



Noble initiative

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez, an avid animal lover, urges everyone to adopt instead of buying pets

LEISURE | P2



'US delivered missiles'

The US has secretly delivered long-range ballistic missiles to Ukraine to be used against Russian forces, the Pentagon confirms

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Eyeing more biz

Hyundai to launch its first India-manufactured EVs by 2025 as Hyundai and Kia look to boost their presence in Tata Motors-dominated nascent space

BUSINESS | P11



Indian trio in final

Tarundeep Rai, Dhraj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav sail into the men's team recurve final at Archery World Cup Stage 1

SPORTS | P12

2 Maoists gunned down in Boudh

Bhubaneswar: At least two Maoists were killed early Thursday in a gun battle between Red rebels and security forces in Boudh district, police said. The exchange of fire between Maoists and personnel of state's Special Operation Group (SOG) took place in Parhel reserve forest under the Kantamal police limits, Additional DG (Operation) Dev Datta Singh said. "Bodies of two Maoists along with arms, grenades and other articles were recovered from the operation site," Singh said, adding that the operation was on till Thursday morning.

1,202 in fray in phase 2 of LS elections today

New Delhi: As many as 1,202 candidates, including prominent faces such as Rahul Gandhi, Om Birla and Hema Malini, will try their electoral luck in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections Friday. Polling is scheduled from 7am in 88 constituencies across 13 states and Union Territories in the phase. The remaining five phases of the polls will continue till June 1, with counting of votes scheduled June 4. More than 16 lakh polling officials have been deployed across 1.67 lakh polling stations for over 15.88 crore voters, the Election Commission (EC) said. Voters include 8.08 crore male, 7.8 crore female and 5,929 third gender electors.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'm ready to pay ₹5,000 for cooking gas and ₹1,000 for petrol, but no govt can force me to pay inheritance tax

| MARKET WATCH | | |
|--------------|----------|------------|
| INDEX | | VIARIATION |
| SENSEX | 74339.44 | ▲ 486.50 |
| NIFTY | 22570.35 | ▲ 167.95 |
| DOLLAR | 83.32 | ▲ ₹0.23 |
| EURO | 89.30 | ▲ ₹0.29 |
| GOLD | ₹71,210 | ▲ ₹160 |
| SILVER | ₹80,720 | ▲ ₹223 |

| WEATHER | | |
|----------|--------|--------|
| | BBSR | CTC |
| Max Temp | 42.2°C | 43.0°C |
| Min Temp | 24.4°C | 25.6°C |
| Humidity | 51% | 53% |
| Rainfall | 0.2mm | Nil |

FORECAST: HEAT WAVE TO SEVERE HEAT WAVE CONDITION



EVERY VOTE COUNTS: Students of BJB (Autonomous) College show index fingers as a symbolical appeal during a voters' awareness programme on the institution premises in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

EC NOTICE TO BJP, CONG

The Election Commission (EC) flagged alleged poll code violations by a prime minister (Narendra Modi) for the first time and Opposition leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge by serving notices on the leaderships of BJP and Congress. Though the election watchdog refrained from directly mentioning their names, it shared copies of the complaints against the top leaders which were submitted to it



EC has invoked provisions of Representation of the People Act to hold party presidents as first step to rein in star campaigners

New Delhi, April 25: Taking cognisance for the first time of a model code violation complaint against a prime minister, the Election Commission (EC) Thursday issued a notice to BJP president JP Nadda on Opposition charge that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a divisive speech in Rajasthan's Banswara. Separately, the election watchdog also issued a notice to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, asking him to respond to the complaints filed by the BJP against him and the main Opposition party's senior leader Rahul Gandhi regarding their remarks. In the notice sent to Nadda, the EC sought his response by Monday to the complaints filed by the Congress, CPI, CPI (ML) and civil society groups re-

garding the remarks made by Modi April 21 in Banswara. These complaints had referred to Modi's allegations that the Congress wanted to redistribute the wealth of the people to Muslims and that the Opposition party won't even spare the 'mangalsutra' of women. The speech led to a major political slugfest with the Congress and other Opposition parties accusing the PM of making false claims and the BJP alleging that the Congress was nursing an agenda of Muslim appeasement at the cost of weaker sections of the society. The EC also asked Nadda to bring to the notice of all star campaigners of the party to 'set high standards of political dis-

