

BJD, BJP name more candidates for polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 27: The BJD and the BJP Saturday announced the names of 11 more candidates for the Assembly polls in the state.

Of eight candidates announced by the BJP, four are former members of the ruling BJD who switched allegiance to the saffron party recently.

They are Seemarani Nayak (Hindol), Arindam Roy (Salipur), Geetanjali Sethi (Kendrapara), and Prasant Jagdev (Khurda).

Jagdev, formerly a BJD MLA from Chilika, was ousted from the party before he joined the BJP. Roy is a popular Odia actor.

The remaining candidates announced by the party are Fakir Mohan Naik (Telkoi), Murali Manohar Sharma (Champua), Rabindra Andia (Basta), and Banikalyan Mohanty (Basudevpur)

The saffron party has so far announced candidates for 140 out of the 147 Assembly segments.

Similarly, the BJD has announced candidates for three more Assembly seats, dropping two sitting MLAs.

Chief Minister and BJD pres ident Naveen Patnaik nominated Begunia MLA Rajendra Kumar Sahoo for the Khurda Assembly seat which is now represented by Jotirindra Nath Mitra.

The party also fielded debutant Goutam Buddha Das for the Bhograi Assembly segment, denying a ticket to incumbent legislator Ananta Das

Pradeep Kumar Sahoo has been named from the Begunia Assembly segment.

He had unsuccessfully contested from Begunia in 2019 as a Congress nominee. He joined the BJD two years later.

The BJD has so far nominated 144 candidates for elections to the 147-member Assembly in the state that will go for polling in four phases between May 13 and June 1.



ROOTED IN TRADITION: Sikh youths perform 'Gatka', an ancient form of martial arts, during a procession as part of the birth anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Saturday, PTI PHOTO

Illegal arrest an assault on democracy: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Saturday told the Supreme Court that his 'illegal arrest' in a moneylaundering case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam constitutes an unprecedented



nent -Aam Aadmi Party and its leaders," it added. He said a level playing field, which is a pre-requisite for 'free and fair elections', has clearly been compromised with his illegal arrest.

It said the entire basis of Kejriwal's arrest rests upon certain statements which are in the nature of 'self-incriminating confessions' by alleged accomplices who have been given the immunity by way of pardon. The rejoinder alleged the only objective of ED was to procure and obtain some statement against Keiriwal and as soon as the statement was taken, the mission of the probe agency was accomplished and thereafter, the co-accused were neither arrested nor any further statements were taken. It claimed the malicious intent of ED in conducting the investigation was apparent from its deliberate concealment of statements made by co-accused individuals where either no allegations were made or allegations were explicitly denied.

College student among 3 dead in road mishap



Angul, April 27: Three persons including a college student were killed as their motorcycle collided with a truck here in

12 PAGES + SUNDAY POST | ₹5.00

3 Indian women killed in US as SUV goes airborne

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Anand/New York, April 27: Three women hailing from Gujarat's Anand district and settled in the United States were killed in a deadly car crash in the US state of South Carolina, their relatives here said Saturday.

The accident occurred Friday on the Staunton Bridge Road along Interstate 85, according to the South Carolina Highway Patrol troopers. The overspeeding car jumped at least 20 feet in the air before crashing into trees.

Relatives in Gujarat have identified the three as Rekha Dilip Patel, Sangita Bhavnesh Patel and Manisha Rajendra Patel. They belonged to Vasna (Borsad) and Kavitha villages in Borsad taluka of the district.

The women were also related, they said. The husbands of Rekha and Sangita - Dilip Patel and Bhavnesh Patel, respectively-are brothers, while Manisha's husband Rajendra is a cousin of the two men.

Except for Sangita's father Vitthalbhai, who lives near Kavitha village, all other family members of the three women and their husbands had shifted to the US long back.

City sizzles at 44.6°C; Apr highest since '52

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 27: In a first since 1952, the Capital City Saturday recorded the daily highest temperature of 44.6 degrees Celsius in the month of April. With such, commuters in the City faced a hard time while moving to their colleges and of-

Abhijit Sahoo, a Patia resident, said the spell of heatwave since last week has made it tough to find a work-life balance. If such phenomenon continues for a protracted period, there is a need for offices to rework the daily schedule for employees, he added.

The IMD

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Clearly, the voters want us to move towards Gujarat Model-One country, no election

assault on the tenets of democracy based on 'free and fair elections' and 'federalism'. In a rejoinder to the Enforcement

Directorate's (ED) reply affidavit filed on his petition challenging his arrest in the case, Kejriwal said the mode, manner and timing of his arrest just before the Lok Sabha elections when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) had come into play, speaks volumes about the 'arbitrariness' of the agency.

Kejriwal claimed it is a 'classical case' of how the Centre has misused the ED and its wide powers under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to 'crush' the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and its leaders. The rejoinder claimed that ED illegally 'picked up' a sit-

tional convenor of one of the national Opposition parties, five days after the general elections were announced and the MCC came into force

"During an election cycle when political activity is at its highest, the petitioner's illegal arrest has caused grave prejudice to the his political party, and will provide the ruling party at the Centre an unjust upper hand in the ongoing elections," Kejriwal further said in his rejoinder.

"The present case is a classic case of how the ruling party led central government has misused the central agency-Enforcement Directorate and its wide powers under PMLA to crush its biggest political oppothis district Saturday morning, police said.

The accident took place on NH-55 in the Panchamahala area of the district, they said. All three persons died on the spot. They were identified as Krupa Dehury (48), Rajendra Pradhan (21) and Subrat Pradhan (17).

They were going towards Angul town from their village Derjanga, police said. While Krupa and Rajendra were traders, Subrat, a college student, was on the way to a coaching class.

Irate locals blocked the highway for a while, demanding compensation for the families of the deceased. Police said they have seized the truck and started an investigation

fices.

Senior scientist of India Meteorological Department (IMD), Umasankar Das said Bhubaneswar hit the peak temperature around 2:30 pm in the afternoon. This, however, does not indicate that the City would experience such temperature in the coming days. But, the City would still reel under intense heatwave for the next 4 days, he added.

Das stated that May 2016 still remained the hottest summer at 45.8 degrees Celsius in the Capital City, since 1952. The searing rise in the daily temperature shall continue until northwester winds prevail in the City, he added.

Bhubaneswar was followed by Jharsuguda which recorded 43.6 degrees Celsius, Rourkela (42.5), Chandbali (42.4) and Sambalpur (42.1)

The extreme situation has spiked an interest among students to opt for beverages to keep themselves cool during this hot summer. Several engineering students in the Patia area said it is nearly impossible to sit through daily classes without an aerated or lime drink.

As per the weather forecast agency, heatwave to severe heatwave conditions may prevail in Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Angul, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Khurda, and Cuttack districts.

26/11 prosecutor for **BJP Mumbai LS seat**

New Delhi: The BJP has named lawyer Ujjwal Nikam, who was the public prosecutor in the Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks, as its candidate from Mumbai North Central Lok Sabha constituency. Nikam has replaced Poonam Mahajan, the current MP from this seat, as the party's candidate. He was also the prosecutor in the murder case of Poonam's father Pramod Mahajan, who was shot dead by his brother Pravin in April 2006. Party leaders have said the decision to drop her was based on organisational feedback, news agency PTI reported.

WEATHER

	BBSR	СТС
Max Temp	44.6° (43.4°(
Min Temp	26.9°⊖	26.0°C
Humidity	74%	63%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST		
Likely to rise by degree Celsius in the next 2 days		8

60 is the new 18 for this Argentine beauty

ALEJANDRA MARISA RODRÍGUEZ CLINCHES TOP BUENOS AIRES PAGEANT, MAKES HER WAY TO MISS UNIVERSE

AGENCIES

Buenos Aires, April 27: In a remarkable turn of events, Alejandra Marisa Rodríguez, a 60-vear-old contestant, has emerged victorious in the Miss Universe Buenos Aires pageant, challenging age-old beauty norms and inspiring women worldwide.

Her victory, announced Wednesday, not only celebrates her remarkable journey but also underscores the Miss Universe beauty pageant's dedication to embracing diversity and inclusivity.

Hailing from La Plata, the capital city of Argentina's Buenos Aires Province, Rodríguez is not just a beauty queen; she's a seasoned lawyer and journalist, showcasing the multifaceted nature of contemporary beauty. Her triumph stands as a testament to her resilience, breaking barriers and redefining conventional standards of beauty and age.

She becomes the first woman of her age cohort to clinch such a prestigious beauty accolade. Her elegance, grace, and infectious smile captivated both judges and audiences alike, resonating with individuals worldwide

Videos shared on social media reveal her determination as she prepares to represent Buenos Aires in the upcoming national selection for Miss Universe Argentina, slated for May 2024. Should she emerge victorious, Rodríguez will hoist the Argentine flag on the global stage at the Miss Universe World contest, scheduled for September 28, 2024, in Mexico.

"I am thrilled to be repre-

senting this new paradigm in beauty pageants because we are inaugurating a new stage in which women are not only physical beauty but another set of values," she told the media after her win.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Rodríguez's interests in nature, healthy living, music, and culture showcase a multifaceted personality which resonates with audiences worldwide. Her dedication to a healthy lifestyle and self-care underscores the importance of holistic wellbeing in the pursuit of one's goals.

The Miss Universe organisation last year announced that it would no longer have age limits for the contestants. Beginning this year, any woman over the age of 18 is eligible to compete. Earlier, only women between 18 and 28 years could enter the pageant.

Another beauty pagaent contestant who is making waves is 47-vear-old Haidy Cruz, who will represent Dominican Republic in Miss Universe 2024

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 27: In a groundbreaking moment for the

DAMaN, Pratikshya head to NYIFF

012

state, two Odia films. DAMaN and Pratikshya, have been selected to be screened at the prestigious New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF).

DAMaN, directed by Vishal Mourya and Debiprasad Lenka, is about the story of a doctor's relentless fight against supersti-



On the other hand, Pratikshya, helmed by Anupam Patnaik, explores the journey of Sanjay, a middle-class unemployed youth whose only goal is to get a government job. Life throws a curveball at him when his father suddenly becomes ill. With no job and money, he struggles to stay afloat with his inner de-

sires Pratikshya, which won National Film Award for best Feature Film Odia was also screened in

Indian Panorama sec• tion of IFFI 2022 and has won the Best Story Feature Film Award at the Washington DC South Asia Film Festival

(DCSAFF) 2022 The NYIFF, known for its celebration of Indian

cinema's diversity and innovation, provides a platform for independent filmmakers to showcase

their work to a global audience. The inclusion of these Odia films underscores the richness of storytelling and the artistic prowess present in Odisha's film industry.







elsure



NICOLE CRAVES TO TRY NEW THINGS

Actress Nicole Kidman, who is known for Dogville, Eyes Wide Shut, and Days of Thunder, among others, has said that she craves the extreme. The 56-year-old actress has worked across a variety of genres and says she loves pushing herself to try new things, reports Female First UK.

SHAKIRA HASN'T LOST HOPE IN LOVE

Pop singer Shakira, who split from soccer star Gerard Pique in 2022, has expressed her continued belief in love. Shakira stated, "I cannot say that I don't believe in love because I see the example of my parents after 50 years together; how they look into each other's eyes and hold hands and can't live apart from each other."



FORTUNE **FORECAST** GaneshaSpeaks.com accuracy 🔹 reliability 🛛 trust 🌌

You experience a sense of freedom today. And in this mood you feel like doing all the things that you loved to do in your childhood. It is a nice time to take your family on an outing, says Ganesha. Given your mood, you may start planning for the future of your loved ones.

TAURUS

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181 ARIES

This may be, health wise, a bad day for you. Ganesha urges you to take special care and not to do anything that invites illness or discomfort. The least you can do is to ensure that you do not over exert or get into situations that generate ten sion and anxiety. Be careful about the food you eat.

GEMINI

You will receive unprecedented love and affection from all your friends and family members today. It is a good day to conduct important personal or profes sional meetings. A lot of joy and happiness awaits, savs Ganesha

CANCER

You may donate to a charity organisation, for your mental happiness. On the job front, stick to your routine, rather than taking a new bold step, says Ganesha, A good day on the financial front

LEO

A fun-filled day awaits you. You will enjoy all the activities that you take up today. At the work-place too a progressive day awaits you. You will be worried about the fruits of your labour, but they are likely to be sweeter than you thought they will be says Ganesha

VIRGO

You will pen down the things to be done today. However, Ganesha suggest that just making a note of them is not enough; you need to set practical goals according to priority. Moreover, Ganesha warns that items you mark on the top of the list will demand immediate action.



be agitated today. Your happy nature will have to bear the brunt of the sad circumstances and situations that life will show er on you but you will be able to face the situation with your inner strength. You

PC shares her dark phase in Hollywood

New Delhi: Actress Priyanka Chopra, who has always been vocal about her professional and personal challenges, recently recalled how she faced fear and loneliness during her initial struggle in Hollywood.

While interacting with the host on the 'Read the Room' podcast, she admitted that rejections were a humbling experience. The Dostana actress opined, "It humbles you. I was like, I am not going to be upset by it, or I am not going to say that's a closed door; I am going to navigate something else. I put my head down and did my work. I didn't bring my pride of 'I am a leading lady, and blah blah...' That's what helped me find the position in which I am today.' She further added, "It was the industry that I didn't know; the people, I didn't know; I didn't have friends who would call at 2 in the morning. That's very important. I was very lonely, and it was very scary. I was in New York City, which, anyway, is a daunting city. It was a dark period of my life

On the work front, Priyanka will be seen next in Heads of State, featuring John Cena and Idris Elba in crucial roles.

When Ash shut down French journo's questions on nudity

Mumbai: With the Cannes Film Festival nearing, Aishwarya Rai has been trending quite a lot. She's a frequent guest, known for her stylish appearances and brand endorsements. Recently, an old interview of hers with French media resurfaced, in which she straightfor-wardly responded to questions about nudity in Indian films.

Despite the international press's fixation on Indian cinema's lack of nudity, the journalist questions her about it.

The ADHM actress firmly replied, "I have never explored, and I am not interested in exploring nudity on celluloid." When the journalist presses her further, she says, "I feel like I am talking to my gynecologist." The journalist laughs as the actress adds, "I mean, who am I talking to here? You're a journalist; stick to that, brother."

On the professional front, Rai has left an indelible mark in the Hindi film industry with her roles in iconic films like Devdas, Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam, Mohabbatein, Dhoom 2, and Jodhaa Akbar. Additionally, she has ventured into international cinema with acclaimed performances in Bride and Prejudice, Mistress of Spices, and Pink Panther.

Meanwhile, Aishv

was last seen in Mani

Ratnam's Ponniyin Selvan, parts I and II.

AGENCIES

PEANUTS

Mr. Claus



Mumbai: Actor Fardeen Khan, who had stayed away from cinema for almost 14 years and has returned to entertain with Sanjay Leela Bhansali's debut OTT show, Heermandi: The Diamond Bazaar, opened up about his first day of shooting with the maverick director Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

In an exclusive interview, the actor said, "This was my second (comeback) project, but nothing can really prepare you for being on a Bhansali set. You're a fan of his movies and vision. But I don't think I was prepared for the scale and scope of this particular project because I think he takes his own craft to a whole other level. It is like watching an eighthour-long Bhansali movie.'

When asked if one needs to go the extra mile to work with Bhansali, he said, "It's a Bhansali set. It's definitely frightening because when you see all his work and the performances he's extracted from his actors, you know he has set a high standard not only for himself but for everyone around him. He gives his best, and he demands the best of himself and others. So Mumbai: Shruti one has to align with his vision, and that is Haasan's personal life came daunting." AGENCIES

under the radar once again as the actress and her long-time boyfriend, doodle artist and illustrator Santanu Hazarika, who reportedly dated for nearly four years, have reportedly parted ways.

Confirming the news, a source said, "They broke up last month. Since there were personal wavelength issues, they decided to part ways amicably."

As per reports, the Ramaiya Vastavaiya actress and Hazarika have been living apart for approximately a month now. Adding to the speculation, Haasan has reportedly removed all photos of her boyfriend from her Instagram account. The actress who made her debut in Hindi film industry with film Luck also took a small social media break recently and then marked her return with a cryptic post that read, "It's been a crazy ride, learning so much about myself and about people. We should never be sorry for all the things we can be or need to be.

Haasan and Hazarika started interacting with each other through social media. The doodle artist lid into the actor's DMs, and they both started talk

today and will need to watch your diet.

SCORPIO

Negative thoughts are likely to surround you today, try to avoid it. You may feel

lonely and left-out when the day begins. However, a long list of activities and responsibilities will keep you occupied throughout the day. There are possibili ties that you may land up in tricky situations, but you have the knack of handling things gracefully.

SAGITTARIUS Your ways to deal with your

team mates and colleagues will be strict and disci plined. However, your perfect ways at work will leave them awestruck. Your personal equations will be least affected by your stern ways, says Ganesha. Do not let success go to your head.

CAPRICORN

A penny saved is a penny earned. Your strong belief in this will make you scrutinis your requirements and rearrange the priority list, so that you know where and how to utilise the resources. Your choice of friends will represent your approach and outlook towards life. Ganesha advis es you to choose your friends wisely.

There is nothing like having a good time with your brothers and sisters.

Generally, you plan out your routine and activities by yourself, but it is a different day today. Your siblings will make plans for you and you will just go along with the flow, predicts Ganesha. Spontaneity is something new to you, and you will enjoy the change.

PISCES

Some unknown fear could haunt vou today. You will direct your energies to discovering the source of your worries and eliminate them. Lovers will find some precious time to cozy up with their partners. You will find yourself going out to the movies or to a concert. On the whole it will be a productive day for you, says Ganesha.

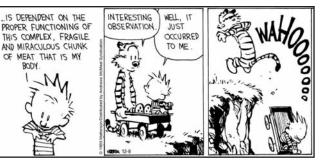
c/o North Pole

Dear Joe,

CALVIN AND HOBBES

BODY





JOE 3

HE HATES TO BE

CALLED "SANTA'



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CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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.

