

Secret of success
Actor Nia Sharma says it's the love of viewers that drives her to outdo herself and overcome challenges

LEISURE | P2

Genocide charges
Israel denies charges of genocide and tells UN top court it is doing everything it can to protect the civilian population during its military operation in Gaza

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Spices in trouble
The Federation of Indian Spice Stakeholders says India's spice export may decline nearly 40 per cent in FY25

BUSINESS | P11

India give up quota spot
India to fight afresh for Paris Games' women's 57kg boxing quota after being forced to surrender the berth following Parveen Hooda's suspension

SPORTS | P12



NAVEEN GUARANTEE

STARTING FROM JULY **FREE ELECTRICITY** 90% OF FAMILIES WILL BE BENEFITTED

VOTE FOR SANKHA TWICE ONE VOTE FOR MP ONE VOTE FOR MLA





DEMOCRATIC RIGHT: A polling officer holds a voting compartment as an elderly person casts his vote sitting at his home in New Delhi, Friday. To encourage and assist elderly persons to cast their votes, the Election Commission of India initiated the home-voting facility for the ongoing general elections AP PHOTO

EVERY DAY COUNTS

Reiterating its stand on an age-old judicial maxim that likens delayed justice to a denial of the same, which has been ascribed in many judicial pronouncements in the past, the Supreme Court Friday took strong exceptions to the Delhi High Court sitting over the bail application of a petitioner for almost 11 months. The top court observed that every single day counts in matters of citizens' liberty. The top court had in another ruling in February described Article 21, which deals with the protection of life and personal liberty, as 'the soul of the Constitution' and observed that the liberty of a citizen is of paramount importance



prior to the closure for summer vacations," it said. Summer vacations in the high court start from June 3. May 31 will be the last working day. Dhall is accused in separate cases linked to the excise policy which are being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The ED's money laundering case stems from a CBI FIR. A trial court had earlier dismissed Dhall's regular bail plea in a corruption case lodged by the CBI.

now the matter has been adjourned to July 8, a bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta was told by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for businessman Amandeep Singh Dhall. "This cannot be that after 40 hearings, you don't decide the regular bail," he said. The bench noted it has been informed that his regular bail plea was filed in July last year. "In matters concerning the liberty of citizens, every single day counts. Keeping the matter of regular bail pending after almost 11 months deprives the petitioner of his liberty," the bench said. "We request the high court to decide the bail application

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Video shows Maliwal arguing with security
NEW DELHI: A day after an FIR was registered in the alleged assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal, a minute-long video purportedly of the chief minister's residence shows her using expletives and arguing with the security staff.

SIT to probe BJP worker's death
POST NEWS NETWORK

Abusive language not appreciated: Naveen

Bhubaneswar, May 17: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Friday denounced the campaign speeches by his counterparts from other states and Union ministers terming them as 'derogatory and abusive', and claimed that those 'political tourists' have no impact on people of his state. In the last few days, a number of BJP CMs and Union ministers campaigned in the state, and altogether 14 rallies were addressed by them Friday at various places across the state. "Some Chief Ministers and Union ministers come as political tourists only at the time of elections and then they disappear," Patnaik told PTI Videos. The ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) chief claimed that the speeches of those political leaders and ministers have no effect on the people of Odisha at all. "And it's most unfortunate



that many of them use derogatory and abusive language. I never believe in doing that and the people in our state don't appreciate such language," Patnaik asserted. During the last few days, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, former Tripura CM Biplab Kumar Deb and at least eight Union ministers along with several senior BJP leaders have campaigned in Odisha, where Assembly and Lok Sabha polls are taking place together.

'Odisha to turn saffron'

Rourkela, May 17: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday predicted a saffron surge in Odisha, claiming that the BJP will win over 75 Assembly and 15 Lok Sabha seats. In response to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's assertion at an election rally that the BJP was struggling to reach 200 seats, Shah countered by saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had already secured 270 Lok Sabha seats in the first four phases of elections and was now aiming for 400. Addressing a rally, Shah said, "With more than 15 MPs and 75 MLAs, Odisha is set to become saffron. This election is to make Narendra Modi the PM for the third time." Shah also criticised the BJD government, accusing it of insulting Odisha's 'asmita' (pride) daily. Emphasising the significance of Lord Jagannath to the people of Odisha, Shah promised that a BJP government would open



all the four gates of the Puri temple for devotees. He also raised concerns about the missing keys of Srimandir's 'Ratna Bhandar' (treasure chest) and promised to make the judicial commission report public within a month of coming to power. "Why is the Patnaik government sitting on the judicial commission report. After coming to power, BJP government will publish the report within a month," he said. "Crores of Jagannath devotees want to know about the original key of Ratna Bhandar, which has been missing for years. Why was the duplicate key made," Shah asked.

SC reserves verdict on Kejriwal's plea

New Delhi, May 17: The Supreme Court Friday reserved its verdict on Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal's challenge to his arrest by the ED in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam but granted him liberty to move the trial court for regular bail. **AAP named accused** NEW DELHI: Enforcement Directorate Friday filed a chargesheet against Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in the money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, and also named his Aam Aadmi Party as accused. P9 A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta reserved its judgement after hearing advocate Abhishek Singhvi and Additional Solicitor General SV Raju. "Arguments heard. Judgement reserved. Notwithstanding the same, and without prejudice to rights and contentions, the appellant can move the trial court for grant of bail in accordance with law," it said.



A lot of money was spent on renovation. Were they making it soundproof and adding a torture chamber?

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	73917.03	↑ 253.31
NIFTY	22466.10	↑ 62.25
DOLLAR	83.31	↓ ₹0.16
EURO	90.56	↓ ₹0.14
GOLD	₹73,670	↑ ₹690
SILVER	₹ 89,756	↑ ₹2456

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	39.5°C	38.6°C
Min Temp	27.4°C	26.5°C
Humidity	76%	73%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
PARTLY CLOUDY SKY

Butter chicken battle heats up with new court evidence

New Delhi, May 17: With new photographic and video evidence, an Indian court battle over the origins of the world famous butter chicken is set to get spicier. Two Indian restaurant chains have been sparring since January at the Delhi High Court, both claiming credit for inventing the dish in a lawsuit that has grabbed the attention of social media users, food critics, editorials and TV channels across the globe. The popular Moti Mahal restaurant chain said it had the sole right to be recognised as the inventor of the curry and demanded its rival, the Daryaganj chain, to



Gujral in 1997 and Jaggi in 2018. Evidence in the non-public filing includes a black-and-white photograph from 1930s showing the two friends in Peshawar; a 1949 partnership agreement; Jaggi's business card after relocating to Delhi and his 2017 video talking about the dish's origin. By virtue of the friends' part-

nership, "both parties can claim that their respective ancestors created the dishes," Daryaganj says in the filing, calling the dispute a "business rivalry." Moti Mahal declined to comment. The judge will next hear the case May 29. A key point of contention, which the court will have to rule on, is where, when and by whom the dish was first made by Gujral in Peshawar, Jaggi in New Delhi, or if both should be credited. Butter chicken is ranked 43rd in a list of world's 'best dishes' by TasteAtlas, and bragging rights about who invented it can matter, brand experts said. "Being an inventor has a huge advantage globally and in terms

of consumer appeal. You are also entitled to charge more," said Dilip Cherian, an image guru and co-founder of Indian PR firm Perfect Relations. Moti Mahal operates a franchisee model with over 100 outlets globally. Its butter chicken dishes start at \$8 in New Delhi, and are priced at \$23 in New York. Late US President Richard Nixon and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru are among the famous clients to have visited its primary outlet in Delhi. Daryaganj started in 2019 and its butter chicken costs \$7.50. It has 10 outlets, mostly in New Delhi, with plans to expand to other Indian cities and Bangkok.

leisure



BIEL CALLS HER MARRIAGE 'A WORK IN PROGRESS'

Actress Jessica Biel says that her marriage to singer-actor Justin Timberlake is a 'work in progress' and she is always trying to 'find the balance' while he is away on tour.

TYRA BANKS HAD HER FIRST DRINK AFTER TURNING 50

Model Tyra Banks has shared her experience of having her first alcoholic drink. Banks celebrated her 50th birthday in December, and she decided to have her first alcoholic drink a couple of days later.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
A plain Jane day. Work goes on as usual, and there is progress. But as Ganesh says, it's an ordinary day. Hum, whistle, doodle, and sip your green tea. While day dreaming, start planning your dream home. After all, that's where the first plan takes shape.

TAURUS
Luck is a four-leaf clover in your pocket. You might get the long desired success in education related matters today – a favourable result of a competitive examination, maybe. You will proudly smile at your power of resilience and sense of proportion, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
The day will be dedicated to spending quality time with children, predicts Ganesh. You will be overloaded with household responsibilities and will find it tough to deal with them. However, you will manage to do well and will be satisfied with the outcome.

CANCER
Today, you will strictly follow your plan book. All Ganesh needs to do to predict your day is take a peep into the book. However, this is only one of those rare days when things go according to plan. You are likely to keep your views to yourself, and will hardly betray what's on your mind.

LEO
Most battles are fought and won inside our head. Hence, Ganesh urges you to maintain a positive outlook today. The stars grant you the ability to double your efforts, and allow your imagination to take flight and chart new routes to success. This should curb your frustration of the last few days.

VIRGO
A day to look inside and contemplate. Find peace and prosperity, says Ganesh. Clam up like those oysters and discover the pearl within you. A fine helping hand you shall lend today to those who need it, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh has a feeling that today may not be the best day to undertake any government dealings. Call it red-tapism, or bureaucratic procrastination, but it is highly unlikely that such tasks shall be fruitful today. This may test your patience, and in doing so, bring out your competency and efficiency to the fore, especially if you happen to be a public servant. Touché!

SCORPIO
It is about time you learn to deal with frustration in a more healthy manner. The right choice is always the hardest to make. Do not let sentiments sway you into hasty choices because they may feel right, but might also be extremely impractical. There may some strain on your relationship with near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, arranging meetings with customers and suppliers will eat into most of your time. Your patience will enable you to listen to suggestions and opinions offered by people. The result of all this, however, is slated to be most favourable and productive.

CAPRICORN
You have always been generous by nature, but your benevolent attitude will do you no good, warns Ganesh. People will try, almost blatantly, to take advantage of you, and for once, you will feel that being crafty and unrelenting would have helped kept those blood-sucking leeches at bay. But as the day progresses, you will thank the Almighty for all the precious things he made you the guardian of.

AQUARIUS
Today, you work hard and party harder! The morning sees you sweating it out at work, as you do your best to implement your plans. In the evening, you will don your best attire and get ready to have a gala time with your beloved. Ganesh says, you receive as much as you give.

PISCES
You set impeccable standards for yourself, but what keeps your subordinates from crumbling about it is the efforts you make to help them achieve perfection in their endeavours, says Ganesh. You inspire, they aspire.

'Viewers' love drives me to outdo myself'

Mumbai: Nia Sharma, who plays the lead in the upcoming fantasy-thriller-romance drama *Suhagan Chudail*, opened up about shooting in scorching 50 degrees Celsius amid the sand dunes of Rajasthan, sharing how her team kept her hydrated and cool with hand fans, ensuring that she was in her best form.

Nia shot a special opening sequence of the show in Rajasthan, braving scorching heat and unforgiving terrain.

Dressed in sizzling attire, Nia was undeterred by stubborn tan lines and temperatures that soared above 50 degrees.

Speaking about the experience, the *Naagin* fame said: "Rajasthan's beauty always sweeps me off my feet. The flavourful food, stunning architecture, and relentless 50-degree temperature were constants during our shoot. Hours under the sun left us with a tan, but as an actor, adapting is key. Every challenge pushes me to give my best."

She went on to add, "My team kept me hydrated and cool with hand fans, ensuring that I was in my best form. It's the love of viewers that drives me to outdo myself, and it makes overcoming these challenges worth it."

Suhagan Chudail will premiere May 27 at 10.30 p.m. on Colors.



Jackie joins Sandrine for Slow Joe biopic

Mumbai: Jackie Shroff is all set to join forces with celebrated French actress and director Sandrine Bonnaire for a biopic titled *Slow Joe*. Bonnaire's directorial prowess, coupled with Jackie Shroff's magnetic performance, promises to deliver a poignant and authentic portrayal of Joe's remarkable story.

Born in Mumbai, *Slow Joe's* legacy transcends borders, making him a fitting subject for this Singapore-France-India co-production.

Produced by Isabella Sreyashii Sen and Olivier Dock, co-CEOs of Singapore production house Hazelnut Media, the highly anticipated biopic re-



ceives a significant boost with this collaboration. Bonnaire brings her unparalleled expertise to helm this captivating cinematic journey chronicling the life of the late Indian musician Joseph Manuel Da Rocha, affectionately known as *Slow Joe*.

Expressing his excitement for the collaboration, Shroff remarked, "I am thrilled to have Sandrine Bonnaire on board to direct *Slow Joe*." Her exceptional talent and vision will undoubtedly elevate the film to new heights," added the Hero actor.

She had posted a picture from her balcony and captioned it, "Being home... is feeding my soul."

Head of State also stars Idris Elba and John Cena.

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Priyanka's Friday advice

Mumbai: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas shared some Friday advice about 'trusting the process.'

The actress took to her Instagram stories and shared a picture of herself standing in front of a mirror with 'trust the process' written on it.

She also shared a photo on Instagram, flaunting her perfect skin and strawberry pink lips, which she captioned 'Strawberry days.'

Thursday, Priyanka shared a glimpse of her \$20 million mansion in Los Angeles after it became 'unlivable' due to a mold infestation.

The actress returned to her home after shooting for her upcoming film *Head of State*, an action comedy directed by Ilya Naishuller, in Nice, France.

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Sharmila admits her 'mistakes'

Mumbai: Sharmila Tagore is introspecting about the time when she first became a mother in 1970 after giving birth to her son, Saif Ali Khan, and admits she was 'absent' from his childhood for the first six years. The 79-year-old actor was speaking at a recent Mother's Day event for YFLO.

Looking back at her motherhood journey, Sharmila said, "When I had Saif, I was very busy. I was working two shifts a day and for the first six years of his life, I was really absent. I did whatever I had to do/I went for the parent teachers meeting, attended his plays but I don't think I was a full-time mom. My husband was there, but I wasn't. I made a few mistakes, honestly."

The actor is glad that he has grown up fine. She credits her husband and the support of her extended family and friends to help her sail through that time.

"One of his school teachers would live across the apartment in Mumbai. She and her husband really looked after Saif as well... For the girls I was there," she admitted.

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PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

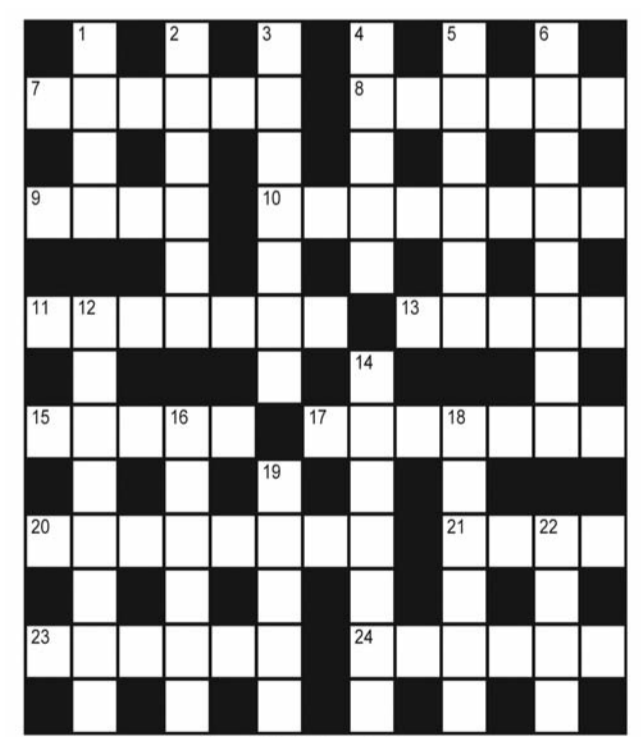


BREVITY



FUN post

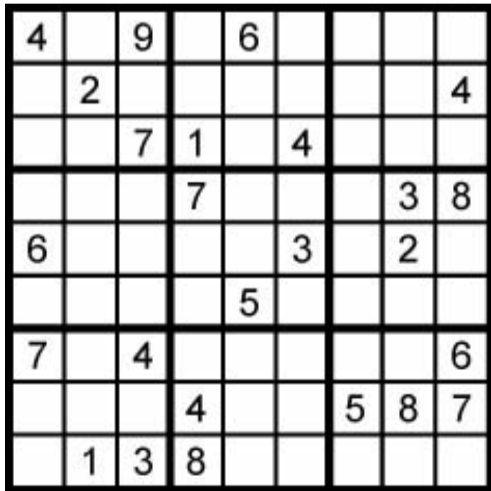
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Money man
 - 8 Legal proceeding
 - 9 Shaft
 - 10 Common auto accident injury
 - 11 Recess
 - 13 Boredom
 - 15 Progeny
 - 17 Part of a board
 - 20 Fantastic
 - 21 Thin
 - 23 Manor
 - 24 Sonora snooze
- Down**
- 1 Wildcat
 - 2 Ravel classic
 - 3 Incognisant
 - 4 Dashboard feature
 - 5 Like some glances
 - 6 Chop suey additive (3,5)
 - 12 Scatter
 - 14 On target
 - 16 Hullabaloo
 - 18 Like some peanuts
 - 19 Proposal
 - 22 Initial stake

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

SECTION 63 OF BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA

SC seeks Centre's stand on plea against marital rape exception



UNDER THE EXCEPTION GIVEN IN SECTION 375 OF IPC, SEXUAL INTERCOURSE OR SEXUAL ACTS BY A MAN WITH HIS WIFE, THE WIFE NOT BEING A MINOR, IS NOT RAPE

EVEN UNDER THE NEW LAW - BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS), EXCEPTION 2 TO SECTION 63 (RAPE) HAS CLARIFIED THAT SEXUAL INTERCOURSE OR SEXUAL ACTS BY A MAN WITH HIS WIFE, THE WIFE NOT BEING UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE, IS NOT RAPE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: The Supreme Court Friday sought the Centre's stand on a petition challenging the marital rape exception under the new criminal laws.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, issued notice on the petition by the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) and said it would be listed for hearing in July along with other petitions seeking to criminalise marital rape.