course and observe provisions of model code of conduct in letter and spirit'. The poll panel also said that campaign speeches made by those holding high positions have more serious consequences. Officials said it is the first time that the panel has taken cognisance of a complaint against any PM. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the EC had given a clean chit to Modi on complaints lodged by the Opposition parties. Then election commissioner, Ashok Lavasa, gave a dissent note on some of the decisions taken by the EC on complaints against the PM. The EC has invoked provi-

sions of the Representation of the People Act to hold party presidents as the first step to rein in star campaigners. According to the poll panel, it has taken a view that while individual star campaigners would continue to remain responsible for speeches made by them, the EC will address party chiefs 'on a case-to-case basis'. With this, the EC has ensured an 'added layer' of responsibility on party heads, the functionaries explained. Recently, Kharge was asked to explain remarks made by two of his party leaders against women. The poll authority issued a similarly worded notice separately to the Congress president with regard to allegations levelled by the BJP against him and Gandhi. The BJP, on the other hand, had written to the EC that Gandhi levelled malafide and utterly sinister allegations against Modi during a speech in Kottayam, Kerala where he alleged that the prime minister was pushing for one nation, one language, one religion. The EC notices to the two party presidents did not directly name either Modi, Gandhi or Kharge, but the representations received by it were attached to the respective letters and they contained details of allegations against the three leaders.

Man found dead; dad cries police inaction

Keonjhar, April 25: The father of a 30-year-old man, who was found hanging at his residence in Chingudipasi village under Jhumpura police limits here Thursday morning, alleged that police inaction led to the 'murder' of his son. Arun Kumar Mohanta was found hanging by a towel from the ceiling of his room in the morning. His father Baidyanath Mohanta alleged that Arun's body bore multiple injury marks. However, the police took the matter lightly and did not arrest the culprits, their neighbours. He alleged their neighbours murdered Arun and hung his body in order to pass it off as suicide. According to Baidyanath, his family had a running feud with their immediate neighbours who were in the habit of throwing garbage into their compound. He said Arun had lodged a police complaint over the issue. However, instead of acting on it, the police hushed it up through mutual agreement between both parties. Subsequently, the differences cropped up again and Arun, along with his mother, was summoned to the police station on a complaint by the neighbours April 6. "The police never acted on the complaints we had lodged earlier. Instead of helping us, police always put us in trouble," Baidyanath alleged, demanding stringent action against the killers of his only son. Meanwhile, tension erupted in the village following Arun's death. Irate villagers refused entry of the police to Arun's house for over six hours. Later, the villagers were pacified after police registered a murder case (110/24) and detained two of the neighbours for questioning. The body was sent for post-mortem. Jhumpura police inspector in-charge (IIC) Sambhari Hansdah said the investigation started following the receipt of complaint. While denying any lapses on part of the police to act on Arun's earlier complaint against the neighbours, the IIC said matter was resolved following mutual understanding. "When we received another complaint, we lodged a case under Section 107 and carried out necessary investigation," Hansdah said.



India sieves online deluge to stamp out disinfo amid polls

Bangalore/Lucknow, April 25: Indian Forest Service officer Surya Sen usually manages a city zoo, but during the world's largest general elections, he has a very different task - rooting out online disinformation in order to prevent any disturbances. As nearly a billion voters head to the polls in a mammoth six-week programme that began April 19, officials like Sen counter rapidly spreading online misinformation/disinformation from election cells that also monitor television and public camera images. "Social media is the primary



ground for misinformation/disinformation," said Sen, whose team monitors social media from an office in India's Silicon Valley city of Bangalore that goes to the polls Friday. Sen works with an external agency where 30 people use keyword tracking software and monitor high-profile influencers round the clock. His operation is one of hundreds of such cells nation-

wide that co-ordinate with the Election Commission of India (ECI). At the same time, Sen's in-house team of 40 sifts online posts by political parties to detect everything from hate speech to fake news that violates polling rules. It is a high-stakes job. In a statement, the ECI said its officials across the country had received 'instructions to be proactive in scotching fake news on social media'. Sen showed Reuters his messaging app WhatsApp, which buzzed constantly with alerts from the external agency flagging content that could disrupt public order or violate election rules, such as use of hate speech.