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



3 6 5 8











ing. In an earlier interview, Haasan revealed that she had sent Hazarika one of her poems, in response to which he sent her an elaborate artwork. AGENCIES



downtown

BEATING HEAT

Devotees walk on a carpet specially laid on Grand Road in Puri as temperature soars across the state, Saturday



Lifer to man for double murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 27: A Khurda court Saturday awarded life imprisonment to a man after holding him guilty of killing his wife and sister in-law in Chandrasekharpur area here in 2022.

District and Sessions Judge Nisith Nisank also slapped a penalty of ₹10,000 on the convict, Bijaya Ketana Sethi, for offence under Section 302 of the IPC. Upon his failure to furnish the penalty, he would undergo additional one year of rigorous imprisonment (RI).

This apart, the court also awarded two years of RI and slapped a penalty of ₹5,000 on Bijaya for offence under Section 201 of the IPC. In case of failure to pay the penalty, the convict would undergo another threemonth of RI. Both the sentences will run concurrently, said Public



Dijaya Sethi, who hails from DKendrapara, was accused of killing his wife Gayatri and her sister Saraswati over some domestic issues at a rented accommodation in Chandrasekhar in April 2022

Prosecutor Sarad Chandra Samanta.

Bijaya, who hails from Hantapada in Kendrapara district, was accused of killing his wife Gayatri and her sister Saraswati over some domestic issues at his rented accommodation in Housing Board Colony under Chandrasekhar police limits here in April 2022.

Gayatri's father Sudam learnt about the murders after his phone calls to her and Saraswati went unanswered. A desperate Sudam reached

the City to inquire about the siblings' whereabouts when he spotted Bijaya leaving the Chandrasekharpur house in a hurry after locking it from outside.

Sudam caught hold of Bijaya and opened the house only to find the sisters' motionless bodies lying in the living room in pools of blood. A blood-stained axe was found at the crime scene. He then informed the

Chandrasekharpur police which swiftly arrested Bijaya for the double murder. The court convicted Bijaya after examining as many as 17

witnesses and other articles along with circumstantial and scientific evidence adduced by the prosecution.



FRESH LOOK: The renovated cemetery of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das on the premises of Odia Baptist Church in Tulasipur area of Cuttack, Saturday

taking serious measures to adapt

Indian students and faculty to the

use of AI, ranging from bringing

courses in emerging technologies

to conducting faculty develop-

ment programs on AI and data

and reskill our students and fac-

ulty members with advanced

technologies," Sitharam reiter-

ated. He complimented SOA for

organising an event like Proxima

2024', a platform for intellectual

thinking, innovative ideas, and

experiential learning, which

would harness the potential of

SOA Vice-Chancellor Pradipta

Kumar Nanda, who presided

over the meeting, said that the

Deemed to be University was

initiating steps to connect the in-

stitutes with the industry as em-

phasised in the New Education

'Our only goal is to upskill

science (DS).

the students

Policy (NEP).

PIC: RAJKISHORE MOHANT

Workforce must be equipped to handle AI challenges: AICTE chief LS polls: 66.7% turnout in Phase II

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 27: The future workforce must be equipped to handle new challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which has generated both hope and fear in the human mind, said All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) chairman TG Sitharam, Saturday.

Addressing 'SOA Proxima 2024', a two-day HR conclave at the Siksha 'O' Anusandhan Deemed to be University (SOA) here, Sitharam said that the unprecedented surge in disruptive technology like AI has evoked both hope and fear in the human mind. "But the need of the hour is to equip the future workforce to adapt to such new challenges,' he emphasised.

"Every time we have encountered new technology, it has injected some fear in the human

mind, but we have learned to adapt to it, and we must do so to face the AI challenge," Sitharam added.

He stated that questions being asked today include: Will humans be truly replaced by AI? Will there be massive job loss? Will machines become super-intelligent, and will humans eventually lose control?

He addressed the conclave attended by HR professionals from around 100 industries in the country and students of the university. "These questions are alarm-

ing and need to be addressed with diverse opinions and thought processes," Sitharam highlighted.

'It is humans who have created these technologies to make their tasks easier and have consequently found themselves in a difficult situation," he noted.



Stating that the existence of AI was unknown a decade ago, Sitharam pointed out that it was successfully exceeding human performance in different fields, including music, art, and literature, and delivering at an unimaginable speed.

The AICTE chairman, however, recalled that humankind had also been apprehensive about new technical developments like computers, mobile phones, and the internet earlier but learned

to embrace them eventually.

"The same could be done with AI and other disruptive technologies with the right guidance of the academic and industry community and proper implementation of their suggestions,' he said.

The AICTE chairman stressed, "We have to work together to create a workforce that is equipped to handle emerging technologies. He mentioned that AICTE was

Lightning kills ward

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: The voter turnout in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections has touched the 66.7 per cent mark, which is less than the figures of the 2019 parliamentary polls, according to sources.

Both phases of the ongoing polls have seen a dip in the voter turnout as compared to the last general election. The 66.7 per cent figure is approximate and the Election Commission has so far not come out with the polling percentage formally. Phase two of the Lok Sabha elections was held Friday across 88 constituencies spread in 13 states. In the second phase of 2019 Lok Sabha elections, held in 95 constituencies across 13 states, the turnout was higher at 69.64 per cent.

In the first phase of this election, the turnout was 65.5 per

constituencies were different then and the total number of seats which went to poll were 91. Heat wave is believed to have contributed to several voters not turning up at polling stations in both the phases. The polling

cent as compared to 69.43 per cent

in the phase one of the 2019 par-

liamentary polls. Some of the

time was extended till 6 pm in many polling stations in Banka, Madhepura, Khagaria and Munger constituencies in Bihar to give some succour to voters against the hot weather.

Special arrangements were made to combat the heat, including a provision of 'shamiyana', drinking water, medical kits and fans for the convenience of the voters. The usual polling time is 7am to 6pm but it varies depending on factors such as terrain, time of sunset, and security situation.



TRADITIONAL FETE : An artiste performs during Sahi Jata in Puri, Saturday

member, mother

AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 27: In a tragic incident, a ward member and his mother died when lightning struck them in Janhimula village under Derabish police limits in the coastal district here, sources said Saturday.

Sources said both the ward member and his mother were returning home after completing work in their green gram field when the mishap took place.

The deceased were identified as Rabindra Barik, a ward member of Janhimula village, and his mother, Sashirekha Barik. Villagers rushed the duo to the District

Headquarters Hospital here for treatment, but they were declared brought dead. Police later recovered the bodies and

sent them for autopsy. OP PHOTO

Colombia's unexplained 'spontaneous' mummies

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

San Bernardo (Colombia), April 27: In a small town high in the Colombian Andes. Clovisnerys Bejarano kneels before a glass box holding the petrified corpse of her mother, who died 30 years ago, but looks as if she might just be asleep.

Saturnina Torres de Bejarano is dressed in the same rose-print dress and green woollen jersey she was interred in, clasping a fake red carnation in her eerily well-preserved hands.

"She still has her little brown face, round, her braids, her hair," Bejarano, 63, told AFP at her mother's final resting place in a museum displaying her body and those of 13 others from the town of San Bernardo who became spontaneously, and mysteriously, mummified after death.

"If God wanted to preserve her... it must be for a reason," said Bejarano, a resident of the town some 100 kilometres (62 miles) south of Bogota. Torres was interred in a vault in the San Bernardo municipal cemetery in 1993. Exhumed in 2001 -- as is customary to make space for new bodies -- her relatives found her still with hair, nails and much of her tissue unspoilt.

It came as no major surprise. Dozens of mummified bodies have come out of the vaults since the first one in 1963. "When all this began, peo-



ple were a little incredulous about what was happening; they thought these were going to be isolated events," said museum guide Rocio Vergara.

"As time went on, it became more and more frequent to find bodies in this condition," she told AFP. Some even still had their eyes, usually quick to decompose.

In the late 1980s, some 50 mummies were found in the mausoleum every year, but the rate has declined to a handful per year, said Vergara.

Despite numerous attempts by experts to explain the phenomenon -- which has also been observed in countries such as Mexico and Italy -- the reason for the spontaneous mummification in San Bernardo has never been pinned down, said Vergara. Some locals believe that the process (mummification) is due to the fact that the person was too good, and it is a reward after death, said Vergara. "There are others who consider that ... it is a punishment."

Most are convinced it is because of the healthy diet of the residents of temperate San Bernardo, and an active, farming lifestyle.

But this is not always borne out by the evidence: one of the mummies belongs to Jorge Armando Cruz, who spent most of his life in the big city of Bogota, where he died before being brought back to his birthplace for burial.

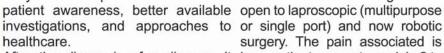
There is no clear pattern to the mummifications: those who are involved are of all different ages when they died, and no particular gender or body type predominates. Vergara said there is no particular sector of the cemetery that yields more mummies than others.

Many believe the answer must lie in the burial vaults. The first mummies were found in San Bernardo only after the cemetery, which has no underground graves, was inaugurated.

Prior to the 1960s, the town had two burial grounds with not a single known case of mummification, said Vergara. The climate in the area is humid, which would ordinarily aid decomposition, not hinder it, she added.

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Health is something everybody wants to have and be in perfect health; however, due to various risk factors, lifestyle changes, smoking, alcohol consumption, fast food eating, disorganized sleep cycles, and stress, people fall ill and depressed. As we move forward in the 21 st century, many diseases are being diagnosed daily and early due to improved



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downtown

Decide women representation in armed forces: HC to Centre



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: The Delhi High Court has asked the Centre to decide in eight weeks a representation seeking the entry of women in the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Indian Naval Academy (INA) and Air Force Academy of the Indian Armed Forces (IAF) through the **Combined Defence Services** (CDS) examination.

The court passed the order on a petition by Kush Kalra, who challenged a December 2023 notification issued by the UPSC inviting application for recruitment in the IMA, INA and Air Force Academy of the IAF and Officers Training Academy (OTA) through the CDS examination.

Noting that the petitioner's representation on the issue was

still pending with the authorities, a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora Friday said, "The writ petition is disposed of with a direction to the respondent to decide the representation in accordance with law within eight weeks.

The petitioner contended that the notification unjustifiably excluded females to appear in the examination to be conducted for the IMA, INA and IAF solely on the grounds of their gender as it only permits them to be considered for Short Service Commission at OTA.

As per the petitioner, now that the Ministry of Defence has removed its entry barrier for females through the NDA examination and the number of female candidates being recruited is increasing every year, there is no reason why the females should not be recruited through the CDS examination for IMA, INA and IAF.

The exclusion of eligible female candidates from the opportunity to get training at the premier Indian training institutes is a violation of their fundamental right to equality, the petition said.

'The respondents allow the unmarried male candidates having adequate degree to take the CDS examination and join Indian Military Academy, Indian Naval Academy and Air Force Academy. However, eligible and willing female candidates are not allowed to take the same examination on the sole ground of their sex and without any reasonable or justifiable explanations within the four comers of the Constitution and this act of discrimination is a dishonour committed by the respondents to the constitutional

values of equality and non-discrimination," the petitioner asserted.



HEAT EFFECT: Market Building wears a deserted look following rising temperature in Capital city, Saturday

PIC- BIKASH NAYAK

STA's review meet to assign poll vehicles on time

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 27: The State Transport department is diligently adhering to all directives of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) for the smooth conduct of the general elections. To review the same, a meeting was conducted by the State Transport Commissioner, Amitabh Thakur with all highranking officials of the State Transport Authority (STA) and **Regional Transport Officers** (RTOs), who participated through video conferencing.

"The aim of the meeting was to look after the timely deploy-

ment of vehicles assigned for election purposes. The department prioritises meticulous planning and rectification of any shortcomings in the vehicle arrangement system for the same," an official said.

The current status of vehicle requisitions from various regions was assessed based on the information provided to STA. Consequently, the Commissioner has instructed to check and reassess the vehicle requirements, based on region-wise needs.

are in line with proposals from past election experiences and suggestions from appointed staff,

Moment has come to reconsider our

development policies: Wangchuk

Each bus and four-wheeler driver including conductor or assistant staff to receive a daily allowance of ₹500 and a two-wheeler driver to get ₹250

aimed at boosting morale and enthusiasm among vehicle owners and staff participating in the election process," Thakur expressed

During the 2019 elections, the department requisitioned 58,000

vehicles statewide. The current estimation of vehicle necessary for the ongoing elections will be determined shortly to expedite the requisition process, as advised by Thakur.

Additionally, providing daily expenditure to the appointed vehicle staff, during duty, in advance, has been emphasised. This was instructed by Commerce & Transport department principal secretary Usha Padhee, to all the District Collectors. "Each bus and four-wheeler driver, conductor or assistant staff will receive a daily allowance of ₹500 and a two-wheeler driver will receive ₹250," informed Padhee.

Unmukt Foundation celebrates 'Utsay'

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 27: The Unmukt Foundation, dedicated to empowering children from underserved communities through holistic education, hosted its annual function Utsav' with fervour and enthusiasm at the Bhanja Kala Mandap here recently.

The event showcased the transformative impact of the foundation's initiatives on the lives of children from marginalised communities.



'The Heartbreak Club' launch by KLF

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 27: Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF), in collaboration with Oxford Bookstore here, unveiled the relaunch of its monthly community literary event 'KLF Corner' with an electrifying book launch of Novoneel Chakraborty's latest masterpiece, "The Heartbreak Club," published by Westland Books.

The event, held at Oxford Bookstore, saw a gathering of enthusiastic book lovers who were waiting for an opportunity to engage with one of India's foremost thriller authors. Novoneel Chakraborty, renowned for his gripping narratives and captivating storytelling, delighted the audience with insights into his creative process and the inspiration behind his compelling characters and settings.

Rashmi Ranjan Parida, the founder and director of KLF said, "KLF Corner, in collaboration with Oxford Bookstore. embarks on a journey to rekindle the essence of literary dialogue within our community Originally launched in 2019, the initiative was paused during Covid-19 pandemic. Now, with the book launch, KLF Corner proudly recommits to nurture the literary spirit. In partnership with esteemed publishers like Penguin India, Harper Collins India, Westland Books Bloomsbury, Rupa and more, we aspire to curate enriching experiences that celebrate the power of words and ideas.' Addressing the audience, Novoneel shared, "In that crowd, my thrillers worked because it was different. Any memorable piece of art is about the character, not the plot. It's not about the person but about the journey you make.'

on IITians at SOA

Bhubaneswar, April 27: The book '100 Great IITians' will be released at an event of the Odisha chapter of Youth for Nation (Y4N) scheduled to be held at the SOA auditorium April 29. Governor Raghubar Das will grace the oc-

POST NEWS NETWORK

casion as the chief guest. The book- a 404 page compendium of illustrious engineers and technocrats-- has listed all such great luminaries who have provided leader-

Y4N to unveil book

ship in different fields to ensure India's growth and development over the years. The book has been edited by Commander VK Jaitly. The celebrated IITians in-

clude Nandan Nilekani, Kota Harinaravana, Naravan Murthy, Damodar Acharya, BK Syngal, Rabi Bastia, YC Deveshwar, Gopal Chandra Mitra, Manohar Parrikar and Capt NS Mohan Ram.

The above-mentioned persons are graduates from the IITs before 2000 and celebrated names in the field of engineering and technology in India having risen to dizzying heights in their respective fields. Thousands of students have passed through the portals of the IITs, India's hallowed temples of higher learning, and made a name for themselves in different

many of us might realise.

One of the most common sym-

biotic relationships is between

various species of algae and

fungi, or between cyanobacteria

(commonly known as blue-green

algae though it's not algae) and

fungi. These paired species take

used in the 19th century to de-

scribe the lichen relationship.

which was thought to be highly

unusual. Since then, we've dis-

covered symbiosis is the norm,

rather than the exception. In

fact, it has shaped the evolution

of most life on Earth.

tiles and on ancient rocks.

The term symbiosis was first

the form of lichens.



parts of the world. The Indian Institute of

Technology (IIT) was conceptualized before the country's independence and the blue print was prepared on the basis of the recommendations of the Nalini Ranjan Sarkar Committee. West Bengal's visionary chief minister BC Roy provided land at Kharagpur where India's first IIT was set up and subsequently inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal

Nehru August 18, 1951. There are 23 IITs in India today making the institutions a global brand and acknowledged across the world. The book '100 Great IITians' has focused on those graduates who

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP Bhubaneswar, April 27: The

moment has come to reconsider our development policies that seek to benefit a few powerful ones at the cost of harming the environment, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk said here Saturday.

Wangchuk was in the Capital to participate at an event organised by Lohia Academy, to discuss the ecological interests of Ladakh region.

Expressing concerns about melting glaciers in Ladakh, he said, "This is happening due to rapid expansion by the industrial plants. Such practices have led to sudden climate change in the area causing flash floods thereby putting ecology and human lives at risk.' "With an aim to safeguard the interest of my region, I was forced to sit on a peaceful satyagraha," he said.



pendent bureaucratic govercept of 'Vishwaguru'. "India's nance, the key decisions on enquest to become a 'Vishwaguru' vironment and local issue face a hurdle. This needs a shift immediately in the coming days, he added. of life, across every nooks and cor-

He further said, "The people in the urban region of India must learn to limit consumption of natural resources such

"The advance arrangements

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, Rabi Narayan Mohanty, S/o- Late Dinabandhu Mohanty, resident of Gachhakali Lane, near Municipal High School, Balisahi, Puri-752001, Odisha declared by this affidavit No. 246, Dt. 25.04.2024 that now onwards I will be known as RAVI NARAYAN MOHANTY for all the future purposes.

refused to be allured by the glamour of the developed world. The book speaks about the success stories of great IITians who have contributed immensely in the field of technology, research and development, defence, social and spiritual sectors, among others,

Moreover, Wangchuk said as Ladakh lacks a system for indeas water and fuel. This has a disastrous impact in the hinterlands of the nation. Besides, the denizens must leave alone the natural resources and minerals to its areas of origin and not interfere with it."

