livelihoods, ultimately contributing to the preservation of biodiversity and agro-biodiversity.

The valedictory function was chaired by CUO VC Chakradhar Tripathi. He emphasised the need for biodiversity research to uplift the economic standard of the common man, thus fostering self-reliance in the country. SBCNR dean SK Palita presented a report on the conference including research paper presentations of 29 invited speakers and 102 poster presentation from research scholars.

# Cadaveric liver transplant surgery at Utkal Hospital



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** The doctors at Utkal Hospital here performed a cadaveric liver transplant recently. Extracted from the body of a patient at IMS & SUM Hospital, the liver was swiftly transported to Utkal Hospital where the surgery was done under the supervision of experts from AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad. The surgery was led by a team of Gastroenterologist Satya Prakash Ray Choudhury, senior consultant in liver transplant Salil Kumar Parida, director Liver Transplant and Hepatobiliary Surgery P Balachandran Menon, Liver Transplant and Anesthesia expert from AIG Hospitals,

Hyderabad Shakti Swaroop and a team of medical experts. Speaking on the occasion, Choudhury said remarked that the achievement signifies a monumental step in providing cutting-edge medical care to the patients. "This is truly inspirational for cadaveric organ donation, in which one person can save many lives, even after death," he said. "The successful collaboration between Utkal Hospital and AIG Hospitals Hyderabad and the dedication of our surgical team have made this groundbreaking procedure possible," Choudhury added. The recipient of the liver was a patient suffering from liver cirrhosis and is currently recovering well under the vigilant care of the medical team.

# 10th convocation of XIM University held

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 20:** XIM University observed its 10th convocation at its new campus here Saturday. In the event, a total of 643 students received degrees for doctoral and post-graduate programmes. Tata Chemicals Limited managing director and CEO R Mukundan was the chief guest and the speaker. In his address, he stressed on 'Humility and Empathy' to be a good leader. He also asked students to surround themselves with good people for a fulfilling life. "Three pertinent principles hold the true essence of life: good thoughts, good words and good deeds" he said. On this occasion, the university conferred an honorary doctoral degree upon R Mukundan.



MAKING A POINT: Poet and writer Prabodh Parikh delivering a speech on the occasion of 33rd Gopinath Mohanty Memorial Lecture organised by Odisha Sahitya Akademi at Sochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Saturday. Dignitaries present were Odia Language, Literature and Culture Commissioner-cum-Secretary Sujata R Karthikeyan, Gopinath Mohanty Foundation Trust president Omkarnath Mohanty and Odisha Sahitya Akademi secretary Hrushikesh Mallick and Culture department Special Secretary Madhusudan Das. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

# Deadly Blue Whale game that resulted in several deaths

The death of a 20-year-old Indian student at the prestigious University of Massachusetts in the US, reportedly linked to the deadly Blue Whale Challenge, has raised fresh concerns over the suicide game. As per sources, the first-year Indian student in the US was part of the fatal challenge and was holding his breath for two minutes. He was found dead March 8. Dubbed the suicide game, it began in Russia and reportedly claimed the lives of over 130 boys and girls in the US, China, Ukraine as well as in India. What is the Blue Whale Challenge? Created by Philipp Budeikin, a former convict in Russia, in 2013, the game aims to psychologically provoke players to indulge in daring, self-destructive tasks for 50 days before finally

taking the "winning" step of killing themselves -- and each task must be filmed and shared as "proof". The game, played online, included dares like watching horror and psychic movies, and cutting their hands with blades and needles, among others. In the majority of cases, curiosity lures young victims, and they are given easy-to-do tasks making them addicted. Later they find themselves being psychologically manipulated into continuing with the tasks, which become increasingly more



difficult over the 50 steps. In a media interview, Budeikin stated that his purpose was to cleanse society by provoking people who think they are not worthy of being alive to commit suicide. The game worked by selecting vulnerable "players" from social media who were handed out 50 tasks for 50 days, by "the curator," via a Skype meet.

Players could not back out as they were "blackmailed and cyber bullied". Budeikin was arrested with charges of inciting at least 16 teenagers to kill themselves. He pleaded guilty and was also sentenced to three years in prison. Cases in India India saw the first victim of the deadly challenge in July 2017, when 14-year-old Mumbai schoolboy Manpreet Singh Sahani, jumped to death from the seventh floor of a building. It was followed by several cases, including a Class X student in West Bengal, who committed suicide. His body was found in the bathroom and his face was covered in a plastic bag and with a cord. Another boy, son of a former minister, jumped to death in Delhi. A teenager in Kerala hanged himself to death allegedly while completing a Blue Whale challenge.

A Class VII student in Indore, who recorded all 50 stages in his school diary, was pulled away at the last moment before he could take the final leap. The role of the government The Ministry of Electronics and IT in an advisory shared in 2017 called the Blue whale game "an abatement to suicide". With several deaths taking place in India, due to the game, the government in the advisory also asked parents and guardians to check if their children are staying aloof from family and friends, are persistently low mood and unhappiness, or have any visible marks like deep cuts or wounds on any part of the body of the child. The government had also directed internet platforms like Google, Meta's Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram as well as Yahoo to remove the links to the online game. IANS

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

# Murram loot: Drone mapping of firm's acquired land starts

An industrial firm after acquiring land with the help of IDCO for establishment of its plant, was instead using it for mining murram



The officials have also started drone mapping of the land from Thursday. During the probe a huge deposit of laterite stones has been found on the land. Subsequently, the firm has been asked to stop mining murram

to know about huge deposits of murram there. To avoid getting caught, the firm extracted murram from the land at night with the help of heavy equipment but the villagers caught the wrongdoing.

The firm was found extracting murram using heavy machinery without obtaining environmental clearance (EC), consent to operate (CTO) and consent to establish (CTE). It was later found that the extracted murram was being used in the expansion works of Jakhapura-Banspani rail route project.

The residents lodged complaints with the police, Revenue and Mining departments but in vain.

The Minor Minerals department conducted a probe after reports appeared in Orissa POST and other media. During probe, the firm authorities maintained that murram was not extracted from the land and rather the land was being leveled. The Minor Minerals department also agreed to this claim.

However, after being directed by the senior authorities, officials of the Minor Minerals department conducted a probe again and directed the firm authorities to submit necessary papers, April 12.

The officials have also started drone mapping of the land from Thursday. During the probe a huge deposit of laterite stones has been found on the land. Subsequently, the VCI firm has been asked to stop mining murram.

However, it has been alleged that the firm is again violating the order. Allegedly the Minor Minerals department is not showing enough promptitude due to alleged pressure by some influential political leaders.

When contacted, deputy director Jayprakash Nayak of Minor Minerals department said drone cameras are being used in view of the large area of the land and action will be taken on the basis of the probe findings.

# BOAT CAPSIZE TOLL REACHES 8

Bhubaneswar: The toll in the boat capsizing incident that took place in Jharsuguda district rose to eight with the recovery of six more bodies Saturday, an official said. Personnel of the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and Fire Services, who launched a search operation immediately after the boat capsized Friday, recovered six more bodies from the Mahanadi river, he said. Two bodies were fished out earlier and seven people were missing. "Six more bodies were recovered from the Hirakud reservoir of the river," the official said. The bodies were sent for post-mortem examinations, he added. "Five scuba divers fitted with cameras in their headgear joined the search operation and spotted the bodies of three women and three boys," the official said, adding that the search operation was still underway. All deceased people hailed from Kharseni area of neighbouring Chhattisgarh. The incident occurred when around 50 passengers were returning in the boat after visiting a temple in Patharseni Kuda in Bargarh district.

# Parents die in front of kids as speeding ambulance hits bike

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, April 20: In a tragic incident, a couple died in front of their two daughters after a speeding ambulance hit their bike on Kiakata bridge over Mahanadi river in Boudh district Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Mitu Behera, 36, and his wife Manorama, 32, of Sadeipur village under Baunsuni police limits in this district. Fortunately, both the children, who were near their parents when the mishap occurred, had a close shave.

As per reports, Mitu along with his wife and two daughters - Puja and Lovely - was returning from his in-laws' house at Kampala village under Madhapur police limits in Angul district to Boudh on a two-wheeler.

They stopped on the Kiakata bridge as the girls wanted to



have a glimpse of the Mahanadi water. While the children went near the railings of the bridge, the couple waited for their return. Mitu was sitting on the bike while Manorama was standing near him. Suddenly a speeding ambulance coming from Sambalpur side hit them from rear.

While Mitu died on the spot,

Manorama was critically injured in the mishap. Locals rushed Manorama to Boudh district headquarters hospital in critical condition. However, she passed away while undergoing treatment at the hospital.

The driver of the ambulance is reportedly on the run after the mishap. It is suspected that the ambulance is from Bhubaneswar.

On being informed, cops from Kiakata police station in Angul district reached the spot, seized the body and sent it to hospital for post-mortem. Police also seized the ambulance, rescued the orphaned children and launched an investigation into the incident.

A pall of gloom has descended on Sadeipur village following the tragic incident. Local residents have demanded immediate arrest of the culprit.

# RSP starts palliative care skill training programme

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 20: A home health aide training programme has been launched by SAIL, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) at Maa Samaleswari Education and Welfare Trust here. The programme has been undertaken in association with the trust to enhance the skill set of peripheral populace in palliative care.

PK Swain, CGM (TA & CSR) presided over the function and inaugurated the training programme. Present on the occa-



sion were Swarnalata Manjhi, Training Manager, Maa Samaleswari Education and

Welfare Trust, executives and employees of CSR department and partner agency. Under this programme, a total of 15 underprivileged persons from peripheral areas of the plant are being trained.

Speaking on the occasion, Swain highlighted the importance and scope of palliative care in improving the quality of life of both the patients and their families facing problems associated with life threatening or debilitating illnesses. He urged the participants to make the best

use of the training programme for successful and effective implementation of palliative care.

The main objective of the training programme is to enhance the employability and livelihood prospects of the poor and underprivileged people for sustainable income generation.

The 350-hour training programme spread over 90 working days is undertaken at the cost of ₹4.93 lakh. The training is being imparted by Sister Julitha Kispotta, retired head nurse, IGH, Rourkela.

# Angul collectorate's junior assistant axed for bribery

Angul: A junior assistant working in the Revenue department in Angul district was dismissed from service Saturday following her conviction in a Vigilance court, a senior official said. Pankajini Biswal, 35, junior revenue assistant of Angul collectorate, was dismissed from service with immediate effect following her conviction by the Vigilance court of Angul in a bribery case, he said. The Vigilance Directorate had charge-sheeted Biswal February 6, 2017, for demanding and accepting a bribe in relation to two mutation cases. She was subsequently convicted by the Vigilance court May 12, 2023, and sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of ₹5,000.

Advertisement for a recruitment drive for the Odisha State Government. It features a portrait of a man in a white shirt and a group of four men in white shirts. The text in Odia reads: 'ବିକଳି ତରଫରୁ ବିଧାୟକ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥା କରାଯାଇଥିବାରୁ ପୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ନବୀନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନବୀନ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଡି.କେ. ପାଣ୍ଡିଆନ, ପ୍ରଶଂସା ପ୍ରକାଶ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଯଶସ୍ୱରା ବିଧାୟକ ବହି ନାରାୟଣ ପାତ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଏବଂ କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ଜଣାଇଛି। ଅଭିମନ୍ୟୁ ସେଠୀ ଆନନ୍ଦପୁର ବିକଳି ବିଧାୟକ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥା'.

# Jaundice outbreak in GCE, Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 20: As many as 18 students at a hostel of the Government College of Engineering (GCE), Keonjhar were diagnosed with jaundice and admitted to Keonjhar district headquarters hospital, reports said Saturday. While some of them have been taken home by their parents, the rest are under treatment at the hostel, sources said. After the incident, a medical team visited the hostel where the cases

were reported. The team took samples of water being supplied to the hostel and inspected the quality of food being provided to the students in the hostel.

"Water samples have been sent to Bhubaneswar for examination. Some students have been taken home by the parents after they complained of health complications and others are under treatment at the hostel," said GCE Principal Trilochan Sahu.

Sources said some days back, one student was found suffering from

jaundice by the hostel authorities. Subsequently, 17 students developed symptoms related to jaundice.

Chief District Medical Officer, Keonjhar Dr KC Prusty said, "Out of the total 12 blood samples collected from the hostel, one has been found to be positive in the hepatitis test so far. Among the rest, jaundice was detected in five samples and the rest six were diagnosed with mild jaundice. No such evidence was found in the water samples during the examination".

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY. Tender Notice No.: MSM-ROH-SLRA-3-24 Dtd. 15.04.2024. Name of Work: ROH AND REPAIR OF WAGONS INCLUDING OPERATION & MAINTENANCE OF ROH DEPOT AT SARLA FOR A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS. Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹29,16,40,191.61. Cost of tender form: Rs. 11,800/-, EMD: Rs. 16,08,200/-. Completion Period: 48 (Forty Eight) Months. Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. on 06.05.2024 (for all tenders). No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.reps.gov.in. Sr. Div. Mechanical Engineer Sambalpur. PR-33/P/24-25.