"It is a constitutional issue. This will be live even after the new code," the bench, also comprising Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra, said. The SC had January 16, 2023 sought the Centre's response on certain petitions assailing the Indian Penal Code (IPC) provision which provides protection to a husband against prosecution for forcible sexual intercourse if the wife is an adult.

Under the exception given in Section 375 of the IPC, sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife - the wife not being a minor - is not rape.

Even under the new law - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), exception 2 to Section 63 (rape) has clarified that 'sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife, the wife not being under eighteen years of age, is not rape'.

The newly enacted laws — the BNS, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act (BSA) — that would completely overhaul the criminal justice system will come into effect from July 1.

Besides, the exception under the BNS, AIDWA has also challenged in the Supreme Court the constitutionality of Section 67 of the BNS, which prescribes imprisonment ranging from two to seven years for married men who rape their separated wives.

The plea, filed through lawyer Ruchira Goel, objected to the provision on the ground that the penalty is lower than the mandatory minimum 10-year sentence otherwise applicable in cases of rape.

It also assailed as unconstitutional Section 221 of BNSS, which facilitates a 'lenient regime' under Section 67 by prohibiting a court from taking cognizance of the offence without 'prima facie satisfaction of the facts which constitute the offence upon a complaint... by the wife'.

The petitioner emphasised that the marital rape exception violates Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution as it negates a married woman's consent to sex and perpetuates sexual and gender stereotypes about the subordination of a woman's individuality.

"The impugned provisions, in pegging the legal status of a woman's consent to her marital

status, are manifestly arbitrary. There is no determining principle to justify the select deprivation of married women of a legal right to complain of the commission of the offence under Section 63 of the BNS by her husband," the petition said.

It further stated that the protection of the 'institution' of marriage as the 'objective' to sustain the exception is wholly unjust and unfair.

The petition also stated that the marital rape exception is against Article 19(1)(a) and Article 21 of the Constitution because it takes away a married woman's rights to bodily integrity, decisional autonomy, and dignity.

One of pending pleas in the Supreme Court has been filed in relation to the Delhi High Court's split verdict of May 11, 2022 on the issue. This appeal has been filed by a woman, one of the petitioners before the Delhi HC.

However, two HC judges -- Justice Rajiv Shaktiher and Justice C Hari Shankar -- had concurred on granting a certificate of leave to appeal in the Supreme Court as the matter involved substantial questions of law which required a decision from the top court.

AIDWA was also one of the petitioners before the HC.

While Justice Shaktiher, who headed the division bench, favoured striking down the marital rape exception for being 'unconstitutional' and said it would be 'tragic if a married woman's call for justice is not heard even after 162 years' since the enactment of the IPC, Justice Shankar said the exception under the rape law is not 'unconstitutional and was based on an intelligible differential'.

Another plea has been filed by a man against the Karnataka HC verdict which had paved the way for his prosecution for allegedly raping his wife.

SECURITY PREP FOR MODI'S ROADSHOW

Police officials surveying the security arrangements on Grand Road in Puri, Friday, ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's roadshow. The PM is set to embark on a two-day visit to Odisha from May 19, state BJP chief Manmohan Samal said Friday. Upon his arrival Sunday evening, Modi will convene a meeting with party leaders in Bhubaneswar. The following day, he is slated to visit Srimandir and participate in a roadshow.



CAR FEST AHEAD: Maharana servants busy constructing hubs of chariot wheels at Rath Yard in Puri, Friday

PIC: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

BIJOY AMONG 3 EXPELLED FROM BJP

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 17: The BJP Friday expelled senior leader Bijo Mohapatra and two others from the party on the charge of 'anti-party activities'.

The action against Mohapatra came after his son Arabinda was made the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) candidate from the Patkura Assembly seat.

Mohapatra, a former state executive member of the party, is accused of canvassing for his son.

In a statement, the saffron party said the two other leaders who were expelled are state executive member Sarada Pradhan and vice-president of state BJP SC Morcha Rakesh Mallick.



BJP STATE EXECUTIVE MEMBER SARADA PRADHAN AND STATE SC MORCHA VICE-PRESIDENT RAKESH MALICK WERE ALSO EXPELLED

BIJOY MOHAPATRA, A FORMER MINISTER AND A PROMINENT POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE STATE, WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF BJD

WHEN CONTACTED, MOHAPATRA CALLED BJP'S DECISION TO EXPEL HIM AS 'RIDICULOUS'

Pradhan and Mallick, who are considered close to Mohapatra, are contesting the Assembly election as Independent candidates after being denied BJP tickets.

The action was taken according to the direction of BJP state president Manmohan Samal,

the statement said. Mohapatra, a former minister and a prominent political figure in the state, was a founding member of the BJD. He was expelled from the BJD.

He then founded a new regional party Odisha Gana Parishad (OGP), which won

two Assembly seats in the 2004 elections.

However, the OGP was later merged with the Odisha unit of the NCP, headed by Mohapatra, which won four Assembly seats in the 2009 Assembly election. Mohapatra later dissolved the state unit of the NCP and joined the BJP.

When contacted, Mohapatra called the party's decision to expel him as 'ridiculous'.

The veteran political leader said that over the last five years, he has dissociated himself from party activities and has not attended any party meetings or functions. Mohapatra was also not seen with any senior party leaders during this period.

Mohapatra held the Patkura Assembly seat for four times.



HEATWAVE: The otherwise busy Bajrakabati Road in Cuttack wears a deserted look as day temperature soars, Friday

PIC: RAJKISHORE MOHANTY

After ABDO, JE's body found in Keonjhar dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 17: Three days after the mutilated body of an Assistant Block Development Officer (ABDO) was found close to the railway tracks near Harichandanpur railway station in Keonjhar district Monday, the body of a Junior Engineer (JE) was recovered from the farmlands near Banachakulia village, under Ghatagaon police station limits of the district, late Thursday.

Police said the deceased, Chandrahasya Naik, a native of Sukurli village of Mayurbhanj district, worked as a JE in Saharpada block of Keonjhar district. Police sources said that Chandrahasya was last seen travelling on a motorcycle with three others to Banachakulia village, Wednesday. While the other three riders were traced to a hospital, Chandrahasya's body was found in a farmland surrounded by forests Thursday night.

Police said Chandrahasya Naik, a native of Sukurli village of Mayurbhanj district, worked as a JE in Saharpada block of Keonjhar district

They said Naik was last seen travelling with three others on a bike to Banachakulia village Wednesday

On being informed, police reached the spot with a scientific team and began an investigation after recovering the body.

Police said the trio who accompanied the deceased on the bike had been hospitalized after they met with an accident. They allegedly told the police that since one of them got drunk it was difficult for all the four to return on the bike together. Therefore, three of them first came back on the vehicle, leaving the JE in that village. They had plans to pick him up in the second trip. However, while returning, they met with an acci-

dent and got themselves admitted to the hospital for treatment.

Meanwhile, Sub Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Prabhat Kumar Tripathy said, "No external injury mark was found on the deceased's body. We are waiting for the post mortem report to know the cause of death. Meanwhile, we are questioning the trio who accompanied the deceased. We will get a clear picture soon."

Nevertheless, the back-to-back discovery of bodies of government officials under mysterious circumstances has created a sensation in the district.

Lifespan to grow by 5 yrs in men, 4 yrs in women by 2050

A Lancet study has projected that in India, men could have an average life expectancy of over 75 years, while that of women could be almost 80 years by the middle of this century

Life expectancy around the world is projected to improve by almost five years in men and by over four years in women between 2022 and 2050, according to a global study published in The Lancet journal.

Researchers said that the improvements are expected to be the highest in countries where life expectancy is lower, thereby contributing to an overall enhancement of life expectancy across geographies.

Public health measures preventing and improving survival rates from cardiovascular dis-

eases, COVID-19, and a range of communicable, maternal, neonatal, and nutritional diseases, are largely driving the trend of increasing life expectancy globally, the authors said.

"In addition to an increase in life expectancy overall, we have found that the disparity in life expectancy across geographies will lessen," said Chris Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), University of Washington, US.

"This is an indicator that while health inequalities between the



highest and lowest income regions will remain, the gaps are shrinking, with the biggest increases anticipated in Sub-Saharan Africa," said Murray. The IHME coordinates the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, the "largest and most compre-

hensive effort to quantify health loss across places and over time."

However, the researchers from the GBD 2021 Forecasting Collaborators said that the ongoing shift in disease burden to non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular ones, cancer

and diabetes, and exposure to associated risk factors including obesity and high blood pressure, will have the most impact on the next generation.

This shift was analysed to increase an individual's years lived with disability or YLDs. Disease burden is the impact of a health problem on a given population, measured through varied indicators such as deaths, disability, or financial costs.

Therefore, as the disease burden shifts from that of communicable ones to non-communicable health problems, people are expected to live longer, but with more years spent in poor health, the researchers said.

They said that healthy life expectancy around the world, re-

ferring to the number of years one could expect to live in good health, will increase by 2.6 years in the coming years - from 64.8 years in 2022 to 67.4 years in 2050.

For India, the study has projected that by 2050, on average, men could have a life expectancy of over 75 years, while that for women could be almost 80 years.

Healthy life expectancy, however, was projected to be over 65 years for both men and women in India.

Drawing on the work of more than 11,000 collaborators, the GBD 2021 includes more than 607 billion estimates of 371 diseases and injuries and 88 risk factors in 204 countries and territories, according to the IHME.

Man held for burglary

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 17: The Commissionerate Police Friday arrested a 24-year-old man on charges of burglary under Nandankanan police limits here May 3.

The accused Saman Sabar alias Suman, who hails from Keonjhar, was residing in VSS Nagar area here, ACP (Zone VI) Ramesh Chandra Bishoi said.

Bishoi said Suman burgled cash and other valuables from the house of Babuli Jena under Nandankanan police limits when the family was asleep on the terrace late May 3 night. The next morning, Jena found the valuables missing and approached the police.

"We zeroed in on Suman and nabbed him. He is involved in six crimes in the City. The burgled items have been recovered," Bishoi said.

EC's response sought on turnout data plea

New Delhi, May 17: Holding an urgent hearing at 6:30pm Friday evening, the Supreme Court sought a response within a week from the Election Commission on a plea by an NGO seeking a direction to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of conclusion of polling for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

The top court, which was argued earlier in the day by lawyer Prashant Bhushan that the plea be heard today itself, assembled in the evening after the conclusion of an SCBA function to bid farewell to Justice AS Bopanna. Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud termed the request of the poll panel seeking time to respond to the plea as 'fair'.

The bench said the EC should be given some reasonable time to respond to the plea and listed it for hearing before an appropriate bench during the summer vacation May 24, a day before the sixth phase of the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls.

During brief hearing, senior advocate Maninder Singh, appearing for the poll panel, said NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has levelled "absolutely false allegations" in the plea and, moreover, a recent judgment of another bench of the apex court headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna has dealt with the issues which are also part of the present case.

On April 26, the Justice Khanna-led bench rejected the pleas for reviving paper ballots and also 100 per cent cross-ver-



ification of votes cast on electronic voting machines with voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT).

Bhushan, on the other hand, opposed the submission, saying that the issue relating to voter turnout data was not part of the earlier petition.

The CJ, earlier in the day, asked the counsel appearing for the Election Commission to take instructions and said it will hear the matter at the end of the board.

The ADR had last week filed an interim application in its 2019 PIL seeking directions to the poll panel that "scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded)" of all polling stations be uploaded immediately after the polls.

"Direct the Election Commission to provide tabulated polling station-wise data in absolute figures of the number of votes polled as recorded in Form 17C Part-I after each phase of polling in the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections and also a tabulation of constituency-wise figures of voter turnout in absolute numbers in the ongoing 2024 Lok

Sabha elections," the NGO said. It said the plea was filed to ensure that the democratic process is not subverted by electoral irregularities.

The voter turnout data for the first two phases of the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections published by ECI April 30 has been published after 11 days of the first phase of polling April 19 and four days after second phase of polling April 26.

"The data, as published by the ECI in its press release dated April 30 shows a sharp increase (by about 5-6 per cent) as compared to the initial percentages announced by ECI as of 7pm on the day of polling," the plea said.

The petition said the "inordinate" delay in the release of the final voter turnout data, coupled with the unusually high revision of over five per cent in the poll panel's press note of April 30 has raised concerns and public suspicion regarding the correctness of the said data.

The non-release of the absolute number of votes polled coupled with the "unreasonable delay" in the release of votes polled data has led to apprehensions in the mind of the electorate about the sharp increase between initial data and data released April 30, it said.

"These apprehensions must be addressed and put to rest. That in order to uphold the voter's confidence it is necessary that the ECI be directed to disclose on its website scanned legible copies of Form 17C Part-I (Account of Votes Recorded) of all polling stations which contains the authenticated figures for votes polled, within 48 hours of the close of polling," it said.



ENCHANTING MOVES: Artistes perform during annual dance festival 'Nrutyambada' organised by Orissa Dance Academy at Rabindra Mandap Friday. **PIC: BIKASH NAYAK**

Constitution bench verdict cannot be undermined: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: A judgement of a Constitution bench would be 'binding' on benches of lesser strength, the Supreme Court has held while recalling its April 2022 verdict in a matter related to land which was meant exclusively for common use by the inhabitants of a village in Haryana.

In its order dated April 7, 2022, the apex court had held that a panchayat cannot claim ownership of the land which has been taken from the real owners from their permissible ceiling limits under the land law in Haryana. The apex court had consequently said panchayats can only manage and control the land which has been taken from the

owners and cannot claim title.

"It is pertinent to note here that for the land taken from the proprietors by applying pro-rata cut from the permissible ceiling limits of the proprietors, management and control alone vests with the panchayat but such vesting of management and control is irreversible and the land would not revert to the proprietors for redistribution as the common purposes for which land has been carved out not only include the present requirements but the future requirements as well," it had said.

The top court had delivered the verdict on a batch of appeals against a full bench verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court which had examined the legality of sub-section 6 of Section 2(g)



of the Haryana Village Common Lands (Regulation) Act, 1961.

In a judgement delivered Thursday, a bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said that when the high court verdict rested on the law laid down by the apex court's Constitution bench in 1966, "the least that was expected" of the court in the judgement under review was to explain as to why the high

court was wrong in relying on the 1966 verdict.

"No law is required to state that a judgement of the Constitution bench would be binding on the benches of a lesser strength. Bhagat Ram (1966 verdict) has been decided by a strength of five judges, this court having a bench strength of two judges could not have ignored the law laid down by the Constitution bench in paragraph 5 in Bhagat Ram," the bench said.

The top court delivered its verdict on a plea seeking review of the April 2022 judgement. It said that "ignoring" the law laid down by the Constitution bench and taking a view totally contrary to the same would amount to a material error, manifest on the face of the order.

READY TO VOTE

Bhubaneswar: A pledge to cast vote May 25 was held Friday at Lok Seva Bhavan here, in the presence of senior officials and staff. Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena and Development Commissioner Anu Garg took pledge on the occasion. Postal ballot voting for media personnel in Khurda district was also conducted Friday. Earlier, a mega signature campaign towards creating awareness among voters was conducted at Biju Patnaik Park with an aim to increase the turnout during the general elections.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Prabhat Kumar Parida, S/o- Late Mayadhar Parida, resident of ward No.-18, Palasuni, GGP Colony, P.S.- Rasulgarrh, Dist.- Khordha, PIN- 751025, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.- 134 dtd. 13.03.2024 that now onwards I shall be known as Pravat Kumar Parida for all future purposes.

I, Udayasingh Tamsay, S/o Late Lage Tamsay resident of Nandankanan Zoologicalpark, P.O.- Barang, Dist.- Khordha, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.-2161 dated 13.05.2024 before the Executive Magistrate, Sadar, Cuttack that the correct spelling of my name is Udayasing Tamsay. In service records it has been spelled as Udayasingh Tamsay. Both Udayasingh Tamsay and Udayasing Tamsay are one and same person. So I declare that my name will be treated as Udayasing Tamsay for all purposes

Wonderla Amusement Park to open May 24

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 17: India's largest amusement park chain, Wonderla Holidays announced the launch of its newest park at Kumbharbasta in Capital city Friday. The park will be officially opened for public May 24. Wonderla Holidays Limited managing director Arun K Chittilappilly shared in a press meet.

Wonderla president Sivadas M, chief operating officer Dheeran Choudhary, vice-president (engineering) Ajikrishnan and Bhubaneswar park head Kalpataru Nayak attended the press meet.

On the occasion, Chittilappilly said, "We are thrilled to announce that Wonderla Bhubaneswar will officially open in the 3rd week of June, with public access starting May 24. Our journey has always been about creating memorable ex-



periences for our guests and we are excited to bring this vision to Odisha. This launch is significant for us and we envision great success for the park, which will entertain over 3,500 people per day."

The park is set to become the go-to destination for families, friends and adventure-seekers in the city. With a diverse range of rides, attractions and entertainment offerings, Wonderla promises an immersive experience that will captivate visitors.

Wonderla is currently running various offers as part of the launch, including discounts for students with valid ID card, Mo Bus and train ticket discounts and birthday offers, among others. Indian playback singer Stebin Ben will perform May 26, as part of the celebration.