The education reformist also shared his views on broader con-

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam Wangchuk stated the practice of measuring overall development of an area through Gross Domestic Product (GDP), must come to an end. As the process ignores the ecological growth, by which it fails to recognise the increase in forest cover and animal species, he added.

such as the nucleus (the con-

trol centre of the cell) and mi-

tochondrion (involved in cellu-

lar respiration, which uses

oxygen to break down food mol-

ecules to make energy avail-

These complex cells evolved

The organelles of complex

cells were once single-celled life

forms that survived being en-

gulfed by other simple cells.

They formed a more complex

and efficient cell, which has be-

come the basic cell type for large

Cell respiration in both plant

and animal cells involves mi-

tochondria, which indicates

they were engulfed early in evo

lutionary history. Later a cell

type already containing mito-

chondria engulfed the chloro-

plast. This led to the evolution

of complex plants.

multicellular life forms.

from much simpler, ancient

forms of life that came together

able).

symbiotically

should never be limited within the

progress of metropolitan states.

Rather, it must target for holistic

development, in terms of quality

Putting forth the concept of

ner of the nation," he said.

The event included felicitation of guests, Rajya Sabha member Amar Patnaik and Padma Shri Ileana Citaristi

Citaristi shared her childhood stories and highlighted the collaborative efforts of the foundation towards social and educational reforms.

Patnaik discussed the gaps in current education system and highlighted the foundation's work towards it.

'Unmukt book' - a compendium of year round activities of the foundation was launched by the esteemed guests.

Founder Shweta Agarwal provided insights into the vision and mission of the Unmukt Foundation and emphasised its commitment to transform education, nurturing creativity and fostering environmental consciousness among children.

"Unmukt began with a vision to create joyful and sustainable learning communities and has evolved into a sanctuary prioritising children's holistic development in body, mind and soul over mere numerical scores," she said.

"Children are inherently good. They mirror us and as we set examples, they follow," Shweta added. She invited everyone to join the family and be a part of the transformative journey.

Heartwarming notes were shared by Unmukt's trustee Padma Shri Sabarmatee at the end.

Symbiotic relationship between species older than thought he widely used word symin environments they might not biosis is the intimate rebe able to colonise otherwise. lationship of different The fungus provides a suitable species living together. It's much environment for its partnering more common and older than

species of algae or cyanbacteria to grow – it might otherwise be too exposed or dry, for example. In return, the fungus gets to share some of the carbohydrates produced by photosynthesis.

This is an example where both partners benefit from their relationship. It's called mutualistic symbiosis

Lichens are often very good indicators of air quality and more general ecosystem health. Their absence can indicate poor air quality. Because they absorb air pollutants such as heavy metals they can be used as biomonitors.

Lichens are diverse. They grow on tree trunks, on roof close relationship with fungi in

The symbiosis of two different species allows both to survive

In another very common example of mutualistic symbiosis, most plant species live in a

the soil. It's known as a mycorrhizal association.



The plants harness the energy in sunlight to make sugar from water and carbon dioxide in the process called photosynthesis. The plants share this food with the fungus, which relies on them for survival. In return, the fine threads of the fungus greatly increase the surface area of the plant roots for absorbing water and nutrients.

In parasitic symbiosis, one partner benefits at the expense of the other. Examples include the fungi Phytophthora, Fusarium and Armilleria, which often kill their plant hosts.

In cases of commensalism, one organism benefits and the other neither gains nor loses.

Small birds, for example, sometimes perch on large herbivores. eating insects disturbed by the larger animals

As in any relationship, possible things can change over time. For example, a mutualistic symbiosis between a tree and its mycorrhizal fungus might change to parasitism as the tree ages and declines, or if environmental conditions change.

Symbiosis has played a huge role in the evolution of life. The cells that make up the bodies of animals and plants are the result of symbiotic relationships.

Cells are complex. They contain structures called organelles,

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OrissaPOST SUNDAY | APRIL 28 | 2024 | BHUBANESWAR

state

to 2015, according to a 2022 paper

co-authored by researchers from

the state's Berhampur

Tamanna Sengupta of India's

Centre for Science and

Environment think-tank told

AFP that Odisha had the high-

est number of villages severely

impacted by coastal erosion in

by the growing frequency and in-

tensity of cyclones and floods

and those who remain are at

risk of losing their homes to in-

tensifying floods, Sengupta said.

on coal for energy generation

and is the world's third-largest

emitter of carbon dioxide, the gas

chiefly responsible for rising

India remains heavily reliant

'The sea will eat this place'

Locals have been displaced

in the area, she added.

The crisis had been worsened

University.

the country.

Eroding existence: Eerie story of Satabhaya

An upriver dam-building spree in the decades since India's independence drastically cut the amount of sediment deposited where the waterways met the sea leaving Odisha's coasts vulnerable to erosion

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Satabhaya, April 27: The gentle roar of the ocean lulled mother-of-two Banita Behra to sleep each night, until one day the encroaching tide reached her doorstep.

Behra is among hundreds of people from the disappearing and largely abandoned coastal village of Satabhaya, whose displaced former residents have been officially recognised by the government as 'climate migrants'

She grew up watching helplessly with her neighbours as rising seas, driven by climate change and upriver dams, slowly claimed the land around them.

"We were doing well there. We used to catch fish," the 34year-old told AFP, "But the sea came nearer and took away our homes.

Satabhaya is the hardest-hit of several rural idylls along the seafront in eastern Odisha, a state that has also been battered in recent decades by tropical cyclones and floods of in

creasing ferocity.

Behra's home is now underwater, 400 metres (1,300 feet) out to sea, while a few of her neighbours who refused to move live in makeshift thatched huts by the new shoreline.

A weathered brick wall is all that remains of what was once a seaside temple to Panchubarahi -- a locally revered Hindu deity supposed to protect worshippers from natural disasters.

Last year the Odisha government announced funds for a resettlement colony in Bagapatia. 12 kilometres inland from their village, giving each family a small plot of land and \$1,800 to build a new house. Authorities said the scheme

was the first of its kind in India for those forced to leave their homes by climate change.

But life in Bagapatia has been tough for the new arrivals without seas to fish and farmland to cultivate, many are depressed by having lost their self-reliance and way of life.

In order to survive, most of the community's men have had to take jobs to work as labourers out of state.

Behra's husband is now away 10 months of the year, working on the opposite side of the country and sending money home to provide for their two young children. 'We miss him, some days I feel like crying," she said, "But what can we do?'

'Growing frequency and intensity' Rising global temperatures

driven by human activity have

led to a consequent rise in global



sea levels with the melting of polar ice caps. Odisha, where millions of peo-

ple live in coastal settlements along the Bay of Bengal, is particularly vulnerable to the encroaching waters.

Satabhaya sits at the mouth of the mighty Mahanadi River Delta and its coasts were once replenished by earth carried by the currents from inland.

But an upriver dam-building spree in the decades since India's independence from Britain in 1947 drastically cut the amount of sediment deposited where the waterways met the sea.

That left Odisha's coasts vulnerable to erosion and lacking a critical defence against rising sea levels.

Across the state, sea levels increased by an average of 19 centimetres in the five decades

global temperatures.

Extreme weather events are expected to worsen as temperatures rise further, with UN climate experts warning the world could see average temperatures 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels within the decade. Odisha's chief forest conser-

vation officer Susanta Nanda said that more than a third of the state's coast was already eroding due to climate change and other manmade environmental damage.

The urgency of protecting atrisk coastal communities was underscored by the struggles of those already forced to leave their homes, he told AFP.

It is very difficult for climate refugees to start their lives again, Nanda said.

A 2017 report on migration by the UN Development Programme found that resettling communities affected by climate change was beneficial on balance when done with adequate planning.

But it found doing so also brought new problems for those who had been relocated, including a lack of decent work in their new home communities.

Jagbandhu Behra -- no relation to Banita -- was unable to find a job to support himself in the Bagapatia resettlement colony after leaving Satabhaya.

The 40-year-old moved even further inland in search of hope of greener pastures but remains gloomy about his prospects.

"There's no guarantee that we survive," he told AFP. "One day the sea will eat this place as well '

3 arrested for attack on Forest personnel



POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 27: The Forest department arrested and forwarded to court three persons Saturday for attacking the Forest department personnel of the Bhuyan Juang Pirha range office. The arrested persons were identified as Bidyadhar Pradhan and Sabar Pradhan of Luhakala village and Debanand Dehury of Gamardihi village under Nayakote police limits.

According to sources, Assistant Conservator of Forest Jitendra Behera sent a team of forest personnel Thursday afternoon to put out the fire reported at Khandadhar forest. Rajendra Jena, forest guard of Nayakot, along with four others went to the forest to extinguish the fire.

After seeing them, some villagers involved in poaching by starting the forest fire fled the spot. The forest team captured two hunters and seized a bark-

While the team was returning, some villagers of Luhukala attacked the Forest officials and damaged their vehicle. They even freed and took the accused duo with them. Forester Rajendra sustained a head injury

and was admitted to Keonjhar

DHH for treatment. On Friday morning, under the leadership of ACF Jitendra Behera, the Forest personnel including ranger Nayankant Sahu, Champua ranger Akshay Chhatriya raided the village and arrested three accused named as Sabar Pradhan, Bidyadhar Pradhan and Debanand Dehury from Luhukala village under Banspal block. Seven others involved in this crime absconded from the village

Range officer Nayan Kant Sahu said, "Bows, arrows, axes and slings have been seized. Similarly a complaint has been lodged in Nayakote PS against the attackers.



Woman beats elderly mother to death with wooden plank

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhuban, April 27: In a shocking incident, a mentally-challenged married woman allegedly killed her elderly mother by thrashing her with a wooden plank at Majhipal village under Bhuban police limits in Dhenkanal district Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Durgabati Das, 86, wife of Bibhuthi Bhushan Das of Majhipal village. According to sources, their accused daughter Ashalata, 54 has reportedly been suffering from mental illness since 2007 and staying with her mother at her paternal house after her in-laws left her.

Ashalata allegedly killed h



body. Later the body was sent to Bhuban hospital for autopsy. wooden plank inside the house The police brought the accused Friday night and had locked the door thereafter. Durgabati's only son Alok and

EAST COAST RAILWAY

NAME OF WORK : MAINTENANCE (C

der No. 06-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25

woman to Bhuban police station for questioning and conducted an investigation. his other sisters kept in touch Durgabati's four daughters with their mother over phone and only son cooperated with the police in the investigation. every day. However, they could

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Dtd.23.04.2024

Work : TERMINAL COACI

not contact Durgabati Saturday morning and anticipating some-

thing untoward contacted a man

in the village. It was only then

that they came to know about the

horrific incident. Immediately

all the sisters and relatives rushed

to the village and upon arrival

were shocked to see her body in a pool of blood inside the house.

On being informed, Bhuban PS

officials and a scientific team

reached the spot and seized the

OP PHOTO mother by beating her with a

NHRC asks DM, SP to submit report on compensation for rape survivor

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 27: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the District Magistrate (DM) and the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Kendrapara to submit a report on the compensation to be paid to a rape victim, along with proof of payment, within four weeks.

Both the DM and SP of Kendrapara have also been instructed to provide additional or complete reports on the matter by June 3 before the commission.

Acting on a petition filed by rights activist Sagar Jena of Kendrapara, the NHRC issued the order Friday.

Jena alleged in his petition that a woman was raped by an accused, who not only recorded the act but also blackmailed the victim for money. The incident occurred in November 2021 when the accused arranged a feast near the victim's neighbourhood.

During the event, he spiked her food, causing her to become unconscious, after which he raped her and recorded the act. Subsequently, the accused started blackmailing the victim, extorting ₹1.5 lakh from her and threatening further assault.

The victim complained about the accused January 5, 2022. Considering the seriousness of the matter and the gross violation of human rights, Jena requested the commission's intervention.

The commission sought an action taken report (ATR) from officials September 22, 2022. Since no report was received, reminders were sent February 10, 2023, and again March 16, 2023, to the concerned authorities.

In response, the SP of

Kendrapara stated that a case had been registered under Section 323, 506, 376(D), 307, and 34 IPC against four accused persons.

One accused was arrested August 30, 2022, and forwarded to custody. The DSP, Kendrapara, supervised the case and concluded it as true under Section 341, 323, 506, 376(D), 307, and IPC.

The SP submitted a report in August 2023, stating that the investigation was pending for the apprehension of another accused, with due action promised during the investigation.

A letter was sent to the District Legal Service Authority (DLSA), Kendrapara, requesting financial assistance for the victim.

Despite considerable time having passed, the district authorities had not submitted a conclusive report regarding the payment of monetary compensation to the victim.

The investigation of the case was stated to be pending, but no subsequent report had been submitted on the outcome.

On January 16, the commission directed the DM and the SP of Kendrapara to submit a supplementary report on the compensation to be paid to the victim and the outcome of the investigation within four weeks

The commission noted that the police report was silent on the compensation to the victim.

As per the NALSA scheme, a rape victim is entitled to compensation ranging from ₹4 lakh (minimum) to ₹7 lakh (maximum), the commission stated in its order, directing the DM and the SP of Kendrapara to submit a report on compensation along with proof of payment within four weeks.

23 fire points have been identified at four places under Baripada forest division, one place under Rairangpur forest division, 14 places under south forest division and four places under north forest division of Similipal

No let-up in Similipal wildfires



POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, April 27: Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary, one of India's largest national parks, in Mayurbhanj district has been witnessing widespread forest fires, with many raging for the last 24 hours owing to the relentless heatwave gripping the region.

The wildfires, a regular affair in the sanctuary during summer months, are destroying the green cover and endangering the wildlife in the sanctuary This has sparked resentment among the residents in the district as there is no let-up in the spread of wildfires.

Meanwhile, wildfires were found raging at 23 points inside the sanctuary, Similipal Field Director and Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF), Prakash Chand Gogineni said.

The 23 fire points have been identified at four places under Baripada forest division, one place under Rairangpur forest division, 14 places under south forest division and four places under north forest division of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR).

The wildfires are showing no sign of abatement despite the Forest department making every effort to douse the blazes which are rapidly spreading inside the sanctuary. Wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers have demanded that the state government and Forest department should seek the assistance of the Indian Air Force and sprinkle water on the sanctuary using helicopters in order to extinguish the fire. A local outfit Bhanja Sena's

founder Kalinga Keshari Jena has requested President Droupadi Murmu on social media platform 'X' to intervene in the matter and check the spread of wildfires in the sanctuary

Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary is spread over 275 sq km land and wildfires were found spreading at various places inside the sanctuary due to dry and hot atmospheric conditions.

The dry leaves shed by trees in the hilly and rocky jungles are stated to be the reason behind the quick spread of wildfires. Many a time, local villagers sneak into the jungles to collect firewood and set the dry leaves on fire for poaching leading to spread of wildfires

Fire personnel are using special and modern vehicles to move into the remote corners of the sanctuary to contain the wildfires. The Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF), Forest personnel and Special Task Force (STF) personnel are leaving no stone unturned to douse the fires spreading faster than their expectation but they have failed to fully contain them. Extinguishing flames and fortifying fire lines across various sections of the reserve have become a herculean task, according to a Fire personnel.

Officials have been using drone cameras to identify the fire points and then report those to the fire fighting team. The fire fighting team immediately rushes to the spot and douses the fire. This has become a daily affair keeping Fire personnel on alert always.

Bidding Start Da	te: 29.04.2024
Tender Closing At 1300 Hrs. of 13	g Date and Time : 3.05.2024.
tender, and an received shall be i Complete information	ation including e-Tender corrigendum is available
Sr. Divisional Ele	ectrical Engineer (TRD),

CLEANING OF PLATFORM RETURN TRAINS AT JNRD, TIG, KBJ AND BLGR FOR CHECK AND D CHECK) OF CUMMINS ENGINES (24 NOS.) OF 17 NOS TOWER WAGONS IN KHURDA ROAD (KUR) DIVISION FOR THREE YEARS. A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹2,06,58,270/dvertised Value : ₹3,18,65,290.35 Cost of tender form: Rs. 11,800/-, EMD : Rs.2,53,300 npletion Period: 36 (Thirty Six) Months. der closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. or nanual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or on shall be accepted against such nders even if these are submitted on firm's head and received in time. All such man shall be considered invalid and shall b ed summarily without any considera ted summany winnun, any consorter... iplete information including e-tender ments of the above e-tender is available site: www.ireps.gov.in. Sr. Divl. Mechanical Engine 60/P/24-25

PRESS RELEASE OBSERVER'S CONTACT DETAILS OF GANJAM DISTRICT

Any complaints or grievances related to 20 - Berhampur P.C. & 134 - Digapahandi A.C. may contact to the below mentioned Mobile Nos./Mail Id.

SI. No.	Name of the Observer	Contact No.	Mail ID			
	Sri Swaroop P, IAS 20 - Berhampur P.C. General Observer					
01	Room Alloted: Room No. 8 Special Circuit House, Berhampur	9692194145				
02	Sri Saurav Dubey, IRS 20 - Berhampur P.C. Expenditure Observer	9692201530	eopcberhampur@ gmail.com			
03	Ms. Kanchi Gupta, IRS (C&CE) 20 - Berhampur P.C. Expenditure Observer	9692194157	expenditure observer berhampur@ gmail.com			
04	Ms. Chandrika Garg, IRAS 134 - Digapahandi A.C. Expenditure Observer	8144214486	observer digapahandiac@ gmail.com			
05	Sri Ajaya Linda, IPS 20 - Berhampur P.C. Police Observer Office Place is BeDA,	9692185164				
Berhampur Collector-cum-DEO, Ganjam						

power post

FOCUS VACCINATION

Doubt is not a sport to indulge in with impunity; it is a poison, which drop by drop corrodes the soul



THE MOTHER

Communal Speech

The Prime Minister has been accused of violating the Representation of the People Act in his speech, which the Opposition has called communal. A complaint has been filed with the Election Commission and in the courts to disqualify him. Under the law, an appeal by a candidate to the electorate to vote or refrain from voting on the ground of religion is a corrupt practice. On this the Supreme Court has passed two judgements which specifically exempt Hindutva. These came in the case of the Shiv Sena's Dr Ramesh Yashwant Prabhoo versus Prabhakar Kashinath Kunte, 11 December 1995 and another one involving the man who would later become Maharashtra's Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi.