# SU asst professor suspended over offensive social media posts

Bhubaneswar: The authorities of Sambalpur University Saturday suspended Rajat Kumar Kujur, an Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Administration Department for indiscipline. As per the order of the Chancellor, the varsity's registrar has put Kujur under suspension. Kujur was accused of misbehaving with PG council chairperson and posting offensive posts against her on social media. Following the allegation, an inquiry was ordered. Based on the findings, the suspension of Rajat Kujur was recommended. During the suspension period, he is not allowed to the office of the PG Council Chairperson, a notification issued by the varsity stated. Further, the authorities have also restricted his entry into the administrative building, any PG department/section or library. He has been barred from attending any meeting of the varsity during the suspension period. However, he will get subsistence allowance at the rate equal to leave salary, the notification added.

Advertisement for an E-Auction Sale Notice by Indian Bank. ZONAL OFFICE: SAMBALPUR 2ND FLOOR, SHYAM ARCADE, KHETRAJPUR, SAMBALPUR - 768003, e-mail: zosambalpur@indianbank.co.in. Sale of Immovable property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002). Whereas, the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank had taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS", "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WITHOUT ANY RECOURSE BASIS" for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp.

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers / Guarantors / Mortgagees	Description of the Immovable Properties	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession Notice / Outstanding Dues	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	BAREIPALI BRANCH, Mob No.: 9778399766 / Borrowers: 1) M/s. Chai & Co, Prop: Mr. Sunil Chai, S/o.: Ram Chandra Chai, At: Kalyan Nagar, SRIT Colony, Budharaja, Sambalpur-768004. 2) Mrs. Satyabhama Chai, W/o.: Sri Ram Chandra Chai, At: Contractors Colony, SRIT Colony, Budharaja, Sambalpur-768004	All that piece and parcel of Land recorded in the name of Mrs. Satyabhama Chai, W/o.: Ram Chandra Chai, Khata No.: 89, Plot No.: 264, Mouza: Piplipali, Tahasil: Jujumura, Dist.: Sambalpur, admeasuring Ac.0.950 Dec, Kissan: Gharabari, Bounded by North: Road, South: Plot No.: 223, East: Plot No.: 264, West: Vacant Land.	17.08.2023 / 21.11.2023 / ₹ 67,53,217/- as on 14.04.2024 + further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon	₹30,00,000/- / ₹3,00,000/- / ₹10,000/-
2.	SAMBALPUR BRANCH, Mob No.: 7076468647 / Borrower/Mortgagor: M/s. Sharad & Co, Prop.: Late Sharad Agrawal, Represented by Legal Heir Smt. Gudi Agrawal, /Guarantor/Mortgagor: M/s. Neha Agrawal, D/o.: Late Ramavatar Agrawal, Both are At: Indira Niwas, Balaji Mandir Lane, Ward No.: 3, Khetrajpur, Sambalpur	All that piece and parcel of Land and Building in the name of Late Sharad Agrawal and Ms. Neha Agrawal, at Khata No.: 368/516 at Plot No.: 1025/2849, Area: Ac. 0.030 Dec., Kissan: Gharabari, Mouza: Sambalpur Town Unit No.: 09, PO/Tahasil/PS.: Talbhata, Dist: Sambalpur, Bounded by North: Plot No.: 1024, South: Plot No.: 1025, East: Road, West: Plot No.: 1019 and 1020	13.10.2023 / 06.01.2024 / ₹ 18,77,545/- as on 15.04.2024 + further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon	₹31,00,000/- / ₹3,10,000/- / ₹10,000/-

DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 22.05.2024 from 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 Minutes duration  
LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE 21.05.2024 upto 05.30 PM by online  
Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: 07.05.2024 to 21.05.2024 between 10.00 AM to 4.00 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their own expenses  
TERMS & CONDITIONS: 1) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer to the link: https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp and https://ibapi.in. Prospective bidders may also contact the Authorised Officers / Branch as mentioned in above list. 2) This is a statutory 30 days sale notice to the above mentioned borrowers/guarantors under Rule 8(6) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002. 3) This is a 30 days' notice to the Borrower / Guarantor / Mortgagee of the above said loan about holding of this sale on the above mentioned date. 4) All expenses relating to the stamp duty and registration of Sale Certificate/conveyance, if any, shall be borne by the successful bidder. 5) The Authorized Officer will not be held responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or anybody in respect of the property under sale. 6) The Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale without assigning any reason thereof. It may be noted that nothing in this notice constitute or deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the bank to sell the property.  
STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.  
Borrowers/Guarantors/Mortgagors are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/ sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost.  
Place: Sambalpur, Date: 20.04.2024  
Sd/-Authorised Officer, Indian Bank

भारत का राजपत्र  
The Gazette of India  
सौ.जी.-डी.एल.-अ.-14032024-252975  
CG-DL-E-14032024-252975  
असाधारण  
EXTRAORDINARY  
भाग II-खण्ड 3-उप-खण्ड (II)  
PART II-Section 3-Sub-section (ii)  
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित  
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

सं. 1251) नई दिल्ली, बुधवार, मार्च 13, 2024/फाल्गुन 23, 1945  
No. 1251) NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13, 2024/PHALGUNA 23, 1945

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS  
NOTIFICATION  
New Delhi, the 13th March, 2024

S.O. 1313(E).— In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building (widening/two lane with paved shoulder/four lane etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH16 in the stretch of land from Km. 62 to Km. 98 (Collectorate- Jajpur, LA (Civil) Section, AT/PO/PS/Dist- Jajpur) in the district of Jajpur in the state of ODISHA, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.

Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section (1) of section 3C of the said Act.

Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, LAO (Civil) & CALA, Jajpur in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.

Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final. The land plans and other details of the land to be acquired under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.

SCHEDULE  
Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling NH16 in the stretch of land from Km. 62 to Km. 98 (Collectorate- Jajpur, LA (Civil) Section, AT/PO/PS/Dist- Jajpur) in the district of Jajpur in the state of ODISHA.

File Number: NHA/11014/OD/2001-OR-II-E/3A

District: Jajpur  
https://egazette.gov.in  
Publication date, 13 March 2024  
https://egazette.gov.in/WriteReadData/2024/252975.pdf

FOCUS POLITICS

# EROSION OF DEMOCRACY



**Democratic backsliding has many causes, including the deprivations of Big Tech and the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation. But the one that plays a critical role is emerging from a strange concoction of unchecked economic globalisation and severe political balkanisation**

their hold on power. This underscores the anti-democratic nature of hegemonic powers. If Israeli citizens could vote in US presidential elections, America's Middle East policy might have been markedly different. Such a policy would likely have aligned more closely with the interests of both Israelis and Palestinians, rather than with Netanyahu's political agenda. I hasten to add that matters would likely be worse if Trump won the US election. But I suspect that the Democratic Party would win, but with a rather different Middle East policy, if ordinary Israelis, and not just Netanyahu and his cronies, had a voice in the US election.

There is no easy solution to this conundrum. Israelis will not be voting in US elections anytime soon, and Ukrainians will not influence the selection of Russia's next leader. The advance of digital technology and globalisation, and the consequent erosion of global democracy, highlights the trade-offs and vulnerabilities inherent in the current international order.

As I argued in my book *The Republic of Beliefs*, it is possible to establish binding laws and regulations even without direct state intervention. The key, as Eric Posner and Cass Sunstein have also pointed out, is to foster appropriate norms that are self-enforcing. At the same time, we must strive to create more effective multilateral organisations and international charters aimed at strengthening democratic governance worldwide.

*The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.*

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Democracy is in retreat across much of the world, with authoritarian leaders and extremist movements gaining momentum amid widespread discontent with established political parties and institutions. As democratic governance comes under strain, our most cherished ideals, such as equal freedom and rights for all, are increasingly at risk.

Democratic backsliding has many causes, including the deprivations of Big Tech and the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation. But the one that plays a critical role is emerging from a strange concoction of unchecked economic globalisation and severe political balkanisation. This has enabled major powers like the United States to wield disproportionate influence over the well-being of billions of people worldwide, who have no political voice.

The bedrock principle of democracy is that people affected by the decisions of political leaders should have a say in selecting those leaders. This idea is so fundamental that even authoritarian countries like Russia and North Korea hold elections, ostensibly allowing citizens to "choose" their leaders. Of course, these elections pose no real threat to the existing regime. In North Korea's 2023 election, for example, Kim Jong-un's Workers' Party received 99.91% of the votes.

To comprehend the problem, imagine that US presidents were elected solely by voters in the District of Columbia. Every resident of Washington would have the right to vote, and the candidate with the most votes would become president. Even if this process were free from fraud, it would be difficult to consider the US a democracy under such conditions. Elected leaders would naturally prioritise the inter-

ests of Washington residents over those of Americans everywhere else, whose well-being would have little to no impact on their chances of being re-elected.

While this scenario may seem far-fetched, people all around the world find themselves in the same position as a disenfranchised Texan or Michigander. The accelerated economic globalisation of the past four decades, driven by increasingly interconnected supply chains and the rapid advance of digital technologies, has facilitated the free flow of capital and goods across national borders. But this also means that major powers are now able to affect individuals and communities all over the world with just a few clicks.

As matters stand, the well-being of billions of people hinges on the decisions made by the sitting US president. While American leaders have the power to disrupt numerous economies by severing supply chains or manipulating financial flows, the citizens of these countries have no influence over

US elections. Similarly, Ukrainian or Georgian citizens have little say over who rules Russia, even though who rules Russia can have a large influence on their well-being. (Of course, even Russians have no say over who rules Russia.)

This erosion of global democracy could have far-reaching geopolitical consequences. While the US government puts considerable effort into managing its domestic economy effectively, it has adopted a cavalier approach to foreign policy.

The ongoing crisis in the Middle East is a case in point. US President Joe Biden's unconditional support for Israel's war against Hamas over the past six months has benefited Israel's embattled prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. But as US Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have pointed out, the goals of ordinary Israelis - who want to end the war and bring home the hostages - differ significantly from those of Netanyahu and his far-right political allies, who seek to prolong the conflict to maintain



Kaushik Basu

**THE BEDROCK PRINCIPLE OF DEMOCRACY IS THAT PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE DECISIONS OF POLITICAL LEADERS SHOULD HAVE A SAY IN SELECTING THOSE LEADERS**



Aakar Patel

**The present Constitution and laws give us enough freedom to apply discrimination against non-Hindus legally, while still pretending to be pluralist, democratic and secular**

## Already Hindu Rashtra

At a civil society meeting in Bangalore this week, the question was asked if a Hindu Rashtra was on the horizon with a third term impending. To see if it is possible one must begin by asking what it is, and how Hindu Rashtra will be different from what we have at the present.

Till 2008, after which it became a republic like ours, Nepal was a Hindu Rashtra, the only one in the world. Why was it a Hindu Rashtra? Because executive power flowed from a Kshatriya (Chhetri) king as prescribed in the Manu Smriti. Nepal's 1959 Constitution identifies the Head of State as being someone who is an "adherent of Aryan culture and Hindu religion."

The 1962 Constitution defines Nepal as an "independent, indivisible and sovereign Hindu State" and repeats the formulation of the king as being Aryan and Hindu. The Raj Sabha or governing council includes the head Brahmin (Bada Gurujyu) and the officiating priest (Mool Purohit).

Nepal's 1990 Constitution defines the country as being "multiethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu and constitutional monarchical kingdom." It restates the "Aryan-ness" and "Hinduness" of the king. The Raj Sabha was now called Raj Parishad and the Mool Purohit excluded though the Bada Gurujyu remained. The 1959 Constitution had no religious freedom as such and "no person shall be entitled to convert another person to his religion." A citizen may only "practice and profess his own religion as handed down from ancient times," meaning no propagation was allowed, a principle still followed in Nepal. The ban on conversion was rephrased to close the loophole surrounding the words "his religion" and the new text read: "No person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another."

To conclude, Nepal was a Hindu Rashtra because of three things. First, that rule was caste-based through a hereditary Kshatriya; second, this king had caste-based advisors in his court; three, that there is no religious freedom and propagation is banned.

Here Nepal was and is more honest than India. Our Constitution through Article 25 says that the right to freely propagate religion is a fundamental right but across India's states are laws which also make religious propagation a criminal offence. Therefore the right exists mostly on paper.

Nepal was only to this extent a Hindu Rashtra. No other parts of the prescribed caste hierarchy and caste-based discriminations as required by the texts were applied to the State in Nepal and they could not have been. It would have gone against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and every single modern law and practice that gives individuals liberty and equality and freedom.

For this reason, it is difficult to see how it can be replicated here. We do not even have the hereditary king that Nepal did. But if this is not Hindu Rashtra then what are the BJP and the RSS talking about? Here we do not have a proper answer because they have never defined it, though they speak of it often. There is no draft or charter or constitution of the RSS Hindu Rashtra and what its laws would be and how they would differ from the present. The reason is that their only focus is on minorities.

A Hindu Rashtra of the type they speak of might mandate by law that no non-Hindu can become prime minister or chief minister, and only Hindus can hold certain offices. We should consider here that though we have no such law, it is not required. There is no Muslim chief minister in this country, that no Muslim has ever even served a full 5 year term as CM in any state besides Kashmir, and of course there has never been a Muslim prime minister in India.

This type of Hindu Rashtra can also adopt some other discriminatory aspects against its religious minorities. Germany in the 1930s adopted a set of laws that prevented inter-marriage between communities. In India, after 2018, seven BJP states have passed laws that also criminalise marriage between Muslims and Hindus. German laws excluded Jews from citizenship, and India has of course adopted the CAA excluding Muslims.