Bhubaneswar marks the fourth addition to Wonderla's portfolio, following Kochi, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Wonderla Odisha began with an invitation from the state government during Odisha Tourism Investor Interaction Meet (OTIIM) in 2019, with "in principle" approval in 2020 from the State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) for a 90-year lease on the government land. With an investment of approximately 190 crores, Wonderla Bhubaneswar showcases over 21 exhilarating dry and wet rides that promise unforgettable thrills, ranging from high-speed coasters to family-friendly attractions. Situated just 22.5 kilometers from the Capital, Wonderla is strategically positioned to become the ultimate destination for adventure-seekers. Designed as a tribute to Odisha's rich cultural heritage and natural splendour, the park spans over 50 acres and offers a journey through experiential rides inspired by the region's history and culture.

IndiaSkills 2024 kicks off

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 17: IndiaSkills 2024 competition demonstrates the highest standards of skills in the country, commenced recently under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The inauguration ceremony at Yashobhoomi, New Delhi witnessed the participation of around 900 candidates from different states and Union Territories.

Participants at the competition will showcase their diverse skills and talent across 61 competitions, starting from traditional crafts to cutting-edge technologies. While 47 competitions will be held onsite, 14 will be held offline in Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), working under MSDE, is implementing the event. The opening ceremony was

graced by MSDE secretary Atul Kumar Tiwari, senior economic advisor Nilambuj Sharan, director general (training) Trishaljeet Sethi, joint secretary Sonal Mishra and Hena Usman. The ceremony was followed by a cultural programme.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Tiwari said that 'IndiaSkills 2024' is a celebration of skills, innovations and determination. "It is a testament to the boundless potential of our youth and their ability to shape the future of our nation. It is a platform where dreams are realised, and aspirations are nurtured," he added. He further said that he is confident about the capabilities of the candidates and is hopeful that they will excel in the competitions. Winners of IndiaSkills, with the help of best industry trainers, will prepare for WorldSkills Competition scheduled to take place in Lyon, France in September.

Variation in El Nino, La Nina causes coral reef bleaching

Ocean temperatures that have gone "crazy haywire" hot, especially in the Atlantic, are close to making the current global coral bleaching event the worst in history. It's so bad that scientists are hoping for a few hurricanes to cool things off.

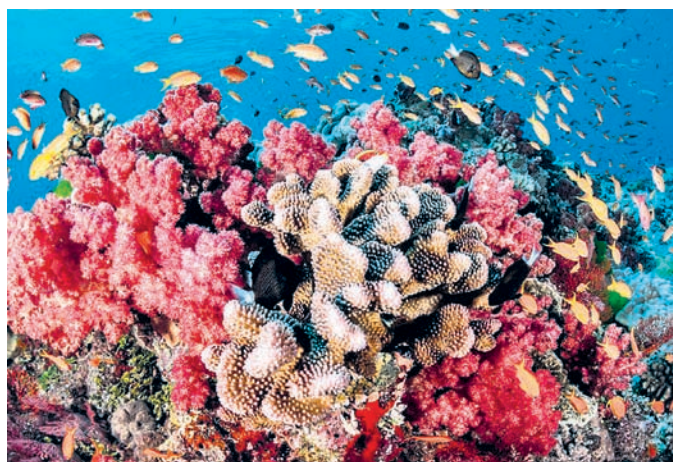
More than three-fifths — 62.9 per cent — of the world's coral reefs are badly hurting from a bleaching event that began last year and is continuing. That's nearing the record of 65.7 per cent in 2017, when from 2009 to 2017 about one-seventh of the world's coral died, said Derek Manzello, coordinator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Coral Reef Watch Programme.

When water gets too hot, coral, which are living creatures, bleach and sometimes die.

In the Atlantic, off the Florida coast and in the Caribbean, about 99.7 per cent of the coral reefs have been hit with 'severe' losses in staghorn and elkhorn species, Manzello said recently in NOAA's monthly climate briefing. Sixty-two countries are seeing damaged coral, with Thailand shutting off a tourist-laden island to try to save the coral there.

Meteorologists say a La Nina — a natural cooling of parts of the Pacific that changes the weather worldwide — is forecast to develop soon and perhaps cool oceans a bit, but Manzello said it may be too little and too late.

"I still am very worried about the state of the world's coral reefs just because we're seeing things play out right now that are just very unexpected and extreme," Manzello said.



"This wouldn't be happening without climate change. That's basically the cornerstone of all the ocean warming we're seeing," Manzello said. But on top of that are changes in El Nino,

the reverse of La Nina and a natural warming of ocean waters; reduced Sulphur pollution from ships and an undersea volcano eruption. Former top NASA climate sci-

entist James Hansen said "acceleration of global warming is now hard to deny" in a new analysis and statement recently.

For coral, it comes down to how hot the water is and "things have just gone crazy haywire with ocean temperatures in the last year," Manzello said. He said hurricanes bring up cool water from deep and benefit coral reefs if they don't hit them directly.

"Hurricanes can be devastating for reefs," Manzello. "But in the grand scheme of things and given the current situation we are in on planet Earth, they're now a good thing essentially, which is kind of mind-blowing."

On Wednesday, parts of the Atlantic where hurricanes often develop had an ocean heat content — which measures water warmth at depths — equivalent to mid-August, said hurricane re-

searchers Brian McNoldy at the University of Miami and Phil Klotzbach at Colorado State University.

The world's oceans last month broke a record for the hottest April on record. It was the 13th straight month global seas broke records, and because the oceans are slow to cool or warm, more records are likely, said Karin Gleason, NOAA's climate monitoring chief.

Coral reefs are key to seafood production and tourism worldwide. Scientific reports have long said loss of coral is one of the big tipping points of future warming as the world nears 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial time. That's a limit that countries agreed to try to hold to in the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

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Cong candidate held for assaulting builder

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, May 17: Saka Sujit Kumar, the Congress candidate for the Digapahandi Assembly seat in Ganjam district has been arrested for allegedly assaulting a builder, police said Friday. The incident, which was the result of business rivalry, happened Wednesday near the Berhampur police station. Kumar was taken into custody Thursday after a complaint was lodged, police added.

SP Sarthak Sarangi informed that three persons, including the builder identified as Sudhansu Sangram Padhy of Sihala locality, were injured in the assault.

After employees in Padhy's company were beaten up while working on a plot in Kukudakhandi, the realtor along with some of his associates were going to the police station to lodge a complaint when the Congress candidate allegedly attacked them along with his supporters, Sarangi informed. He added that along with Kumar his close aide K Amit Kumar has also been arrested.

Rayagada staring at acute water crisis

Declining groundwater level a matter of great concern, say environmentalists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, May 17: Residents in this district stare at a major water crisis in the near future with the sharp decline in groundwater level, sources said Friday. Establishment of a number of industries and a rise in population are two of the main reasons for the alarming decrease in groundwater level, they pointed out. Rampant digging up of bore wells is another reason for the shrinking groundwater level, sources added.

Environmentalists apprehend that a major crisis is in store in future as no steps have been taken for conservation of water. They added that unless digging up of bore wells is curtailed, the water crisis cannot be controlled. It should be added that district administration officials are clueless about the bore well issue. They do not even know how many bore wells have been set up in the district. Residents pointed out that the administration is not taking any concrete steps for



REPRESENTATIONAL PIC

preserving water below the soil.

Sources said that there is a groundwater division (GWD) office in the district but it remains non-functional due to lack of adequate number of employees.

People in the know of things informed that groundwater level started decreasing from 2019 and now the pinch is already being felt.

This district has 11 blocks and 78 points for checking groundwater level. In most of the blocks

the water level has decreased substantially, sources pointed out. The groundwater level is satisfactory at Padmapur block while it is the worst in Rayagada block.

Reports available from the Rayagada Groundwater Development department said that water was earlier available at 4.96 metres below soil in Bissam Cuttack block. However, it depleted to 7.77 metres in 2023. Similarly, water level at Gudari

block stood at 10.46 metres in 2019 but now has gone down to 12.39 metres. The water level at Gunupur was 13.01 metres and 6.20 metres at two check points in 2019. However, now it stands at 13.49 metres and 3.45 metres. At Rayagada block, the water level has reduced to 29.31 metres now as against 22.24 metres in 2019.

According to information available the situation is the same for most of the other blocks including Kalyansingpur, Kashipur, Kolnara and Muniguda. Environmentalists stated that the way the water level is falling, the district stares at a bleak future.

When contacted, hydrologist Jyotiprasad Das working at the GWD office stated that the current groundwater level is indeed concerning. He however, pointed out that it is the responsibility of all residents in the district to conserve and preserve water. He informed that he has not received any instruction to impose restrictions on the digging up of bore wells.

RSP's sports summer camp attracts talented youngsters



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 17: The Ispat Stadium in Sector-VI, the Biju Patnaik Hockey Stadium, the indoor stadium at Sector-V, the basketball and the kabaddi grounds here now wear a colourful and busy look. All these places are the venues for the sports summer camp for youngsters. The event organised by the Sports de-

partment of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) is one of the most-awaited annual programme for youngsters. The various activities aim to provide platforms for children to engage in various sports disciplines, foster their talents and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Another important venue is the indoor stadium in Sector-20. It bustles with activities from the crack of dawn as youngsters ar-

rive to participate in kabaddi, badminton and table tennis coaching camps. There is always a buzz as youngsters try out their hands in various sports disciplines under the watchful eyes of the coaches. "Thanks to the excellent infrastructure and guidance, I have improved my skills and am moving towards my dream of representing India at the Olympics in future," said Shivam, a 17-year-old badminton player and a Class XII student of Kendriya Vidyalaya.

Coaches are also happy at the large turnout in the different disciplines. "The summer sports coaching camp conducted by RSP always has been a huge attraction for children of the Steel City. This year also the response has been fantastic," stated Rajiv Kumar Nayak, a badminton coach who also is an employee of RSP.

Incidentally, this is the 37th edition of the summer sports camp, officials informed.

4 dead, 7 injured in Rourkela road mishap



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 17: Four people were killed and seven others suffered serious injuries Friday when the vehicle they were travelling in overturned near Bonai. All the passengers of the car were coming here to attend the last rites of Swapan Kumar Mohanty, an RSP employee who breathed his last Thursday after a prolonged battle with cancer.

The car was travelling with people from Chandaneswar in Balasore district and Digha in West Bengal. Eye-witnesses said that it was moving at high speed. Near Bonai, the driver of the vehicle tried to evade a big crater and while swerving, the vehicle

turned turtle. Swapan's sister and brother-in-law died on the spot, informed officials later.

Police arrived at the spot and with the help of locals rescued the nine others trapped inside the overturned car. Initially, they were taken to the Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH). However, after their conditions deteriorated, they were shifted to a nursing home. Two more persons including a woman breathed their last at the nursing home.

Doctors informed that even though the seven others have suffered serious injuries their conditions are stable now. Police after post-mortem handed over the bodies to family members of the deceased.

"It is very tragic. Swapan babu's sister and brother-in-law were coming to pay their last respects and now they are dead. It couldn't have been more heartbreaking," said a family member.

Vedanta conducts health camp in Kalahandi

Bhubaneswar: Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh, India's premier producer of smelter grade alumina and a unit of Vedanta Aluminium, has conducted a comprehensive multi-specialty health camp and a blood donation drive in Kalahandi district. The week-long event prioritised accessible



healthcare services through multiple health camps and awareness drives in several remote villages of Kalahandi district and witnessed notable participation from the communities. The campaign culminated with a major multi-specialty health camp and blood donation drive at Vedanta Hospital, with an active participation of more than 350 community members. Attendees had the opportunity to receive free health check-ups and one-to-one consultation with specialists in general medicine, paediatrics, gynaecology, ophthalmology and dentistry providing preventive screenings and curative guidance. Moreover, the blood donation drive garnered tremendous support to alleviate the critical shortage of transfusable blood in the region by collecting 32 units, that will safeguard the lives of many individuals in need. The campaign closely aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 'Good Health & Well-being (SDG 3)' and 'Forging Partnerships to Achieve Common Goals' (SDG 17) and aims to make a positive impact and construct a healthier future for all, officials said.

JSW presents bicycles to young footballers

Barbil: The JSW Foundation has distributed 40 bicycles to young footballers training under its guidance. This is a noteworthy initiative aimed at enhancing accessibility to sports education. Recently, JSW distributed 20 bicycles at Jajang and 10 bicycles each at Nuagaon and Narayanposhi localities. Mines managers and JSW Odisha's Mines Division operational head were present during the distribution programme. There are 170 young football enthusiasts who are being trained at four different locations. These young trainees are being provided 360-degree holistic facilities with nutritional diet, football kits, good infrastructure and proper training by experts. Providing football training to the young generation is a highly-anticipated programme initiated by JSW aimed at improving and boosting sports skills. JSW has deputed four football coaches in four mine locations to train these youngsters. JSW is also collaborating with Bengaluru FC Rural Football Academy to provide excellent training to the young footballers from its DIZ areas in Odisha, a release, on behalf of JSW Foundation, said.

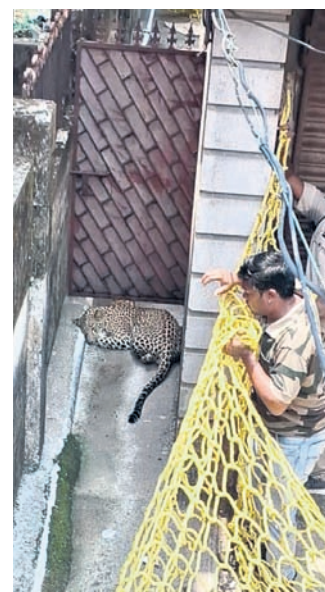
Leopard strays into Baripada; captured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, May 17: A leopard created a stir as it strayed into this town Friday morning. The animal was spotted in Bhanjpur locality of this town in Mayurbhanj district.

After locals informed the Forest department and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), a team was promptly dispatched to conduct rescue operation.

Wild animals are often sighted



in the area as the place is close to Similipal National Park. The team found the big cat on the premises of Budhikhamari Primary School and immediately cordoned off the area with safety nets. The team then carefully tranquilised the leopard and captured it and shifted it to a transportation cage.

A preliminary examination conducted by officials determined that the leopard was a male, estimated to be four to five years old. "The animal is currently under observation and will soon be released into a suitable location away from human habitation," informed an official.

WTI state project head Rudra Mahapatra said, "Considering the safety of the leopard and the public, a decision was made by the Forest department and our team to tranquilise and relocate the animal. Our team is currently monitoring its condition closely and administering sufficient hydration."

People who had spotted the leopard early in the morning heaved a sigh of relief after it was captured. They pointed out that the school was shut otherwise it could have been a harrowing experience for the students.

Climate change harming Koraput coffee

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, May 17: Koraput coffee which has carved a niche for itself in the world map has been hit hard by climate change, a report said. It seems that global warming has affected the coffee plants badly as the output has decreased considerably. This has prompted the officials of the Koraput Coffee Board to replace plants that are 20 to 25 years old in various plantations of the district to combat the adverse impacts of climate change. The board is working hard to prevent the plants from get-



ting affected due to climate change, PRO, Upendra Shah informed.

The immunity and output of a coffee plant declines as it ages. The output from a coffee plant reduces

substantially when it attains the age of 25 years. Keeping this in mind, the authorities are pruning the tip of the plants to achieve better output. However, when this procedure is failing to increase production, the plants are being uprooted and replaced by new ones, Shah informed.

A new coffee plant starts bearing beans within three to four years after it is planted. Officials at the Koraput Coffee Board are hopeful that within the next few years, the new plants will definitely play a major role in increasing production and help in reducing losses.

Shah informed that the board is providing financial assistance for the upkeep of the coffee plants to individual farmers. He stated that the aid is helping farmers recover from their losses and going a long way in enhancing their livelihood.

More than 3,500 hectares of land in this district are now being used for growing coffee. Close to 5,000 farmers including tribals earn their livelihood from coffee plantations. It definitely has transformed the lives of people in the district, Koraput Coffee Board officials said.

15 fall sick after inhaling toxic gas

Balasore: Fifteen people fell ill after inhaling toxic gas emitted from a prawn processing unit near Nilagiri in this district, police said Friday. They added that workers, mostly women, engaged in processing work complained of vomiting, nausea and difficulty in breathing Thursday night. Among those who fell ill were some minors also. All of them were immediately taken to the Nilagiri hospital by co-workers where after treatment they were discharged, hospital sources said. However, Khantapada police station under whose jurisdiction the plant is situated said no complaint has been lodged in this regard. A new twist to the tale was however, added Friday with Balasore's BJP MP candidate Pratap Chandra Sarangi demanding strong action against the company. "It's a gross irresponsibility on the part of the company. An investigation should be jointly launched into the incident by the Labour department and police and stern action should be taken against the company," stated Sarangi. District labour officer Shuva Narayana Sahu meanwhile stated that he had visited the hospital Thursday night. However, he did not find any of the workers there who had fallen ill. "We have initiated a probe into the incident," Sahu said.

LOSS OF MONEY RECEIPTS

We would like to inform the General Public that Original Security Deposit Money Receipts bearing Nos. 020379008, for Rs.145138.55, 020379009 for Rs.159473.00 dated 18.04.2000, 682011 for Rs.35000.00 dated 12.10.2006, 682067 for Rs.34914.00 dated 09.11.2006, 023/427060 for Rs.55147.00 dtd. 15.01.2008, SDA0117008 for Rs.44713.00 dated 03.09.2016, 1145007 for Rs.169078.00 dtd. 28.06.2018 and few others amounting to Rs.59478.45 towards Security Deposit totalling to Rs.702942/- issued by the Office of the Executive Engg., TPWODL (Erstwhile WESCO), RED Rajgangpur in favour of M/s. Konark Steel Industries (P) Limited have been lost on the way near RMC, Rourkela. If any person, who finds these money receipts, it is requested to kindly return the same to us at **Konark Steel Industries (P) Limited, Gangpur House, Uditnagar, Rourkela- 769012, Mobile No. - 9238998680.**

Registered Office : 19-A Dhuleswar Garden, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, 302001. www.aubank.in

LOAN AGAINST GOLD - AUCTION NOTICE ON 'AS IS WHERE IS' BASIS

The below mentioned borrower/s have been issued notices to pay their outstanding amounts towards the loan against gold facilities availed from AU Small Finance Bank Limited ("Bank"). Since the borrower/s has/have failed to repay his/their dues, we are constrained to conduct an auction of pledged gold items/articles on **24 May 2024 between 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM (Time)** at below mentioned branches according to the mode specified therein. In the case of deceased borrowers, all conditions will be applicable to legal heirs. Please note that in the event of failure of the above auction, the bank reserves its right to conduct another auction without prior intimation.