The charge of violating the Representation of People Act in the first case was based on three public speeches by Bal Thackeray in November and December 1987 in canvassing for Prabhoo

Bombay High Court found Thackeray's speeches "were all in very intemperate language and incendiary in nature which were appeals to the voters to vote for Dr Prabhoo because of his religion, i.e., he being a Hindu, and the speeches also promoted or tended to promote enmity and hatred between different classes of the citizens of India on the ground of religion.

Thackeray's speeches included the words: "We are fighting this election for the protection of Hinduism. Therefore, we do not care for the votes of the Muslims. This country belongs to Hindus and will remain so." In the Urdu Times, the report appeared with the headline "Shiv Sena ko Musalmanon ke voton ki zarurat nahin hai" (Shiv Sena did not need the votes of Muslims). And: "Though this country belongs to Hindus, Ram and Krishna are insulted. (The Opposition) valued the Muslim votes more than your votes; we do not want the Muslim votes. A snake like Shahabuddin is sitting in the Janata Party a man like Nihal Ahmed is also in Janata Party. So the residents of Vile Parle should bury this party.

The Supreme Court quoted other extracts: "But here one cannot do anything at anytime about the snake in the form of Khalistan and Muslims ... The entire country has been ruined and therefore we took the stand of Hindutva and by taking the said stand we will step in the Legislative Assembly... There is a dire need of the voice of Hindutva and therefore please send Shiv Sena to the Legislative Assembly.'

There were other, abusive, things said which cannot be reproduced here, but they are unimportant. The Supreme Court overturned the High Court judgement and said these speeches did not violate the Representation of the People Act. This was because considering Hindutva "as depicting hostility, enmity or intolerance towards other religious faiths or professing communalism, proceeds from an improper appreciation and perception of the true meaning," because Hindutva "may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more." In essence, the court was saying, no matter what is said by a candidate, the court will protect it if it is said under the tent of Hindutva.

The second judgement, which came the same day in 1995 was Manohar Joshi versus Nitin Bhaurao Patil. Joshi had been disqualified by Bombay High Court, again because of speeches by Thackeray and others, and the Supreme Court overturned the judgement

The speeches had been tape-recorded, widely reported on and were also taken down in shorthand by police personnel present there. Manohar Joshi himself had said at a meeting in Shivaji Park on 24 February 1990 that "the first Hindu Rashtra will be established in Maharashtra." Other speakers said that on Joshi being elected, and the BJP-Sena alliance establishing a Hindu government, jobs would be given to all Hindus. The tapes showed that other faiths had been referred to as traitors and betravers of India. In response to this the court said: "In our opinion, a mere statement that the first Hindu State will be established in Maharashtra is by itself not an appeal for votes on the ground of his religion but the expression, at best, of such a hope. However despicable be such a statement, it cannot be said to amount to an appeal for votes on the ground of his religion." In response to the judgement by the then Chief Justice JS Verma, AG Noorani wrote that Verma's "profuse expressions of disapproval are neither relevant nor effective. It is his ruling on the law and his construction of the facts which matter. Both are manifestly, demonstrably wrong. He added: "Election candidates do not waste time expressing hopes in order to titillate the electorate. They know that its vote will be given against promises and pledges. 'The first Hindu Rashtra will be established' is not an expression of hope but a pledge by a Shiv Sena leader at a meeting in a predominantly Hindu locality. If this is not the seeking of votes 'on the ground of his religion,' what is it?" That is a good question, and it remains unanswered. A challenge to the Prabhoo and Joshi judgements was made in 2016. The petitioners said that the Hindutva "way of life" had led to demands of homogenisation and assimilation of minorities and Dalits and Adivasis in the Hindutva way of life. Their petition said, "Hindutva has become a mark of nationalism and citizenship. The interpretation has curtailed faith in secularism, which is the basic feature of the Constitution." The challenge was unsuccessful, with the Supreme Court refusing to hear it citing a procedural technicality, and the Hindutya judgements continue to give the RSS and the BJP the validity with which to further their agenda.



Aakar Patel

Under the law, an appeal by a candidate to the electorate to vote or refrain from voting on the ground of religion is a corrupt practice



here is a good chance that you know one of the 154 million people who over the past 50 years have been saved from a preventable death by routine immunisation. You might even be one. In fact, surveying the past half-century, it is hard to identify a public-health tool that has had a more positive impact than vaccination, or one that has done more to promote global health equity.

Routine immunisation programmes, once the purview of the wealthy world, now exist in every country, owing to the landmark commitment that the World Health Organization's member states made in 1974 to establish what is now known as the Essential Programme on Immunization. Initially, the EPI focused on ensuring universal access to vaccines against tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, and measles all preventable child killers. Today, 84 per cent of children globally are immunised against these six diseases, compared to only 5 per cent in 1974.

But progress has been hard won. After rapid gains in immunisation coverage throughout the 1980s, momentum was lost in the 1990s. The main issue was that lower-income countries lacked the resources and infrastructure needed to sustain immunisation programmes. Moreover, vaccine markets were fragmented and dysfunctional: countries depended on a few manufacturers, and uncertain demand deterred new entrants.

That is where Gavi. the Vaccine Alliance, came in. The organisation was established in 2000 to harness the strengths of the public and private sectors. By forging new partnerships. the thinking went, Gavi could improve access to vaccines against a wider range of infectious dis-



The future of vaccines appears to be even brighter. It is possible that before the end of the decade there will be a new vaccine against tuberculosis - one of humanity's oldest scourges. Looking further ahead, we could even see vaccines delivered through dissolvable microarray patches instead of syringes

eases in lower-income countries and marginalised communities. In the decades since, Gavi has helped protect more than one billion children and halve childhood mortality in 78 countries, while delivering significant economic benefits. Meanwhile, most of the countries that Gavi supports have continued to increase funding for vaccination efforts, putting such programmes on a more sustainable footing and creating an entry point for other health services

The 50th anniversary of EPI is a fitting moment to celebrate the millions of lives saved through routine immunisation, and the health workers who have devoted considerable effort, often in the most demanding environments, to realise the

EPI's goals. But it is also an opportunity to reflect on what still needs to be done. According to our estimates, around one in ten children in lower-income countries have not received any routine vaccines. These "zerodose" children are often in poor communities affected by conflict and displacement, in countries with extremely fragile health systems that provide no access to primary care. Continued progress will de-

pend on our ability to reach these marginalised communities. That is why, since taking over as CEO in March, my main priority has been ensuring that Gavi's work is informed by and grounded in the needs and experiences of the communities and countries that we serve.

At a time when violent con-

flict, geopolitical tensions, and climate change are dominating the headlines, the EPI's anniversary should also serve as a reminder that we can still achieve world-changing results when we work together. Every vaccination offers hope for a better, healthier future. And as we stand on the cusp of a new era for immunisation, there is reason for optimism.

Since 2022, for example, a record number of people are protected by the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, which protects against the main cause of cervical cancer. Moreover, we have the ambitious goal of immunising 86 million girls against HPV in Gavi-supported countries by the end of 2025. And this week, three more African countries will join Burkina Faso and Cameroon in rolling out the world's firstever malaria vaccine - a development that would have seemed impossible just a few decades ago.

The future of vaccines ap pears to be even brighter. It is possible that, before the end of the decade, there will be a new vaccine against tuberculosis one of humanity's oldest scourges. Looking further ahead, we could even see vaccines delivered through dissolvable microarray patches instead of syringes.

In the half-century since the WHO instituted the EPI, the world has shown a remarkable capacity to come together on the crucial issue of vaccination. At this moment of deepening political polarisation and global fragmentation, we must commit to another 50 years of changing the world for the better.

The writer is CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

ECONOMY SPECTRUM

Sania Nishtar

IMMUNISATION

PROGRAMMES,

ROUTINE

ONCE THE

COUNTRY

PURVIEW OF

THE WEALTHY

WORLD, NOW

EXIST IN EVERY

Why income inequality matters

ibek Debroy, Chairman states that "the state shall strive of PM's Economic Advisory Council in an edit in Economic Times (16 April) has made an outlandish statement that "income inprovement in people's lives." He bases his argument on Milton Friedman's argument that redistributive policies can stifle innovation and productivity, leading to economic slowdown. He also refers to data from France that indicates that Solidarity Tax on Wealth (1988) resulted in flight of capital and decrease in GDP growth by 0.2% each year.He also quotes two papers by Brulhart and Jacobsen where they show that wealth is highly sensitive to tax rates, leading to asset shifts and attempts to tax evasion. One of the ironies of economic liberalisation in India from 1991 has been the sharp spurt in economic growth accompanied by substantial increase in income share of top 10%. As per the World Inequality Report (2023), the share of bottom 50% from total GDP has gone down from 21% in 1990 to 13% in 2021, while that of top 10% has increase from 32% to 57% in 2021.

to minimise the inequalities in income" and "endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status and opportunity" (Article 28(2)). He is also blissfully indifferent to equality in India does not mat- the SDG mandate that states ter if it coincides with im- must dreduce income inequality (10.1), and adopt fiscal and social policies that promote equality (10.4). The great debate on income inequality was triggered by Simon Kuznets who brought out through his inverted U curve that inequality will initially increase as countries prosper but will then decrease as they reach a high level of percapita income. It was Thomas Piketty through his iconic book "Capital in the Twenty First Century" (2013) who demonstrated how income inequality in developed countries like the USA actually increased sharply after 1970. For Piketty such inequality is not an accident but a feature of capitalism where the people in the top income bracket are consciously favoured by the governing class, as did President Regan in the USA through his Reganomics.

with a premium on skill which the bottom 50% miss out substantially. In India, the highest tax rate came down from 50% during 1982-1986 to 30%, with a clamour to reduce it further. Richard Wilkinson in a stirring book The Sprit Leveldemonstrated how in developed countries with high inequality affects index of health like obesisity, mental illness, high levels of homicides. Inequality breeds resentment, hostility, and the poor feel disempowered, shorn of social justice. Angus Deaton, the Nobel laureate, showed in 2015 how there was amarked increase in death of the middle aged White americans after 1999. Lack of college education and explosion in opium use led to blue collar heydays of the 1970s to decline of working class. Indira Gandhi introduced the 25th amendment to the Constitution (1971) by introducing Article 31C which ringfenced laws to implement Article 39(b)& (c) from the protection of fundamental rights like Article 14 (right to equality) and right to freedom (Article 19). This new clause was upheld by the Supreme Court in the Keshavanand Bharati Case (1973), while striking down the provision that it will not have power to review such laws, if challenged. The Court went one step further upholding na-

tionalisation of coke manufacturing companies in the the Sanjeev Coke Manufacturing Case (1983) by stating that "When 31C comes in Article 14 goes out." It was the most conclusive judicial sanction to the government to "promote egalitarian principle of socio economic justice" by triggering Article 39(b). An IMF study brought out how a modest increase in tax rates on highest income category does not result in flight of capital. An Oxfam Report brings out how 5% wealth tax will generate \$1.7 trillion which will be enough to take 2 billion people out of poverty. In a subsequent publication "Capital & Ideology" Piketty writes that access to quality basic education transcending class can be a powerful antidote to inequality in income. The latest India Employment Report brings out how average monthly earnings of regular workers has come down from ₹12,100 in 2012 to ₹10,925 in 2022 and that of casual workers stands at ₹4,712 and of self-employed at ₹6,843, where the bottom 50% of India's workforce is languishing. In this backdrop, Debroy's observation that "living standards of India's poor have improved significantly" is not only inaccurate but unfeeling.

WISDOM CORNER

- Music and silence combine strongly because music is done with silence, and silence is full of music. MARCEL MARCEAU
- The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be.

ANNE FRANK

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.

EDMUND BURKE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1945: Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, "Il Duce," who, after a series of military misadentures, became unpopular even among his fellow Fascists, was captured while trying to flee Italy and was executed on this day in 1945.
- 1947: Norwegian ethnologist and adventurer Thor Heyerdahl and a small crew set sail from Peru aboard the primitive raft Kon-Tiki and arrived in Polynesia three and a half months later
- 1952: The Allied occupation of Japan came to an end after seven years of rapid social and economic change following the country's surrender in World War II
- 1967: At the height of the Vietnam War American boxer Muhammad Ali refused induction into the U.S. Army, citing religious reasons: his subsequent conviction was eventually overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.



Satya Narayan Misra

INEQUALITY BREEDS RESENTMENT, **HOSTILITY, AND THE POOR FEEL DISEMPOWERED**, **SHORN OF SOCIAL** JUSTICE

> It's surprising how Debrov pays scant attention to the Constitutional provision which

In another well researched book The Great Leveller, Schedel brought out how the average tax rate on top 1% of the households came down from 42% in 1980 to 27% in 2013. He also brought out how globalisation tends to benefit the elites disportionately-

The writer teaches macro economics.

Evolution of English

Sir, The growth of English, spoken by over 1.5 billion people worldwide and the official language of 67 sovereign and 27 non-sovereign countries, has been viewed with guarded interest because it is a work in progress. The language pundits will declare that English is nobody's property; it is the property of the language itself. Simple, effective, comprehensible and assimilable sentences are all that the language demands. As mankind has evolved, English is no longer a language of the English. It has taken many roots, and people and communities all around have deciphered the luxury of imbibing a good English knowledge. Even as technology is increasingly employed for multilingual learning, the cultural and intellectual heritage of English cannot be sidelined.

Stray thoughts

Sir, This refers to "Kharge writes to PM, seeks time to explain Party's Nyay Patra," Orissa Post, April 26. The Congress party seems to be hung up on caste and wealth surveys in order to pit the relatively well-off voters against the vast majority of the poor and unprivileged sections. The party reckons that without snapping Modi's emotional connect with the OBCs and the poor it cannot hope to do well in the polls. Rahul Gandhi in particular has given vent to his "stray thoughts" on wealth-sharing and distribution and socio-economic surveys with the singular objective of dividing the electors into rich versus poor. Like a broken record, attacking "Ambani and Adani" from the stump may not burnish the Congress' pro-poor credentials, given that both industrialists owe their initial growth to the Congress. In the early years of the Republic, the \rightarrow Opposition had picked on the "Birlas and Tatas" to suggest that the then Congress governments were in their pockets. Probably, abusing successful businessmen in a country with a large number of poor comes naturally to the Opposition. But that certainly should not suggest that the rise of these industrialists is party-specific. As is by now well known, businesses are good at, well, doing business — with whichever party may come to power.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE







etters

(200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are 101 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

Orissapost

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



Adverse weather conditions may hit mango crops in UP: Experts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 27: Battling the impact of climate change, the mango yield in northern India, including Uttar Pradesh (UP), may be hit by the earlierthan-usual summer this year, said experts at Lucknow's ICAR-Central Institute of Subtropical Horticulture (CISH).

The mango belt is known for its prized Chausa, Dussehri and Langra varieties globally and the northern belt accounts for 40 per cent of the total mango production in India.

Of 21 million metric tonnes (MT), 4.8 MT comes from UP alone, said T Damodaran, the institute's Director.

Temperature has seen a sig-

nificant rise and the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) is predicting a further rise in the mercury in days to come

With the mercury expected to go up to 43 degrees Celsius soon, it may not be ideal for mango flowering, said experts at the institute.

Unlike the previous year, when mango produce was affected due to untimely hailstorm, thunderstorm and semi looper insects, mango flowering this year is good due to warm weather. But fruit produce may again suffer due to extreme climatic conditions expected in coming days,

the scientists said. "Looking at the intense heatwave forecast over the next 30



days, where the temperature is expected to go up to 43 degrees Celsius soon, policymakers and mango lovers have started having doubts about the fate of the

mango crop for the current season," said the scientists.

Damodaran said high temperature during fruit formation is usually expected to favour the crop, however, sudden temperature rise may result in a higher fruit fall, if it is not managed with light to moderate frequent irrigation to keep the crop moist. Mango crops are often con-

sidered the most vulnerable to climatic changes during flowering-fruiting period.

The most crucial period for the crop falls in March-April when night temperatures start rising above 15 degrees Celsius, which decides the flowering and fruiting of mango crop, he explained.

The president of the All India Mango Growers' Association, Insram Ali, said extreme temperatures during the flowering season (March-April) damage flowers as they are not able to

bear the heat. Even low temperatures are bad for the flowers.

The Mal-Malihabad region, which is the leading producer of mangoes in northern India and UP, and is especially known for the popular variety Dussehri, has had low flowering this year, at only 30-35 per cent, he stated.

In previous years also, 25-30 per cent of the mango produced was lost and damaged due to unprecedented weather. According to ICAR-CISH,

Lucknow, the mango production in Mal-Malihabad bordering the Sitapur area was affected by 35 per cent and 20-25 per cent in other districts of UP due to unseasonal rainfall and hailstorm in March and April.

'Ensure uninterrupted

drinking water supply'

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

M K Stalin Saturday directed the offi-

cials to ensure uninterrupted drink-

ing water supply to the people this

summer. Chairing a review meeting

with the state government officials

here in the wake of heat wave condi-

tions prevailing in many parts in the

mer has brought with it two kinds of

state, the Chief Minister said sum-

crisis. "One is excessive heat and

another is increasing demand for

Although the coastal areas of Tamil

Nadu received heavy rainfall leading

Northeast Monsoon season, other

western districts of Tamil Nadu con-

sidered as catchment areas, received

tion as there is extreme short-

however yet to decide on this

even though the department has

informed us of the benefits of

switching over to the new crops.'

The farmers have also been ad-

parts of the state, especially the

drinking water," Stalin said.

to floods during the previous

less rainfall, he said

Indian heart saves Pakistani teen girl in Chennai hospital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 27: A Pakistani teenage girl who has been ailing since 2019 got a new lease of life after she received a heart from a 69-year-old Indian donor from New Delhi.

The 19-year-old girl from Karachi successfully underwent a heart transplant surgery and was discharged recently, doctors who performed the surgery at a city hospital here said.

"I am feeling fine (now). I thank the Indian government for giving me a visa. I got a heart transplant here," she said and also thanked the doctors for saving her. She was very sick upon her arrival in Chennai, her mother Sanobar said. "We got an emergency visa... the doctors saved her," she added.