Many of the things that India has done especially since 2019, with targeted laws and policy on namaz (in the national capital region in 2021), hijab (in Karnataka in 2021), beef (since 2015), bulldozers (across India now), talaq (in 2019) and so on would also be something that we can see in an exclusionary Hindu Rashtra.

So the question is, if we have already excluded Muslims from political office by default, and if we are already harassing our minorities daily through laws, like Nazi Germany did and like Pakistan did, then why do we need a Hindu Rashtra or a change from the present set of laws? The answer is that we do not. The present Constitution and laws give us enough freedom to apply discrimination against non-Hindus legally, while still pretending to be pluralist, democratic and secular. There appears to be no particular advantage or benefit that we get in officially changing our constitutional and legal State from secular to Hindu Rashtra.

So then what can we expect from the third term, if it should come? I must recount a reply, most likely apocryphal, given by the poet Ahmed Faraz, when someone asked him the classic question: "Yoon hi chalta raha to kya hoga?" (What will happen if things continue in this fashion). Faraz's reply was: "Darr to is baat ka hai ke kuch bhi nahin hoga, yoon hi chalta rahega" (The real fear is that nothing will happen: That what is around us will continue).

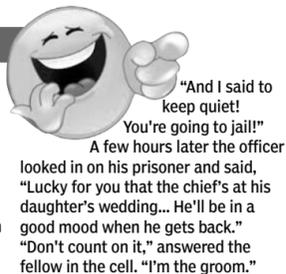
### WISDOM CORNER

- The greatest heroes are those who do their duty in the daily grind of domestic affairs whilst the world whirls as a maddening dreidel. **FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE**
- Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently. You can practice any virtue erratically, but nothing consistently without courage. **MAYA ANGELOU**
- The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude. **OPRAH WINFREY**

### LOL

#### Time for wedding

A police officer stopped a motorist who was speeding down a street. "But officer," the man began, "I can explain." "Just be quiet," snapped the officer. "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back." "But, officer, I just wanted to say,"



"And I said to keep quiet! You're going to jail!" A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you that the chief's at his daughter's wedding... He'll be in a good mood when he gets back." "Don't count on it," answered the fellow in the cell. "I'm the groom."

### SPECTRUM SOCIETY

## Help-seeking in violence against women

Of the many factors indicative of women's empowerment, domestic violence is a significant one. It has a direct link with the violation of a woman's human rights and is therefore an obstacle in achieving SDG-5, which is about gender equality. Despite a large volume of material and policy investment made by the government on gender equality, there is very slow progress on the status of violence and discrimination against women. Such violence not only harms the immediate present of women but also has long run implications on their socio-economic lives. The issue of violence and the status of help seeking on the matter in Odisha are examined here, based on the recently released data of the 5th round (2019-21) of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).

In Odisha, around 29.6% of ever-married women aged 18-49 were victims of any form of physical violence and the person/s responsible for these incidents were their current husbands. The common forms of violence under this category were: (i) being slapped by their husbands (25.9%); (ii) being pushed, shaken, or having something thrown at them (15.5%); (iii) having their arm twisted or hair

pulled (7.3%); (iv) being punched with a fist or something that could hurt (6.1%); (v) being kicked, dragged, or beaten up (5.3%); and (vi) being choked or burnt on purpose (1.5%).

In Odisha, around one-third (32.4%) of rural women and 33.5% of urban ones have experienced spousal violence. The incidence of spousal violence was more evident among Scheduled Castes (41.3%), followed by Scheduled Tribes (35.5%) and other category (30.0%). The incidence was least among Other Backward Class (26.8%). The risk of violence is more among women who are working for cash (38.0%), whereas it is relatively lesser for women who are not employed (30.5%). In terms of educational attainment, more educated women experience much lesser spousal violence. However, the experience of emotional, physical, or sexual spousal violence is 19.4% for women who have 12 or more years of education. The incidence of spousal violence is seen with husbands who attended schools for less than 5 years (41.4%). Alcohol consumption is one of the major indicators that results in physical or sexual violence. It is quite evident from the recently released information of NFHS which reveals the high-

est incidence of violence (58.5%) against women aged 18-49 where the husband gets drunk "often". There is a sharp decline in the percentage of women experiencing violence from 58.5% to 45.4% with a husband who gets drunk "sometimes", whereas the violence is the least (22.1%) with a husband who "does not drink". In other words, "no drinking" reduces the risk of violence by nearly three times than with "often drinking" husbands. Additionally, the NFHS identified an interesting reason for spousal violence by comparing the violence status of the mother with that of the daughter in two groups—one with violence, and the other without violence. Women whose mothers were victims of spousal violence are more vulnerable in abusive marriages than those whose mothers were not victims of domestic violence.

The moot question revolves around why institutional interventions made by the state have failed to reach these women or why the women could not extract benefits from the available resolution mechanisms. The first and foremost issue that emerges in this scenario is the matter of "help-seeking" in general, and that of seeking help in the case of violence, in particular. As per

the NFHS-5 data, maximum number of affected women (81.5%) never sought help and never told anyone. The different sources of help seeking presented in NFHS-5 are divided into two broad categories: institutional and non-institutional. In Odisha, help-seeking from the police department is found to be the minimum (5.5%), whereas the same from own family is 58.3%, that from a friend is 26.1%, and from husband's family it is 18.7%.

Help-seeking depends upon an array of socioeconomic risks—suffocating nature of the institution of marriage in a patriarchal society, being uncomfortable with the legal system, lengthy and often messy legal procedure and unsupportive social system due to which a woman is not always in a position to derive benefits from institutional redressal arrangements made by the state. Additionally, the opportunity cost associated with violence for these women is substantial, leading to their continuing to suffer in silence.

*The writer is Professor, Council for Social Development (An institute supported by ICSSR, Government of Telangana and RBI), Hyderabad. Views are personal.*



Sujit Kumar Mishra

**IN ODISHA, HELP-SEEKING FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT IS FOUND TO BE THE MINIMUM**

### Oil shock

Sir, Apropos, "Oil prices surge in global market," *Orissa POST*, April 20, this is a matter of concern for India, which imports over 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements. A steep hike in global oil prices could significantly raise the country's import bill and make the rupee depreciate due to the larger outflow of foreign exchange. It's the purchase of cheaper oil from sanctions-hit Russia that helped India reduce its import expenditure over the past year or so. Supply disruptions caused by geopolitical turbulence have prompted India, the world's third biggest oil consumer and importer, to firm up plans to build its first commercial crude oil strategic reserve. Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd, a special purpose vehicle created by the government, has invited bids for constructing an underground storage facility in Karnataka. However, the project is expected to be completed only by 2029-30. In the immediate future, India will continue to be heavily dependent on oil imports.

**N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE**

### Water scarcity

Sir, Cities need to be planned keeping water availability in mind. A picture of water availability can be drawn by calculating certain parameters like average rainfall, runoff into seas or rivers, fresh water and ground water sources, etc. Moreover, if the population of the city is planned taking into account the availability of water, the water scarcity of the city may be eliminated to a large extent. For overpopulated cities necessary steps need to be taken as per water availability.

**Nabnit Panigrahi, RAYAGADA**

### West Asia crisis

Sir, The Middle East continues to reverberate from the Iran-Israel conflict. A missile attack by Israel hit Iran's Isfahan province on Friday, and Iran responded by destroying three drones. Israel called off the strike in response to Iran's recent attack using 300 drones. Iran downplayed the attack, stating that it did not result in any significant damage. Their cautious response shows their intention to de-escalate the tension. Meanwhile, the US reiterated it would back Israel if the latter came under attack but would not participate in any offensive strikes initiated by Tel Aviv.

**NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# UP: Cops, govt doctors to appear virtually in courts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Lucknow, April 20:** The Uttar Pradesh Prosecution Department is planning to introduce a new system wherein government officials, mostly policemen and doctors, will be able to record their statements virtually in pending court cases.

This is being done to reduce the pendency of cases in the courts of Uttar Pradesh.

The state government is gearing up to build infrastructure in the districts to have a central, computerised system under which police officers and government doctors can go to the office of the Joint Director of the Prosecution Department and record their statements for speedy proceedings in the courts.

ADG (Prosecution), Dipesh Juneja, said, "There is a huge pendency of cases in the district courts. What happens is that police officers who work in the capacity of investigating officers and doctors in medico-



legal cases have to routinely go to the district courts to record their statements. Such officials are regularly transferred from one district to another across the state."

"Because of the geographic size of Uttar Pradesh, it becomes difficult for these officials to physically go to the district courts. For example, one officer who was posted in western UP and investigated a case there gets transferred to eastern UP. Now that officer has to take leave, and travel to the district where he was posted earlier. This results in the loss of manpower and also requires large amounts of funds for travel and lodging. So we plan to have a centralised

system where a police officer or a government doctor can go and virtually record their statements. This will help us ensure speedy trials in cases, and also, save money," Juneja said.

The Prosecution Department plans to launch the initiative in five districts soon -- Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Noida, Barabanki, and Varanasi. "Once the system is operational in these five districts, we will extend it to the other districts as well. In the future, we hope the common people can also give statements to courts remotely from these computerised offices," said Juneja.

Joint Director (Prosecution), Atul Kumar Ojha, said: "Once an officer retires, he or she is not willing to go to a different district to record evidence. To get allowances for the same is a lengthy process. This system will allow them to do it from wherever they are based after their retirement. We hope to reduce the pendency of cases with this new system."



Students celebrate their success after declaration of Uttar Pradesh Board results for classes X and XII, in Noida, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

# Thakur eyeing fifth term from Hamirpur



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Hamirpur, April 20:** Union Minister and sitting BJP MP Anurag Thakur is eyeing to win Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat for the fifth time in a row, while the Congress is yet to announce its candidate for the constituency.

This time, he is aiming to surpass the 2019 historical win with a victory margin of about 4 lakh votes, underscoring the electorate's continued support for BJP in the hill state.

Hamirpur is BJP's bastion from where Anurag Thakur's father and two-time Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal was thrice elected as an MP.

Traditionally, this Lok Sabha seat, made up of 17 Assembly constituencies, has been with the BJP since 1998, when Suresh Chandel was elected as MP. He continued till 2004.

In 2007 Dhumal became the MP from Hamirpur but he later resigned to take over as Chief Minister. This necessitated the bypoll and since 2008, Anurag Thakur has been the MP. His maiden electoral victory was at the age of 34.

Ground reports say it will not be a challenge for the Union minister to retain this seat as legislators of three of five Assembly seats in Hamirpur, the home district of the father-son duo, which were earlier won by the state ruling Congress in December 2022 polls, have switched sides and joined the BJP.

The Congress won four of the five Assembly constituencies in the district while an Independent won the seat, once the stronghold of the Dhumal family.

In the run-up to the vote, Rajinder Rana, who had won as a Congress legislator from Sujampur -- from where Anurag Thakur's father Dhumal used to contest, is in

the fray as the BJP candidate for the Assembly by-poll.

Likewise, Congress turncoat legislator Inder Dutt Lakhanpal from Badsar is in the fray for the Assembly by-poll as the BJP candidate.

Rana and Lakhanpal were among six MLAs who faced disciplinary action from the Congress for cross-voting after the BJP won the lone Rajya Sabha seat in the state.

Independent legislator Ashish Sharma from Hamirpur has also extended support to the BJP in the Rajya Sabha poll.

"The Congress is facing a challenge to win the BJP's bastion, despite the Chief Minister belonging to Hamirpur district," a political observer told IANS.

The parliamentary constituency has a significantly high literacy rate. It consists of 17 Assembly segments, which include all five segments of Una district, five from Hamirpur, four from Bilaspur, two from Kangra and one Assembly segment from Mandi district.

Banking on the Narendra Modi factor, Anurag Thakur believes when "you work and deliver there is no question of anti-incumbency, rather there is pro-incumbency."

In every parliamentary election in the state, which witnesses a bipolar contest between the Congress and the BJP, Hamirpur has been witnessing more aggressive campaigning as compared to the other three Lok Sabha constituencies -- Shimla (reserved), Kangra and Mandi.

In his political pitch, it is always Anurag Thakur's father and two-time Chief Minister Dhumal who plays an important role by devoting maximum time and energy to ensure his son's victory.

Polling for all four Himachal Pradesh Lok Sabha seats will be held June 1. The results will be out June 4, as in the rest of the country.

# Injured leopard back in the wild after treatment

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Agra, April 20:** A critically injured leopard from the Meerut Forest Division is back in the wild after getting treated at a specialised hospital in Agra run by the Wildlife SOS, a non-profit conservation organisation.

Forest officials said the three-year-old injured leopard was rescued recently and transferred to the Wildlife SOS transit facility. After recovery, the animal was released into its natural habitat in the Shivaliks.

The leopard had sustained an injury on the forehead and had a badly wounded paw.

Ilayaraja S, Deputy Director, Veterinary Services, Wildlife SOS, said, "For the initial 4-5 days since arrival, the leopard was not consuming food properly. But after providing appetiser syrups, the leopard started showing signs of appetite, and was eating and drinking normally."

When found fully fit, the leopard was released in the Badkala



Forest Range in the Shivaliks. Baiju Raj MV, Director,

Conservation Projects, Wildlife SOS, said, "With the support

of the chief wildlife warden of Uttar Pradesh and the chief conservator of forests for Meerut zone, we were able to release the leopard back into the wild."

Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-founder and CEO, Wildlife SOS, said, "With growing infrastructure, wild animals are constantly threatened with degradation and loss of natural habitat. In such cases, we must ensure that animals such as this leopard deserve their rightful space to live in the wild."

# World's highest polling booth in Himachal has 52 voters

**TASHIGANG IN THE SPITI VALLEY IN HIMACHAL PRADESH REMAINS COVERED WITH SNOW FOR SIX MONTHS IN A YEAR.**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Shimla, April 20:** World's highest polling station Tashigang, located at a height of 15,256 feet above sea level in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul-Spiti district, which is part of the Mandi parliamentary constituency, has 52 registered voters, said Assistant Election Officer Harsh Negi.

There were 45 voters in Tashigang in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Of these, 27 were men and 18 women voters. In the 2021 Mandi parliamentary by-elections, there were 48 voters, which included 29 men and 22 women. And in the 2022 Assembly elections, there were 52 voters comprising 30 men and 22 women.

Tashigang in the Spiti Valley remains covered with snow for six months in a year. There is a



shortage of oxygen there. Before 2019, the highest polling station was Hikkim (14,400 feet) located close to Tashigang. But in 2019, Tashigang was made a polling station. For years, Hikkim (14,400 feet), close to Tashigang, was the highest polling booth.

The Election Commission every time set up the model polling booth with a selfie point with the Himalayas in the background.

Donning traditional attire, most of the electorates reach the booth to cast their votes.

Officials told IANS that at a majority of polling stations in Lahaul-Spiti district, there is

still widespread accumulation of snow. These booths are scattered over rugged, cold and inhospitable terrain where poll officials have to trek hours to reach their booths.

Lahaul-Spiti, along with other remote areas of Kinnaur district and Bharmour in Chamba district, are part of the sprawling Mandi constituency that covers almost two-thirds of the state.

Locals are largely Buddhist farmers who grow barley, potatoes, wheat and black peas.

The election for the Mandi parliamentary seat will take place June 1 along with the state's three other seats.

# Glass skywalk to come up after LS polls in Chitrakoot

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chitrakoot, April 20:** Uttar Pradesh will soon get its first-ever glass skywalk bridge, which will be set against the picturesque backdrop of Tulsī waterfalls in Markundi range of Chitrakoot forest division.

Built from a fusion of glass and steel, this marvel of engineering takes the form of Lord Ram's revered bow and arrow, thereby symbolising strength and valour.

According to reports, this bridge promises to redefine the landscape of ecotourism in the region. This ambitious project aims to elevate the allure of Chitrakoot.

Drawing inspiration from Bihar's renowned skywalk glass bridge in Rajgir, Uttar Pradesh's glass skywalk is poised to captivate visitors with its blend of aesthetic charm and structural brilliance.

The bridge, said sources, will be inaugurated after the Lok Sabha polls.

Complementing the breath-

taking vistas of the waterfall, the surrounding area has been transformed into a verdant oasis known as 'Kodand Van', which will provide visitors with a tranquil retreat amid nature's splendour.

Built by Ghazipur-based Pawan Sut Construction Company, the bridge stands as a testament to collaborative effort and visionary planning.

Originally known as Shabri waterfall, the cascading beauty that serves as the foundation for the glass skywalk was recently christened 'Tulsī waterfalls' by the state government.

Offering both aesthetic appeal and structural integrity, the bow-and-arrow-shaped bridge spans an impressive length of 25 m

towards the abyss and boasts of a width of 35 m between its sturdy pillars. With a robust load capacity of 500 kg per square metre, the bridge ensures safety and comfort for visitors eager to embark on this thrilling adventure.



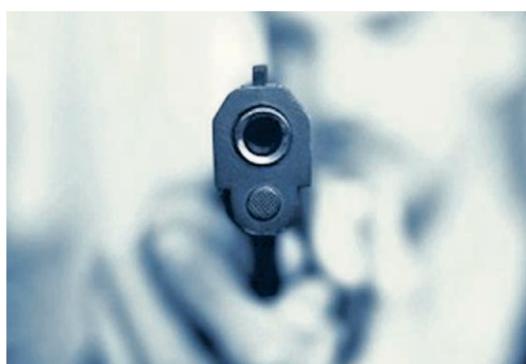
# Unclaimed firearms turn police station into 'gun museum'

*Among the unclaimed firearms are 70 vintage muzzle-loading guns dating back to the 1857 revolt era*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kanpur, April 20:** It is not a museum for guns, but it is no less either: Over 400 licensed firearms have been lying in the 'maalkhana' (storeroom) of the Ghatampur police station in Kanpur for the past 20 years, as no one turned up to reclaim them.

According to police sources, many owners of the firearms who deposited their guns during elections -- as is mandatory -- have passed away and



their family members have not turned up to claim the same. Of the total 4,148 licensed weapons deposited at this facility before elections in

previous years, 2,039 guns have been deposited ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Interestingly, the 406 unclaimed firearms here include 70 vin-

tage muzzle-loading guns dating back to the 1857 revolt era.

"The heirs of the owners who passed away are not claiming these guns because of the tedious process of weapon transfer. Besides, frequent elections have led to the accumulation of firearms in the police station," said Manoj Singh, a lawyer.

"This effectively makes the police station 'an old-age home for weapons'. People believe it's safe that the weapons are stored at the police station as they can't be used for any wrongdoings," said Singh, representing two persons who refused to reclaim their arms.

Their ground is that the process of depositing and reclaiming weapons is a grueling one because of the frequency of elections, he added.

As per records, 30 of the 406 unclaimed guns were deposited during the 2003 Assembly elections, 100 in the 2007-2009 elections, 200 in the 2012-2014 elections, and six during the 2017 elections. The 'vintage' guns used in 1857 were deposited some 25 years ago, said SHO Sumit Kumar Singh.

"Notices have been sent to the owners, but none have responded," said an official.

"After the Lok Sabha elections, notices will be pasted on the houses of those who deposited these guns. If they do not reclaim them, the police will be forced to initiate legal action," said Ranjit Kumar, ACP, Ghatampur.

"Imagine the space and security the guns require. This is a task for us," he added.



BJP's Laxmipur Assembly constituency nominee Kailash Kulesika participates in a road show along with party workers and supporters at Dasmantapur in Koraput district, Saturday



A BJD delegation coming out of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Bhubaneswar, Saturday after submitting a complaint over alleged violation of Model Code of Conduct by BJP's Sambalpur MP nominee Dharmendra Pradhan and Sambalpur MLA nominee Jayanarayan Mishra over misuse of government office premises by holding meeting with NCC officers and cadets

## ASSEMBLY POLLS

# BJD, BJP evenly poised in Sundargarh segment

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, April 20:** The battle for the Sundargarh Assembly segment is set to be tough for both BJD and BJP. Sitting MLA Kusum Tete (BJD) and BJD candidate Yogesh Singh are facing each other for the second time from the constituency.

A section of the voters are of the opinion that the race is mainly between BJD and BJP, while Congress candidate Sharanani Raudia, who recently moved from BJD, is inconsequential. "After Yogesh left Congress and joined BJD, the rank and file of the party in the constituency followed suit in regular intervals. In fact, there is hardly anyone left in the party to campaign for the candidate," said a local journalist with a vernacular daily.

Nevertheless, no one seems to be sure about the fortunes of the BJD, or BJP, in the election. "The contest is evenly poised. Both sides are trying to swing the voters of Hemgir block in their favour," said a BJP supporter. In the battle for Sundargarh Assembly seat, voters in Hemgir block have traditionally played a decisive role.

This time, there is one more noteworthy candidate, Rajendra Nayak, a sitting sarpanch of CPI. Nayak has been raising his voice for justice to the mining-affected displaced persons from time to time. He has credible base among electorates in Balinga, Gopalpur, Hemgir and some nearby areas.

Raudia, though hails from here, may find it difficult to garner much support. "Nayak has good grip over the displaced population, while Raudia is also eyeing for their support. However, she might not find much favour because the sarpanch (Nayak) is more aggressive in his cam-



paign," said a resident of Hemgir.

Meanwhile, Kusum's body language exudes confidence. That is primarily because her husband Ajay Patel belongs to the powerful 'Agharia' community. The Agharias are a strong and closely knit community in Sundargarh. They are like the elites in the area having their dominant presence in politics, academics and business spheres.

As a BJD candidate in 2014, she had lost to Singh who was the Congress candidate. In 2019, she resigned from BJD after she was denied a ticket. This proved to be a game changer. Singh fought as a BJD candidate and pooled 43.45 per cent votes (75,754) and the party's vote share increased by 9.63 per cent. On the other hand, Kusum who fought on a BJP ticket got 83,118 votes (47.67 per cent) and the party's vote share increased by an astounding 30.03 per cent. The difference between the two was 7,364 votes.

Yogesh Singh is the scion of the erstwhile zamindar family of

Sargipali from where he started his campaigning this time. Over the last five years, he has managed to develop a good grip over the party cadres. Besides, the powerful transporters and liquor syndicates are reported to be standing behind him. Party sources said Singh is unlikely to face any dissension within the party.

However, local BJP sources said that Jual Oram, the MP candidate of the party, is not favourably inclined towards Kusum. This is because a few months back Kusum's name along with that of Shankar Oram, the BJP candidate from Biramitrapur, was being considered for the MP ticket while plans were afoot to send Jual back to his constituency, like what the party did elsewhere. "Jual did not like this. However, Jual's liking, or otherwise, will hardly hamper her prospects as she is capable of taking care of herself. Rather, Jual will have to seek her help to sail through," said a local BJP source.

## Our daughters being attacked: Modi slams Cong-led K'taka govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, April 20:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday criticised the Congress-led Karnataka government over the recent incidents of crime in the state while indirectly referring to the murder of an MCA student and a Congress leader's daughter, Neha Hiremath.

Speaking at a rally here in the Palace Grounds, PM Modi also appealed to the people to be careful and to be on the highest alert mode. Slamming the Congress, he said, "Here, our daughters are being attacked. Bombs exploded in markets. Assaults are launched for listening to bhajans and kirtans. These are not routine incidents. Against this backdrop, I appeal to the people of Bangalore and Karnataka to remain on the highest alert mode from the Congress."

Targeting the Congress government in Karnataka, PM Modi said that Kempe Gowda (founder of Bangalore city) has built a beautiful city. "The Congress government has created such a situation that the tech city has been reduced to a tanker city. They have handed the city over to the water mafia," he said.

## ANANDAPUR ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hatadihi, April 20:** A tough fight is on the cards for the Anandapur Assembly constituency under Keonjhar LS segment as the candidates from all three mainstream parties belong to Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district.

Meanwhile, BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik announced the name of Abhimanyu Sethi as the party candidate from the constituency putting all speculation to rest. BJP has fielded Alok Sethi as its candidate while veteran Jaydev Jena is the Congress candidate from the constituency.

After announcement of Abhimanyu's name, party workers thronged his residence and wished him success by handing him flower bouquets.

Sources said Bhagirathi and Mayadhar were striving hard for re-nomination while party workers were adamant on fielding of a new face. The party workers had organised a series of meetings demanding a new face from the constituency and informed the party supremo about their decision. Political analysts claimed that

## Tough battle on cards as BJD fields new face



the constituency will witness a tough fight as all three candidates of mainstream political parties are from Hatadihi block.

BJD candidate Abhimanyu is a resident of Inchol village while BJP candidate Alok is a resident of Hatadihi village. Similarly, Congress candidate Jaydev Jena is a resident of Sankhana village under the block. The Anandapur Assembly constituency consists of Hatadihi and Anandapur blocks as well as areas under Anandapur Municipality. There has been precedent that the candidate who gets more votes from Hatadihi block becomes the winner.

Congress candidate Jaydev Jena has been defeated thrice by the BJD candidate in the last three Assembly elections. BJP,

however, pushed Congress behind and contested with the BJD during the last panchayat elections. BJD won in six and BJP in one out of the seven zones during the last panchayat elections while Congress failed to open its account.

The announcement of Abhimanyu's name as BJD candidate from Anandapur Assembly constituency has been welcomed by the party workers. Political analysts hoped that the dissident workers who had left the party will return once again.

However, all eyes will be on Bhagirathi and Mayadhar and the roles they will be taking in the elections. While BJP and Congress have intensified their campaigns, BJD is preparing to join the bandwagon.

## EC announces fresh polls in 11 Manipur booths tomorrow

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Imphal, April 20:** The Election Commission Saturday declared the Lok Sabha elections held at 11 polling stations in the Inner Manipur Parliamentary constituency as void and announced to hold repolling in these stations Monday.

Manipur's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Pradeep Kumar Jha, said Saturday night that fresh polling will be held in these 11 polling stations under the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat.

"All voters of these 11 polling stations are appealed to come out in large numbers to exercise their franchise from 7am to 5pm on Monday," the CEO told IANS. The opposition Congress has demanded repoll in at least 47 polling stations in Manipur, alleging that a large number of polling booths were captured and vandalised Friday.

Manipur Congress President K Meghachandra Singh said the party has lodged a complaint with the Manipur CEO demanding repoll in 36 polling stations in the Inner Manipur seat and 11 polling stations in the Outer Manipur Lok Sabha constituency.

The CEO also said that 92-95 per cent of the displaced citizens presently staying in the relief camps cast their votes Friday.