E-Auction Branch Details (E-auction will be conducted by using Weblink <https://gold.samil.in>)

BHADRAK - 23660001880734 23660002011504 | **CUTTACK** - 23660001419544 23660001488013 23660002157329 23660002331232 | **HINJILICUT** - 23660001229872 23660001230129 23660001367921 23660001441942 | **KUAKHIA** - 23660001441612 23660001741807 23660002006064 23660002353410 24660000041570 24660000042718 24660000079458 24660000128457 |

Note: The auction is subject to certain terms and conditions mentioned in the bid form, which is made available before the commencement of auction.

Sd/-
Manager
AU Small Finance Bank Limited

Format - C 7

For Political parties to publish in the newspaper, social media platforms & website of the Party, Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedent could not be selected as candidates :- (As per the Commission directions issued in pursuance of the order dated 13.02.2020 of the Honorable Supreme Court in Contempt Petition (C) No. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) No. 536 of 2011.)

Sl. No.	1.	2.
a	Criminal Antecedents	52(a) Odisha Excise Act. 379 IPC, 420/379/467/468/471/34 IPC, 323/294/506 IPC, 52 A Odisha Excise Act.
b	Nature of Offences :-	Purushottampur P.S. Case No. 76/18 GR. 73/18 Purushottampur P.S. Case No. 237/23 GR. 231/23 Purushottampur P.S. Case No. 245/23 GR. 239/23 GR. 92/2014, GR. 323/2020.
c	Case No.	J.M.F.C, Purushottampur
d	Name of the Court	J.M.F.C, Purushottampur
e	Whether charged has been framed or not (YES/NO)	YES
f	Date of conviction if any	NO
g	Date of punishment undergone, if any	NO
h	Any other information required to be given	NO
1.	The reasons for the selection of the candidate, Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the candidate, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words.)	Myself is a youth leader and have good relationship with the voters of Khallikote Assembly Constituency And I was the General Secretary of Aska Parliamentary Constituency on 2014
3.	Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words.)	As a social worker have good public relation in khallikote Assembly Constituency, so no other suitable candidate available

In the case of election to Council of States or election to Assembly Council by MLA mentioned the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

Format C-1

(for candidate to publish in Newspapers)

Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Qrs. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of Candidate : **Jual Oram, At - Kendudihi, PO-Kaleiposh, PS-Lahunipara, Dist - Sundargarh, Pin - 770040**

Name of Political Party : **Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)
Name of Election : **General Election to Lok Sabha - 2024.**
*Name of Constituency : **02, Sundargarh (ST) Parliamentary Constituency.**
I Jual Oram, a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents :

Sl. No.	Name of Court	Cases No. and dated	Status of cases (s)	Section (s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offences (s)
1	JMFC, Rourkela	G.R. No - 62/2022, JMFC, Rourkela	Pending	U/s 294, 509 IPC Intending to insult the modesty of women
2	SDJM, Bonai	Gr. No - 480/2007	Pending	U/s - 143, 341, 283, 149 IPC/174 Blockage of Rail line for public issue
3	JMFC, Rourkela	G.R. No 62/1999	Pending	U/s - 143, 341 of IPC Blockage of road for public issue

(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences

Sl. No.	Name of Court & date (s) of order (s)	Description of offences (s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1	NIL	NIL	NIL
2	NIL	NIL	NIL
3	NIL	NIL	NIL

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

Sd/- (Girish Chandra Sahu)
Election Agent of S. Jual Oram,
02, Sundargarh (ST) Parliamentary Constituency

FOCUS POLITICS

SO, IT'S SHAH VS YOGI



Over the last five years, there has been plenty of buzz in the bazaar over the shadowboxing between Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath with an eye on the main chance. The media coverage of Covid deaths in UP was alleged to enjoy Delhi's patronage. The arrest of a Delhi fixer by UP Police was met with an I-T raid of a Gorakhpur financier

is a Umar Khalid. The big difference is only one of them speaks Gujarati and has the PM's ear.

Over the last five years, there has been plenty of buzz in the bazaar over the shadowboxing between Shah and Yogi with an eye on the main chance. The media coverage of Covid deaths in UP was alleged to enjoy Delhi's patronage. The arrest of a Delhi fixer by UP Police was met with an I-T raid of a Gorakhpur financier. Yogi was reputed to have fought tooth and nail an earlier attempt to get him out. And the PM's body language with Shah and Yogi tells its own story for all who care to see.

By hinting at a 'Yogi vs Shah' tussle, Kejriwal has killed three birds with one grenade. One, he has pushed a belligerent BJP into a defensive mode. Two, he has artfully underlined the frustrations of Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari. And three, with 41 of UP's 80 seats still to vote, he has created enough disincentsives for Yogi's supporters to plump for the BJP. Given Yogi's apparently high popularity, would it really be in his interest to work full pelt for Modi's win, if it will only result in his exit and remove him from the race?

Inherent in the BJP's Methuselah defence—"Modiji will complete his full term"—is a staggering unpreparedness for life after Modi. Its over-the-top reaction to a Congressman's intimation of Modi's mortality is further proof. But the lack of clarity on who is next in line when the time comes, as indeed it will someday, reflects poorly on the management of the world's largest political party. It scarcely need be said that a squabble between the contenders is exactly what Dr Kejriwal ordered for the Opposition.

that everyone was hissing about is now headline news. Except that it isn't.

With mainstream media in full cheerleader mode, it has been left to digital and social media to suss out the juice of this story—and distill it into a 'Yogi vs Gujarat Lobby' bottle. It is not gone unnoticed by influential YouTube commentators that the BJP top guns who were rolled out to counter Kejriwal only refuted his claim on Modi relinquishing office on turning 75. No one sought to erase the "best before June 4" label the Delhi CM had slapped on his UP counterpart's tenure should BJP win a third term. So, is there more to Kejriwal's

charge than just smart, diversionary politics?

Now is not the time to discuss the relative merits and demerits of the two aspirants. Shah, 60, is a first-term MP; by 45, Yogi was into his fifth term. Shah runs a couple of departments after being party president; Yogi shepherds a state that is the size of the world's fifth biggest nation. As a saffron-clad monk, Yogi ticks the bachelor box middle-class India is in awe of; Shah has installed a nepobaby at the helm of the cricket board while flailing at 'parivaarvad'. For every police excess under 'Chanakya', there is a JCB under 'Bulldozer Baba'; for every Kafeel Khan, there

Satyapal Kapoor

THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHAH AND YOGI IS ONLY ONE OF THEM SPEAKS GUJARATI AND HAS THE PM'S EAR

Major Overhaul

It is only by the touch of the Absolute that we can arrive at our own absolute. All absoluteness is pure delight.

SRI AUROBINDO



Perhaps stung by all the criticism of the changes to the current laws, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is actively seeking input from the Directors-General of Police across all states and union territories on a proposal to modernise and streamline over a dozen pre-independence laws. This significant move is notably timed alongside the Lok Sabha elections and aims to update antiquated laws such as the Registration of Foreigners Act, Official Secrets Act, and Explosive Substances Act, among others.

In March, Prime Minister Narendra Modi directed Union government secretaries to prepare reform plans for the initial 100 days of the new government, spurring this effort. According to sources, one major proposal is to merge the Registration of Foreigners Act, Passport Act and Foreigners Act into a single law, provisionally titled the Immigrants and Foreigners Bill. Discussions on this possible consolidation have already taken place with the Law Ministry.

Updating the Official Secrets Act (OSA) to keep pace with technological advancements is also under consideration. The OSA, which deals with espionage and unauthorised handling of sensitive information, has a draft bill prepared with inputs from key intelligence and defence agencies, including the Intelligence Bureau, Research and Analysis Wing, and the Defence Ministry, among others.

Moreover, the MHA aims to combine two Acts concerning explosive substances, currently overseen separately by the MHA and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. The ministry has also sought feedback on updating laws within state jurisdictions, including a new Police Act, based on the MHA's Model Police Act of 2006, which has already influenced legislation in at least 15 states.

The exit of a go-to babu

It went down to the wire, with babus in a quandary until the last moment, whether to throw a farewell party or quietly bid goodbye to a colleague. Finally, the uncertainty over the completion of the Central deputation tenure of Sunil Kumar, senior joint secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, ended with the issue of a final relieving order.

Despite efforts by the ministry to prolong his tenure, Kumar was relieved of his duties, and granted earned leave until July. Initially proposed for a two-year extension, the ministry's offer of a shorter extension was rebuffed by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Sources have informed DKB that Kumar had quite a fan club in the ministry, thanks to his simplicity and down-to-earth vibe. What made him so special to his peers and colleagues was that he had become the go-to babu for all things upstream, downstream and everything in between. He looked after upstream exploration and production matters, petrochemicals, import and export of crude oil and petroleum products, ethanol blending programme and other biofuels, green hydrogen and renewable energy, etc. That's a lot to deal with, for any babu. But even the most dedicated and popular babu is not irreplaceable, and so Kumar had to finally exit.



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

IAS privileges vs medical ethics, Kerala clash under scanner

Tensions are high in Kerala's babu circles. A recent incident has shed light on the tricky balance between administrative authority and medical ethics.

The IAS Association has called on Chief Secretary Dr V. Venu to address the recent doctors' protest triggered by Thiruvananthapuram District Collector Geromick Georges. The 2015-batch IAS officer caused an uproar when he summoned a doctor from a busy outpatient surgery to treat his nail infection at home.

Sources have informed DKB that the doctor reportedly ended up waiting an hour at the Collector's residence before finally treating and clearing the infection before returning to the hospital. The entire situation set off a wave of anger among the doctors, raising serious questions about the abuse of administrative privileges.

The IAS Association, however, defended the Collector, citing the civil service rules, which allow doctors to visit civil servants at home for medical exams, with the timing decided by the medical officer and the costs reimbursed. The babus have also slammed the breach of medical ethics in making the Collector's health condition public.

On the flip side, the state Medical Officers Association reported that the Health Secretary had spoken with the Collector to ensure this kind of incident doesn't happen again.

But as the controversy builds up, Chief Secretary Venu has stated that he will review a detailed report submitted by the Health Secretary before deciding on the matter.

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

WISDOM CORNER

The chief handicap of the blind is not blindness, but the attitude of seeing people towards them. HELEN KELLER

However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. STEPHEN HAWKING

I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best. FRIDA KAHLO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1860: Abraham Lincoln became the Republican candidate for the U.S. presidency on the third ballot at the Republican National Convention in Chicago.

1940: Brussels fell to the invading German army in World War II and was subjected to harsh terms of occupation.

1974: Announcing to the world that it had entered an elite group of nations whose members possessed nuclear capabilities, India conducted its first nuclear tests in Pokhran, Rajasthan, as part of the 'Smiling Buddha' operation.

1980: Following an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale, Mount St. Helens in Washington state erupted in one of the greatest volcanic explosions ever recorded in North America.

LOL



SOLVING A DISPUTE

Two little squirrels were walking along in the forest. The first one spied a nut and cried out, "Oh, look! A nut!" The second squirrel jumped on it and said, "It's my nut!" The first squirrel said, "That's not fair! I saw it first!" "Well, you may have seen it, but I have it," argued the second.

At that point, a lawyer squirrel came up and said, "You shouldn't quarrel. Let me resolve this dispute." The two squirrels nodded, and the lawyer squirrel said, "Now, give me the nut." He broke the nut in half, and handed half to each squirrel, saying, "See? It was foolish of you to fight. Now the dispute is resolved." Then he reached over and said, "And for my fee, I'll take the meat."

SPECTRUM BEYOND THE HEADLINE

Caught in the age imbroglio

Within hours of his stepping out of jail, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal hooked the ball. Instead of name calling the BJP, he hit where it hurt the most.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kejriwal said, is turning 75 in September this year. Were he to follow his own rule that had axed party veterans like LK Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi, then Modi should relinquish office before the year is out.

For the uninitiated, Prime Minister Modi had introduced an age bar to retire partymen from active politics at 75 years. The rule came handy to axe detractors.

Kejriwal is now hurling the same clause at Modi daring him to do what he did to others.

Kejriwal did not say Modi should retire or sought to know whether he would. Instead he tapped the electorate and told them that a vote for Modi actually means a vote for Union Minister Amit Shah: Modi's trusted lieutenant.

Kejriwal's take: the electorate is being hoodwinked into be-

lieving that Modi will lead the country for the next five years. Reality check: "Modi is asking for votes for Amit Shah" to quote Kejriwal.

Clearly, Kejriwal has put the BJP in a bind. It has targeted minds and perhaps led a Modi-driven electorate to stop and think: Will a vote for Modi be a waste?

Not the one to take chances, Shah stepped in. He not only debunked Kejriwal's diatribe but also assured the electorate that Modi will complete his term. The age-bar, he clarified, is "not written anywhere in the BJP's Constitution".

The twist has put a question mark on Modi's credibility. Since he is central to this debate, the focus is on him to see if he acts on what he, himself, had initiated in 2014.

Shah's assertion makes it clear that he won't.

So what does this do to Modi? For one, it exposes his double-speak. Another, it demonstrates his ability to bend rules at will and widen the gap between

words and action: something the Opposition has accused him of, often calling him a liar.

Therefore to say that this is Kejriwal's masterstroke is stating the obvious. Would it pay dividends? Yes and no.

For starters, it has put Modi on the backfoot which is good news for the Opposition, in case it can exploit the issue to its advantage.

As for Kejriwal he has to fend for himself. Age imbroglio apart, he has been crying hoarse about BJP's vendetta politics.

For record, Kejriwal was jailed after the Enforcement Directorate accused him of corruption in an excise scam. Last week, the Supreme Court granted him interim bail.

Kejriwal has charged the BJP with vendetta politics. While painting it black he has tried to emerge a martyr: a Chief Minister victimised by the BJP: yet a phoenix rising from the ashes.

On the face of it a good script but one that has failed to resonate with the people. Clearly in this

case, one man's loss is not another's gain so if Modi is on a sticky wicket it does not, necessarily, mean that Kejriwal has scored.

In other words, making Modi a villain does not translate into Kejriwal emerging a hero. It is not a quid pro quo. Kejriwal is being assessed on his own deeds or misdeeds while the BJP's vendetta politics is an albatross of its own making.

Throwing political opponents in jail, Kejriwal included, does not augur well for the government. If anything it could cancel the grandeur of Brand Modi that the BJP is fervently marketing.

Consequently, nothing stops the electorate from battling the 'if it is them today it could be us tomorrow' syndrome. This perhaps could checkmate the BJP in its illusive 'abki baar 400 paar, or 400 plus seats dream run.

The writer is a senior journalist, political commentator and author.



Kumkum Chadha

KEJRIWAL IS BEING ASSESSED ON HIS OWN DEEDS OR MISDEEDS WHILE THE BJP'S VENDETTA POLITICS IS AN ALBATROSS OF ITS OWN MAKING

Despicable diatribes

Sir, It is with grave concern and shock that we have come to know that Abhijit Ganguly, an ex-High Court judge who resigned a few months ago to join the BJP and is now contesting the Lok Sabha election from Tamluk constituency, has stooped down to an unfathomably low level. He asked the West Bengal Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, what her price was and whether she was a woman at all! In free India, this is the first time one who has served as a judge of a High Court has demeaned himself so much to pass such disparaging, unparliamentary, and misogynistic remarks in public against Mamata Banerjee, a woman Chief Minister, and, for that reason, any woman! One really wonders how this person, who is a personification of arrogance embedded in crudity, got himself elevated to the High Court! We now want to see what action Rekha Sharma, Chairman of the National Commission for Women (NCW), who with such a tearing haste initiated action against Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar within a few hours on hearing that the AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal was allegedly assaulted by him and summoned him to appear before NCW the very next day, is going to initiate against Ganguly for his blatant disparaging outburst.

Tharcus S Fernando, CHENNAI

Election extravaganza

Sir, History will judge the Indian elections as Republican India's first intensively televised elections. Never have close to five hundred news networks, and the print media played a pivotal role in bringing out facts and figures rather correctly. The exit poll outcome also became part and parcel of the election exercise. It was indeed a marathon effort to cover the election news 24x7 and make it lively all the time. Even though the critics were harping on the news media getting kick back from the political top wigs, the news channels and news agencies made neutral views, and that in the end became a bright point in our election front. People were glued to the television sets to get the latest breaking news, and the morning newspaper gave in-depth information on the position of the political race in the best way possible. All in all, it was a collective effort that made this election more historic and meaningful.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

BITM to spotlight Kolkata Metro's contribution to urban mobility



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 17: In acknowledgment of Kolkata Metro's pivotal role in the city's transportation network, the Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), under the National Council of Science Museums, will feature the gradual evolution of the underground mass transit in the city in its upcoming transport gallery.

Scheduled to open May 18 as part of the International Museum Expo, the gallery will provide insight into the global progression of transportation systems.

Through captivating dioramas, the exhibits will narrate the journey of human civilisation from the invention of the wheel to the modern electric vehicle.

Situated on the ground floor of the museum, visitors will have the opportunity to explore detailed miniature 3-D models, including an illustration of Kolkata's underwater Metro system, which commenced operations last February. Another exhibit will showcase the various levels of underground Metro stations and surface infrastructure.

BITM director S Chaudhuri emphasised the gallery's educational value, highlighting its potential benefits for students, teachers, science enthusiasts, researchers, and Metro commuters alike.

As part of the immersive experience, visitors will have the chance to view historical artifacts such as old tickets, tokens, and smart cards from Kolkata Metro, displayed near the exit gate.