Getting the visa was very difficult; more than that the patient's family could not afford the treatment cost. Dr K R Balakrishnan, director of the Institute of Heart and Lung Transplant, MGM Healthcare, here said.

The girl has been battling for her life after suffering a cardiac arrest in 2019. Her family consulted Dr K R Balakrishnan and Dr Suresh Rao, Co-Director, Institute of Heart and Lung Transplant, MGM Healthcare.

UP govt now focusses on problem of beggary

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 27: Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government has asked municipal commissioners of major cities in the state to deal with the problem of beggary



The principal secretary of the urban development department. Amrit Abhijat has directed officials to take immediate steps to check the increasing nuisance being caused by beggars at busy traffic junctions and markets.

Officials have also been directed to survey all manholes and to cover them properly to avoid any untoward incident. An eight-year-old boy had died in Lucknow after falling into a manhole Tuesday. Abhijat said Friday, "Some people could be pushing ablebodied people into beggary. Reports of territorial conflicts among them are also on the rise. It needs to be checked if some organised gang is behind the menace. Municipal commissioners have been asked to coordinate with the social welfare department to rehabilitate the beggars into the mainstream. Help from NGOs and social organisations needs to be taken and periodic reviews are required to find out what such people are doing." According to an estimate, Lucknow alone has about 10,000 beggars. No official survey report is available on the latest population of the beggars.

ELIMINATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

TN education dept releases guidelines

INDO-ASIAN NEW SERVICE

Chennai, April 27: The Tamil Nadu school education department has directed district education officers to constitute school-specific monitoring committees to prevent corporal punishment.

The monitoring committees will include school heads, parents, teachers and senior students.

The department has directed the committees to ensure that they promptly address any complaints regarding corporal punishments and to find out whether they have resulted in mental harassment of students.

As per the Right to Education Act, 2009 corporal punishment includes physical punishment, mental harassment and discrimination.

The department has also directed the district education officers to keep vigil on corporal punishment in schools under their jurisdiction as the state wants schools to create a safe mental and physical environment for students

The guidelines are

focused on safeguarding the physical and mental well-being of students, and extend beyond eliminating corporal punishment to address any form of harassment of students

It is also planning to conduct awareness camps against corporal punishment based on the guidelines of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

The department also requires affirmative action against corporal punishment and positive engagement with children. In its directive, the depart-

ment has said that the focus should be on help and not on punishment, multidisciplinary intervention and a positive environment for the students where they can voice their opinions and woes alike.

Farmers asked to switch crops in TN

55 % WATER IN RESERVOIRS

EXTREME HEATWAVE CONDITIONS HAVE LED TO THE DRYING UP OF PALAR **RIVER WHICH IS ONE OF THE MAIN SOURCES OF WATER IN THIS REGION**

AGENCIES

Chennai, April 27: With most of the reservoirs in the droughtprone districts of Vellore, Ranipet, Thirupathur and Tiruvannamalai left with only 55 per cent of water, farmers have been advised to shift to

crops that require less water. Sources in the Tamil Nadu water resources department told IANS that the 55 per cent of water that is remaining in the major reservoirs of the region

> mestic consumption. ready said that the temperature

between 38 to 42 degrees Celsius. Extreme heatwave conditions have led to the drying up of Palar



require less water

The Tamil Nadu agriculture

to cultivate crops like maize,

ragi, groundnuts, wheat and

pulses like green gram and urad

as these crops require less water.

Tamil Nadu agriculture de-

These crops, according to the

Boats anchored following a 45-day ban on fishing imposed by the Tamil Nadu government, at Ennore near Chennai

cials, will also gi

In Tamil Nadu the crops traditionally being cultivated by farmers are sugar cane, paddy and banana which require large quantities of water.

farmer in Tiruppatur, told IANS, 'The agriculture department has already asked us to switch from sugar cane and paddy farming to

being cultivated by farmers are sugar cane, paddy and banana which require

age of water in the region. We are

K Ramaswamy, a sugar cane

arge quantities of water



farmers to cultivate crops like maize, ragi, groundnuts, wheat and pulses like green gram and urad as these crops

will not be used for agriculture and it will only be used for dosources of water in this region. The weather department has aldepartment has advised farmers

in these districts would touch 44 degrees Celsius in days to come. At present the temperatures in these districts are anywhere

River which is one of the main

helmets on trial basis

Lucknow cops get AC



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 27: The Lucknow Traffic Department has provided AC helmets, as part of a trial phase for the first time in Lucknow, to four traffic personnel.

This "cool initiative" is designed to help cops on duty beat the heat under the scorching sun.

These helmets have AC vents to channel the coolness to the head along with a hard plastic shield that works as goggles to protect the eyes from the sun's glare.

The helmet is connected to a large battery pack tied to the waist of a person. When the battery is drained, a red light on top will alert the person to put the helmet on charging.

"The AC installed in the helmet will reduce the temperature by 10-15 degrees and this will provide relief to cops from the scorching heat," said ADCP (Traffic) Ajay Kumar.

After a successful trial, about 500 such helmets will be procured from a Hyderabad-based company. A month-long trial will decide if the product can be introduced formally, said the official.

This "cool initiative" is designed to help cops on duty beat the heat under the scorching sun

"The number will be decided by the higher authorities. The weight of the helmet is half of that of a normal helmet and our cops felt very comfortable," added the ADCP.

This is the second such initiative in UP, a similar trial was conducted by the Kanpur Police," said DCP (Traffic) Salmantaj Patil. Recently, similar trials were conducted in Bhubaneswar, Vadodara and other cities.

There will be two types of helmets - with battery backups of two and eight hours, respectively. Reportedly, the first one will be provided to traffic personnel while the one with more backup will be provided to police personnel.

"Despite being comfortable for the user, the helmet will be checked for any health risk as one part of the body is cool and the rest is exposed to heat. We will examine if it has any negative effects," said the ADCP.



When they can't enter fields,

use plain wires or saris and dupattas to fence fields.

icy, even that is not possible. We them illegally or abandon them,"



Hathras/Firozabad, April 27: In villages across western Uttar Pradesh, the sight of emaciated stray cattle roaming around has become all too common and so is the sight of destroyed crops.

many cows feed on plastic and garbage. Farmers are also upset over the state government's decision to reinforce an old order that no barbed wires should be used to fence fields. Now, most farmers

"Earlier, we would give the old cow in exchange for 10-20 per cent of the down payment and get a new one. But with the new polhave no option but to either sell said a farmer who did not wish

to be named. In May 2017, the Markets) Rules, 2017' under Centre banned the sale of cattle the Prevention of Cruelty to for slaughter in animal markets Animals Act.

Every village in western Uttar Pradesh has a cow shelter but they are at capacity. PTI visited five cow shelters in the region and they were all at capacity.

er 1.90 cro ased by 10 per cent in 2019 red to th cows and 23,36,151 The population of dry cows exotic and cross-bred cattle creased by 26.9 per cent from 2012 The stray to 2019 ace has also idded to farmers' eco

they do not know what to do with cows that have stopped giving mill

Chaudhary Pushpendra Singh, the president of farmers' organisation Kisan Shakti Sangh, stressed the importance of adopting sustainable solutions, such as setting up more cow shelters,

schemes and incentivising responsible cattle rearing practices, to tackle the stray cattle crisis. This region is a potato belt, a crop that cows often eat.

Though they do not consume wheat, they ruin the crop while passing through the fields, he said.

Amid the election fervour, this issue stands as a potent symbol of the broader challenges faced by rural India, he said, underscoring the critical need for proactive governance and sustainable development strategies. As polling day approaches, voters in western Uttar Pradesh are keenly watching how various candidates in the fray propose to address the stray cattle menace. So far, they do not have much to look for-ward to with political parties keeping mum on the issue.



The environment ministry

notified the stringent 'Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals

(Regulation of Livestock

across the country.









BJD's candidate for Karanjia Assembly constituency, Basanti Hembram, and party's Keonjhar LS nominee, Dhanurjaya Sidhu, addressing workers at a party meeting in Karanjia of Mayurbhanj district

Koraput MP and Congress leader Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka presenting his five year work report at a press conference organised at his residence in Koraput

Ex-Tripura CM, state BJP leaders PM Modi a 'mehengai' man: Priyanka meet to raise Odisha vote share

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharampur (Gujarat), April 27: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Saturday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over inflation calling him a "mehengai" man and claimed that the ruling BJP's top leadership may be pretending to be in denial mode now, but the party will change the Constitution if it returns to power.

"BJP leaders and candidates are saying that they will change the Constitution. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi is denying it. This is their tactic," she said at a public rally at Dharampur village of tribaldominated Valsad district held in support of Congress candidate for ST-reserved Valsad Lok Sabha seat, Anant Patel.

"First, they will always deny what they want to do. But after coming to power, they will implement it. They want to change the Constitution to weaken the common people and deprive them of their rights given in our Constitution," said the Congress leader.



PM Modi enters the stage during elections like "Superman", she said, asking people to remember him as a "mehengai (inflation)" man.

Congress's manifesto, she said "BJP leaders project the prime minister as powerful and say it addresses the issues faced by that 'chutki bajake ladai rukva the tribal population. Their party will bring an MGNREGA-like dete hai (he can stop the war -Russia-Ukraine – with the snap scheme for urban areas where of fingers)'. Then why is he unfamilies will get 100 days of guarable to remove poverty just like anteed work, she said. that," she asked.

The Congress leader claimed that the tribal population in Gujarat, which is Modi's home state, and in the country is sufto fishermen, taking minimum

wage to ₹400, working out "subplans" for Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs), a special budget for tribals and declaring tribal-dominated areas as scheduled areas.

The Congress general secretary alleged that PM Modi reduced the price of LPG cylinders only due to the general elections, claiming he had no sympathy for the people. She also responded to PM Modi's relentless attack on Congress over 'wealth redistribution".

"He is now warning people that Congress will enter their houses with an X-ray machine to conduct a search, then snatch vour ornaments as well as 'mangalsutra' kept in safes and give it away to others. Is that even possible? Is he doing this out of nervousness," she asked.

The BJP has fielded Dhaval Patel against Congress' Anant Patel in the Valsad constituency.

All 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat will go to polls in the third phase of general elections on May 7. BJP had cleanswept the state in the 2014 and 2019 polls.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 27: Former Tripura chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb held a closeddoor meeting with Odisha BJP leaders here Saturday and discussed strategies to increase the vote share of the saffron camp in the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the eastern state, party sources said.

The discussion was held two days after Union Home Minister Amit Shah, during a meeting with party leaders, had reportedly mentioned that the BJP's vote share soared from 2-3 per cent in Tripura and it managed to come to power there

Sources said Deb was invited by the Odisha BJP to sharpen its strategies before the polls and guide it to achieve the goal.

Deb, the Rajya Sabha MP, is expected to stay in Odisha for a month till the end of the elections in the state, they said.

Shah had also said that the BJP's vote share in Odisha in the 2019 Assembly elections was 32 per cent and 38 per cent

in the Lok Sabha polls. Therefore, an increase in

BJP's vote share is possible and the party can form the government in the state, Shah said in the meeting. The Odisha BJP is also con-

templating consulting Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma while making its strategies for the elections, a senior party leader said.

Assam was another state where the BJP improved its vote share and formed the government.

"If required, we will consult chief ministers of other BJPruled states and strategists to achieve the goal in Odisha,' the party leader said.

Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, one of the BJP's star campaigners, is scheduled to participate in a roadshow for party nominee Pradip Purohit from the Bargarh Lok Sabha constituency Sunday.

Sai will join the roadshow in the Jharsuguda Assembly segment

Wait for few more days: Kharge on Amethi, Rae **Bareli candidates**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 27: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Saturday said that the names of party candidates for prestigious Amethi and Rae Bareli seats in Uttar Pradesh will be announced in a few days.

Addressing a press conference here, he claimed that though the BJP says the corrupt must be put in jails, when leaders facing corruption charges join the saffron party, they are put on the lap and sent to Rajya Sabha or Assembly. "You have to wait for a few more days... when the names of candidates come from people to me and I sign the notification, it will be announced," he said when asked about candidates for Amethi and Rae Bareli

Lok Sabha constituencies. Those questioning Congress leaders for changing constituencies must also tell me how many times have (Atal Bihari) Vajpayee and (Lal Krishna) Advani changed their seats, Kharge said, when asked about the BJP criticising Rahul Gandhi for fighting the elections from Kerala's Wayanad instead of Amethi



Senior saffron party leader Tomar claims the BJP will win at least 16 out of 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state and 80 of 147 Assembly seats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 27: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will benefit from the anti-incumbency against the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government, which is in power for an unbroken 24 years in Odisha, and a strong Modi wave to dethrone Naveen Patnaik from the helm of the state, senior saffron party leader Vijaypal Singh Tomar claimed Saturday.

In an interview with PTI, Tomar said, "There is anti-incumbency and people in Odisha have decided to change the BJD government this time. Similarly, there is a strong Modi wave across India, which has also been strongly felt in this state.'

Tomar claimed the BJP will win at least 16 out of 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state and 80 of 147 Assembly seats here.

On BJD leader VK Pandian, a close aide of CM Naveen Patnaik, Tomar, ostensibly referring to Pandian's Tamil background, said, "One man became super CM and is running the government as its de-facto chief. Is there any justification to this? So, this time, the BJP is fighting not only to make Odisha a developed state but also for Odisha's pride."

Once the BJP forms a doubleengine government here, all central schemes and Modi's guarantees will be implemented in Odisha, he said.

A large number of senior BJD leaders including sitting MLAs, MPs and former MLAs and MPs have joined the BJP. Besides, the



party has consolidated its organisation from the level of polling booths to mandals and districts where workers are geared up to secure victory in both Parliament and state Assembly polls, the leader added.

On two BJP leaders Bhrugu Baxipatra and Lekhasri Samantsinghar joining the BJD, Tomar said, "We denied them MLA tickets. But, BJD has given Lok Sabha tickets to them. It shows where the BJD now stands.

Asked how BJP gave tickets to KV Singhdeo and his wife Sangeeta, members of the same family in Odisha when the party is against dynastic politics, he replied, "None of the leaders are new to politics. They are experienced campaigners. Dynastic politics means one family-run party."

He alleged the BJD government, which ruled the state for a long period, has misutilised central grants.

While piped water supply connection has been provided to nine crore households in the country, Odisha is lagging behind.

Similarly, the Centre has sanctioned PMAY houses to Odisha, but the state government has allotted many of those to ineligible beneficiaries while the genuine people remain deprived," he alleged.

Now that Modi has promised an additional three crore PMAY houses in the next five years, genuine beneficiaries from Odisha will get allotments after the BJP forms government in the state, said the BJP leader.

fering due to issues like rising

inflation, unemployment, low

remuneration, loss of land, vi-

olence against women and other

atrocities. Highlighting the

She also said that the Congress

is committed to filling about 30

lakh vacancies in government

jobs, providing subsidised diesel

While 13 crore people have availed of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana benefits across the country, the people of Odisha, especially its migrant workers, are not able to reap the benefit due to the BJD government's apathy. BJP will form a government here and implement the scheme, he said.

Tomar highlighted the plight of state farmers who failed to avail the benefits of PM Kisan Yojana on account of faulty documentation.

The BJD government is only branding central schemes in its name to take credit for those. The Central government has been providing free ration to poor families. But, the state government puts its sticker on the bags, alleged Tomar.

On Sam Pitroda's remark on inheritance tax, he said, "Congress says Muslims have the first right. But, we are saying the first right should be for the poor people of the country."

Reacting to the sops announced by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi ahead of the elections, Tomar said, "He has lost credibility. Erstwhile PM Manmohan Singh had announced a waiver of crop loans. But, CAG called it a scam. Modiji is giving assistance to the farmers under the PM Kisan scheme and money is being trans-ferred directly to their accounts. People trust Modi's guarantee as he fulfilled triple talaq, 33 per cent quota for women and abroga-

tion of Article 370. The Congress is campaigning for 'garibi hatao'. The party was in power for 60 to 70 years, but they did nothing for the poor people. The Modi government in the last 10 years brought 25 crore poor people above the poverty line, the senior BJP leader said.

5T Chairman Kartik Pandian receiving applications from supporters while addressing BJD workers at a party meeting held at Mini Stadium in Nuapada district, Saturday



Many workers from BJD and Congress in Uditnagar and Chhend localities joined BJP in the presense of BJP's candidate for Sundargarh Parliamentary constituency, Jual Oram at a merger meeting in Rourkela OP PHOTO





According to the National **Disaster Response Fund** (NDRF) rules, the state was supposed to be paid ₹18,171 crore. but the Central government has only approved ₹3,498.98 crore. This money is not sufficient for the drought relief. Our fight for the arrears will continue siddaramaiah I KARNATAKA CM

ACTOR GOES MISSING

think that they can win the elec-

tions by cancelling (school) jobs

and with bombs. We want 'roti,

kapda, makaan' and jobs for the

people, not their lofty speeches.'

Saturday alleged that several

judgment on school jobs.

The Trinamool Congress

A team of the Delhi Police Special Cell Saturday visited the house of actor Gurucharan Singh Saturday to investigate his mysterious disappearance, officials said. The Delhi police Saturday lodged an FIR under Section 365 (abduction) over the disappearance of Singh, who plays the role of 'Roshan Singh Sodhi' in the famous TV serial 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah', they said



Mamata slams CBI raids in Sandeshkhali Nobody can break

If the BJP claims nothing happened in the past 70 years (under previous dispensations) then let us believe that IITs, AIIMS, big industries etc were all built nov

uote

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA CONGRESS LEADER

This election is not about a village or about (familial) relations. This election will decide the future of the country AJIT PAWAR MAHA DEPUTY CM

This election is not for roads and electricity there are problems like unemployment that need to be raised besides other

issues, which we are facing post-2019 development MEHBOOBA MUFTI PDP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

School bus overturns: 15 children injured

Ranchi: Fifteen children were injured after their school bus overturned in Ranchi Saturday morning, police said. The bus with 30 children onboard overturned at a turning, about 100 metres from the St Maria School in Mandar, they said. "About 15 children were injured. They are under observation at the nearby Mission Hospital," officer-incharge of Mandar police station Rahul Kumar told PTI.