"We are very happy with the high turnout among the displaced persons who communicated that they wanted to be part of the democratic exercise," Jha said. The Election Commission had set up 85 special polling stations for the ethnic violence-hit displaced voters in seven districts of the state.

# Voters of 'silent hamlet' cast ballots for basic amenities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhadkahi (J&K), April 20:**

The residents of Dhadkahi, known as the 'silent village' in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district due to its large deaf-and-dumb population, exercised their right to vote in the Lok Sabha polls Friday in the hope of getting basic amenities, such as roads, water, healthcare facilities and education. However, they warned of boycotting future elections if their demands are not met.

Located amidst snow-clad mountains, Dhadkahi is primarily inhabited by members of the Gujjar community, known for their agricultural practices and nomadic lifestyle. The unique characteristic of the village is that more than half of its population has faced challenges in

hearing and speaking due to congenital medical conditions since 1950.

Despite these challenges, more than 35 per cent of the eligible voters in the village cast their votes at two polling booths by the afternoon.

"We have voted to garner support for our long-standing demand for basic facilities. We urge the government to set up schools for the deaf-and-mute children in our village," Mohammad Hanief, a social activist, said.

The villagers emphasised the need for immediate attention to their issues, including teachers for a primary school, a doctor for a primary health centre and linking the hamlet with the road network.

"The administration should look into the villagers' problems



and ensure that the primary school gets teachers, the primary health centre gets a doctor

and the village is linked to the road network," Hanief said. The villagers said they will

boycott future elections if their demands are not addressed promptly.

"We will boycott any election - whether for the Assembly or panchayats - if our demands are not met," Hanief said.

With the help of Hanief, Rahil Ali, a deaf-and-mute father of five kids, stressed the importance of a school for children with similar conditions.

"We cast our votes with this demand in mind. The government should ensure the establishment of a deaf-and-dumb school to educate these children," he said in sign language, which was interpreted by Hanief.

The villagers also called for government support to help the deaf-and-mute youngsters become self-reliant by starting their own businesses. "The government should pro-

vide them with loans, training and animals under various schemes to help them earn a livelihood," Hanief said.

Despite their hearing-and-speech impairments, the villagers were enthusiastic about participating in the polling process.

"We are very happy to take part in the polling to choose our MP. Everyone is enthusiastic that the new MP will provide justice to us by ensuring basic facilities," Shabir Ahmed said.

Dhadkahi is home to approximately 4,500 Gujjars. The first case of hearing-and-speech impairment was reported in the village in 1939.

The village is part of the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency, one of the 102 seats in the country that went to polls Friday.

# national

## of the day quote

Since August 5, 2019, J&K has been converted into an open-air prison. All the decisions are being taken in Delhi about J&K to disempower the people here

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

I am 93 years old. In 2014, I challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and got defeated. I was ready to submit my resignation as I had challenged. However, Prime Minister Modi told me that I should be in the Parliament as my experience was needed

HD DEVE GOWDA | JANATA DAL-SECULAR PRESIDENT

Vijayan lives in perpetual fear of PM Modi because of numerous scams in which he is involved. His only agenda is to appease PM Modi and that is why he is continuously attacking Rahul Gandhi

VD SATHEESAN | KERALA LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

## SHORT TAKES

### China-made drone seized

**Chandigarh:** The Border Security Force (BSF) Saturday said it has seized a China-made drone near the India-Pakistan border in Punjab's Amritsar district along with a packet of 500 gm of heroin. Acting on a tip off, the BSF troops carried out an extensive search operation in the suspected area. At about 4:45 pm Friday, the troops successfully recovered one drone along with one packet of suspected heroin of 500 gm, the BSF Punjab Frontier said. The packet was wrapped in yellow adhesive tape, and a small torch was also found attached to the drone.

### Fake currency seized in Bengal

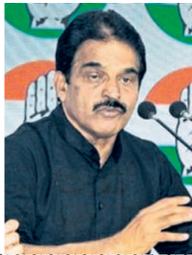
**Kolkata:** In a joint operation, the West Bengal Police and the South Bengal Frontier of the BSF seized fake Indian currency notes (FICN) with a face value of Rs 1,48,500 from a house close to the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal's Malda district. The raid took place Friday after an input from the BSF's intelligence wing. Before carrying out the raid, troops of the 70th Battalion of the BSF deployed at the Sasni border outpost informed the state police to prevent any retaliation by the villagers.

### Arms, ammunition recovered

**Jammu:** J&K Police Saturday claimed to have recovered arms and ammunition in the Arnas area of Reasi district in Jammu division after busting a hideout. Police said that acting on the reliable information regarding the presence of a hideout in the Arnas area, an operation was launched to sanitise the area. "We have recovered two detonators, 12 cartridges of Assault Rifle, one pull-through, one-hand held Tape recorder IED-enabled, one calculator IED-enabled, one battery and few connecting wires," the police said.

### DRI arrests Customs official

**Kolkata:** The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) arrested a Customs Department official Friday for leading a betel nut smuggling racket from Bangladesh. A departmental inquiry is already underway against Samir Shankar, the customs superintendent, based on allegations that he received Rs 40 lakh illegal gratification every month while being posted in the GST wing for allowing betel nut-laden trucks illegally through inspection checkpoints.



Modi finally appears to have realised that he is on the back foot and is trying to instil confidence by repeatedly saying about crossing 400 seats. Everyone knows what the reality is going to be

KC VENUGOPAL | AICC GENERAL SECRETARY (ORGANISATION)

### SISODIA WITHDRAWS INTERIM PLEA

AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister, Manish Sisodia, Saturday withdrew his interim bail application to campaign for his party for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls



# EC chalked out 7-phase polls to assist BJP: Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Malda, April 20:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday alleged that the Election Commission of India chalked out seven-phase polls to enable Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his cabinet colleagues to carry out extensive campaigning using the nation's resources.

Addressing a public meeting at Gajol in Malda district in support of Malda Uttar TMC candidate Prasan Banerjee, a former IPS officer, Mamata Banerjee, the party supremo, said polls have been scheduled from April 19 to June 1 so that Modi and his cabinet colleagues can travel on special planes across the country before every phase to "overwhelm the Opposition".

"On earlier occasions, elections used to be over by May but this year, it has been extended till June 1 to enable Modi to visit various places on military planes, while we are made to arrange for our own transport, including helicopters, which are also being booked by BJP leaders so that we get little space," she alleged.

"People are greatly inconvenienced by the scorching heat but Modi is unperturbed as they (BJP leaders) are campaigning in VVIP comfort with all facilities at hand," she added.

Banerjee alleged that though the Union council of ministers led by Narendra Modi is a caretaker cabinet after the announcement of elections and the EC is in charge of running the administrative machinery, the



poll body is "toeing the line dictated by Modi and his party colleagues".

Attacking the BJP and Congress MPs from West Bengal, Banerjee alleged that despite being elected from the state in 2019, none of them took up the state's cause regarding the release of MGNREGA funds by the Centre or building houses for the poor under PM Awas Yojana.

"On the other hand, our (TMC) MPs were manhandled and arrested when they went to Delhi in November last year to demand the release of MGNREGA funds," she said.

"But what have the Congress and BJP MPs done for the poor? What has (Maldaha Uttar) BJP MP Khagen Murmu done for job card holders of the state?" she questioned.

Banerjee accused the CPI (M)

and Congress of bolstering the BJP in the state and urged people not to cast votes for any non-TMC candidate. "I had coined the name of INDIA bloc. But INDIA bloc does not exist in Bengal. For us, it exists outside the state," she said.

"Our MP Mahua Moitra was expelled from Parliament for unmasking the misdeeds of the Modi government and its proximity to big business houses. TMC MPs were targeted by this vindictive government," she added.

Stating that TMC MPs, including Mamata Bala Thakur and Derek O'Brien, were sent back from Guwahati airport when they went to Assam after the names of 19 lakh Bengalis were left out of NRC, Banerjee asserted that her party has always stood up to "atrocities committed by the BJP government".

### Soumya's mother moves SC against bail to four killers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 20:** The mother of TV journalist Soumya Vishwanathan, who was shot on Nelson Mandela Marg while returning from work in her car in 2008, has filed a special leave petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court challenging the Delhi High Court's order granting bail and suspending the life sentence of four men convicted in the case.

The division bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Girish Kathpalia of the High Court had delivered the order February 12, noting that the convicts have been behind bars for nearly 14 years. The bench had said that their life sentence will remain in suspension till this court deals with their appeal against conviction and sentencing in the case.

Now, the deceased's mother's SLP is likely to be listed April 22 before the top court. The Saket court had, in November last year, sentenced Ravi Kapoor, Amit Shukla, Baljeet Malik, and Ajay Kumar to life imprisonment, while the fifth convict, Ajay Sethi, was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

Four of them -- Ravi, Amit, Baljeet and Ajay -- had sought suspension of the sentence during the pendency of appeals. Earlier in January this year, Malik and Shukla had filed appeals through advocate Amit Kumar against the trial court's October 18, 2023, judgement convicting them and the November 25, 2023 sentencing.

### TISS suspends PhD student for two years

Ramadas Prinisivanandan (30), who is pursuing his doctorate in Development Studies, has also been debarred from entering the TISS campuses in Mumbai, Tuljapur, Hyderabad and Guwahati

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 20:** The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) has suspended a PhD student for two years for indulging in activities that are 'not in the interest of the nation' and referred to instances like him participating in a protest in Delhi under the PSF-TISS banner.

Ramadas Prinisivanandan (30), who is pursuing his doctorate in Development Studies, has also been debarred from entering the TISS campuses in Mumbai, Tuljapur, Hyderabad and Guwahati.

In a notice sent to Prinisivanandan dated March 7, TISS referred to instances like the screening of documentaries like 'Ram Ke Naam' ahead of January 26 as a "mark of dishonour and protest" against the Ram Mandir consecration in Ayodhya.

He has also been accused of screening a banned BBC documentary on the TISS campus last January and also organising the Bhagat Singh Memorial Lecture (BSML) by inviting "controversial guest speakers".

It said that these issues are "very serious and it is discernible that you are intentionally and deliberately indulging in such unlawful activities in the name of freedom of speech and expression."

"Your activities are not in the interest of the nation. Being a



public institution, TISS cannot permit or tolerate its students indulging in such activities which are anti-national and bring a bad name to the nation. Hence all such activities fall under the category of serious criminal offence. The committee recommended your suspension from the institute i.e. Tata Institute of Social Sciences for the period of two years and your entry shall be debarred across all campuses of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, which is accepted by the competent authority," the TISS notice dated April 18 reads.

Prinisivanandan, who hails from Kerala, said he will appeal against the suspension.

The Progressive Student Forum, a Left-leaning student body Prinisivanandan is associated with, said the march referred to by the TISS was related to 'anti-student policies in the form of the National Education Policy'. It also said BSML has had the distinction of inviting well-known academics, scholars and human rights activists, including two Ramon Magsaysay awardees.

# 54 trains cancelled as protest continues



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ambala, April 20:** A total of 54 trains on the Ambala-Amritsar route were cancelled Saturday as farmers squatted on tracks at the Shambhu railway station in Punjab's Patiala district for the fourth day, officials said.

The protestors have been demanding the release of three farmers arrested by the Haryana Police during the ongoing stir. As many as 54 trains were cancelled Saturday because of the farmers' protest, railway officials said. The protest has affected the movement of 380 trains in the last

three days, causing inconvenience to passengers, they added. The farmers have been protesting under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) in Patiala district's Shambhu.

They began their protest for the release of arrested farmers Wednesday by squatting on the tracks on the Ambala-Ludhiana-Amritsar route in Shambhu near the Punjab-Haryana border.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said the protest will continue until the three farmers are released. The SKM (Non-Political) and the KMM are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march by farmers to press the government to accept their demands, including legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

The farmers have been staying put at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13 when their march was stopped by the security forces.



EVMs and VVPATs being kept at a strong room after the first phase of Lok Sabha elections, in Thoothukudi, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

# No one stepped out to vote in village of dreaded Maoist leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sukma, April 20:** While the residents of several remote villages in Chhattisgarh's Bastar Lok Sabha constituency defied the poll boycott call given by Maoists and exercised their franchise Friday, people from Puvarti village, the native place of a hardcore Maoist leader, chose to stay away from the electoral process.

Puvarti, a Maoist-stronghold in Sukma district bordering Bijapur district, is the home village of dreaded Naxalite leader Hidma, who is believed to be the mastermind of several deadly attacks on security forces in Bastar region.

Polling was held in the Bastar Lok Sabha seat Friday and a voter turnout of 67.56 per cent was recorded there. "No voters from Puvarti village exercised their voting right during polling



Friday," Booth Level Officer (BLO) of Puvarti polling booth Java Patel said. Some officials said the villagers did not cast their vote out of fear.

The Puvarti polling booth (No. 4), meant for voters of three villages - Puvarti, Tekalgudiyam and Jonaguda - was set up in Silger village, around 20-25 kms

away from Puvarti.

The number of voters in Puvarti is 332, Tekalgudiyam 158 and Jonaguda 157 - which comes to a total of 547 voters for Puvarti booth, he said. Total 31 voters cast their votes at Puvarti polling booth, but none of them was from Puvarti village and were from Tekalgudiyam and

Jonaguda, he said. In Bastar Lok Sabha seat, Kanta assembly constituency which covers Sukma district recorded 54.31 per cent turnout.