Since its introduction in 1984, Kolkata Metro has expanded to cover four major stretches: Dakshineswar-New Garia, Salt Lake Sector V-Sealdah, Howrah Maidan-Esplanade, and New Garia-Ruby Crossing.

AGRA ADDS A NEW ATTRACTION TO ITS HERITAGE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra May 17: A new white marble structure in Agra that took 104 years to build is daily drawing hordes of spiritually inclined tourists.

The visitors often draw comparisons between the iconic Taj Mahal and the newly built mausoleum of the founder of the Radhasoami sect in Soami Bagh, located about 12 km away from the Taj Mahal.

The immaculate white marble structure has become a popular attraction for tourists exploring Agra. Many are in awe of the grandeur of the mausoleum and consider it a wor-

thy rival to the Taj Mahal, adding to the architectural splendour of the city known for its Mughal monuments.

Unlike the Taj Mahal, which was completed in 22 years with the labour of thousands of skilled artisans and craftsmen in the 17th century under a medieval authoritarian regime, the construction of the Soami Bagh mausoleum spanned over a century in an open society.

A devoted follower of the faith, Pramod Kumar mentioned that the construction of the mausoleum was a testament to the unwavering faith, fervour, and dedication of its creators, who were driven by their religious beliefs.



Resting on a foundation of 52 wells, the 193-foot tall structure, all in white marble from

Makrana in Rajasthan, is undoubtedly one of the most ambitious projects in India.

Sparks fly as BJP, Congress, SP big guns roar in Amethi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav raised political temperatures in Amethi while campaigning



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amethi (UP), May 17: Just three days before the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha polls kicks off, Amethi turned into a virtual battleground Friday with big guns from the BJP, Congress and SP addressing major election rallies in the constituency.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav raised political temperatures in Amethi while campaigning.

In his speech, HM Shah slammed nepotism in the Congress and SP and said that Amethi and Raebareli were not family seats and did not belong to one family.

He termed the Congress and SP as anti-Hindu and said that they spurned the invitation to the opening of the Ram Temple.

He also said that the Modi

Government was committed to protecting the boundaries of the country.

"Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir belongs to us and we will take it back," he promised.

HM Shah asked people to make the lotus bloom in Amethi and Raebareli and the BJP will be '400 paar'.

The INDIA bloc rally was jointly addressed by Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav.

An emotional Rahul Gandhi recalled his 42-year-old association with the constituency and said that he had first come to Amethi with his father, late Rajiv Gandhi, as a 12-year-old.

"Whatever I know of politics, is what I have learnt from Amethi," he added.

Rahul Gandhi further said, "I belonged to Amethi. I still belong to Amethi. I will continue to belong to Amethi. I will ensure that whatever Raebareli gets in

future, Amethi will get the same."

Appealing for votes for Congress candidate Kishori Lal Sharma, he said that Sharma had been working in Amethi for four decades and people knew him as a simple man.

Rahul Gandhi said that the 2024 elections would decide the future of the people of the country and the Constitution.

On his part, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav said that the coming together of the Congress and SP was like "ek aur ek, gyarah" which would make the BJP go "nau, do, gyarah."

Akhilesh Yadav reminded farmers about the manner in which they had been treated by the central government during their agitation against the farm laws.

He promised the MSP guarantee that the farmers had been demanding for the Modi Government, if the INDIA bloc formed the government at the Centre.

"The BJP wants to change the Constitution and take away your rights. They are not only against the poor, but also against animals. My farmer friend in Amethi kept an injured crane and nursed it back to health. The government took away that crane," he said while referring to the incident that had gone viral.

The SP leader promised to re-open all industrial units that had shut down in Amethi.

Calcutta HC grants bail to Piyali Das



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 17: The Calcutta High Court Friday granted bail to Sandeshkhali BJP worker Piyali Das who surrendered before a lower court three days ago over a criminal case lodged against her.

Justice Jay Sengupta also directed that she be released from jail on personal bond forthwith.

A case was filed against Das alleging that she got the signature of a woman of Sandeshkhali on a blank paper which was later filled up as complaints of sexual assault against TMC leaders.

After she surrendered May 14, the additional chief judicial magistrate of Basirhat sub-divisional court rejected the bail prayer of Das and remanded her to eight days' judicial custody.

The BJP worker moved the Calcutta High Court seeking bail. Advocate Rajdeep Majumder submitted before the court that IPC 195A (forcing a person to give false evidence), a non-bailable section, was added against her by the police after she surrendered before the lower court.

The West Bengal government opposed the bail prayer. The court directed that a final report on the investigation in the case lodged against Das could not be submitted without its permission. The matter will be taken up for hearing again June 19.

Mercury breaches 45°C mark in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 17: For the first time this season, the maximum temperature in the state crossed the 45-degree Celsius mark.

Kanpur was the hottest at 45.1 degrees Celsius Thursday, while the temperature in Agra and Bundelkhand region remained between 43-45 degrees Celsius.

Due to favourable synoptic conditions and the increasing speed of hot Westerly Winds, there is a possibility of a gradual increase of 1-3 degrees Celsius in the temperature of the state during the next 3-4 days, due to which heatwave is likely to start from Friday and continue during the next fortnight of May.

Maximum and minimum temperatures in Lucknow Friday will be around 43 degrees Celsius and 27 degrees Celsius respectively. The day temperature in the state capital soared to 42.4 degrees Celsius on Thursday, said Mohd Danish, Lucknow Meteorological (MeT) office in charge.

As per the state forecast, the weather is likely to remain dry over the state. The MeT Department has issued a warning of heatwave conditions very likely at isolated places over the state.

According to the state MeT department, the Bundelkhand region and districts bordering

Delhi and Rajasthan will be swept by a heatwave Friday. It will spread gradually to most parts of southeastern, central and northeast UP Saturday.

The entire state, barring the Terai belt bordering Nepal, will reel under the heatwave Sunday and Monday.

Temperatures are expected to increase gradually and touch or cross the 45 degrees Celsius mark



Sunday and Monday when Lucknow goes to polls in the fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections.

"Clear skies and dry hot winds blowing from the desert region of Rajasthan are responsible for the heatwave. Mercury levels will soar during this period. The state will also be lashed by dry hot westerly winds for the next five days," said Mohammad Danish.

The southwest monsoon is likely to enter the South Andaman Sea on its normal date of May 19 and Kerala May 31, one day before its normal date of June 1. Only after this, will the progress of the monsoon in the rest of India be determined.

Phoolkali celebrates 12 yrs of freedom from forced begging



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Agra, May 17: Rescued from the grips of a harrowing existence spent begging on the unforgiving streets, Phoolkali - a resilient female elephant - found freedom in 2012.

The conservation NGO Wildlife SOS swooped in as her saviour, whisking her away to the safety of the Elephant Conservation and Care Centre (ECCC) in Mathura, where she has now revelled in 12 years of newfound freedom.

The relentless trudging along scorching tarred roads led to agonising foot ailments for the majestic pachyderm, including painful toenail abscesses, torn footpads, and festering wounds.

By the time Wildlife SOS and the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department intervened and plucked her from her misery, Phoolkali bore the physical scars of her traumatic past, with a protruding spine and palpable signs of malnutrition and dehydration.

However, with her arrival at ECCC came a glimmer of hope and a chance at redemption.

The dedicated veterinary team and elephant caretakers at the NGO poured their hearts into

nurturing Phoolkali back to health, gradually erasing the vestiges of her painful past and imbuing her life with comfort and care.

Since her arrival, Phoolkali's life changed for the better as the NGO's veterinary team and the elephant care staff gradually healed her and made her feel comfortable.

With medicated foot baths, toenail trimming sessions, relaxing hydrotherapy sessions, and a nutritious diet, her health saw remarkable recovery.

Her mental well-being also improved as the 67-year-old elephant found companions in female resident elephants Emma and Maya.

Iyayaraja S, Deputy Director-Veterinary Services, Wildlife SOS commented, "The trio has grown inseparable, and Emma and Maya's company has played a crucial role in Phoolkali's healing journey. The three go on their daily walks together and it makes for an amazing sight at our facility."

Today Phoolkali is a completely different elephant who loves to explore the vast fields of the Wildlife SOS centre and forage in the natural vegetation.

In order to mark her 12th year of rescue, the team at Wildlife SOS prepared a fruit feast for Phoolkali.

The lavish spread consisted of watermelons, pumpkins, and bananas, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the delightful trio of Phoolkali, Maya, and Emma.



People with disabilities take part in a voting awareness campaign in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

POST-POLL VIOLENCE

CBI looking for 6 absconders; houses of 2 TMC leaders raided

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 17: The CBI conducted raids at various locations in West Bengal Friday, looking for six absconders in a post-poll violence case, including some Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders, officials said.

The Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) search operation was aimed at tracing

the whereabouts of the six absconding accused against whom non-bailable warrants have been issued by a special court, the officials said.

The court has issued the warrants against Buddhadeb Maity, Pradip Mandal, Debabrata Panda, Tapas Bej, Arjun Kumar Maity and Bikramjit Das, they said. The CBI team searched the residences of two TMC leaders



at Kathi in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal in connection with its ongoing probe into the killing

of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker in post-poll violence in 2021, an officer said.

A team of CBI officers raided the houses of Debabrata Panda, a TMC leader from Kathi Block number 3, and block president Nandadulal Maity in the early hours, he said.

"Panda, Nandadulal's son and 52 others have been named in the FIR lodged in connection

with the killing of Janmejay Dolui," the CBI officer told PTI. Dolui, a BJP worker, was killed in violence following the 2021 West Bengal Assembly polls.

The officer said 30 people were summoned for questioning in connection with the matter but none turned up. "We are conducting raids at places associated with these people. We need to question them," he said.



BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik waving at a crowd during an election meeting held at PHED Ground in Sambalpur, Friday



Veteran actress and BJP leader Hema Malini attends 'Ashirbad Samabesh' of the saffron party at Salia Sahi in Bhubaneswar, Friday

Migration key issue in Hinjili, Kantabanji

Though there is no official data on the number of migrants from Hinjili and Kantabanji, unofficial estimates say more than a lakh people have left their homes in these two constituencies in search of jobs in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and other states

"We had to return from Surat in Gujarat to cast votes in Hinjili as our family lives here. Unless we cast our votes, the local Sarpanch may deny us free rice or other such benefits being availed from the government," said Santosh Gouda, 35, a migrant worker.

Similar is the story of other migrant workers. Each migrant worker is paid train fare and food allowance of Rs 500 to return to the village and cast votes, Gouda said, adding that all parties including BJD, BJP and Congress adopt this approach to raise their vote share in the elections.

Patnaik has been elected from Hinjili Assembly segment since 2000.

"It is our pride that our MLA is the Chief Minister of Odisha. During the last 24 years, he has improved certain infrastructure but has not solved the basic problem of migration. Had there been sufficient work here, why should our husband, brother and son go to another state in search of jobs," said Bilasini Behera, of Sheragada area under Hinjili assembly segment.

During Patnaik's tenure Hinjili, a small rural pocket, has become a municipality. Now it has sub-divisional hospital, rural industrial park, skill development centre, fire stations, Harabhangi irrigation project and drinking water supply for every household but migration is still a problem.

"Hinjili is basically an agrarian economy where its residents mostly undertake vegetable cultivation. But, they are forced to undertake distress sale of their produce due to lack of cold storages, claimed Sisir Mishra," the BJP candidate pitted against Patnaik.

Mishra says if adequate cold storage facilities are made available, migration could be curbed



to a great extent. This apart, the CM has not been able to set up even a pin factory so that the migration could be arrested.

"Though Patnaik has been representing Hinjili seat for about two-and-half-a-decades, the area does not look like a VVIP constituency. The officers manage the show here on behalf of the Chief Minister which is again a curse for the local people," the BJP candidate said.

Patnaik is seeking re-election for the sixth time in a row from Hinjili. Congress has pitted Rajani Kanta Padhi against the BJD supremo. Though there are 10 candidates in the fray from this constituency, the main contest is likely to be witnessed between the BJD and BJP in Hinjili which comes under Aska Lok Sabha constituency.

The over 2.31 lakh voters of Hinjili are dependent on agriculture and business. "We are concentrating only on increasing the victory margin," said Nibedita Pradhan, BJD's Zilla Parishad member.

Patnaik's close aide and BJD leader Kartik Pandian said: "You can see ILO data, UNDP data and even Government of India data. The rate of migration has drastically come down from Odisha, distress migration, which is the negative side of migration has completely come down. Naveen Babu has been taking all measures. In fact, we have the biggest skill development

programmes in the country. The World Skill Centre is here in Odisha."

Patnaik is also contesting Kantabanji Assembly segment in Bolangir district. This is for the second time that Patnaik has been contesting from two Assembly segments. In 2019 elections, he had also contested Hinjili along with Bijepur, a western Odisha Assembly seat. He had won both the seats. He, however, retained Hinjili following the request of the people.

While the migrant workers from Hinjili work in different spinning mills in Surat, the people from Kantabanji run either to Andhra Pradesh or Telangana to work as daily labourers in different brick kilns. Many times they face torture at the brick kiln. "Can Patnaik assure the people of Kantabanji to stop migration," asked sitting Congress MLA Santosh Singh Saluja, who is contesting against the chief minister in Kantabanji.

Saluja, who has been elected to the Assembly from Kantabanji four times - 1995, 2000, 2009 and 2019, said the BJD government "failed" to set up any industry in the area and the people do not get MGNREGA work.

"We will vote for the CM with the expectation that our area gets priority in BJD government. He may quit, but if elected, the CM would ensure development of the area," said Basanti Tandi, a woman SHG member.

Bhubaneswar-Ekamra braces for fierce battle

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 17: Even though BJD's Bhubaneswar-Ekamra Assembly nominee Ashok Chandra Panda has been on a winning streak from the constituency for the last three elections, since 2009, it would not be a cakewalk for him this time thanks to the 'rising popularity' of BJP candidate Babu Singh.

Sources said riding the 'anti-incumbency wave' against Panda, Singh has raised the poll pitch by meeting people at their doorsteps for the last two years and has been taking up issues related to sewerage, sanitation, roads and public amenities.

Significantly, the saffron party's vote share in Ekamra seat has witnessed a rise from 13.19 per cent in 2009 to 35.27 per cent in 2019.

Speaking to OrissaPOST, Singh said the dismal state of civic amenities, has put the denizens in this constituency under immense trouble. The situation gets exacerbated during the rains when roads and building compounds get waterlogged due to lack of proper drainage.

"During the last monsoon, the deities of Lingaraj Temple faced almost a hostage-like situation due to unprecedented waterlogging. The severe waterlogging caused inconvenience to the servitors and devotees as well. This is also an embarrassment for us. If this was not enough, there is utter indiscipline in conduct of temple rituals as priests have been whimsically stopping the daily rituals of the Lord."

The BJD nominee added that Panda has miserably failed in



Ashok Chandra Panda



Babu Singh



Prasant Kumar Champati

restoring heritage waterbodies like Bindu Sagar and others.

Alleging negligence by the incumbent MLA, an Old Town resident Nishikant Tarenia said developmental initiatives like better roads and amenities have been eluding the Ekamra constituency for long. "This has further added fuel to the debate of Old Town versus other parts of the City like Infocity and Saheed Nagar," Tarenia added.

The Congress first-timer, Prasant Kumar Champati, said his foremost priority would be to improve civic amenities in the slums under the constituency. Stressing the manifesto of Odisha unit of Congress, Prasant said he is reaching out to voters with the key promises of Rs 3,000 unemployment allowance, cooking gas cylinder at subsidised rate of Rs 500 and monthly allowance of Rs 2,000 to SC women among others.

Besides, Prasant said after winning he would focus on cleaning Gangua nullah and Daya River. "The Congress party never believes in awarding fake land pattas to slum dwellers, which the BJD government did. Upon winning, we would ensure that these dwellers get land pattas for free," he added.

The BJD government, in a bid to revamp the heritage of ancient shrines such as Lingaraj Temple and Anant Basudev

Temple, launched Ekamra Prakalpa in 2019 with a budget of Rs 280 crore. The project, touted to be similar to Puri Srimandir Heritage Corridor Project, aimed to restore the shrines and preserve holy water bodies with an allocated area of 80 acre.

However, the project faced ire of locals when it announced the eviction of commercial establishments and shops to carve passage for smooth commutation. Though, it promised financial rehabilitation for the evicted shop owners, the irate locals hit the streets in protest.

Meanwhile, about the developmental works undertaken during his tenure, Panda said he ensured 24X7 water supply to areas like Jadupur and Dumduma which were facing acute water crisis before 2009. Besides, the water treatment plant at Daya River, involving an expenditure of Rs 110 crore, would streamline the City's civic facilities in the long run, he added. On Babu Singh's popularity posing a challenge to him, Panda said, "In 2019 election, I have faced bigger opponents, but the blessings of voters' have always been with me. Similarly, there were altogether 23 contestants against me in 2014 elections, but none got a chance to win. This time, with people's mandate I'd repeat it again."

BJD's Abhimanyu intensifies campaign



POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, May 17: BJD's candidate for Anandapur Assembly constituency Abhimanyu Sethi has intensified his campaign ahead of the elections scheduled for May 25.

According to sources, Sethi undertook door-to-door campaign and bike rallies in Anandapur Municipality as well as several panchayat areas seeking votes Friday. Women at various places were seen greeting Sethi with great enthusiasm, signaling his victory from the segment, the sources added. Numerous BJD supporters, youths and senior party workers participated in the rally.

With the ruling BJD is gearing up to retain the prestigious Assembly seat, participation of party candidate Badri Narayan Patra from the neighbouring Ghaspura Assembly seat has emerged as a major headache for the rival candidates.

With the internecine squabbles within the BJD have died down, the party workers are hitting the campaign trail in a unified manner. Meanwhile, campaign by Independent candidates has lost the vigour due to lack of participation, said sources.

It is learnt that active participation of BJD's Debapriya Patra in the campaign in Anandapur segment has boosted Sethi's poll prospects.