IndiGo Plane suffers glitch

New Delhi: An IndiGo aircraft enroute to Ahmedabad returned to the national capital Saturday afternoon due to an issue with the landing gear, according to a source. The plane, operating flight 6E 129, landed safely at the Delhi airport at around 1440 hours. There were around 170 people on board, the source said. An IndiGo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kulti/ Ushagram (WB), April 27: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday said there was "no evidence" of arms seizure in Sandeshkhali, asserting that CBI teams conducted searches without informing the state police.

She expressed skepticism regarding the operations, stating that the recovered items "might have been brought by officials of the central agency".

"If a firecracker goes off in Bengal, the NIA, CBI, NSG are coming to investigate. It seems that a war is going on. The state police were not informed. It is not known what was found. There was no evidence. The seized items might have been brought by them (CBI) in a car," Banerjee said here. She was addressing an election rally for TMC's Asansol Lok Sabha candidate Shatrughan Sinha.

The CBI Friday seized arms and ammunition, including a police service revolver and foreign-made firearms, during searches at two premises of an associate of now-suspended TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh in Sandeshkhali, officials said.

The searches were conducted in connection with the January attack on an Enforcement Directorate (ED) team by a mob



that was allegedly instigated by Sheikh, who was arrested by the West Bengal Police February 29 in the case.

Teams of the Central Bureau Investigation (CBI), the bomb detection squad, the National Security Guard (NSG), the central paramilitary forces and the West Bengal Police were part of the searches at Sandeshkhali -- a riverine delta -- on the fringes

of the Sunderbans in North 24 Parganas district. Banerjee also said, "Today, I heard there was an incident near

Sandeshkhali. A BJP leader had stored bombs in his house. They

TMC alleges bomb explosion at house linked to BJP leader in Hasnabad

Kolkata: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) Saturday alleged that several people were injured after a powerful bomb went off at the house of a relative of a BJP leader in West Bengal's Basirhat assembly constituency. TMC leader Kunal Ghosh alleged that the explosion tore apart the roof of the house belonging to a relative of BJP leader Nimai Das in Hasnabad panchayat area, leaving several people injured. He questioned why the CBI or the NSG wasn't called to probe the incident. Ghosh claimed Das was often seen with senior BJP functionaries such as B L Santosh during public events of the saffron camp. "All have witnessed how the CBI along with the NSG enacted a drama at Sandeshkhali in the same Basirhat region in the name of recovery of firearms from a house located at an isolated place Friday", Ghosh said. He claimed that the NSG was used "as a part of the drama at Sandeshkhali yesterday. Today, an explosion took place at the house of the BJP leader's relative Why shouldn't the CBI or the NSG step in to probe the incident", he asked.

Delhi CM: Sunita

free electricity and opened Mohalla Clinics.

"We will vote to remove dictatorship and save democracy," Sunita Kejriwal said.

"Your CM is a 'sher', nobody can break him or make him bow down," she added.

As Sunita Kejriwal's carcade snaked through narrow lanes, a large number of AAP supporters, carrying the Delhi Chief Minister's cut-outs and blue and yellow Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) flags, gathered there and raised slogans like "Jail ke tale tutengey, Kejriwal chhutengey". Patriotic songs were also played during the roadshow. Many supporters stood in balconies and windows.

The local leaders of AAP's alliance partner Congress also attended the roadshow with their supporters. A local resident, Vimla Devi, said the arrest of Arvind Kejriwal just before the elections was not good.

With Arvind Kejriwal behind bars in a money laundering case linked to the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy, his wife will spearhead the AAP's poll campaign and hold roadshows, including one in West Delhi Lok Sabha constituency Sunday, according to party leaders



New Delhi, April 27: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is a "sher" (lion) and nobody can break him, said his wife Sunita Kejriwal as she held her maiden Lok Sabha poll roadshow in support of the AAP's East Delhi candidate Kuldeep Kumar Saturday evening.

Standing through the sunroof of a vehicle. Sunita Kejriwal greeted voters in the Kondli area of East Delhi constituency with folded hands.

She also shook hands with some women. She said the Delhi Chief Minister was jailed because he built schools, provided

SNIPPETS Several Sikhs join BJP in Delhi

New Delhi: A large number of Sikhs, including members of the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee, joined the BJP Saturday. Citing a host of measures taken by the government to help the minority community, BJP chief JP Nadda on the occasion said if anybody has really worked for the community, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The party said in a statement that more than 1,000 Sikhs joined the BJP. Nadda also cited central government decisions such as opening of the Kartarpur Sahib corridor, FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) registration for donations to the Golden Temple, and action against the accused in the 1984 anti-Sikh riot cases.

Massive forest fires in Nainital

Dehradun: An IAF helicopter was pressed into service to extinguish the raging forest fires in Uttarakhand's Nainital district Saturday, a day after the flames reached the High Court Colony in the Pines area. The blaze came dangerously close to the houses in the colony and an Army cantonment around five kilome tres away from the Pines, prompting the response by authorities. The Indian Air Force said a Mi-17 V5 helicopter was deployed to assist in the firefighting operations. "With a forest fire building up in vicinity of an Air Force Station near Nainital, #IAF activated its aerial fire fighting capability, employing a Mi-17 V5 helicopter for undertaking Bambi Bucket Ops." it posted on 'X'. Forest officials said the helicopter collected water from the Naini and Bhimtal lakes in a Bambi bucket and poured it over the burning forests of the Pines. Bhumiadhar Ivolikot, Naravan Nagar, Bhawali, Ramgarh and Mukteshwar areas

Four accidents leave nine dead



spokesperson said the aircraft is currently undergoing necessary inspection, and an alternate aircraft is being provided to the passengers.

Drug labs unearthed

New Delhi: The NCB and Gujarat Police ATS Saturday busted three "clandestine" drug manufacturing labs in Raiasthan and Guiarat leading to the seizure of 300 kgs of narcotics and arrest of seven persons. Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Deputy **Director General (Operations)** Gyaneshwar Singh in a statement said that the labs were unearthed after about three months of "intensive" technical and ground surveillance that was mounted by the two agencies to identify the people involved in the network as well as the locations of the labs. A total of 149 kgs of mephedrone or 'meow meow' (both in powder and liquid form), 50 kg ephedrine, and 200 litres of acetone was recovered from the three labs located in Bhinmal of Jalore district and Osian in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan and Gandhinagar in Gujarat, the officer said.

4 injured in hosp fire

Mumbai: Four persons were injured in a fire that broke out in a hospital in Kandivali West in Mumbai Saturday, a civic official said. The blaze started at 1:50pm in the rear part of WINS Hospital, which is located in 30-storey 'Kesar Ashish' building near Mahavir Nagar, and was doused at 2:05pm, the Fire Brigade official said. "Four persons sustained injuries in the fire that was confined to electrical wiring, installations and the compressor of the centralised air conditioning mechanism in the facility," he said.

Bhopal: Nine persons were killed and over 20 injured in four separate accidents in the past 24 hours in Madhya Pradesh, police said Saturday. Three persons each were killed in two separate accidents in Maihar and Rajgarh districts while one person was killed in Mandla district, officials said. Two others lost their lives in an accident involving a car and truck in Seoni district, they said. In Rajgarh, a 30 year-old woman, her 5-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter were killed and two injured when an unidentified vehicle hit a two-wheeler on the national highway near Khanpura village late Friday night. In Mandla district, a 50-year-old woman was killed and 19 others injured when a bus carrying a marriage party overturned near a bridge on the Mandla-Jabalpur national highway late Friday night.

2 CRPF personnel killed in militant attack

Imphal: Two CRPF personnel were killed and two others injured as militants attacked a camp of security forces in Manipur's Bishnupur district in the early hours of Saturday, police said. The militants attacked an IRBn (India Reserve Battalion) camp at Naranseina in the Moirang police station area, they said. "The militants fired indiscriminately from hilltops, targetting the camp. It started around 12.30 am and continued till about 2.15 am. The militants also hurled bombs, one of which exploded in the outpost of CRPF's 128 battalion," a senior police officer said. The deceased were identified as sub-inspector N Sarkar, a native of Assam's Kokrajhar district, and head constable Arup Saini of Bankura district in West Bengal, he said. The injured were inspector Jadav Das and constable Aftab Das, he said, adding that they received splinter wounds.

NO RESPITE: Porters move a cart on a hot summer day in Kolkata. West Bengal

Three kids among 7 dead in separate fire incidents in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sasaram/Begusarai, April 27: Seven persons, including three children and a woman, died and three others sustained injuries in two separate fire incidents in Bihar Saturday.

In the first incident at Rophatha village in Rohtas district's Sasaram, a hut caught fire around 12.30 pm claiming the lives of three children and a police woman, said. The deceased, all belonging to one family, were identified as Sulochan Devi (20), Kiran Kumari (10), Mamta Kumari (10), and Bhakola Kumari (4). Two others, identified as

Shivvarti Devi and her son Montu, sustained burn injuries, police added.

Panchayat head Dayanand Singh and block development officer Atul Gupta visited the spot and ordered an inquiry.

"Though the fire was immediately brought under control, the hut had been reduced to ashes by then. All the deceased and two others who sustained burn injuries belong to one family", Singh said in a statement.

Gupta said, "An inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the exact cause of the fire'

Bihar Chief Minister as Chattish Sharma, Arvind Nitish Kumar has expressed his Shrama, and Shyam Kumar, condolences over the tragic police said. incident. "Chief Minister Nitish were so intense that neither the Kumar has expressed his deep sorrow on the death of four perfire could be doused nor the sons in the fire incident in victims rescued

'India becoming attractive for clinical trials'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Boston, April 27: Over the past 10 years, clinical trials in India have become easier, more accessible and accelerated, experts from the pharma sector have said as top multinationals are increasingly looking at the country as their base for clinical trials.

Novartis is one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world and was the fourth largest by revenue in 2022. "Given where we are, given what the landscape in the international community has happened, the regulators in India are starting to move and make changes to it. Since 2013, there have been 10 modifications to that act to try to make clinical trials easier, more accelerated, more accessible, et cetera," Srinivasan said at the 18th Annual BioPharma & Healthcare Summit in Boston April 25 organised by the USA



vices, for example, are now a

separate vertical. "We will have much more

lot more standardisation, a lot more clarity on what

ethics committees can do, their compensation, et cetera," he said, adding that modernisation is now happening.

'Hospital chains and hospital networks are actually also clearly modernising. Seventy per cent of the patients are in private hospital networks. Private hospital networks are now diversifying into tier two, and tier three cities, into tertiary networks as well. That gives

things that are

going on that

makes India

pretty attrac-

tive for clini-

cal trials,

said. At the

Srinivasan

you broad-based ac-Data from 2017 to 2023 cess to patients. So this is all the

shows that phase two and phase three clinical trials are growing at about 15 per cent to 18 per cent in India

This is primarily because of the 10 modifications done to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940, according to Badhri Srinivasan,

same time. head of Global Clinical Srinivasan and **Operations**, Novartis other experts felt that India has a lot of other improvements to make. "It is still harder to do clinical trials in India," he said at the summit, which was attended by top leaders from the American and Indian pharma sector. Dr Sarah Sheikh, head of Global Development, Takeda, India can help companies like hers to bring medicines to patients faster.

Some of the major changes are making clinical trials in India much more feasible, scalable, and predictable.

Dr. Christopher Corsico, Global Head of Development, GSK, said that many companies have built a huge infrastructure in India because of the talented population there to help build and run the operational component of clinical trials.

Dr. Uli Broedl, senior vice president and head of Global Clinical Development, at Boehringer Ingelheim, said India now offers huge opportunities.

ED summons AAP **MLA Amanatullah** Khan again Apr 29

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan has been asked by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to depose again next week in a money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the Delhi Waqf Board during his chairmanship, officials sources said Saturday.

The MLA has been asked to appear April 29 and continue with the recording of his statement under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

The 50-year-old Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislator from the Okhla Assembly seat was questioned by the central agency for about 13 hours last week.

In a related development, a bail to Khan in this money laundering case.

area, three persons lost their

lives and one sustained injuries

when two motorcycles collided

The deceased were identified

Eyewitnesses said the flames

head-on and caught fire.

PTI









international



The two

countries (US, China) should help each other succeed rather than hurt each other, seek common ground and reserve differences rather than engage in vicious competition, and honour words with actions rather than say one thing but do the opposite

XI JINPING PRESIDENT, CHINA



actual freedom but will never compromise on my or my nation's

freedom. I will remain in jail if I have to for nine more years, or more, but will never strike a deal with those who have enslaved my nation

IMRAN KHAN FORMER PM, PAKISTAN



their ambassadors in Tehran

FOREIGN MINISTER, IRAN

SHORT TAKES

Omaha (US): Tornadoes wreaked havoc Friday in the Midwest, causing a building to collapse with dozens of people inside and destroying and damaging hundreds of homes, many around Omaha, Nebraska. As of Friday night, there were several reports of iniuries but no immediate deaths reported. Tornado warnings continued to be issued into the night in Iowa One of the most destructive tornadoes moved for miles Friday through mostly rural farmland before chewing up homes and other structures in the suburbs of Omaha. Photos on social media showed the small city of Minden, Iowa, about 30 miles (48.3 kilometers) northeast of Omaha also sustained heavy damage.

Cease-fire in Gaza likely Russian missiles pound Ukrainian power plants

Hamas reviewing Israeli proposal for truce as possible Rafah offensive looms

ACCORDING TO AN EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL ...

Hamas' statement came hours after a high-level Egyptian delegation

The discussions between Egyptian and Israeli officials focused on the

first stage of a multi-phase plan that would include a limited exchange of

And also the return of a significant number of displaced Palestinians

The mediators are working on a compromise that will answer most of

both parties' main demands, which could pave the way to continued

hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners

It was not immediately clear

to their homes in northern Gaza with minimum restrictions

wrapped up a visit to Israel where it discussed a "new vision" for a pro-

holed up, despite calls for restraint from the international community including Israel's staunchest ally, the United States. Egypt has cautioned an offensive into Rafah could have 'catastrophic consequences" on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, as

I earnestly

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continue to stand by the

persuade your students

HAN DUCK-SOO | PM, SOUTH KOREA

patients as you have done

Senior well as on regional peace Western and Arab and security. officials are expected to meet next week in Rivadh to discuss the months-long war in the Gaza Strip on the sidelines of an economic forum in Saudi Arabia, according to southern Israel close diplomatic sources to Rafah and

hit targets in the city in near-daily airstrikes.

The US has been critical of Israeli policies in the West Bank and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is expected in Israel Tuesday, has recently determined an army unit committed human rights abuses there before the Gaza war.

But Blinken said in an undated letter to House Speaker Mike Johnson, obtained by 'The Associated Press' Friday, that he is postponing a decision on blocking aid to the unit to give Israel more time to right the wrongdoing.

Hamas has said it will not back down from its demands for a permanent cease-fire and full withdrawal of Israeli troops, both of which Israel has rejected. Israel says it will continue military operations until Hamas is defeated and that it will retain a security presence in Gaza afterward



REUTERS

The Israeli

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Kyiv, April 27: A Russian missile attack pounded power facilities in the centre and west of Ukraine Saturday, mounting pressure on the ailing energy system as the country faces a shortage of air defences despite a breakthrough in US military aid.

WARSHIP BOOST FOR PAK

China has launched the first of

submarines to be built for its

provide it with state-of-the-art

all-weather ally Pakistan to

dimension to their growing

bilateral military cooperation

the eight Hangor-class

warships, adding a new

The strike using ballistic missiles and cruise missiles fired by Russian strategic bombers based in the Arctic Circle was the fourth large-scale aerial assault targeting the power system since March 22

'The enemy again massively shelled Ukrainian energy facilities," said DTEK, the largest private electricity company, adding that four of its six thermal power plants had suffered new damage overnight.

Rescuers battled to put out massive fires at several energy facilities in the western regions of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk. which border NATO members Poland and Romania, officials said.

In President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih, the supply of running water was disrupted after strikes on energy facilities in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, officials said.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv that has been heavily bombed in recent weeks, a mis-

THE STRIKE USING BALLISTIC **MISSILES AND CRUISE MISSILES** FIRED BY RUSSIAN STRATEGIC BOMBERS BASED IN THE ARCTIC **CIRCLE WAS THE FOURTH** LARGE-SCALE AERIAL ASSAULT TARGETING THE POWER SYSTEM **SINCE MARCH 22**

ACCORDING TO UKRAINE'S AIR FORCE, RUSSIA HAD LAUNCHED **34 MISSILES OVERNIGHT, OF** WHICH 21 HAD BEEN SHOT **DOWN BY UKRAINIAN AIR** DEFENCES

RUSSIA DENIES TARGETING CIVILIANS DURING ITS AIR ATTACKS, BUT SAYS THE **UKRAINIAN ENERGY SYSTEM IS A LEGITIMATE MILITARY TARGET**

sile struck a hospital holding 60 patients overnight, injuring a woman and damaging the building, nearby water pipes and power lines, regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said.

Ukraine, which has tried to take the fight back to Russia in recent months using long-range drones, attacked the Ilsky and Slavyansk oil refineries in Russia's Krasnodar region overnight, a Ukrainian intelligence source told 'Reuters'

The drone strike conducted by the SBU security service caused fires at the facilities, the source said. Ukrainian drones also attacked Russia's Kushchevsk military airfield in the same southern region, the source added.

Student anti-war protesters dig in after police called –

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, April 27: Students protesting the Israel-Hamas war at universities across US, some of

SNIPPETS Houthis come to fore

Sanaa: Yemen's Houthi group said early Saturday that they had launched a missile attack and hit a British oil tanker in the Red Sea and shot down a US drone in northern Yemen. "Our naval forces (Friday) targeted a British oil ship, Andromeda Star, in the Red Sea with a number of appropriate naval missiles and hit it directly." Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea read a statement in the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV channel. He also said that their air defence forces succeeded in shooting down an American MO9 aircraft in the airspace of Saada confirr







HOSSEIN AMIR-ABDOLLAHIAN

Tornadoes hit US

al-Hayya said the Palestinian militant group was evaluating Israel's proposal, and "upon completion of its study, it will submit its response. He gave no details of Israel's offer but said it was in response

whether Israel's latest response to Hamas on a cease-fire was dito a proposal from Hamas two weeks ago. Negotiations earlier rectly related to Friday's visit to this month centered on a six-Tel Aviv by Egyptian mediators. week cease-fire proposal and the release of 40 civilian and sick hostages in exchange for free-

Saturday it was reviewing a new

Israeli proposal for a cease-fire in

Gaza, as Egypt intensified efforts

to broker a deal to end the months-

long war and stave off a possible

Israeli ground offensive into the

Senior Hamas official Khalil

southern Gaza city of Rafah.

oners in Israeli jails.