Jagargunda area committee of Maoists had put up banners in Puvarti in adjoining villages appealing people to boycott polls. In February this year, the Chhattisgarh police set up its camp in Puvarti and the move was termed as a major achievement for security forces in the fight against Left Wing Extremism.

Located in a dense forest around 150 km away from Sukma district headquarter, Puvarti has been deprived of development works and basic facilities due to the Naxal menace and geographical circumstances, officials had said.

Setting up of security camps in remote and highly Naxal-affected areas like Puvarti will help thousands of villagers to get

rid of the Maoist menace and get benefited with development works and welfare schemes of the government, they had added.

Notably Puvarti is the home village of former commander of Maoists' PLGA (people's liberation guerilla army) battalion number 1 Hidma and incumbent commander Barse Deva.

Maoists' Peoples' Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) battalion no. 1 formation has been instrumental in carrying out several deadly attacks in south Bastar. Ahead of setting up a camp in Puvarti, security forces had set up their camp in Tekalgudem, a few kms away from Puvarti, in January, during which an encounter broke out between security personnel and Naxalites. Three CRPF personnel, including two commandos of its elite jungle warfare unit CoBRA, were killed and 17 others injured in that incident.

### 4 dead, 20 injured in UP

**Mainpuri (UP):** Four women died and 20 people were injured when a tractor-trolley was hit by a truck in Uttar Pradesh's Mainpuri Saturday, police said. The accident happened around 4 am near Fardpur village when around 35 people onboard the tractor-trolley were returning from a child's 'namkaran' ceremony, they said. According to one of the injured passengers, Virendra Singh Lodhi Rajput, 25 women were among the 35 people who had gone to attend the ceremony of his daughter's child in Beldhara village, they said. Inspector Bichwan Police Station Anavish Kumar Tyagi said when they reached Fardpur village, the headlights of the tractor developed some problems. They parked it on the roadside to fix it when a speeding truck rammed into the tractor-trolley. Twenty injured people were admitted to the district hospital and four others, including three women, were rushed to Safai hospital in critical condition, he said. The locals caught hold of the truck driver and handed him over to the police.

# international

## of the day quote

A prompt admission of Palestine into the United Nations is a move to rectify a prolonged historical injustice

The Secretary-General reiterates that it is high time to stop the dangerous cycle of retaliation in the Middle East

The violence poses an extreme and immediate danger to the 800,000 civilians who reside in El Fasher

## SHORT TAKES

### US sanctions 3 Chinese firms

Washington: The US has imposed sanctions on three Chinese companies and one from Belarus for secretly supplying missile-applicable items for Pakistan's ballistic missile programmes, including its long-range missile programme, the State Department has announced. The names of the companies are Xi'an Longde Technology Development, Tianjin Creative Source International Trade and Granpect Co Ltd from China and Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant from Belarus. These entities "have engaged in activities or transactions that have materially contributed to, or pose a risk of materially contributing to, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or their means of delivery, including any efforts to manufacture, acquire, possess, develop, transport, transfer or use such items, by Pakistan." State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said Friday. China, an all-weather ally of Pakistan, has been the main supplier of arms and defence equipment to Islamabad's ambitious military modernisation programme.

### Extortion letters

Singapore: Singapore's Indian-origin Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and several members of Parliament have received extortion letters containing fake photos of themselves in obscene situations. Balakrishnan said in a Facebook post that several other MPs and himself received letters containing a "fake distasteful image accompanied by a threat". "This conduct is deplorable and totally contrary to the values and good practices that we are trying to inculcate in our society. We have filed police reports and will take appropriate legal action," he said. There have been over 70 police reports since March about such extortion letters, according to a Channel News Asia report Saturday.

### X to challenge Oz

Sydney: Social media platform X said Saturday it would challenge in court an order from an Australian regulator demanding the company remove some posts related to the stabbing of a bishop in Sydney. Police charged a boy, 16, with a terrorism offence Thursday for the alleged stabbing of Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel at a church in the New South Wales capital Monday. Footage from the scene showed the boy restrained by the congregation and shouting accusations that Emmanuel had insulted Islam. X's Global Government Affairs posted Saturday that the Australian eSafety Commissioner had ordered it "to remove certain posts in Australia that publicly commented on the recent attack against a Christian Bishop".



Our sky must become safe again. It depends fully on your choice whether we indeed are allies

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | PRESIDENT, UKRAINE

## CAMPAIGN AMID TRIAL

Donald Trump to hold his first campaign rally Saturday since his criminal trial in New York began, with the North Carolina crowd likely to hear the ex-president reiterate fiery outrage at the unprecedented legal proceedings



# Middle East on boil

REUTERS

Cairo, April 20: Iran's foreign minister Friday said Tehran was investigating an overnight attack on Iran, adding that so far a link to Israel had not been proven as he downplayed the strike.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told NBC News the drones took off from inside Iran and flew for a few hundred meters before being downed.

"They're... more like toys that our children play with, not drones," Amirabdollahian said. "It has not been proved to us that there is a connection between these and Israel," he said, adding that Iran was investigating the matter but that media reports were not accurate, according to Tehran's information.

Iranian media and officials described a small number of explosions, which they said resulted from air defenses hitting three drones over Isfahan in central Iran in the early hours of Friday. They referred to the incident as an attack by "infiltrators", rather than by Israel, obviating the need for retaliation.

Amirabdollahian warned that if Israel retaliated and acted against the interests of Iran, Tehran's next response would be immediate and at maximum level. "But if not, then we are done. We are concluded," he said.

The attack appeared to target an Iranian Air Force base near the city of Isfahan, deep inside the country, but without striking any strategic sites or causing major damage.



- Iran's foreign minister downplays drone attack Friday, says Tehran investigating
- Iran foreign minister says drones used were 'more like toys'
- Israeli planes and tanks pound several areas across Gaza Strip

Israel has said nothing about the incident. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the United States had not been involved in any offensive operations, while the White House said it had no comment.

Israel had said it would retaliate after a strike April 13, the first ever direct attack on Israel by Iran, which caused no deaths after Israel and its allies shot down hundreds of missiles and drones.

Tehran launched those attacks in response to a presumed Israeli airstrike April 1 that destroyed

a building in Iran's embassy compound in Damascus and killed several Iranian officers including a top general.

Allies including the US had pressed all week to ensure any further retaliation would be calibrated not to provoke more escalation, and Western countries tightened sanctions on Iran to mollify Israel.

Israel's assault on Gaza began after Hamas Islamists attacked Israel October 7, killing 1,200, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's military offensive has killed 34,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the Gazan health ministry.

As night fell Friday, Israeli planes and tanks pounded several areas across the Gaza Strip, with air strikes hitting areas of Rafah where over half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are sheltering, according to residents, Hamas media and officials at the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry. One strike hit two apartments in a residential building in the city, killing nine people, including four children, and wounding several others, health officials said.

Violence between Israel and Iranian proxies across the Middle East has intensified throughout six months of bloodshed in Gaza, raising fears the longstanding foes' shadow war could spiral into a direct conflict.

## Pro-Iranian base attacked in Iraq

Baghdad: A huge blast at a military base in Iraq early Saturday killed a member of an Iraqi security force that includes Iran-backed groups. The force commander said it was an attack while the army said it was investigating and there were no warplanes in the sky at the time. Two security sources had said earlier that an airstrike caused the blast, which killed a member of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and wounded eight others at Kalso military base about 50 km (30 miles) south of Baghdad. In a statement, the PMF said its chief of staff Abdul Aziz al-Mohammedawi had visited the location and reviewed information from investigators. "The air defence command report confirmed, through technical efforts and radar detection, that there was no drone or fighter jet in the air space of Babil before and during the explosion," the military said in a statement. The incident in Iraq's Babil province occurred with frictions even higher than usual across the Middle East, following what sources said was an Israeli attack in the Iranian city of Isfahan Friday.

## NK missile mania goes on unabated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Seoul, April 20: North Korea said Saturday it had tested a "super-large" cruise missile warhead and a new anti-aircraft missile.

A power test of a super-large warhead designed for the Hwasal-1 Ra-3 strategic cruise missile and a test launch of the Ppyolji-1-2 anti-aircraft missile took place Friday, state media reported.

It said Friday's tests were part of North Korea's regular military activities and had "nothing to do with the surrounding situation."

UN resolutions prohibit North Korea from testing ballistic missiles of any range, some of which are capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.

Against the backdrop of the conflict over North Korea's nuclear weapons programme, tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased significantly once again.

## Fighting rages on Myanmar-Thai border

Rebels target stranded junta troops

REUTERS

Naypyidaw, April 20: Fighting raged at Myanmar's eastern frontier with Thailand Saturday, witnesses, media and Thailand's government said, forcing about 200 civilians to flee as rebels pressed to flush out junta troops holed up for days at a bridge border crossing.

Resistance fighters and ethnic minority rebels seized the key trading town of Myawaddy on the Myanmar side of the frontier April 11, dealing a big blow to a well-equipped military that is struggling to govern and is now facing a critical test of its battlefield credibility.

Three witnesses on the Thai and Myanmar sides of the border said they heard explosions and heavy machine gun fire near a strategic bridge from late Friday that continued into early Saturday. Several Thai media outlets

## Man dies after self immolation



The man burned for minutes in full view of television cameras that were set up outside the courthouse, where the first-ever criminal trial of a former US president is being held

REUTERS

New York, April 20: A man has died after setting himself on fire Friday outside the New York courthouse where Donald Trump's historic hush-money trial was taking place as jury selection wrapped up, but officials said he did not appear to have been targeting Trump.

NBC News and other US media said early Saturday that the man had died. NBC News quoted New York City police as saying the hospital where the man was taken had declared him dead.

Officials had said earlier the man, who was in his late 30s, was in critical condition. Witnesses said the man pulled



pamphlets out of a backpack and threw them in the air before he doused himself with a liquid and set himself on fire. One of those pamphlets included references to "evil billionaires" but portions that were visible to a Reuters witness did not mention Trump.

The New York Police Department said the man, who they identified as Max Azzarello of St Augustine, Florida, did not appear to be targeting Trump or others involved in the trial.

"Right now we are labeling him as sort of a conspiracy theorist, and we are going from there," Tarik Sheppard, a deputy commissioner with the Police Department, said at a news conference.

The shocking development came shortly after jury selection for the trial was completed, clearing the way for prosecutors and defense attorneys to make opening statements Monday in a case stemming from hush money paid to a porn star. The court adjourned later in the afternoon.

A conviction would not bar Trump from office.

## SNIPPETS

### US to pullout troops from Niger

Niamey: The US administration has agreed to withdraw around 1,000 troops from Niger over the months ahead, US media and television in the West African country have reported. The decision comes in response to a demand from the West African country's military junta, which cancelled a military cooperation agreement with the United States in mid-March. Amadou Abdramane, a spokesman for the junta, said the move was based on patronizing US attitudes and an alleged threat of reprisals by the US delegation. The deal had previously allowed US troops and civil contractors of the US Defence Department to operate in the country. The Washington Post reported that the US administration had opposed the step, which would affect efforts to combat terrorism in the region. It also places a question over the status of a US airbase built at a cost of \$110 million just six years ago. The Sahel which runs through Niger and its neighbours has become a hotspot for Islamist terrorism, with attacks rising in Niger following a coup last year.



### Severe energy crisis hits Ecuador

Quito: Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa declared a second state of emergency Friday over an energy crisis that has already led to rationing in the South American country. Noboa, who took office in November, had declared an energy emergency and instituted power cuts earlier this week, but the cuts will be suspended on Sunday for a referendum he looks set to win on a raft of security measures. His first emergency declaration, in January, sought to tame surging crime by allowing more coordination between the military and police. In Saturday's 60-day state of emergency, Noboa deployed the military and police to guard energy infrastructure, according to a decree published on his office's website. A drought caused in part by the climate phenomenon known as El Nino has hit levels at hydroelectric dams, which produce most of Ecuador's power.



# HOW UKRAINE IS ADJUSTING TO PERMANENT WAR



mands. The armed forces must be prepared to fight for months or years to come. The government has to keep the civilian economy afloat, even as it sends more of its able-bodied population to battle. And as the leadership in Kyiv awaits a long-delayed aid package from the US Congress, it must learn to do

more recently, the new commander in chief, General Oleksandr Syrsky, suggested that 150,000 recruits per year might be sufficient, although many regard that figure as too low. Equally pressing, however, may be the issue of maintaining troop quality.

Even if a cease-fire agreement is someday reached and the war ends, Ukrainians know that they will always have Russia and Belarus on their borders. That means a permanent threat, and the country will have an ongoing demand for weapons to defend itself. Most European states developed their military infrastructure during the Cold War, when defence spending was high. Ukraine, a very big country, must do so amid a hot war on its own soil, when it has few resources and desperate needs. Under such circumstances, reshaping the social and economic system—and preserving the country's democratic institutions—cannot depend on one leader or even the armed forces; it requires the involvement of the entire country. And there are no definite right answers.