Jobs, farm issues hold the key in Sambalpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambalpur, May 17: Unemployment and distress sale of paddy are the pressing issues in Sambalpur Lok Sabha constituency, where Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan of BJP and influential BJD general secretary (Organisation) Pranab Prakash Das are poised for a showdown.

The candidates' attention is squarely on farmers and weavers, who are crucial in a region that encompasses the catchment area of Hirakud reservoir and has a thriving handloom industry.

The majority of Sambalpur's population, concentrated in five of its seven Assembly constituencies, relies either on agriculture or the harvesting of Kendu and Sal leaves for their livelihoods.

Pradhan, who is a Rajya Sabha MP from Bihar, is contesting elections after a gap of 15 years. He had unsuccessfully contested the last Assembly election from Pallahara Assembly seat in 2009.

Das, on the other hand, is the sitting MLA of Jajpur. He is known to be an influential or-

ganiser of the party. The prestigious Sambalpur parliamentary constituency was represented by BJD during its alliance with BJP three times in a row in 1998, 1999 and 2004.

In 2009, 2014 and 2019, however, voters of the constituency elected Congress, BJD and BJP candidates respectively.

Pradhan, a resident of Talcher town in Angul district and son of former Union Minister Debendra Pradhan, has been a central minister since 2014 and is banking on the initiatives of the Union government to register a victory.

"We are optimistic that people will vote on the lotus symbol. The BJP-led Centre has established IIM Sambalpur and people are happy with the developmental work of the Union government," he said.

Das, a three-term Jajpur MLA and son of former Janata Dal state president Ashok Dash, claimed that people love Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and have been benefited from the BJD governments' schemes for farmers, weavers, students, youths and women.



"The BJD government's KALLA scheme for farmers is very popular in this region," Das said.

Although a total of 14 candidates are in the fray, the contest is directly between Pradhan and Das.

Congress has nominated former BJD MP and ex-minister Nagendra Pradhan, who quit the ruling party in the state and joined the grand old party a few days before filing his nominations.

The Congress had first named

Dulal Chandra Pradhan from the seat but later changed its candidate to Nagendra Pradhan, who had won the constituency in 2014 on a BJD ticket, after he joined the grand old party. Aggrieved by the party's decision, Dulal later joined BJP.

Nagendra was elected from Athamalik Assembly segment three times, in 1990 on a Janata Dal ticket and in 2004 and 2014 as a BJD candidate. He had also served in the Naveen Patnaik cabinet.

The Sambalpur parliamen-

ary constituency was reorganised in a delimitation exercise ahead of the 2009 Lok Sabha polls.

It comprises Sambalpur, Rairakhol, Kuchinda and Rengali Assembly constituencies in Sambalpur district, Athamalik and Chhendipada Assembly segments in Angul district, and Deogarh Assembly seat in Deogarh district.

In 2009, 2014 and 2019 elections, Sambalpur sent three different party candidates to the Lok Sabha. In 2009, the Congress won by a margin of 14,874 votes, while BJD secured the seat in 2014, winning by 30,574 votes. The BJP bagged the seat in 2019 by a margin of only 9,162 votes.

of the day **quote**

We will implement a uniform civil code, that is our commitment. We do not work against any religion. Everyone living in the country -- be it Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Jews -- are our brothers. I am talking about a uniform civil code because it is one of the policy-making principles of the Constitution

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

I taught the same lessons to Rahul and Priyanka which Indira Gandhi and the people of Rae Bareilly had taught me. To respect all, protect the weak, fight against injustice for the rights of people. Don't be afraid, because your roots of struggle and traditions are very deep

SONIA GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Modi is giving back-to-back interviews, but everything that he says is laughable. What kind of medicine does Modi ji take that he forgets what he said one day and speaks something completely another today. Modi's interviews seem like a comedy show

PAWAN KHERRA | CONGRESS LEADER

X POST OF THE DAY

Some signs when a nation starts going in the wrong direction:-
1. The political discourse become extremely hateful.
2. Media is cornered. And, becomes state sponsored.
3. Clean wealth builders start leaving.
4. Death of education (rational thinking).
5. Data gets manipulated at scale.
6. Real wealth does not grow (eg. GDP/Capita)
7. The currency continues to weaken.
8. Any criticism is an attack on the nation.
9. Rise of crony capitalists, who corner wealth.
10. Over regulation on everything stifles innovation.
11. The general junta starts seeing public servants as gods. There was something called as Age of Enlightenment, which came after 700 years of Dark Ages.

This is how Age of Enlightenment was defined: (an important para that every human should know) "The Age of Enlightenment (also the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment) was the intellectual and philosophical movement that occurred in Europe in the 17th and the 18th centuries. The Enlightenment featured a range of social ideas centered on the value of knowledge learned by way of rationalism and of empiricism and political ideals such as natural law, liberty, and progress, toleration and fraternity, constitutional government and the formal separation of church and state".

SHORT TAKES

5 women killed in road accident

Jaipur: Five women were killed and 12 others were injured in Rajasthan's Bharatpur when a UP Roadways bus rammed into a trailer truck running ahead Friday, police said. According to police, the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Transport bus was on its way to Jaipur from Aligarh when the accident occurred on the Halaina Mahua Highway.

Flash floods at Courtallam waterfall

Nilgiris/Tenkasi (Tamil Nadu): The torrential rain Friday prompted the Nilgiris district administration to ask tourists to defer their holiday plans till May 20 and in Tenkasi district, the heavy downpour triggered flash floods at Old Courtallam waterfall leading to the death of a 17-year-old boy. The Nilgiris district administration said very heavy rains have been forecast from May 18 to 20 here and asked people to "avoid" visiting the hilly tourist destination during this period.



The Jel contested the elections in 1987 as well. Its leader (Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Shah) Geelani also contested the elections. It was because of the rigging in 1987 elections that people lost their faith in the elections

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHIEF

SC SEEKS ED'S REPLY ON HEMANT'S PLEA

The Supreme Court told former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren Friday that it needs to prima facie satisfy itself before granting interim bail to him in a money-laundering case linked to an alleged land scam for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls



Swati Maliwal vs AAP

The Swati Maliwal assault case is a BJP conspiracy to frame Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and she is the "face" of this, the AAP alleged Friday, terming allegations levelled by her against Kejriwal's aide "baseless"



get arrested, I will reveal all the secrets". Maliwal added that party has taken a "U-turn" two days after it accepted that Kumar had "misbehaved" with her.

In its probe into the incident, the Delhi Police took Maliwal to the CM's residence to recreate the crime scene, an official said, adding that her statement was also recorded before a magistrate at the Tis Hazari court.

In the FIR, Maliwal claimed that Kumar hit her with "full force again and again" and she was "kicked and slapped seven to eight times". She also alleged that despite telling him that she was menstruating and in pain, he did not budge.

Addressing a press conference, senior AAP leader Atishi said Maliwal had reached the CM's residence without an appointment and her intention was to level allegations against Kejriwal. "Today a video has surfaced that has exposed the

lie of Maliwal. In her FIR, she has said she was brutally assaulted and she was in pain, and buttons of her shirt were torn. The video that has surfaced shows an entirely different reality," she said.

Atishi said the video shows Maliwal "comfortably sitting in the drawing room" and "threatening the security staff", and that "her clothes were not torn". "The video shows her threatening Kumar. The charges lev-

Bibhav files police complaint against Maliwal

New Delhi: Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar Friday filed a police complaint against Swati Maliwal, alleging she breached the security of the CM's residence to gain unauthorised entry May 13 and created a ruckus there, the party said. It also said that when Kumar tried to stop her she hurled abuses at him. In his complaint filed via an e-mail to the Civil Lines Police Station SHO, Kumar said now she is trying to falsely implicate him by alleging that he assaulted her at the Chief Minister's residence when she had gone to meet Kejriwal. Meanwhile, Bibhav did not appear before the National Commission for Women (NCW) Friday. When an NCW team along with Delhi Police again went to serve him notice Friday, the occupants of the house refused to accept it.

FRESH EXCISE POLICY CHARGESHEET

ED names Kejri, AAP as accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: The Enforcement Directorate Friday filed a fresh charge sheet in the Delhi excise policy case, naming Arvind Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as accused, the first time that a sitting Chief Minister and a political party face money laundering charges.

Official sources said the prosecution complaint, spanning about 200 pages, has been filed before a special court here. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja is likely to take up the chargesheet for cognisance in coming days.

The accused have been sought to be charged under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said. They said Kejriwal has been made an accused in his personal capacity as well as the national convener of his political outfit AAP.

The federal agency had arrested 55-year-old Kejriwal from his official residence here March 21. He is currently out of jail on interim bail.

This is the eighth charge sheet filed by the ED in this case in which it has arrested 18 people so far, made a total of 38 entities as accused and attached assets worth Rs 243 crore. Last week, a similar complaint was filed by the agency against BRS leader

and former Telangana Chief Minister Chandrashekar Rao's daughter K Kavitha and four others.

The CM was earlier called the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the Delhi excise "scam" by the ED. It was alleged that he acted in collusion with Delhi government minister, AAP leaders and others. Additional Solicitor General S V Raju told the Supreme Court Thursday that Kejriwal played a key role in the formulation of the now-scrapped excise policy.

"We have direct evidence that Kejriwal stayed in a seven-star hotel, whose bills were partly paid by an accused in the case," he said, adding that Kejriwal, as the national convener of the AAP, was vicariously responsible for the alleged scam.

The ED had earlier claimed that AAP, being a political party, is defined as an association or a body of individual citizens of India under the Representation of the People Act, and hence it can be categorised as a "company" as contemplated under section 70 of the PMLA. As Arvind Kejriwal was "in-charge of and responsible" for the said company i.e. AAP during the time of offence, he and his party "shall be deemed guilty" of offences mentioned under the anti-money laundering law and liable to be prosecuted and punished, it had said.

SNIPPETS

Brutal heat scorches northwest India

New Delhi: A brutal heat wave swept swathes of northwest India Friday, with the maximum temperature soaring to a scorching 47.4 degrees Celsius in southwest Delhi's Najafgarh, the highest in the country so far this season so far. The mercury breached 45 degrees Celsius at 19 places in Rajasthan, 18 in Haryana, eight in Delhi and two in Punjab. Conditions are expected to turn worse with the severe heat wave over the northwest Indian plains predicted to continue during the next five days.

CUET UG: NTA reschedules Kanpur centre exam

New Delhi: The National Testing Agency said Friday that the CUET-UG exam at a centre in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur where the wrong question paper was distributed will be conducted May 29. The agency also denied reports of the question paper being leaked at the centre. "The exam will be conducted May 29 for over 220 students at an exam centre at Maharana Pratap Group of Colleges in Kanpur. This decision was taken after a wrong question paper was distributed May 15," a senior National Testing Agency (NTA) official said.

Hoarding collapse case transferred to crime branch

Mumbai: The investigation into the Ghatkopar hoarding collapse incident has been transferred to the crime branch of Mumbai Police, an official said Friday. Earlier in the day, accused Bhavesh Bhide, director of the Ego Media advertising agency which had erected the hoarding that collapsed on a petrol pump Monday evening and claimed 16 lives, was sent in police custody till May 26 by a local court. The probe was transferred to the crime branch considering its scope, a senior police official told PTI.

Mob sets school on fire after student found dead

Bihar: A private school in Patna was set on fire Friday by an angry crowd after the body of the 3-year-old was found concealed within a drainage gutter from the campus premises. According to reports, the body of the 3-year-old was found concealed within a drainage gutter. The boy's family launched a frantic search for the boy after he did not return from school and they grew suspicious when school authorities avoided questions about the child's whereabouts, reported.

US understands Chabahar port's importance: MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal Friday said that the United States understands the importance of Chabahar port and it has an important role to play as far as the region is concerned, particularly for the landlocked countries in the area.

India Friday said a "narrow view" should not be taken on the long-term agreement between New Delhi and Tehran on the Chabahar port project as it would benefit landlocked Afghanistan, Central Asia and the entire region.

The remarks by Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came days after the United States warned of sanctions following India and Iran sealing the deal.

India and Iran Monday signed a 10-year agreement that provided for Indian operations at the Chabahar port.

"India's commitment towards the Chabahar port is to realise its potential as a connectivity hub for Afghanistan and Central Asian countries, which are landlocked," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.



BEAT THE HEAT: People bathe in a canal on a summer day in Jammu PTI

EC show-cause to BJP's Abhijit Gangopadhyay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Kolkata, May 17: The Election Commission Friday issued a show-cause notice to former high court judge and BJP Lok Sabha candidate Abhijit Gangopadhyay for his "improper, injudicious and undignified" remarks against Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The comments by Bandopadhyay triggered a war of words in poll-bound West Bengal, with TMC claiming that the comments reflect the "misogynist mindset of the BJP" and the BJP claiming that his remarks have been "misconstrued by the TMC."

Gangopadhyay is the fourth politician in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections to have been served a notice for undignified remarks against women.

BJP's Dilip Ghosh and Congress's Supriya Shrinete were censured by the EC after being served notices for their remarks against Mamata Banerjee and Kangana Ranaut respectively. Randeep Surjewala of the Congress was barred from campaigning for 48 hours for his remarks against BJP's Hema Malini.

The poll panel acted on a complaint by the Trinamool Congress against Gangopadhyay for his remarks against Banerjee while addressing a public meeting held May 15 in Haldia. The BJP has fielded Gangopadhyay from Tamluk seat in West Bengal where voting will be held May 25.

The EC in its notice noted that Gangopadhyay's comment has been found to be "improper, injudicious, beyond dignity in every sense of the term, in bad taste" and prima facie violative of the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and its advisory to political parties. The EC has sought a response by 5 pm of May 20. The notice reminded the former Calcutta High Court judge about its recent advisory which said that political parties and candidates should refrain from any deeds or actions or utterances that may be construed as being repugnant to the honour and dignity of women.



Climate change affecting 85% of Indians: Survey

Severe heatwaves have impacted a large number of people in parts of India for three years in a row, affecting health, water availability, agriculture, power generation and other sectors of the economy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: Eighty-five per cent of people surveyed in India say they are already experiencing the effects of climate change, and more than a third of them have either already moved or considered moving because of extreme weather events such as severe heat, droughts and floods.

Ninety-one per cent of 2,178 adults surveyed between September 5 and November 1 last year by the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and CVoter are "worried about global warming". Eighty-five per cent of the people said they are already experiencing the effects of climate change.

Thirty-eight per cent had to go without enough clean drinking

water for at least one day in the past year and 72 per cent experience electricity disruptions on a typical day.

According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication-CVoter survey, more than 70 per cent of people think global warming affects weather in their local areas and monsoons in India but only 64 per cent usually receive warnings ahead of an extreme weather event.

While 86 per cent of the respondents favour India's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, 78 per cent say the government should be doing more to address global warming.

Sixty-one per cent think India should augment the use of renewable energy while only 14



per cent think the country should expand the use of fossil fuels.

India accounts for nearly 18 per cent of the global population but uses only 6 per cent of the world's primary energy, according to the International Energy Agency.

However, due to its large population, India is currently the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter behind China and the US. Research shows India is

among the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts. Climate change has already begun to alter growing seasons in the country and, with around 50 per cent of its population engaged in agriculture and other climate-sensitive sectors, the damage to productivity and health is significant.

According to the independent think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water, more

Thirty-four per cent of the respondents said they have either already moved or considered moving because of extreme weather events such as severe heat, droughts, floods or others

According to a report by the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, weather-related disasters triggered over half a million (above five lakh) internal displacements in India in 2023 and around 2.5 million (25 lakh) in 2022

Deadly floods left a trail of destruction in the Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand last year

A glacial lake outburst flood in Sikkim in October led to the collapse of a hydroelectric dam, killed more than 100 people, and affected more than 88,000

than 80 per cent of the Indian population lives in districts highly vulnerable to extreme weather events. It is projected that 148.3 million (14.83 crore) people in India will be living in severe climate hotspots by 2050.

international

of the day quote

We warn that they (US) are playing with fire. They have long been in a state of indirect war with the Russian Federation

SERGEI RYABKOV | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

Putin's visit to Beijing is an example of the two big authoritarian countries supporting each other, working together with each other, supporting each other's expansionism

JOSEPH WU | OUTGOING FOREIGN MINISTER, TAIWAN

What European citizens want from us are solutions, practical, realistic solutions that can be implemented

DIMITRIS KAIRIDIS | MIGRATION MINISTER, GREECE

SHORT TAKES

Fico still in ICU

Banska Bystrica: Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico remains in intensive care, the government said Friday, two days after he was shot at close range in an assassination attempt that stunned the small Central European nation and drew international condemnation. Earlier, local media reported that Slovak doctors would meet Monday to assess whether Fico, who underwent hours of surgery, could be transported to the capital Bratislava from the central city of Banska Bystrica where he is being treated.

Tit-for-tat move

Moscow: Russia Thursday declared Britain's defence attaché persona non grata and gave the diplomat a week to leave the country in response to London's decision to expel the Russian defence attaché earlier this month over spying allegations. Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it summoned a representative of the British Embassy in Moscow Thursday to express its "strong protest in connection with the unfriendly and groundless decision" to expel the Russian attaché from London.

Iran arrests 260

Dubai: Iranian police have arrested more than 260 people, including three European citizens, on suspicion of spreading satanism, the state-run IRNA news agency reported Friday. The report said the suspects were arrested Thursday in Shahryar County, west of the capital of Tehran, for "spreading the culture of satanism and nudity." Gatherings where unrelated men and women are seen together are illegal in Iran and considered a sin under Islamic law. It was not clear how such a large number of arrests were made in one night.

Synagogue attacked

Paris: French police shot and killed a man armed with a knife and a metal bar who is suspected of having set fire to a synagogue in the Normandy city of Rouen early Friday, authorities said. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin posted on the social media site X that the armed individual was "neutralised." "In Rouen, national police officers neutralised early this morning an armed individual clearly wanting to set fire to the city's synagogue. I congratulate them for their reactivity and their courage," he said.