As the war drags on and casualties mount, there has been growing international pressure ing hundreds of Palestinian prisfor Hamas and Israel to reach an agreement on a cease-fire and

longed cease-fire in Gaza

negotiations with the goal of a larger deal to end the war avert a possible Israeli attack on Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge after fleeing fight-

ing elsewhere in the territory. Israel has been insisting for

months it plans a ground offensive into Rafah, on the border with Egypt, where it says many remaining Hamas militants are

Fire takes 10 lives

Rio de Janeiro: A fire tore through a small hotel in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre early Friday, killing at least 10 people and injuring 11, authorities said. The fire broke out in the early hours in the three-story building, which provided affordable housing in single rooms and had a contract with the municipal government to shelter homeless people. The establishment didn't have proper licensing and lacked an emergency fire plan, the fire brigade of the Rio Grande do Sul state said. Eight of the 11 people rescued from the fire are still hospitalized, two of them still in serious condition but under no life threat, local authorities said.

..... Quake rocks Japan

Tokyo: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.9 Saturday jolted off Japan's Bonin Islands or Ogasawara Islands, the country's weather agency said. The temblor occurred at 5.36 p.m. local time (0836 GMT) at a depth of 540 km. measuring 3 on the Japanese seismic intensity scale of 7 in parts of the prefecture, said the Japan Meteorological Agency. The epicentre was located off the west coast of the islands. about 875 km south of Tokyo. at a latitude of 27.9 degrees north and a longitude of 140.0 degrees east.

3 women killed

New York: Three Indian-origin women hailing from Gujarat were killed on the spot in a deadly crash in the US state of South Carolina when their overspeeding car veered out of control before jumping at least 20 feet in the air and crashing into trees, authorities said.

military operations in support of the Palestinian people until the Israeli siege and aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip stop

N Korea sticks to its plan

Seoul: North Korea Saturday reiterated its commitment to launching more reconnaissance satellites into orbit this year after putting its first spy satellite into orbit in November. Pyongyang "will carry out an important mission to enhance its space reconnaissance capabilities as planned to monitor and control the US and other hostile forces' military movements and aggressive attempts," an unnamed spokesperson of the North's National Aerospace Technology Administration (NATA) said in a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Yonhap news agency reported. North Korea put its first spy satellite, Malligyong-1, into orbit in November after two failed attempts in May and August and has vowed to launch three more this year. The North blamed the "US ambitions to militarise space" for its push for space development.

Sigh of relief for Indian crew

Dubai: Iran Saturday said the mostly Indian crew of a Portuguese-flagged ship that was seized by Iranian forces in its maritime territory two weeks ago is being granted consular access, raising hopes for their early release and extradition. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard seized the Israeli-affiliated, Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries, a container ship, manned by a crew of 25, including 17 Indians, near the Strait of Hormuz April 13 as a result of a series of attacks between Iran and Israel. Ann Tessa Joseph, the sole woman cadet among the 17 Indian crew members of the MSC Aries was released April 18. Earlier Thursday, in New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said there are certain "technicalities involved" in the return of the remaining 16 Indian crew members.

OPPOSING FOR GOOD: Protesters holding slogans reading "Oppose the Extension of Dangerous and Old Nuclear Power Plants," stage a die-in in protest during an anti-nuclear demonstration in front of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan in Taipei, Taiwan, Saturday. Hundreds of protesters gathered for the 10th anniversary of their main actions to stop the construction of the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant in 2014

Climate change main driver of biodiversity decline: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: Climate change could become the main driver of biodiversity decline by the mid-century, a new research has found.

Studying changes in land-use patterns and their impacts on biodiversity, an international team of researchers found that biodiversity around the world could have declined by 2-11 per cent.

"By including all world regions in our model, we were able to fill many blind spots and address criticism of other approaches working with fragmented and potentially biased data," said Henrique Pereira, research group head at the



German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv), and ecosystems might evolve in and the first author of the study published in the jour-

Research highlights

- Climate change poses an imminent threat to biodiversity and ecosystem services
- While land-use change has historically been a significant factor, the findings indicate that climate change could overtake it as the primary driver of biodiversity loss by mid-century
- Conservation and restoration efforts should be prioritised globally as necessary natural climate solutions

that the combined effects of landuse change and climate change lead to biodiversity loss across all global regions, regardless of emissions scenario.

The researchers called for a "truly integrated approach" considering varied sustainability aspects to reduce conflicts between policies and safeguard biodiversity in the coming decades. "For instance, while bio-energy deployment is still a critical element of the majority of climate stabilisation scenarios, it also poses a threat to species habitats," said IIASA **Biodiversity and Natural Resources** Program Director Petr Havlik, one of the study co-authors.

The findings suggested that conservation and restoration efforts should be prioritised globally as necessary natural climate solutions, the authors said.

whom have clashed with police in riot gear, dug in Saturday and vowed to keep their demonstrations going, as faculty at several schools condemned university presidents who have called in law enforcement to remove protesters.

As Columbia University continues negotiations with those at a pro-Palestinian student encampment on the New York school's campus, the university's senate passed a resolution Friday that created a task force to examine the administration's leadership, which last week called in police in an attempt to clear the protest, resulting in scuffles and more than 100 arrests.

Though the university has repeatedly set and then pushed back deadlines for the removal of

the encampment, Faculty the school sent an condemns email to students universities Friday night sayleadershin ing that bringing

back police "at this time" would be counterproductive.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza, protesters nationwide are demanding that schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the conflict.

Early Saturday, police began clearing a protest on the campus of Northeastern University in Boston. The decisions to call in law enforcement, leading to hundreds of arrests nationwide, have prompted school faculty members at universities in California, Georgia and Texas to initiate or pass votes of no confidence in their leadership.

A university senate's executive committee report, which represents faculty, found Shafik and her administration took "many actions and decisions that have harmed Columbia University." Those included calling in police and allowing students to be arrested without consulting faculty, misrepresenting and suspending student protest groups and hiring private investigators.



Examining how biodiversity

the future, the researchers found

nal 'Science'







business



In some cases, we are seeing... where people are spamming the system to generate ad money. That is obviously not ok ELON MUSK X OWNER

OFFICE SPACE LEASING DROPS 25 PC ANNUALLY

Office space leasing in Delhi-NCR fell 25 per cent annually to 18.1 lakh square feet in January-March this year on lower demand from corporates, according to real estate consultant Vestian. The office space absorption stood at 24 lakh square feet in the year-ago period.



US regulator gathering info on Indian spices

PRASHANT KUMAR YES BANK MD AND CEO With this space (cyber security) getting critical,

income and we may look at cross

selling products to them in future

Our market

share in merchant UPI

transactions is around 55 per cent.

This gives us

advantage on fee

national risks are also huge. It is not at the individual level but even at the national level, the

cyber security risks are huge S KRISHNAN UNION IT SECRETARY

For years, we have been highlighting the persistent problem of foreign e-commerce companies circumventing rules and laws in their relentless pursuit of capturing the Indian market, often

resorting to unethical business practices PRAVEEN KHANDELWAL

SECRETARY GENERAL, CONFEDERATION OF ALL INDIA TRADERS

Q4 RESULTS CORNER

ICICI Bank net grows 18.5 pc

Mumbai: ICICI Bank Saturday said its March quarter consolidated net profit grew 18.5 per cent to ₹11.672 crore. helped by lower provisions. On a standalone basis, the second largest private sector lender showed a 17.4 per cent growth in its profit after tax at ₹10,708 crore for the reporting quarter against ₹9.122 crore in the year-ago period. For fiscal 2023-24, its standalone net profit arew to ₹40.888 crore from ₹31,896 crore a year ago. The core net interest income increased 8.1 per cent to ₹19.093 crore in the reporting quarter on a 16.8 per cent growth in loans. However, it was restricted by a compression in net interest margin to 4.40 per cent from 4.90 per cent in the year-ago period.

uote **77**

IN 2019, A FEW BATCHES OF MDH PRODUCTS WERE RECALLED IN THE US FOR SALMONELLA CONTAMINATION REUTERS

Hyderabad, April 27: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is gathering information on products of Indian spice makers MDH and Everest after Hong Kong halted sales of some of their products for allegedly containing high levels of a cancercausing pesticide.

"The FDA is aware of the reports and is gathering additional information about the situation," an FDA spokesperson told Reuters

Hong Kong this month suspended sales of three MDH spice blends and an Everest spice mix for fish curries. Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest spice mix as well, saying it contains high levels of ethylene oxide, which is unfit for human consumption and a cancer risk with long exposure.

Reuters is the first to report the



U.S. FDA's review of alleged contamination of Indian spice products. MDH and Everest did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment on this matter. Everest has previously said its spices are safe for consumption. MDH has not responded to queries about its products so far.

MDH and Everest spices are among the most popular in India and are also sold in Europe, Asia and North America. India's food regulator, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), is now checking the

the past two years have helped

the economy to catch up with

the pre-COVID trends.

Investment, backed by strong

government spending on in-

frastructure, has helped India

maintain a steady recovery mo-

about inflation and geopolitical

That said, there are concerns

Fish Curry

Masala

quality standards of the two companies, following the moves in Hong Kong and Singapore.

India's Spices Board, the government's regulator for spice exports, said Wednesday it had sought data on MDH and Everest exports from authorities in Hong Kong and Singapore, and was working with the companies to find the "root cause" of the quality issues as inspections started at their plants.

In 2019, a few batches of MDH's products were recalled in the U.S. for salmonella contamination.

FPI selling in equity getting absorbed by domestic funds

The trigger for this renewed FPI selling, in both equity and debt, is the sustained rise in US bond yields

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 27: Heavy selling by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in the equity markets is getting absorbed by domestic funds and retail investors

In April, FPI selling in equity stands at ₹6304 crore. In the cash market during this period, the equity selling stood at ₹20525 crore In the debt market also, there is a trend of renewed selling. The debt sales in April stand at ₹10640 crore, says VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services

The trigger for this renewed FPI selling, in both equity and debt, is the sustained rise in US bond yields. The 10-year bond yield now stands at around 4.7 per cent which is hugely attractive for foreign investors, he said.

The latest core CPI inflation in the US jumped to 3.7 per cent against the expectation of 3.4 per cent. This means the prospects of early rate cuts by the Fed are receding. This will keep yields high triggering more FPI outflows in both equity and debt, he said.





INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 27: Amid the muted revenue growth in the Indian IT services sector due to global macroeconomic headwinds, leading IT companies saw a drop of nearly 70,000 employees in the last fiscal year (FY24).

Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro and Tech Mahindra, among others, lost maximum employees in FY24.

While Infosys saw its employee headcount drop by 25,994, the headcount at TCS went down by 13,249, in FY24. IT bellwether Wipro saw its employee strength fall by 6,180 in the fourth quarter (Q4) of FY24.

When it comes to the full year, the IT services major witnessed its headcount decline by 24,516. Tech Mahindra had a total headcount of 145,455 in FY24, down 795 (on-quarter) and 6,945 (full year). Among the leading IT serv-

ices companies, HCL Tech was an exception which had a total headcount of 227.481 in the last fiscal year, with a net addition of 1,537 employees.

According to a latest Crisil Ratings report, the IT services sector in the country is likely to see a second successive year of muted revenue growth, at 5-7 per cent in FY25.

As revenue growth remained subdued, IT service companies pulled back on the addition of fresh talent, resulting in headcount reductions by 4 per cent (on-year) in December 2023.

Aditya Jhaver, Director, CRISIL Ratings, said that the slowdown in technology spending will continue this fiscal year, weighing on the revenue growth of IT service providers.

"Revenue from BFSI and retail segments will continue to be a drag with subdued growth of 4-5 per cent while manufacturing and healthcare will grow at a healthy 9-10 per cent," he noted.

Deloitte projects India's FY25 GDP growth at 6.6%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: Deloitte India has said it estimates India's GDP growth at 6.6 per cent in the current fiscal helped by consumption expenditure, exports rebound and capital flows.

In its India's economic outlook report, Deloitte said the rapid growth of the middle-income class has led to rising purchasing power and even created demand for premium luxury products and services.

With the expectation that the number of middle-to-high-in-

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: The Centre ple of rate cuts later in 2024. Saturday said it has allowed exports of 99,500 tonnes of onions, India will likely see improved from capital flows and a rebound in mainly sourced exports," said Deloitte India Maharashtra, to six neighbour-Economist Rumki Majumdar. ing countries despite the ban Strong growth numbers over on shipments.

The Centre has also allowed exports of 2,000 tonnes of white onion cultivated, especially, for export markets in the Middle East and some European countries.

December 8, 2023, the government banned export of onions.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs



fixed at 5 lakh tonnes this year. The Central agencies, like NCCF and NAFED are tying up local agencies like FPOs/FPCs/PACs to support the procurement, storage and farmers registration to begin the procurement of any store-worthy onion.

A high-level team of the Department of Consumer Affairs, NCCF and NAFED visited Nashik and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra from April 11-13, 2024, to create awareness among the farmers. FPOs/FPCs and PACs about the procurement of 5 lakh tonnes

of onion for buffer stock. To reduce the storage onions, the department has decided to enhance the quantum of stocks to be irradiated and cold stored from 1,200 tonnes last year to over 5,000 tonnes this year, with technical support from BARC, Mumbai. The pilot of onion irradiation and cold storage taken up last year has been found to have resulted in the reduction of storage loss to less than 10 per cent, the statement said.

IDFC FIRST Bank profit drops 10%

New Delhi: IDFC FIRST Bank Saturday reported 10 per cent decline in net profit at ₹724 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024 due to substantial jump in provisions. The lender had . earned a net profit of ₹803 crore in the year-ago period Total income rose to ₹9,861 crore from ₹7,822 crore a year ago, IDFC FIRST Bank said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew to ₹8,219 crore during the period under review, from . ₹6,424 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. Net Interest Income (NII) grew 24 per cent from ₹3,597 crore in Q4 FY23 to ₹4,469 crore in 04 FY24, it said.

Yes Bank profit doubles to ₹452cr

Mumbai: Yes Bank Saturday reported over two-fold jump in standalone net profit at ₹452 crore for March quarter 2023-24, primarily due to benefits on the provision front. In the year-ago quarter, the bank logged a profit of ₹202.43 crore. The nrivate sector lender benefitted from write-back on income tax and interest on income tax returns, but the profits were limited by its inability to comply with the mandatory priority sector lending (PSL) requirements, its management said. For fiscal 2023-24, it reported 74 per cent growth in net profit at ₹1,251 crore. In the March quarter, the core net interest income grew just 2.3 per cent to ₹2.153 crore on the back of narrowing of Net Interest Margin to 2.4 per cent from 2.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

come segments will be one in two households by 2030/31, up from one in four currently, we believe this trend will likely become further amplified, driving overall private consumer expenditure growth, it said.

Deloitte has revised India's economic growth prediction for last fiscal to a range of 7.6 to 7.8 per cent. In January, the firm had projected growth for 2023-24 fiscal in the range of 6.9-7.2 per cent.

The country's GDP growth is estimated to reach around 6.6 per cent in FY 2024-25 and 6.75 per cent in the year after, as markets learn to factor in geopolitical uncertainties in their investment and consumption decisions, Deloitte said in its quarterly update to its economic outlook.

'The global economy is expected to witness a synchronous rebound in 2025 as major election uncertainties get sorted out and the central banks of the West may announce a cou-

uncertainties feeding into higher food and fuel prices. At the same time, the prediction of above normal monsoon will likely provide some respite by positively impacting agriculture output and easing pressure on food prices. Inflation is expected to remain above the Reserve Bank of India's target level of 4 per cent over the forecast period due to strong economic activity, Majumdar said.

mentum, she added.

Deloitte's FY25 GDP growth estimate is similar to the projections made by the World Bank. It is, however, lower than the projections by the RBI and other agencies. The RBI has projected the Indian economy growth at 7 per cent in the cur-

rent fiscal. While the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Fitch Ratings have estimated growth at 7 per cent, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), S&P Global Ratings and Morgan Stanley projected a 6.8 per cent growth rate for FY25.

Food & Public Distribution said the government has "allowed export of 99,150 tonnes of onion to six neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, UAE, Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius and Sri Lanka".

The export prohibition has been imposed to ensure adequate domestic availability against the backdrop of estimated lower Kharif and Rabi crops in 2023-24 compared to the previous year.

The ban was imposed amid an increase in demand in the international market, it added. The National Cooperative

Exports Limited (NCEL), the agency for the export of onion to these countries, sourced the domestic onions to be exported through e-platform at L1 prices.

NCEL has supplied to the agency or agencies nominated by the government of the destination country at the negotiated rate on a 100 per cent advance payment basis.

A high-level team of the **Department of Consumer Affairs, NCCF** and NAFED visited Nashik and Ahmednagar districts of Maharashtra from April 11-13, 2024, to create awareness among the farmers, **FPOs/FPCs and PACs** about the procurement of 5 lakh tonnes of onion for buffer stock

The offer rate of NCEL to the buyers takes into account the prevailing prices in the destination market and also international and domestic markets. The quota allocated for export to the six countries is being

2024 under the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) of the Department of Consumer Affairs has been

ment said.

In March, the Union Agriculture Ministry released the data for onion production.

As per the data, onion production in 2023-24 (First Advance Estimates) is expected to be around 254.73 lakh tonnes compared to around 302.08 lakh tonnes last year.

This is due to a decrease of 34.31 lakh tonne output in Maharashtra, 9.95 lakh tonne in Karnataka 3.54 lakh tonne in Andhra Pradesh and 3.12 lakh tonne in Rajasthan, the data showed.