After more than two years of war, Ukraine's need for soldiers is acute. But it is not just a question of adding more people to the existing forces or making up for the fallen and wounded. In actual numbers, officials have made varying estimates of the country's needs: in December 2023, army commanders demanded 500,000 new soldiers;

UKRAINIANS CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A TOUGH FRONTLINE AGAINST RUSSIANS AND ARE AS DETERMINED AS EVER TO DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY

## of the day quote

This is also an interesting moment because this is India's moment. There has been numerous policy interventions made internally, and the global factors which give us the tailwinds. The country is growing at a time when the world is at stress

SANJIV PURI | PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE, CII

We aim to proactively address the evolving needs of Indian agriculture and farmer preferences by leveraging the latest technologies

MOTTI LEVIN | CEO, HAIFA GROUP

As a responsible corporate working together with industries on enabling sustainable processes and circular economy, we acknowledge the local collection and segregation of battery waste for recycling and reuse of extracted battery materials

ASHOK THAKUR | DIRECTOR, CUSTOMIZED ENERGY SOLUTIONS

## SHORT TAKES

### HDFC Bank posts ₹16,511cr profit

**New Delhi:** The country's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank Saturday reported a net profit of ₹16,511 crore for the January-March quarter of the financial year 2023-24. This is only a marginal 0.84 per cent increase over the corresponding figure of ₹16,373 crore for the same period of the previous year. However, the financial results for the two years are not comparable due to the merger with the parent entity HDFC Ltd during the year. The HDFC board of directors has recommended a dividend of ₹19.5 per equity share of ₹1 for the year ended March 31, 2024, the bank said.

### IREDA posts 45% jump in profit

**New Delhi:** Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) reported a 44.83 per cent jump in net profit to ₹1,252.23 crores for the financial year ended March 31, 2024, compared to the net profit of ₹864.63 crore registered in the previous fiscal year 2022-23. The nation's largest pure-play green financing NBFC also said that it has successfully reduced its net non-performing assets to 0.99 per cent in FY 2023-24 from 1.66 per cent in FY 2022-23, demonstrating a significant reduction of 40.52 per cent year-on-year. IREDA's loan book has grown by 26.81 per cent, from ₹47,052.52 crores as of March 31, 2023, to ₹59,698.11 crores as of March 31, 2024.

## OLA PLANS \$500MN IPO

This is Ola's second attempt at IPO, after a 2021 plan to raise up to \$1bn was canned

REUTERS

**Mumbai, April 20:** Indian ride-hailing firm Ola Cabs is planning an initial public offering (IPO) to raise \$500 million at a company valuation of about \$5 billion, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

SoftBank-backed Ola is India's answer to Uber and plans to file papers for approval with the country's market regulator within three months, said the sources, who declined to be named as the matter is confidential.

Ola declined to comment.

The company is in talks with investment banks, including Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Citi and India's Kotak and Axis, and plans to appoint IPO advisers within a month, said two of the sources. Citi and Bank of America declined to comment, while the others did not

## INFLATION FIGHT

# RBI can't let guard down just yet: MPC

RBI has continued its prolonged pause in the key repo rate at 6.5%, pursuing durable signs of easing inflation amid volatile food prices

REUTERS

**Mumbai, April 20:** India's success in the disinflation process should not distract the central bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) from the inflation trajectory's vulnerability to frequent supply-side shocks, Governor Shaktikanta Das wrote in the minutes of the April policy meeting released Friday.

Earlier this month, the six-member rate-setting committee kept the main lending rate at 6.5%, in line with expectations. It had raised the repo rate by a total of 250 basis points between May 2022 and February 2023.

"Going ahead, while monetary policy seems to be on the right track, it is too early to ease guard against inflation," said Rajiv Ranjan, the central bank's executive director and MPC member.

Five out of the six MPC members voted in favour of holding rates, with the monetary policy stance of "withdrawal of accommodation" retained by a similar margin of votes.

External member Jayanth Varma voted for a 25 basis points rate cut for a second consecutive meeting and said the current



Downward pressure on inflation must be maintained until a better balance of risks becomes evident and the layers of uncertainty clouding the near-term clear away

MICHAEL PATRA | DEPUTY GOVERNOR, RBI

The central bank has projected 7% growth in the fiscal year that started in April, compared with an estimated 7.6% in the year ended March 31

real interest rate of around 2% is excessive.

"The fact that economic growth in 2024-25 is projected to slow by over half a percent relative to 2023-24 is a reminder that high interest rates entail a growth sacrifice," he wrote.

The central bank has projected 7% growth in the fiscal year that started in April, compared with an estimated 7.6% in the year ended March 31.

Retail inflation is expected to average 4.5% this fiscal year but the recent flare up in tensions in the Middle East could push up global oil and commodity prices and boost imported inflation in India going ahead.

"Downward pressure on inflation must be maintained until

a better balance of risks becomes evident and the layers of uncertainty clouding the near-term clear away," central bank deputy governor Michael Patra wrote.

Governor Das said the overlapping food price shocks, apart from imparting volatility to headline inflation, may also result in spillovers to core inflation.

Annual retail inflation in March was 4.85%, lower than 5.09% in February, and below the 4.91% forecast in a Reuters poll.

Interest rate cuts in India are "off the table" in fiscal year 2024/25 given the change in the Federal Reserve's policy path and strong growth in India, analysts at Morgan Stanley said in a note earlier this week.

## Zomato slapped with ₹11.81cr GST demand

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 20:** Online food delivery platform Zomato has received a goods and services tax (GST) demand and penalty order worth ₹11.81 crore.

The order consists of ₹5.9 crore in GST demand and a penalty of ₹5.9 crore for July 2017-March 2021 period.

"The company has received an order for the period July 2017 to March 2021 passed by Additional Commissioner, Central Goods and Services Tax, Gurugram raising demand of GST of ₹5,90,94,889 with applicable interest (not quantified) and penalty of ₹5,90,94,889," Zomato said in a stock exchange regulatory filing.

Earlier this month, the food delivery platform had said it re-



ceived notices from the tax authorities in Delhi and Karnataka over alleged short payment of GST in 2018 amounting to ₹4.2 crore.

The company had said it would appeal against the tax demand notices.

Zomato registered ₹125 crore in profit in the third quarter (Q3) of the last financial year (FY24) - an improvement by ₹390 crore as compared to the same quarter last year.

## TIDBITS

### Environment-tech sector garners \$7.3 billion in funding till date

**New Delhi:** The environment-tech sector in India has raised \$7.3 billion in total funding to date, a report showed Friday. The country's environmental technology funding saw substantial growth between 2018 and 2022, surging from \$0.23 billion to \$2.47 billion, as per data by Tracxn, a leading market intelligence platform. India's share in global funding was 7 per cent in 2022, the highest since 2011. Environment tech funding in the country peaked in 2022 at \$2.47 billion. However, it experienced a decline to \$1.68 billion in 2023, a 32 per cent decrease from 2022. As of the first three months of 2024, the funding stands at \$0.24 billion. Despite the global increase in funding, India's share remained consistently low, ranging from 0 per cent to 7 per cent. Bangalore (\$2.7 billion) tops the list in this space in terms of all-time city-wise funding, followed by Delhi (\$1.2 billion) and Mumbai (\$942 million). "This space has seen 14 initial public offerings (IPOs) and 25 acquisitions to date. Only five companies reported more than \$100 million rounds in 2023," the findings showed. One unicorn has also emerged in India in this space -- Ola Electric.



### 37 Indian startups secure \$310 million in funding

**New Delhi:** At least 37 startups in India secured about \$310 million in funding this week, including 10 growth-stage deals, as deals continued at a normal pace in the country. Last week, as many as 21 startups secured nearly \$105 million in the country. This week, 10 startups raised \$225.86 million in funding, including GPS Renewables which secured \$50 million in debt funding, according to a report in Entracker. Deeptech startup Ecozen raised \$30 million in a mix of debt and equity from existing investors, including asset management firm Nuveen. Online B2B marketplace ProcMart raised \$30 million in its Series B funding led by Nandan Nilekani and Sanjeev Aggarwal's VC fund, Fundamentum Partnership, and the Edelweiss Discovery Fund. Gaming startup LightFury Games secured \$8.5 million in its maiden round, led by Blume Ventures and other key investors.



## India among leading nations in artificial intelligence adoption

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 20:** As the Asia-Pacific region experiences a surge in the adoption of Generative AI (GenAI), India is set to join the most rapidly expanding markets in the forthcoming years.

According to an IDC report, the Asia-Pacific region is witnessing an unprecedented surge in GenAI adoption, including software, services, and hardware for AI-centric systems.

The region is likely to see GenAI spending soar to \$26 billion by 2027, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 95.4 per cent for the period.

This surge underscores the region's pivotal role in driving the next wave of AI innovation and technological advancement, the report mentioned.

Deepika Giri, Head of Research, Big Data and AI, IDC APJ, said that the investment in GenAI will reach its zenith within the next two years, followed by a period of stabilisation.

"China is projected to maintain its position as the dominant market for GenAI, while Japan and India are set to become the most rapidly expanding markets in the forthcoming years," Giri mentioned.

From software development to customer service, GenAI is revolutionising industries, ushering in a new era of innovation in the region.

The financial services sector is experiencing rapid growth in GenAI adoption in Asia -- projected to reach \$4.3 billion by 2027 with a CAGR of 96.7 per cent, the report said.



## Russia top crude supplier to India for 2nd yr in row

Russia squeezes Mideast, OPEC shares in India's oil market to historic lows

REUTERS

**New Delhi, April 20:** Russia became the top crude oil supplier to India during the fiscal year 2023/24 for a second year in a row, squeezing the market share of Middle Eastern and OPEC producers to historic lows, ship tracking data from industry sources showed.

New Delhi has been gorging on Russian oil sold at a discount after Western nations shunned purchases and imposed sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. As a result Russia is now the top supplier to the world's third-largest oil importer.

India has continued to buy Russian oil despite problems posed by a raft of sanctions aimed at reducing Moscow's oil revenue to fund the war.

Russia is an ally of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) but it has eaten into the share of India's crude diet from key OPEC producers in the Middle East.

Russian oil accounted for about 35% of India's overall 4.7 million barrels per day (bpd) crude imports in the fiscal year to March 31 compared with about 22% a year ago, the data shows.

India imported 1.64 million

India imported an equal amount of oil from OPEC and non-OPEC nations for the first time in 2023/2024



Russian oil accounted for about 35% of India's overall oil imports

Middle Eastern oil in Indian imports fell to an all-time low of 46%

Iraq continued to be second-largest supplier followed by Saudi

bpd of Russian oil in fiscal 2023/2024, up about 57% from the previous year; the data shows.

That lifted the share of oil from Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in India's imports to 39% in 2023/24 from 26% a year ago, the data shows. In contrast, the share of Middle Eastern oil in Indian imports fell to an all-time low of 46% from 55%.

Iraq continued to be the second-largest supplier to India followed by Saudi Arabia in 2023/24.

India imported an equal amount of oil from OPEC and non-OPEC nations for the first time in 2023/2024, the data showed.

The fall in Saudi oil imports followed higher official selling prices set by state-owned Saudi Aramco for most of the year, while imports from Kuwait have also dropped sharply after the producer diverted its crude to a new domestic refinery.

## Gems, jewellery exports in FY24 drop by 12.17%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 20:** Gems and jewellery exports declined by 12.17 per cent to ₹2,65,187.95 crore (\$32,022.08 million) during 2023-24, compared to the previous financial year due to high interest rates in the US and slow recovery in China. Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) data showed. Gems and jewellery exports in FY23 stood at ₹3,01,925.97 crore (\$37,646.17 million), according to GJEPC data.

"The last financial year was very challenging for all product categories. This was mainly due to slowdown in the US, India's biggest export market in the segment, due to high interest rates. Also, slow recovery in China post Covid-19," GJEPC chairman Vipul Shah told PTI.

Meanwhile, the overall exports of Cut and Polished diamonds dipped by 25.23 per cent during FY24 to ₹1,32,128.29 crore (\$15,966.47 million) compared to ₹1,76,716.06 crore (\$22,046.9 million) for the same period of previous year.

Provisional gross export of Polished Lab Grown Diamonds dipped by 13.79 per cent ₹11,611.25 crores (\$1,402.3 million) in FY24 compared to ₹13,468.32 crore (\$1,680.22 million) of FY23.

However, according to the provisional export of total gold jewellery witnessed a growth of 20.57 per cent at ₹92,346.19 crore (\$1,140.780 million) in FY24 against ₹76,589.94 crore (\$9,538.84 million) in the previous year.

Provisional gross export of silver jewellery dipped by 43 per cent in FY24 at ₹13,406.1 crore (\$1,616.42 million) from ₹23,556.71 crore (\$293.9 million) in FY23.



## Suppliers helping Apple achieve green goals

THE 'SUPPLIER CLEAN ENERGY PROGRAMME' NOW SUPPORTS OVER 16.5 GIGAWATTS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING IN INDIA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 20:** As big companies invest billions of dollars into building a sustainable future, innovations in clean energy, materials and recycling are helping iPhone maker Apple meet its environmental goals.

Apple has cut its overall greenhouse gas emissions by more than 55 per cent since 2015 and the goal centres on reducing emissions by 75 per cent from 2015 levels.

The 'Supplier Clean Energy Programme' now supports over 16.5 gigawatts of renewable energy around the world, including in India. With this, more



than 100 supplier facilities achieved over 2 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity savings last year, according to the company.

Together with additional energy savings -- primarily associated with heat -- these facilities avoided nearly 1.7 million metric tonnes of carbon emissions, up 25 per cent from 2022, the company mentioned in its '2024 Environmental Progress Report'.

In India, renewable energy company CleanMax has part-

nered with Apple to accelerate renewable energy adoption in the country.