Nepal PM in soup

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" will seek a vote of confidence in Parliament May 20, the fourth within 18 months of taking office, days after Upendra Yadav-led Janata Samajbadi Party withdrew its support for his government.



We have no intention to export our military technical capabilities to any country or open them to the public

KIM YO JONG | POWERFUL SISTER OF NORTH KOREAN LEADER

SUNAK, WIFE'S FORTUNES RISE

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and wife Akshata Murty, who made their debut in the annual 'Sunday Times Rich List' two years ago, have moved up the ranks in the 2024 edition thanks to the Murty's lucrative Infosys shareholding. The couple, both 44, have risen from 275th last year to 245th with an estimated wealth of GBP 651 million, making them the "wealthiest people to call 10 Downing Street home"



Vatican stricts rules on supernatural phenomena

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH REVAMPS NORMS TO EVALUATE VISIONS OF MARY AS IT ADAPTS TO INTERNET AGE AND COMBATS HOAXERS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vatican City, May 17: The Vatican Friday radically reformed its process for evaluating alleged visions of the Virgin Mary, weeping statues and other seemingly supernatural phenomena, putting the brakes on making definitive declarations unless the event is obviously fabricated.

Nowadays, word about apparitions or weeping Madonnas travels quickly and can actually harm the faithful if hoaxers are trying to make money off people's beliefs or manipulate them, the Vatican said.

The new norms make clear that such an abuse of people's faith can be punishable canon-

ically, saying, "The use of purported supernatural experiences or recognised mystical elements as a means of or a pretext for exerting control over people or carrying out abuses is to be considered of particular moral gravity".

The new norms reframe the Catholic Church's evaluation process by essentially taking off the table whether church authorities will declare a particular vision, stigmata or other seemingly divinely inspired event supernatural.

Instead, the new criteria envisages six main outcomes, with the most favourable being that the church issues a non-committal doctrinal green light, a so-called "nihil obstat".



THE VATICAN'S DOCTRINE OFFICE OVERHAULED NORMS FIRST ISSUED IN 1978, ARGUING THAT THEY WERE NO LONGER USEFUL OR VIABLE IN THE INTERNET AGE

Such a declaration means there is nothing about the event that is contrary to the faith, and therefore Catholics can express devotion to it.

The Catholic Church has had a long and controversial history of the faithful claiming to

have had visions of the Virgin Mary, of statues purportedly weeping tears of blood and stigmata erupting on hands and feet mimicking the wounds of Christ.

When confirmed as authentic by church authorities, these otherwise inexplicable signs have led to a flourishing of the faith, with new religious vocations and conversions. That has been the case for the purported apparitions of Mary that turned Fatima, Portugal, and Lourdes, France, into enormously popular pilgrimage destinations.

Church figures who claimed to have experienced the stigmata wounds, including Padre Pio and Pope Francis' namesake, St Francis of Assisi, have inspired millions of Catholics even if decisions about their authenticity have been elusive.

Zelenskyy signs law allowing convicts to serve in military

REUTERS

Kyiv, May 17: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a law allowing some categories of convicts to serve in the army, parliament's database showed Friday.

A separate law enhancing fines for those not abiding by army mobilisation rules was signed as well, its entry on the parliament's website showed.

Manpower has long been an issue for Kyiv's military as it fights a much larger and better-equipped foe. The problem has grown more acute in recent months, prompting authorities to introduce stricter measures for draft evaders.

The new law offers parole to convicts who sign a contract to join the army, a move that some officials have said could generate a maximum of 20,000 soldiers for the Ukrainian war effort.

Those convicted of the most serious crimes, such as the premeditated murder of two or more people, rape and crimes against national security, would still not be allowed to enlist.

Separately, Zelenskyy signed a law increasing fines for draft dodgers to up to 8,500 hryvnias (\$218), according to the parliament's website. The average monthly wage in Ukraine is about \$560.

The lack of manpower is seen by some military analysts as Ukraine's biggest problem. Weapons supplies that have been significantly delayed, particularly from Washington, are expected to reach the frontline soon.

Ukraine has already lowered the draft mobilisation age from 27 to 25. The upper limit is 60.

In tandem, the government has also temporarily suspended consular services for men of military age who reside abroad, complaining they were not helping the Ukrainian state fight for its survival.

RAFAH INCURSION

Israel dismisses genocide charges

The country insists it is doing all it can to protect civilians in Gaza



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The Hague, May 17: Israel strongly denied charges of genocide Friday, telling the United Nations' top court it was doing everything it could to protect the civilian population during its military operation in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice wrapped up a third round of hearings on emergency measures requested by South Africa, which says Israel's military incursion in the southern city of Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza" and has asked the court to order a cease-fire.

Tamar Kaplan-Tourgeon, one of Israel's legal team, defended the country's conduct, saying it had allowed in fuel and medication to the beleaguered enclave. "Israel takes extraordinary measures in order to minimize the harm to civilians in Gaza," she told The Hague-based court.

A protester shouting "Liars" briefly interrupted Kaplan-Tourgeon's final remarks.

The hearing was paused for less than a minute while security

guards escorted a woman from the public gallery.

South Africa told the court Thursday that the situation in the beleaguered enclave has reached "a new and horrific stage" and urged judges to order a half to Israeli military operations.

The court was holding a third round of hearings on emergency measures requested by South Africa since it first filed its genocide case at the end of last year. According to the latest request, South Africa says Israel's military incursion in Rafah threatens the "very survival of Palestinians in Gaza."

ICJ judges have broad powers to order a cease-fire and other measures, though the court doesn't have its own enforcement apparatus. A 2022 order by the court demanding that Russia halt its full-scale invasion of Ukraine has so far gone unheeded.

Most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people have been displaced since fighting began.

South Africa initiated proceedings in December 2023 and sees the legal campaign as rooted in issues central to its identity.

There is a tragic war going on, but there is no genocide

GILAD NOAM | JUSTICE MINISTRY OFFICIAL, ISRAEL

BITTER DISPUTE OVER PARL REFORMS

Taiwan lawmakers exchange blows

Taiwan is a rambunctious democracy and fighting does on occasion take place in parliament

REUTERS

Taipei, May 17: Taiwanese lawmakers shoved, tackled and hit each other in parliament Friday in a bitter dispute about reforms to the chamber, just days before President-elect Lai Ching-te takes office without a legislative majority.

Even before votes started to be cast, some lawmakers screamed at and shoved each other outside the legislative chamber, before the action moved onto the floor of parliament itself.

In chaotic scenes, lawmakers surged around the speaker's seat, some leaping over tables and pulling colleagues to the floor. Though calm soon returned,



there were more scuffles in the afternoon. Lai, who is to be inaugurated Monday, won January's election, but his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lost its majority in parliament.

The main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), has more seats than the DPP but not enough to form a majority on its own, so it has been working with small Taiwan People's Party (TPP) to promote their mutual ideas.

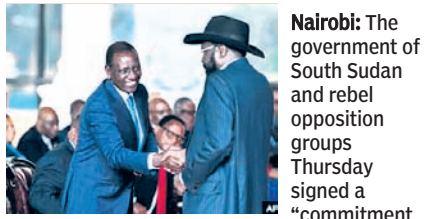
The opposition wants to give parliament greater scrutiny pow-

ers over the government, including a controversial proposal to criminalise officials who are deemed to make false statements in parliament. The DPP says the KMT and TPP are improperly trying to force through the proposals without the customary consultation process in what the DPP calls "an unconstitutional abuse of power".

Lawmakers from all three parties were involved in the altercations, and traded accusations about who was to blame.

SNIPPETS

Peace in South Sudan: Govt, rebels sign declaration



Nairobi: The government of South Sudan and rebel opposition groups Thursday signed a "commitment declaration" for peace during high-level mediation talks in Kenya, described as key step in efforts to end the conflict in South Sudan that has long crippled its economy. The content of the agreement was not made public during the signing ceremony, attended by diplomats and civil society groups. The rebel opposition groups were not part of the 2018 agreement that ended South Sudan's five-year civil war that left 400,000 people dead and millions displaced. Kenya's foreign office said the agreement was a "first milestone" in the ongoing talks in which warring sides pledged their commitment to end the violence and hostilities. South Sudan is due to hold elections in December but remains politically fragile, in part because the 2018 peace agreement is yet to be fully implemented and because conflict and violence continues in different parts of the country over ethnic and political differences.

Visa-free group travel between Russia, India soon

Moscow: Consultations between Russia and India on a bilateral agreement to ease travel will begin in June, a Russian minister has said, adding that Moscow and New Delhi were set to strengthen their tourism ties by launching visa-free group tourist exchanges. "India is at the final stage of internal state coordination," Nikita Kondratyev, director of the Russian Economic Development Ministry's Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects, was quoted by RT News as saying Wednesday. The minister at the sidelines of the International Economic Forum "Russia - Islamic World: KazanForum 2024" in Kazan said the first discussion on a draft agreement was scheduled to take place in June, and a signing was expected by the end of the year. "Russia and India are set to strengthen their tourism ties as they gear up for the launch of visa-free group tourist exchanges. The first round of consultations between the two nations is scheduled for June, with an aim to finalise a bilateral agreement by the end of the year," the minister said.



Joint child custody to divorced parents in Japan



Tokyo: Japan's parliament Friday passed a revision to the country's civil code that will allow divorced parents the option of joint child custody, a change that brings the nation in line with many other countries. The revision, the first to custody rights in nearly 80 years, is to take effect by 2026. It will allow divorced parents to choose either dual or single custody while requiring them to cooperate in ensuring their children's rights and wellbeing. Under the current law, child custody is granted to only one divorced parent, almost always the mother. The change comes as divorces are increasing in Japan and a growing number of divorced fathers hope to stay in touch with their children. A number of high-profile allegations by divorced foreign fathers of child abductions by former partners who returned to Japan also encouraged the change. The revision requires the sharing of child rearing costs by the parent who is not the main custodian. Currently, most divorced mothers, who often are part-time workers with low incomes, do not receive financial support from their former husbands.

Abu Dhabi sees first brewery open as UAE eases alcohol laws

In seven emirates of the UAE, Sharjah outright bans the sale and consumption of alcohol, like neighbouring Saudi, as well as Iran, Kuwait

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Abu Dhabi, May 17: In 2018, Chad McGehee opened Side Hustle Brews and Spirits, an Abu Dhabi-branded brewery and distillery with funky camels on its cans and playful names familiar to anyone living in the United Arab Emirates.

The only problem was it was illegal to produce alcohol in the country, so his company made its hoppy India pale ale in the United States and it then imported to the UAE for sale.

That's all changed as Abu Dhabi has overhauled its laws to allow for the micro and craft breweries that have taken the rest of the world by storm, part of a wider reconsideration of alcohol policies in the Islamic nation increasingly drawing tourists. And McGehee's dream

of IPAs in Arabia became a reality — though it took hard work as they were the first to open.

"The government had created a regulation around fermentation, but the steps of getting a permit, the steps of inspection, all of these things were not put on paper yet. So that had to be built out as we were going through this process," McGehee said on a recent afternoon at his brew pub on Abu Dhabi's Al Maryah Island.

Abu Dhabi long has been considered by those living in the UAE to be more buttoned-up than the rambunctious neighbouring emirate of Dubai, home to night clubs, beach bars and pubs drawing tourists and residents to imbibe. In the seven emirates of the UAE, Sharjah outright bans the sale and consumption of alcohol, like neighbouring Saudi Arabia, as well as



Iran and Kuwait.

But beginning in 2020, Abu Dhabi changed its policies. It eliminated its licensing system for alcohol purchases for drinkers to boost sales and tourism during the coronavirus pandemic. Eliminating the licenses allowed Muslims, if they chose, to drink,

as well as decriminalised alcohol possession for those without a license.

The Emirates still maintains a strict no-tolerance policy on drunken driving and public intoxication. Islam also considers alcohol consumption as "haram", or forbidden.

But alcohol sales long have been a major driver of tax revenue and a moneymaker for the UAE. Dubai Duty Free, for instance, sold 6 million cans of beer last year, as well as 3.8 million bottles of liquor and 2.3 million bottles of whiskey for thirsty travellers.

But despite that demand, there was no local equipment available to open a brewery in the UAE. McGehee ended up importing almost everything for the brewery, nearly all of it coming from the US.

Abu Dhabi represents a completely untapped market for Side Hustle.

"The idea for me was like going back in time, when I started almost 20 years ago," said Mitchell Dougherty, Side Hustle's brewmaster.

At any given point, Craft has

14 beers on tap. So far this year they have brewed 34 and aim to reach up to 100 by the end of the year. The names of the beers include some winking reminders of life in the UAE, including one called "Massage Card Ninja" — a nod to business cards showing scantily clad women that appear under car windshield wipers in some Dubai neighbourhoods.

McGehee said the different types of beers include ingredients from the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Japan and the US, covering a variety of palates for their international customers.

"If you look at Abu Dhabi, you have people from almost 200 countries," he said. "They all have their own definition of what beer is, what craft beer is, or what lager is, or what IPA is, so we're trying to cater to as many of them as possible.

of the day quote

I want to underline much against the advice given by some economists that India should no longer be looking at manufacturing or ramping up manufacturing

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

We need to sign many more Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with other countries and reduce tariffs to compete with the rest of the world

BVR SUBRAHMANYAM | CEO, NITI AAYOG

India is now being called the Office of the world interestingly. And the demand in India is one of the highest in Asia, and in fact the rest of the world

ANSHUL JAIN | CHIEF, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD INDIA

Q4 RESULTS

JSW Steel net falls

New Delhi: JSW Steel has posted a 65 per cent fall in consolidated net profit at ₹1,322 crore for the March 2024 quarter impacted by raw materials costs and some other expenses. It had clocked ₹3,741 crore net profit during the fourth quarter of the last fiscal, the company said in an exchange filing Friday. The company's total income also fell to ₹46,511.28 crore from ₹47,427 crore in January-March FY23. During the period under review, its expenses stood at ₹44,401 crore, as against ₹43,170 crore a year ago. Among the expenses, the cost of raw materials consumed by the company surged to ₹24,541 crore from 23,905 crore in the January-March FY23. While "other expenses" increased to ₹7,197 crore from ₹6,653 crore in the year-ago period.

IIFL Securities profit rises 2X

New Delhi: IIFL Securities Friday announced its net profit more than doubled to ₹180.4 crore in three months ended March 2024 driven by strong growth in all the business segments. In comparison, the company had posted a net profit of ₹86.4 crore in the year-ago period, IIFL Securities said in a statement. Total income surged 74 per cent year-on-year to ₹704.4 crore for the quarter under review from ₹405.2 crore in the January-March quarter of the FY 2022-23.

CONTAMINATION ALLEGATIONS

Hong Kong, Singapore banned the sale of popular brands MDH, Everest after detecting carcinogenic chemical ethylene oxide in their products

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 17: The Federation of Indian Spice Stakeholders (FISS) Friday said India's spice export may decline nearly 40 per cent in FY25 if the issue of ethylene oxide or EtO contamination in spices meant for exports is not addressed at the earliest.

The statement came against the backdrop of Hong Kong and

Spice exports likely to take a hit

Singapore banning the sale of popular brands MDH and Everest after detecting carcinogenic chemical ethylene oxide in their products, leading to a mandatory recall from shelves.

In 2023-24, India's spice exports totalled \$4.25 billion, accounting for 12 per cent share of global spice exports.

"Lot of exporters have orders on their hands and they have been halted to an extent after that episode. As per our estimate, spice exports could be affected by 40 per cent of the volume this year if the issue is not resolved quickly," said Tejas Gandhi, Secretary of FISS, an association of nearly 600 spice traders, exporters and farmers from across the country.

Addressing a press conference on the issue, FISS



NEPAL BANS EVEREST, MDH SPICES

After Singapore and Hong Kong, Nepal has banned the consumption and sale of spices made through Everest and MDH amid concerns over traces of harmful chemicals in the products. As per reports, Nepal's Food Technology and Quality Control Department has started testing two Indian brands of spices for cancer-causing pesticide ethylene oxide. This decisive action marks a significant step in Nepal's efforts to ensure food safety and protect public health.

Chairman Ashwin Nayak said that misinformation is being

spread about EtO, which according to him, is widely used

TEJAS GANDHI | SECRETARY, FISS

WINZO JOINS ONDC

Online gaming firm WinZO Friday said it has joined government backed e-commerce platform Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). The development will enable ONDC to list its services on WinZO Store that will become accessible for 17.5 crore WinZO users



Creditors' haircuts in bankruptcy cases rises to 73% in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 17: The haircuts taken by creditors in bankruptcy resolutions have increased to 73 per cent in FY24 from the 64 per cent in FY23, a report said Friday.

A total of 269 resolution plans were approved by the National Company Law Tribunals (NCLTs) in FY24, up from 189 in the year-ago period, the report by domestic rating agency Icria said.



The new admissions declined to 987 in FY24 from the 1,263 in FY23, the agency said, attributing the same to a higher base in the previous fiscal because of the Covid-19 pandemic-related stress.

It can be noted that the haircuts, or sacrifices, in comparison to the total dues, which are done by lenders when it comes to corporate insolvency resolutions has led to some concerns in the past about the value at which a new bidder is getting the assets.

Its group head for structured finance ratings, Abhishek Dafria said there has been a "worsening" of the haircuts which are taken by the creditors through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) process to a steep 73 per cent as against 64 per cent in FY23, which was already high.

He said the average time taken for a resolution has increased to 843 days in FY24, up from 831 days in 831 days because of the litigations, and called it out as among the reasons why the haircuts have also gone up. It can be noted that the bankruptcy law envisaged a resolution to take 330 days.

The agency feels the average recoveries for lenders will continue to be in the 30-35 per cent range in FY25.

Dafria said the increase in the number of CIRPs (corporate insolvency resolution process) to 269 has been heartening, and added that an entity continues as a going concern through this.

The decline in fresh additions has helped to bring down the ongoing CIRPs at NCLTs to 1,920 as March 31, 2024, from 1,953 a year ago.