New Delhi, April 27: Telecom

giant Bharti Airtel has unveiled

affordable international roam-

ing packs for customers with

tariffs starting at ₹133 per day.

The new range of packs cov-

AGENCIES

Meta loses billions of dollars in quest to lead AR-VR market Airtel launches intl roaming packs

THE MARK ZUCKERBERG-RUN COMPANY IS LOSING MONEY AT A RATE OF MORE THAN \$1 **BILLION PER MONTH SINCE JUNE 2022 ON ITS AR/VR DREAM, ACCORDING TO GAMESINDUSTRY.BIZ**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 27: As Meta (formerly Facebook) continues to bet big on gaming, it has lost close to \$4 billion on its augmented reality/virtual reality (AR-VR) division.

The Mark Zuckerberg-run company showed continued losses in its AR/VR Reality Labs division in its latest quarterly results.

The company is losing money

at a rate of more than \$1 billion per month since June 2022 on its AR/VR dream, according to GamesIndustry.biz. 'We continue to expect oper-

ating losses to increase meaningfully year-over-year due to our ongoing product development efforts and our investments to further scale our ecosystem," according to the company.

Meta CFO Susan Li said on the Q1 earnings call that "We continue to expect operating



losses to increase meaningfully year-over-year".

Meta's Reality Labs recorded \$440 million in revenue but an

overall loss of \$3.85 billion.

supplied as per requisition made

onion in the country,

Maharashtra is the major sup-

plier of onions sourced by NCEL

The government had also al-

for export," the statement said.

lowed the export of 2,000 tonnes

of white onion cultivated, es-

pecially for export markets in

the Middle East and some

'Being purely export-oriented,

the production cost of the white

onion is higher than other onions

due to higher seed cost, adop-

tion of good agricultural prac-

tice (GAP) and compliance to

strict maximum residue limits

(MRL) requirements," the state-

The procurement target for

onion buffer out of Rabi crop

European countries.

"As the largest producer of

by the destination country.

"The initial signs are quite positive here. But building the leading AI will also be a larger undertaking than the other experiences we've added to our apps, and this is likely going to take several years," said Zuckerberg.

Meta captured 59 per cent of the Extended Reality (XR) headset market in 2023.

Notably, Meta strategically lowered the price of its existing Quest 2 throughout the year, making it an attractive option for budget-conscious consumers, especially during the holiday season, according to Counterpoint Research.

This strategy helped Meta maintain its lead until the launch of Quest 3 in Q4 2023.

ers 184 countries and offers enhanced data benefits, in-flight connectivity and 24x7 contact centre support, according to a company statement. Customers travelling to these 184 countries no longer need to subscribe to multiple packs for various travel destinations, Airtel said, adding that they will now have the convenience of choosing the duration of travel and enjoying seamless connectiv-

ity anywhere in the world through one single pack.



















Fraser-McGurk lifts Delhi **Rare hat-trick of gold**

YOTHI EQUALS DEEPIKA FEAT AS COMPOUND INDIANS BAG FIVE MEDALS IN ARCHERY WORLD CUP STAGE 1



Jyothi Surekha Vennam (3rd from right) poses with her medals alongside her India teammates

dividual section.

points.

the 27-year-old Vijayawada archer

returned with three gold medals.

winning individual, women's

Youngster Priyansh capped

India's spectacular outing in the

compound section, by bagging his

maiden World Cup medal in the

form of a silver in the men's in-

In his second Cup appearance,

the 21-year-old found himself up

against a formidable opponent

in 2021 world champion Nico

Wiener, who delivered a flaw-

less performance, scoring a per-

fect 150 out of a maximum 150.

The 27-year-old Austrian shot

all 10s from 15 arrows to edge out

the spirited Indian by three

In the morning session, India

underlined their supremacy in

the non-Olympic compound cat-

egory to make a clean sweep of

team and mixed team events.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shanghai, April 27: Asian Games champion Jyothi Surekha Vennam spearheaded India's dominance with a rare hat-trick of gold as compound archers lapped up five medals at the ongoing Archery World Cup Stage 1 here Saturday.

The World No.3 Jyothi fought past tournament top seed Andrea Becerra of Mexico in a tight shoot-off finish 146-146 (9*-9) to become the second Indian after Deepika Kumari to secure triple gold medals in a World Cup.

Three-time Olympian and for mer World No.1 Deepika had achieved the incredible feat at Paris World Cup Stage 3 in June 2021.

For Jyothi, it also matched her feat at the last year's Hangzhou Asian Games where

The top seeded women's compound team dropped just four points from 24 arrows to down sixth seeded Italy in the first match of the day.

In the first three ends of six arrows each, Jyothi, Aditi and Parneet missed the perfect 10 only twice to take a handsome 178-171 lead over Marcella Tonioli, Irene Franchini and Elisa Roner.

In the fourth end, the Indians dropped two points but it did not matter much as they nailed the gold with an 11-point margin.

The men's team, who qualified as the fourth seed, put up a near flawless show to defeat their Dutch opponents. They began with a perfect round of 60 and dropped just two points in the next two ends, before sealing the win with another perfect 60 in the final set of six arrows.

In the compound mixed team event, Jyothi and Abhishek took a three-point lead, starting off with a perfect round of 40. The three-point drop in the first end proved decisive for Estonian archers who went on to shoot three perfect rounds of 40 each but the Indians held their nerves to seal the issue.

Leading 119-117, the Indian duo needed a minimum score of 39 points out of a maximum 40 in the final end. They did just that to bag the country's third gold.

Jyothi then returned in the afternoon session to become the individual champion as well. The Indian struggled to get a perfect round in the first three ends as Andrea raced to an 88-87 lead.

Jyothi finally managed a perfect round in the fourth end when she drilled in three 10s with two X (closer to the centre), while Andrea also matched the Indian to retain her one-point lead.

In the fifth round, Andrea faltered under pressure to drop two points, while Jyothi scored a 29 to level it 146-all to force a shoot-off. Both shot nine-all in the shoot-off but Jyothi's arrow was closer to the inner-ring to seal her third gold.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: Jake Fraser-McGurk produced a power-hitting master-class as Delhi Capitals kept themselves in the race for IPL playoffs with a 10-run win over Mumbai Indians here Saturday.

Bringing his big-hitting prowess to the fore, young McGurk gave the scorching Delhi heat competition with a sizzling 27-ball 84 (11x4, 6x6), powering DC to a massive 257/4 after being asked to bat.

Tilak Varma (63, 32b, 4x4, 4x6), Hardik Pandya (46, 24b, 4x4, 3x6) and Tim David (37, 17b, 2x4, 3x6) played some lofty shots to give MI a glimmer of hope but Delhi bowlers, led by Rasikh Salam (3/34), kept striking at regular intervals to stop MI at 247/9. The win elevated DC to the fifth spot

while MI continued to occupy the penultimate place.

While McGurk sparkled upfront, Tristan Stubbs dazzled with an unbeaten 48 (25b, 6x4, 2x6) at the death overs as DC put up a superlative batting effort to register their highest-ever score in IPL.

In reply, MI's script didn't go as per plan as Khaleel Ahmed drew first blood in the form of Rohit Sharma (8). With more than 250 runs to score, MI batters had to go from the word go and that led to Ishan Kishan (20) and Suryakumar Yadav's (26) wickets. Three wickets down and the re-

quired run rate increasing, Pandya took things in his own hands, plundering 19 runs of the ninth over by DC's star spinner Kuldeep Yadav. Tilak Varma then joined in as the duo stitched a 71-run stand.

But 'Impact Player' Salam not

only broke the partnership, claiming Pandya's wicket but also got rid of Nehal Wadhera in the same over. Varma then found an ally in David but he was run out in the final over.

Earlier, opening for DC for the second time this season, the 22year-old Fraser-McGurk equalled his own record for the fastest fifty this season, getting the milestone off just 15 balls after the hosts were put in to bat by MI.

With Fraser-McGurk in the middle, it was raining boundaries and sixes at the rather small Arun Jaitley Stadium. He got 19 runs off the first over bowled by Luke Wood, setting the tone as he skillfully exploited the field restrictions in the powerplay to nab 92 runs. Replacing Wood, Nuwan Thushara also couldn't stop Fraser-McGurk.

With his pacers being carted all over the park, MI skipper Pandya decided to introduce spin in the form of Piyush Chawla but it hardly mattered to Fraser-McGurk, who struck a maximum over long-on to get his third IPL fifty.

The Australian then took a special liking for Pandya as he clobbered the ball out of the park before sending one over deep mid-wicket as Abhishek Porel (36) had the best seat to enjoy the stroke-making, standing at the other end.

Chawla finally managed to put an end to the carnage with a googly. MI dominated for a couple of overs, with Mohammad Nabi picking up Porel in the 10th over. But Shai Hope (41, 17b, 5x6) swung into action, while Rishabh Pant (29) unleashed the helicopter shot.

Stubbs took DC past the 200-run mark. The South African continued his menacing form as he took Wood to the cleaners in the 18th over pocketing 26 runs. However, Bumrah displayed his class as he came in with a bouncer in the next over to get Pant.

BRIEF SCORES: DC 257/4 (Jake Fraser-McGurk 84, Tristan Stubbs 48 n o, Shai Hope 41) beat MI 247/9 (Tilak Varma 63, Hardik Pandya 46, Tim David 37; Rasikh Salam 3/34, Mukesh Kumar 3/59) by 10 runs.

RR take royal stride Indian teams make positive start

towards IPL playoffs PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chengdu (China), April 27: Indian shuttlers had a good in office on the opening day of the Thomas and Uber Cup badminton tournament with both the teams registering 4-1 wins over their respective rivals in their opening ties here Saturday.

team events, winning men's

team, women's team and mixed

team events with Jyothi featur-

Parneet Kaur dropped just four

points to trounce Italy 236-225

in the women's compound team

event to open their account with

The men's team of Abhishek

Verma, Priyansh and

Prathamesh Fuge then went one

step better as they missed just two

points en route to defeating

Netherlands' Mike Schloesser,

Sil Pater and Stef Willems 238-

the sweep when the second-

seeded Jyothi and Verma warded

off a late resurgence from their

Estonian rivals - Lisell Jaatma

and Robin Jaatma - to win 158-

157 in a thrilling finish.

The mixed team completed

Jyothi, Aditi Swami and

ing in two of them.

a gold medal.

231.

Ashmita Chaliha produced

Group C encounter.

The left-handed Chaliha. ranked 53rd, showed great mental resolve and tenacity as she outwitted World No.25 Li, a gold and silver medallist at the 2014 and 2022 Commonwealth Games, 26-24, 24-22 in a 42-minute opening singles clash.

Young women's doubles pair of Priva Konjengbam and Shruti

Thaker went down 19-21, 15-21 to Jackie Dent and Crystal before national champion Anmol Kharb beat Eliana Zhang 21-15, 21-11 in the fifth and final match to complete the comfortable win.

In Thomas Cup, HS Prannoy took the court first but lost 20-22. 14-21 against Kunlavut Vitidsarn to leave India trailing 0-1. Star Indian men's doubles pair of

Swiatek enters pre-quarters, Tsitsipas stunned in Madrid





PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 27: Sanju Samson scored five runs less than his opposite number KL Rahul but his unbeaten 71 (33b, 7x4, 4x6) had five times more impact compared to Rahul's relatively sedate 48-ball-76 (8x4, 2x6) as Rajasthan Royals took a giant leap towards IPL playoffs by comfortably beating Lucknow Super Giants by seven wickets here Saturday.

While Rahul still is favourite to become Rishabh Pant's understudy as the second glovesman at the T20 World Cup, Samson kept himself in the discussion for that US bound flight

Samson and Dhruv Jurel came together after the Royals had stumbled from a brisk start to hand the advantage to the home side, putting on a robust stand of 121 runs in just 62 balls stand for the unconquered fourth wicket to take their side over the line.

Chasing a tricky 197 with LSG deploying seven bowlers including two leg-spinners, Rajasthan finished at 199/3 to win with an over to spare. On his part, the young Jurel (52 n o, 34b, 5x4, 2x6) finally discovered his to put behind a barren run. The win took top-placed Rajasthan to 16 points — six clear from the second-best Kolkata Knight Riders — and a step closer to become the first team to reach the playoffs. The playoffs cut-off this year is likely

to be 18 points if one goes by the current mid-table muddle. LSG remained on fourth spot with 10 points in bag.

Rajasthan openers Yashasvi Jaiswal (24) and Jos Buttler (34, 18b. 4x4. 1x6) knocked off 60 runs from the target unscathed, but their side went through a slump in the following overs while also losing three wickets in quick succession.

Earlier in the first half, Rahul dug deep with Deepak Hooda (50, 31b, 7x4) as LSG managed a competitive 196/5. Rahul and Hooda gave LSG a solid footing with a 62-ball 115-run stand for the third wicket after early blows, but the failure of others meant the hosts could not capitalise on the hard work by the two. Rahul scored his fourth fifty of the season while Hooda banished his poor string of scores to make his first big score this IPL.

BRIEF SCORES: LSG 196/5 (KL Rahul 76, Deepak Hooda 50; Sandeep Sharma 2/31) lost to RR 199/3 (Sanju Samson 71 n o. Dhruv Jurel 52 n o, Jos Buttler 34; Marcus Stoinis 1/3) by 7 wickets.

MATCHDAY Indian Premier League **GT vs RCB** Time: 03:30 pm **CSK vs SRH** Time: 07:30 pm **Telecast: Star Sports Network** Stream: Jio Cinema

an inspired show to stun higherranked Michelle Li as the Indian women's team notched up a clinical win over Canada and then their male counterparts, defending champions, too dished out the same result against Thailand in their Thomas Cup

Mishra then beat Catherine Choi and Jeslyn Chow 21-12, 21-10 to put India 2-0 ahead. Isharani Baruah defeated Wen Yu Zhang 21-13 21-12 to help India take an unassailable 3-0 lead

In the second women's doubles, Simran Singhi and Ritika



Cheema, Esha, Divyansh and Elavenil win in OST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 27: Arjun Singh Cheema, Esha Singh, Divyansh Singh Panwar and Elavenil Valarivan won their events on the concluding day of the Olympic Selection Trials (OST)1 and 2 in rifle/pistol here Saturday.

Cheema won the day's first final (men's 10m air pistol in OST T2), followed by Esha in women's 10m air pistol in OST T2. Divyansh claimed the men's 10m air rifle and Elavenil clinched the women's 10m air rifle final in a cliff-hanger.

None of the 37 shooters who have qualified for the OSTs are sure of their Paris Olympic tickets with the final two trials scheduled in Bhopal next month. Cheema won his final with a

score of 244.6. Ravinder continued his good showing in the trials,

coming in second spot with 242.4, while Varun Tomar was third.

In the women's air pistol, Esha extended her excellent run by winning the OST T2 final in convincing fashion. She was a whole point ahead of second-placed Rhythm Sangwan, after the first series of five-single shots.

She kept getting stronger as the match progressed to finish with a final tally of 244.9, 3.1 ahead of Rhythm. Palak came in third to pick up the final podium place.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty then had to battle it out for 65 minutes to get the better of Peeratchai Sukhpun and Pakkapon Teeraratsakul 21-19, 19-21, 21-12 to level the scores.

Then Lakshya Sen battled for 63 minutes to beat Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul 21-12, 19-21, 21-16 to give India the lead. The second Indian men's doubles combination of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila tamed Tanadon Punpanich and Wachirawit Sothon 21-19, 21-15 to seal the tie in India's favour.

In the inconsequential final match of the tie, Kidambi Srikanth made short work of Saran Jamsri 21-9, 21-5.

The Indian women will play Singapore in their next Group A tie, while the men's team will be up against England in their second fixture Monday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, April 27: Top-ranked Iga Swiatek eased into the Madrid Open's round-of-16 by beating Sorana Cirstea 6-1. 6-1 Saturday. Swiatek, who lost last year's final to Aryna Sabalenka, improved her record this season to 26-4. She will next face either Victoria Azarenka or Sara Sorribes Tormo on Monday for a spot in the final eight.

Swiatek is preparing to make a run for a third consecutive title at the French Open next

month. She is a three-time champion at Roland Garros (2020, 2022 & 2023). The Madrid Open is the only European clay tournament at the 500 level or above the Polish player has yet to win.

On the men's side, Brazilian qualifier Thiago Monteiro upset Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-4 in the second round. The seventhranked Tsitsipas fell to Monteiro, ranked 118th, after having run up a 10-1 record on clay going into the match. Tsitsipas won Monte Carlos early this month before reaching the final of Barcelona last week.

Real move a step closer to La Liga title

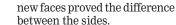
ASSOCIATED PRESS

San Sebastian, April 27: Real Madrid moved another step closer to a 36th Spanish league title after beating Real Sociedad 1-0 and extending its lead in the standings to 14 points.

Carlo Ancelotti's men need just five points from their last five games to ensure the title will return to the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. "We are very close to winning La Liga," the coach acknowledged after a hard-fought win in the Basque country.

On a rainy night in San Sebastian, Madrid put out a second-string team to rest Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior and other regulars

The new faces struggled for large parts of the game, with Sociedad having much of the play and plenty of scoring chances. But one of Madrid's



Arda Guler, the young Turkish attacker, made his first start in the league, and when the Sociedad defense failed to clear Dani Carvajal's low cross, Guler drifted in at the back post to slot the ball home with 29 minutes gone.

Ancelloti paid tribute to the 19year-old Guler, calling him "a very important player for our future." "Guler has extraordinary quality, he has great talent. Little by little he will take center stage.

Takakura Kubo equalised three minutes later for Sociedad only to see his goal disallowed after a video review.

Ancelotti introduced Vinicius, Antonio Rudiger and Eduardo Camavinga in a busy second half as Madrid held on to extend its unbeaten run in La Liga to 27 games.

Another satisfying note for the champion-elect was the return of Eder Militao. The Brazilian defender made his first start since tearing his cruciate ligament eight months ago, and played the entire game.

"I am very happy, after eight months out," Militao said. "Very happy to return and play 90 minutes and feel like a player again.'

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