As part of the initiative, CleanMax has installed 14.4 megawatts of rooftop solar installations across six industrial sites in the country.

The company is also working to tackle the direct climate impact of industrial processes, like the manufacturing of flat-panel displays, which emits highly potent fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-GHGs).

In 2023, about 56 per cent of the cobalt shipped in Apple batteries came from recycled sources, more than double the year before.

That includes the MacBook Air with M3, the first-ever Apple product to be made with 50 per cent recycled material.

About 24 per cent of the lithium shipped in Apple batteries last year came from certified recycled sources.

According to Lisa Jackson, Apple's vice president of Environment, Policy, and Social Initiatives, the company has slashed emissions by more than half, while serving more users than ever before.

"More hard work is ahead of us, and we're focused on harnessing the power of innovation and collaboration to maximise our impact," Jackson mentioned.

The company has also made strides with copper, using 100 per cent recycled copper in key thermal applications in iPhone 15 and the 16-inch MacBook Pro.

# SUNRISERS HUMBLE CAPITALS

## Struggling RCB take on dominant Knight Riders



Shahbaz Ahmed



Travis Head (L) and Abhishek Sharma



Jake Fraser-McGurk



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, April 20:** Aware that they cannot afford any more slip-ups, Royal Challengers Bengaluru will have their task cut out when they face dominant hosts Kolkata Knight Riders in a tricky IPL match here Sunday.

RCB's pursuit of a maiden IPL title has once again hit a roadblock following six losses in seven matches. With five consecutive defeats, the bottom-ranked RCB now confront the daunting task of winning their remaining seven games to keep their playoff prospects alive.

For a side that has been severely let down by their bowlers and relies heavily on the batting prowess of Virat Kohli, Faf du Plessis and veteran Dinesh Karthik, facing KKR presents a significant challenge.

The fact that they are coming after conceding the IPL's record total of 287/3 by Sunrisers Hyderabad in their last match will undoubtedly linger in the minds of their bowlers.

It would not be a bad idea to bring back their most expensive (Rs 11.5-crore) buy this season, Alzarri Joseph, to go alongside Mohammed Siraj, who was not picked against SRH. Joseph has bagged a solitary wicket in three appearances for RCB while also getting hammered at 11.89 runs per over.

Glenn Maxwell's spin also could have been a nice option, but the struggling Australian all-rounder, who pulled out of the game against SRH citing "men-

tal fatigue", is also battling a hip strain that may keep him out of action for some time.

Their batting has centred around the two openers - Kohli and Du Plessis - and Karthik, while the rest of the players have failed miserably. The trio will again have to play a key role against the likes of Sunil Narine, Mitchell Starc and Harshit Rana.

The home side will also be coming on the back of a defeat to Rajasthan Royals in a last-ball finish. So KKR, who have played one match less than RCB, will also eye a return to winning ways and inch closer to playoffs by taking their tally to 10 points at the midway stage.

The biggest threat for RCB will be Narine, not just with the ball but also with the bat at the top of the order. Narine, who scored his maiden T20 century in their last match against RR, is KKR's leading run-getter this season with 276 runs at an incredible strike rate of over 187.

The next best KKR batter is his opening partner Phil Salt, who has struck at a rate of 151-plus. The pair's splendid form means that the likes of Rinku Singh, Andre Russell have got limited opportunities.

### MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

KKR vs RCB

Time: 03:30 pm

PBKS vs GT

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

**New Delhi, April 20:** Sunrisers Hyderabad continued to set lofty standards of ultra-attacking batting in IPL 2024 as Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma brought an out-of-the-world hurricane of dazzling stroke-play to set the base for a 67-run win over Delhi Capitals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium Saturday.

On a placid pitch, Head (89, 32b, 11x4, 6x6) and Abhishek (46, 12b, 2x4, 6x6) left everyone in the stands breathless and speechless with their flurry of impeccable strokeplay and establishing multiple records for fun to help SRH make 125/0 in powerplay, thus setting a new record for the highest powerplay score in T20 cricket, including in the IPL.

Kuldeep Yadav (4/55) and Axar Patel (1/29) helped DC come back in the match as SRH went from 131/0 to 151/4. Handy contributions from Shahbaz Ahmed (59 n o, 29b, 2x4, 5x6) and Nitish Kumar Reddy (37) ensured SRH posted a massive total yet again, while hitting 22 sixes and

equalling their own record of most sixes hit in an IPL match.

In reply, T Natarajan (4/19) fired his yorkers well as DC were bowled out for 199, with SRH now jumping to second place in the points table. Their lone bright spot was young Jake Fraser-McGurk (65, 18b, 5x4, 7x6) hitting fastest fifty of the season in 15 balls.

Pushed into batting first, Head's onslaught began by smashing a six and two fours on Khaleel Ahmed's short balls, before Abhishek clipped one for another boundary in a 19-run opening over.

Head and Abhishek then bagged 21 runs in the second over off Lalit Yadav. Nortje was next to come in firing line, conceding 22 in the third over. It

was also the third time Head reached half century in powerplay of IPL 2024, also the joint-fastest fifty by an SRH batter in IPL.

SRH crossed 100 in just five overs, also the fastest century by a team in T20s. Head smacked Mukesh Kumar four straight boundaries, before ending the powerplay with a loft over long-off for six as SRH made 125/0.

The carnage seemed to have no stopping once Abhishek lofted Kuldeep on the first ball post powerplay. But after that, the script flipped in favour of DC as Kuldeep got rid of Abhishek in the next ball. One brought two for Kuldeep as Aiden Markram got out in the same over.

Despite Klaasen smacking

him for two sixes down the ground and over long-on, Kuldeep bounced back by having Head. Axar further pulled DC back in the match by casting Klaasen.

Nitish and Shahbaz helped SRH cross 200 in 14.5 overs before by a team in T20s. Head smacked Mukesh Kumar four straight boundaries, before ending the powerplay with a loft over long-off for six as SRH made 125/0.

Impact player Prithvi Shaw began DC's chase by smashing Washington Sundar for four boundaries on first four balls before the offie sent him back. Bhuvneshwar Kumar dismissed David Warner in the next over.

Fraser-McGurk brought out his clean bat swing by whacking Sundar for three sixes and as

## Gukesh faces Alireza in Candidates chess

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Toronto, April 20:** Teenaged Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh will have his task cut out against Firouz Alireza of France in the penultimate round of the Candidates chess tournament, on what promises to be a photo-finish here.

Gukesh, with his last white game, will improve his chances greatly in the tournament if he can get past Alireza, who has clearly been struggling. With 7.5 points in his bag, Gukesh shares the lead with Hikaru Nakamura of the United States and Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia. Just two rounds are remaining in the biggest event of the year.

The most important clash of the penultimate round will be between Nepomniachtchi and Nakamura. The latter has been displaying top form having won three in a row while Nepomniachtchi is the only player in the tournament who has remained undefeated after 12 gruelling games.

Apart from these three, Fabiano Caruana is the only player who has a chance to win the event. With seven points, thus far, the American will have to tackle a tough opposition in R Praggnanandhaa of India and finally Nepomniachtchi in the last round.

Even Gukesh has a tough op-

ponent to deal with in Nakamura in the final round and much will depend on how he does against the World No.3. Praggnanandhaa had shown signs of a podium finish mid-way through the tournament but could not quite end up where he wanted to.

However, the Indian has displayed great promise and it is only a matter of time before he can be in the top five of the world ranking or even more. Currently Praggnanandhaa has six points.

Another Indian Vidit Gujrathi had a promising start and his two victories against Nakamura in the tournament stand out as his best efforts. Nerves, however, played some part along with time pressure on certain occasions and the Indian will have to wait for another chance.

It has been a tough call for Alireza, who has just 4.5 points while Abasov, on three points, is at the bottom of the table.

In the women's section, Zhongyi Tan is in the front on eight points and her nearest contender is compatriot Tingjie Lei, who is a half point behind. The two leaders are followed by Russian duo of Aleksandra Goryachkina and Kateryna Lagno along with India's Koneru Humpy on six points apiece. R Vaishali on 5.5 points comes in next, a full point ahead of Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine and Nurgyl Salimovaa of Bulgaria.

## Vinesh, Anshu, Reetika book Paris tickets



VINESH PHOGAT



ANSHU MALIK



REETIKA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 20:** Making a strong comeback to international arena after leading a prolonged protest against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, celebrated Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat locked Paris Olympics quota in women's 50kg category with a strong show at the Asian Olympic Qualifier, here Saturday.

Also punching their tickets to the Paris Olympics were Anshu Malik (57kg) and U-23 World Champion Reetika (76kg), who also reached the final of the tournament with solid performances.

India now have secured four quota places for the Paris Games as Antim Panghal had earned a quota in the 53kg category with her bronze medal winning show at the World Championships last

year. It will be interesting to see if WFI lets the quota winners represent India or hold a final selection trial to pick the national wrestling team. In the Tokyo Games, India had fielded a strong seven-wrestler team that had four women - Seema Bisla (50kg), Vinesh (53kg), Anshu (57kg) and Sonam Malik (62kg).

No male wrestler has yet earned a quota. The last chance to win the Paris Games quota will be at the World Qualifiers in Turkey from May 9.

The 29-year-old Vinesh has now secured her third straight Olympic quota, having featured in Rio Games (2016) and in Tokyo (2020) earlier. Vinesh dished out a strong performance, demolishing her opponents one by one.

Vinesh looked for an opportunity to subdue Miran Cheon in her opening bout and grabbed it

after measuring her Korean rival for about 30 seconds. Once she grabbed Cheon and pushed her down for a takedown, the bout ended in a jiffy, in one minute and 39 seconds.

It was difficult to wriggle out of Vinesh's strong hold. The Indian employed gut wrench move thrice and mixed that with one 'expose' to finish the bout.

The next bout lasted a mere 67 seconds. Cambodia's Smanang Dit was an easy prey. Vinesh pinned her in no time to move to the women's 50kg semifinal. The celebrated Indian faced some resistance from 19-year-old Kazakh wrestler Laura Ganikzy in the semifinals but she used all her experience to foil the attacks employed by her younger rival.

Anshu had no problem while putting it across Kyrgyzstan's Kalmira Bilimbekova in the quarterfinal, winning by tech-

nical superiority. Anshu continued her impressive show, winning the semifinal against Uzbekistan's Laylokhov Sobirova by technical superiority.

Reetika did not have to break much sweat in outclassing Eunju Hwang. She won the first round by technical superiority and got a similar win under her belt against Mongolia's Davaanasan Enkh Amar.

In the final group bout against China's Juang Wang, Reetika raced to an 8-0 lead but the Chinese fought back and logged six straight points. She effected another move at the dying moments but much to the relief of the Indian camp, that point was not awarded because it came at the end of the stipulated time. In her semifinal, Reetika recorded a comfortable 7-0 win against Chinese Taipei's Hui Tsz Chang.

## Nitin-Salman wins Asia Cup gold

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chungju (Korea), April 20:** Indian rowers Nitin Deol and Salman Khan won the gold medal in the Men's Open Doubles competition in the 2024 Asian Cup here Saturday.

The final race of this category concluded Saturday morning and in a keenly contested race, Nitin Deol and Salman Khan defeated a strong challenge from a local pair to win in a timing of 6:35.73.

Meanwhile, in the Asia Oceania Olympic Qualification Regatta being held alongside this event, India's Lightweight Men's Double Sculls pair Ujjwal Kumar and Arvind Singh topped



their race and qualified for the final (Final A) Saturday.

Balraj Panwar, who finished second in the Men's Singles Scull race, also qualified for the Final A as he inched closer to qualification for the Paris Olympic Games to be held from July 26 to August 11.

The winner of the final in the Asia Oceania Olympic Qualification Regatta will qualify for the Olympic Games. Those who fail to get through the continental qualifiers will get a chance to make it through the final Olympic qualifying regatta to be held in a few weeks.

## VERSTAPPEN GETS POLE POSITION FOR CHINESE GP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Shanghai, April 20:** Red Bull's Max Verstappen will start Sunday's Formula One Chinese Grand Prix from pole position after dominating qualifying at the Shanghai International Circuit here Saturday.

Having won Saturday morning's Sprint race by a convincing margin, Verstappen carried on where he had left off, topping every segment and setting a fastest time of 1:33.660, 0.322s faster than teammate Sergio Perez.

But it was a nightmare session for Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, who had finished an encouraging second in the Sprint. The Briton could only qualify



18th after running wide at the Turn 15 hairpin on his fastest lap, and he radioed his team to apologize for his performance, reports Xinhua.

By contrast, there were no such problems for Verstappen,

whose pole position was Red Bull's 100th in F1, and also represented the first time a driver has taken pole in the first five Grands Prix of a season since Mika Hakkinen in 1999.

Behind the Red Bulls, Fernando

Alonso was an impressive third for Aston Martin, with the McLarens of Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri ending the session fourth and fifth. Charles Leclerc took sixth for Ferrari, ahead of teammate Carlos Sainz, who was lucky to be able to finish the hour after having spun at the final corner and clouted the outer wall during Q2.

George Russell took eighth for Mercedes, with Nico Hulkenberg ninth in his Haas, and Valtteri Bottas setting Sauber's best qualifying position of the season so far with tenth. Starting 11th will be Alonso's teammate Lance Stroll, ahead of RB's Daniel Ricciardo on a better day for the Australian.