In addition to the CIRPs, the NCLT also passed liquidation orders for 446 corporate debtors in FY24 against 400 corporate debtors in FY23. The number of CIRPs that have resulted in liquidation continues to be significantly high, at 45 per cent of the 5,467 closed CIRPs, since the inception of IBC, it said.

Only 17 per cent yielded a resolution plan with the remaining cases withdrawn post NCLT admission, the agency said, adding that liquidation for 960 corporate debtors had been completed by March 2024 wherein the creditors realised a paltry 4 per cent of their total admitted claims.

MOVING UPWARDS

UN revises India's growth forecast

The 6.9% economic growth projections for India in the mid-year update is an upward revision from the 6.2% GDP forecast made by the UN in January

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, May 17: The United Nations has revised upwards India's growth projections for 2024, with the country's economy now forecast to expand by close to seven per cent this year, mainly driven by strong public investment and resilient private consumption.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2024, released Thursday, said, "India's economy is forecast to expand by 6.9 per cent in 2024 and 6.6 per cent in 2025, mainly driven by strong public investment and resilient private consumption. Although subdued external demand will continue to weigh on merchandise export growth, pharmaceuticals and chemicals exports are expected to expand strongly."

The UN World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2024 report that was launched in January had said that growth in India was projected to reach 6.2 per cent in 2024, amid robust domestic demand and strong growth in the manufacturing and services sectors. The projection in January for India's GDP growth for 2025 remains unchanged at 6.6 per cent in the latest assessment of the economic situation.



The update said that consumer price inflation in India is projected to decelerate from 5.6 per cent in 2023 to 4.5 per cent in 2024, staying within the central bank's two to six per cent medium-term target range. Similarly, inflation rates in other South Asian countries declined in 2023 and are expected to decelerate further in 2024, ranging from 2.2 per cent in the Maldives to 33.6 per cent in Iran. Despite some moderation, food prices remained elevated in the first quarter of 2024, especially in Bangladesh and India.

In India, labour market indicators have also improved amid robust growth and higher labour force participation, it said. India's government remains committed to gradually reduce the fiscal deficit, while seeking to increase capital investment.

South Asia's economic outlook is expected to remain strong, supported by a robust performance of India's economy and a slight recovery in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Regional GDP is projected to grow by 5.8 per cent in 2024 (an upward revision of 0.6 percentage points since January)

UN reports improved prospects for the world economy and forecasts 2.7% growth in 2024

and 5.7 per cent in 2025, below the 6.2 per cent recorded in 2023.

However, still tight financial conditions and fiscal and external imbalances will continue to weigh on South Asia's growth performance. In addition, potential increases in energy prices amid geopolitical tensions and the ongoing disruption in the Red Sea pose a risk to the regional economic outlook, it said.

The world economy is now forecast to grow by 2.7 per cent in 2024 (an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the forecast in January) and 2.8 per cent in 2025 (an increase of 0.1 percentage points).

The upward revisions mainly reflect a better outlook in the United States, where the latest forecast points to 2.3 per cent growth in 2024 (an upward revision of 0.9 percentage points since January), and several large emerging economies, notably Brazil, India and Russia.

It noted that several large developing economies - Indonesia, India and Mexico - are benefiting from strong domestic and external demand. In comparison, many economies in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are on a low-growth trajectory, facing high inflation, elevated borrowing costs, persistent exchange rate pressures and lingering political instability.

Markets log gains for 2nd day in row



RELENTLESS FOREIGN FUND OUTFLOWS CAPPED THE SHARP GAINS IN DOMESTIC EQUITIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 17: Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty closed higher for a second straight day Friday as buying in index majors M&M, Reliance Industries, and ITC helped the indices rebound from early lows.

In a largely range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 253.31 points, or 0.34 per cent, to settle at 73,917.03.

The NSE Nifty advanced 62.25 points, or 0.28 per cent, to 22,466.10. M&M was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising 5.97 per cent, followed by JSW Steel, Ultra Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ITC and NTPC.

Reliance Industries gained 0.73 per cent to close at ₹2,871 apiece.

In contrast, TCS, HCL Tech, HUL, Nestle India, Bajaj Finserv, Wipro and Infosys were among the losers.

"Despite mixed global signals and uncertainties surrounding the US Fed, the Indian market experienced a robust recovery, largely fuelled by the outperformance of the broader market and positive Q4 earnings. Further, some index heavyweight earn-

ings surpassed expectations, and midcap and smallcap stocks continued to exhibit buying interest during dips. Auto and consumer durables particularly stood out with strong earnings momentum," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge rose 1.18 per cent and smallcap index gained 1.39 per cent.

Sectorally, consumer durables jumped 2.41 per cent, followed by auto (1.80 per cent), realty (1.68 per cent), metal (1.50 per cent), commodities (1.55 per cent), industrials (1.26 per cent) and oil & gas (1.19 per cent).

On the other hand, IT and tech were the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹776.49 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

Special trading session today

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE will conduct a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments Saturday to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions at the primary site. The special live trading session will have an intra-day switchover from the primary site (PR) to disaster recovery (DR) site. There will be two sessions - the first from 9:15 am to 10 am from the PR, and the second from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm from the DR site.

More Indians taking to skies than ever before

97MN PASSENGERS TOOK FLIGHT IN Q1 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: Be it international or domestic, more Indians are travelling than ever before, claims a new report, as a whopping "97 million passengers" travelled through Indian airports in the first three months of 2024 alone.

"Travel Trends 2024: Breaking Boundaries", conducted by the Mastercard Economics Institute (MEI), provides comprehensive insights into the evolving landscape of the travel industry across 74 markets, including 13 in the Asia Pacific region (APAC).

"In 2024, fuelled by a growing middle class and expanded route capacity, more Indians are travelling internationally than ever before. In the first three months of 2024, 97 million passengers travelled through Indian airports. Just 10 years ago, the same



figure would have taken a whole year to achieve," read the report. While domestic air passenger traffic surged 21 per cent above 2019 levels, international travel rose by 4 per cent.

Indian travellers, according to the report, are increasingly exploring key markets, with a 53 per cent increase in visits to Japan, a 248 per cent growth to Vietnam, and a 59 per cent rise in visits to the United States, compared to 2019, despite a stronger US dollar.

Also, Amsterdam, followed by Singapore, London, Frankfurt, and Melbourne are the top five trending destinations that Indian

travellers are visiting this summer (June - August 2024), as measured by the change in share of flight bookings in the report.

"Consumers in the Asia Pacific region have an intense desire and willingness to travel and are becoming increasingly savvy to ensure they get the best value and unforgettable experiences from their trips. For tourism authorities, retailers, the hospitality and F&B sectors, the bottom line is that costs matter," said David Mann, chief economist, Asia Pacific, Mastercard, in a statement.

The report also pointed out

Domestic air passenger traffic surged 21% above 2019 levels, international travel rose by 4%

how consumers globally continue to prioritise experiences over material goods and the same is playing out in the travel sector where spending on experiences, especially nightlife, totals "12 per cent of tourism sales" - the highest point in at least five years.

Additionally, a burgeoning fine dining scene in India has translated to marginal outperformance of the fine dining category for in-destination tourism dining, it reported.

"As of March 2024, spending on casual dining rose by 49.2 per cent, while fine dining saw a 55.2 per cent increase compared to the previous year," it added.

Mastercard Economics Institute, launched in 2020, analysis macroeconomic trends through the lens of the consumer.

ONDC getting traction

5 LAKH SELLERS ONBOARDED SO FAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 17: The government-backed initiative ONDC (open network for digital commerce) has started getting traction in the e-commerce sector and so far five lakh sellers have been onboarded on the platform, a senior official said Friday.

Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Rajesh Kumar Singh said the ONDC was set up primarily to democratise and make digital commerce accessible to smaller players.

"It has started getting traction in the last two years. Five lakh sellers have on-boarded of which 70 per cent are small and

standards for voluntary adoption by sellers or logistics providers or payments gateway operators.

He was addressing media after the "ONDC Startup Mahotsav", which was organised by the department.

Singh said this collaboration is meant to ensure that startups are also able to access the network to get access to the market.

"The idea is to get the wider choice and value to the consumers and also access to all kind of sellers and not only the big ones," he added.

Asked if big startups would overshadow smaller players, the secretary hoped that it will increasingly get traction for all types of players that comes to the e-commerce marketplace.

INDIA FORCED TO CONCEDE PARIS QUOTA FOLLOWING PARVEEN'S SUSPENSION

India to fight afresh for 57kg

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, May 17: In an unprecedented embarrassment for Indian boxing, the country will fight afresh for qualification in the women's 57kg category after being forced to surrender the quota owing to holder Parveen Hooda's international suspension for three whereabouts failures in 12 months.

now backdated by eight months as compared to initial suspension period of 24 months backdated by six months. In essence the sanction is of 14 months, starting from May 17, 2024."

This means Parveen will not be able to compete at the Paris Games in July-August this year.



In boxing, a quota is awarded to the athlete not the country. This leaves only three Indian boxers - Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) - in the Olympic-bound group for now.

With the final Olympic qualifier scheduled to begin May 24 in Bangkok, India will have another chance to qualify for the women's 57kg weight category. But the country can only field reserves who were registered by April 11. "...which means that



only two boxers, named as reserves in 60kg and 66 kg category, are eligible to compete in Bangkok," the BFI stated.

Athletes included in the Registered Testing Pool (RTP) must provide full address of their overnight location, the name and full address of each location where they train, work or conduct other regular scheduled activities, as well as the usual time-frames of each activity.

RTP athletes must also identify a 60-minute window and location for each day of the quarantine, during which they must be available for testing. Failure to comply with whereabouts and testing obligations results in a whereabouts failure.

In October last year, it had come to light that Parveen had committed multiple whereabouts failures in one-year period and had received a notice from ITA, which is overseeing the anti-doping programme for boxing at the Olympics.

World No.1 golfer Scheffler detained

ASSOCIATED PRESS

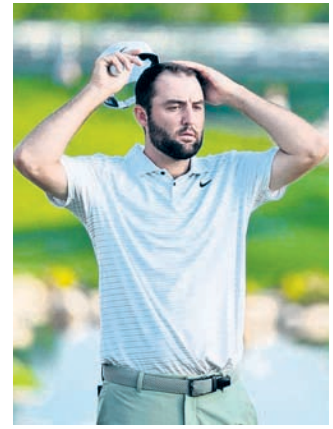
Louisville (US), May 17: Masters champion Scottie Scheffler was detained by police Friday morning on his way to the PGA Championship, with stunning images showing him handcuffed as he was led to a police car. ESPN reported he failed to follow police orders during a pedestrian fatality investigation.

Traffic was backed up for about a mile in both directions on the only road that leads to Valhalla Golf Club, with dozens of police cars flashing red-and-blue lights near the entrance.

Police said a pedestrian had been struck by a bus while crossing the road in a lane that was dedicated to tournament traffic.

ESPN said Scheffler, the No. 1 player in the world who was to start the second round at 8:48 a.m., drove past a police officer in his SUV with markings on the door indicating it was a PGA Championship vehicle. ESPN said Scheffler drove past an officer, who screamed at him to stop and then attached himself to the car until Scheffler stopped about 10 yards later.

Jeff Darlington of ESPN watched this unfold. He said police pulled Scheffler out of the car, pushed him up against the car and immediately placed him in handcuffs. "Scheffler was then walked over to the police car,



placed in the back, in handcuffs, very stunned about what was happening, looked toward me as he was in those handcuffs and said, 'Please help me,'" Darlington said. The PGA of America did not immediately have a comment.

Darlington said police were not sure who he was. He said an officer asked him to leave and when he identified himself being with the media, he was told, "There's nothing you can do. He's going to jail."

Swiatek to play Sabalenka in final

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, May 17: The top-ranked Iga Swiatek extended her winning streak to 11 matches with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over US Open champion Coco Gauff and she will face second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in the Italian Open final.

Swiatek is attempting to complete the "dirt double" by winning the Madrid Open and Italian Open back-to-back. Sabalenka got rid of Danielle Collins 7-5, 6-2 to hand the retiring American only her second loss since early March. It's a rematch of the Madrid final.

Unlike most Americans who can't find their footing on clay when they come to Europe, Tommy Paul feels right at home on the red dirt. That's because he grew up playing on the surface in Greenville, North Carolina.

Paul beat ninth-ranked Hubert Hurkacz 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 Thursday to reach the Italian Open semifinals and follow up his straight-set victory over defending champion Daniil Medvedev two days earlier.

It's the best result on red clay of his career. At least at the senior level. Paul broke the big-serving Hurkacz seven times but also dropped his own serve six times. As a junior, Paul won the French Open boys' title in 2015.

In the semifinals, the 16th-ranked Paul will face Nicolas Pietrangeli, who rallied past Monte Carlo Masters champion Stefanos Tsitsipas 3-6, 7-5, 6-4. Before beating Medvedev, Paul had never defeated a top-20 player on clay. Now he's defeated two top-10 players back-to-back for the first time in his career — on any surface.

LSG SIGN OFF WITH WIN OVER MUMBAI

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 17: Nicholas Pooran (75, 29b, 5x4, 8x6) was absolutely destructive with the willow and having some support from a sedate knock by skipper KL Rahul (55, 41b, 3x4, 3x6) helped Lucknow Super Giants to a comfortable 18-run win against Mumbai Indians, Friday. It was the last match for both sides in this season's IPL. LSG ended their campaign with 14 points while MI finished at the bottom of the table with only eight points.

Pooran and Rahul contrasting knocks led LSG to 214/6 after being invited to bat. In response, MI could reach 196/6, courtesy a splendid start by Rohit Sharma (68, 38b, 10x4, 3x6) and stunning late counter attack by Naman Dhir (62 n o, 28b, 4x4, 5x6).

Chasing a challenging 215-run target, MI were looking on course for a win with Rohit playing the

aggressor's role in 88-run opening stand with the South African Dewald Brevis (23). There was a rain-interruption when MI were 33/0 in 3.5 overs.

However, MI lost three wickets - Brevis off Naveen-ul-Haq (2/50), Suryakumar Yadav off Krunal Pandya (1/29) and Rohit off Ravi Bishnoi (2/37) - in just 14 deliveries to be reduced to 97/3 in 10.5 overs. Dhir, who joined Ishan Kishan (14) at 120/5 in the 15th over, struck some boundaries to the delight of Wankhede crowd as the duo stitched 68 runs for the sixth wicket.

Earlier, Pooran's whirlwind knock covered for Rahul's sedate innings, providing a much-needed impetus to LSG's impressive total. LSG could only manage 69/3 at the halfway stage but Pooran's stunning knock made up for another shoddy powerplay effort by Rahul.

On their part, MI's bowling

woes persisted with skipper Hardik Pandya using as many as eight different bowling options but only seasoned Piyush Chawla (3/29) and Nuwan Thushara (3/28) were impressive.

Pooran's dismissal in the 17th over followed Rahul's exit after their 44-ball stand for 109 runs for the fourth wicket, which gave LSG the platform to push for a total exceeding 200.

Brief scores: LSG 214/6 (Nicholas Pooran 75, KL Rahul 55; Piyush Chawla 3/29, Nuwan Thushara 3/28) beat MI 196/6 (Rohit Sharma 68, Naman Dhir 62 n o; Ravi Bishnoi 2/37) by 18 runs.

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RCB vs CSK
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Stream: Jio Cinema

Napkin that linked Messi to Barcelona sold for USD 965k

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, May 17: The famous napkin that linked a young Lionel Messi to Barcelona sold for 762,400 pounds (USD 965,000) Friday, British auction house Bonhams said.

An agreement in principle to sign the then-13-year-old Messi was written on the napkin almost 25 years ago at a Barcelona tennis club. A more formal and detailed contract with the club followed soon after.

An undisclosed percentage of the sale price pays administrative fees for the online auction, in what's called the buyer's premium. The contract language, written in blue ink, was intended to reassure the teenager's father, Jorge Messi, that the deal would go through.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Barca closer to secure 2nd place in La Liga

Madrid: Fermin Lopez scored both goals as Barcelona defeated last-place Almeria 2-0 to move closer to securing second place in La Liga. Lopez Thursday scored a goal in each half for Barcelona, who opened a four-point gap to third-placed Girona with two rounds to go. Second place guarantees a spot in the lucrative Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia. It was the third win in four matches for Barcelona, who are 14 points behind already crowned champions Real Madrid.

Arjun suffers defeat in Sharjah Masters chess

Sharjah: Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi was stunned by Nikolas Theodorou of Greece in the second round of Sharjah Masters chess tournament here. Erigaisi, however, bounced back to register a victory over Nikolzi Kacherava of Switzerland in the third round that puts back his status as World No.8 in live ratings. Aravindh Chithambaram was the pick of the lot as he carved out an exceptional victory over Muradli Mahammad of Azerbaijan.

India to face Bangla in T20 WC warm-up tie

Dubai: India will take on Bangladesh in their T20 World Cup (World T20/WT20) warm-up fixture in the USA June 1, the ICC announced Friday. The venue and time of India's fixture is yet to be announced. Seventeen of the 20 teams will play warm-up games slated from May 27 till June 1 across the USA and Trinidad and Tobago, the ICC stated. Defending champions England and last edition's runner-up side Pakistan and semifinalists New Zealand are not playing any warm-up matches.

Indian doubles pairs in semis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 17: The top Indian doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty in men's and Ashwini Ponappa and Tanisha Crasto in women's category progressed to the semifinals of the Thailand Open with straight-game wins respectively, here Friday.

Satwik-Chirag outclassed Malaysian duo of Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap 21-7, 21-14 in the third-round encounter. Earlier in the women's doubles combo of Ponappa and Crasto clinched a hard-fought 21-15, 21-23, 21-19 victory over the Korean pair of Shin Seung Chan and Lee Yu Lim.

In the men's singles, Meirba Luwang suffered the third-round exit 12-21, 5-21 against Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn.

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