They were among results thrown up by online searches for terms such as 'Modi' and 'democracy'. Sen did not identify the external agency which also tracks posts from a private list of social media influencers with numerous followers, giving them an increasingly louder voice in shaping the public narrative in India. "We cannot do this job ourselves," Sen said, explaining why the work had to be outsourced. "We do not have the expertise and resources... (It) is a very, very difficult job," he said. Suspect posts are flagged to senior election officials for further action, such as directives to

Facebook or X to remove content or legal action against the posters. Sen added that 36 such cases have so far been registered in Karnataka. Since the last general elections in 2019, the number of internet users in the country has swelled 43 per cent to about 820 million, fed by growing use of smartphones and Facebook, WhatsApp and X. In a similar office in northern Uttar Pradesh, country's most populous state with 240 million people, Reuters encountered just two people working on laptops amid rustling metal racks, tracking online posts by repeatedly refreshing pages.

Now, get SC case info on WhatsApp

NEW DELHI: In a significant step towards digitisation, Chief Justice DY Chandrachud Thursday announced that the Supreme Court will share information relating to cause lists and filing and listing of cases to advocates through WhatsApp messages, saying it will have a 'big-bang impact' and will go a long way in saving paper and the Earth. The announcement on integration of WhatsApp with its ICT services was made by the CJ before a nine-judge bench headed by him commenced the hearing on the vexed legal question arising from the petitions about whether private properties can be considered 'material resources of the community' under Article 39(b) of the Constitution.

leisure



BILLIE'S HAIR MAKEOVER CAUSED IDENTITY CRISIS

Grammy Award-winner Billie Eilish revealed that her dramatic blonde hair transformation sparked an identity crisis, leaving her feeling like she had no idea who she was. In an interview she said: "When I dyed my hair blonde, I immediately was like, Oh, I have no idea who I am."

KALEY CALLS HERSELF MOM OF THE YEAR

Kaley Cuoco, who is best known for playing Penny in the sitcom *Big Bang Theory*, has called herself 'mom of the year'. The 38-year-old actress gave the title to herself after she planned her daughter's first birthday party all by herself, reports *Female First UK*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Today, the stars put you on high alert... and not for nothing. You will save yourself from being swindled. Though you will easily manage to stay ahead of others, you may make a few enemies on your way. It's not a good day if you're looking to buy a house or vehicle, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
Your enthusiasm will be as contagious as your smile today, predicts Ganesh. People will stand charmed by your high spirits. There will be stressful moments, but things will look up later in the day. Take some time off if things get too hectic for you.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to be rather emotional and sentimental, says Ganesh. Your love for performing arts may make you take up lessons in classical music or traditional dance. And much to your delight, your sweetheart will treat you to a surprise candlelit dinner.

CANCER
You are likely start the day in the best of spirits today. Your enthusiasm and cheerfulness will be infectious, and you will be able to lift the mood wherever you go. However, your enthusiasm can be short-lived and pummeled under the weight of some bad news, leaving you distraught. Take a break in case you feel stressed out, advises Ganesh. Things are likely to look up by the time the day ends.

LEO
If one were to put an earnest spirit and a frank attitude together, the result would be a Leo; it's like your hallmark. And with qualities like these in your kitty, don't be surprised if you happen to reach a milestone or two today. Will it be marital bliss or career success? No matter what the area is, be assured that your societal standing shall get a heady boost today, assures Ganesh.

VIRGO
The booster rockets of your ambitions and spirit to work will kick in at the maximum today. Seek recreation after a hard day's work and look to relax at private parties, social-dos and even weddings, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
"Every man has specific natural abilities", said Aristotle. This seems to be true for you today. Your natural talents will be acknowledged and documented at work. This might prompt your equals to hold you up above the rest, and for your seniors to positively encourage you to scale greater heights.

SCORPIO
You will find yourself thinking with your heart rather than your head today, says Ganesh. You may not be able to repress your feelings, and you should not even try. But you should be careful about how you express them, particularly in public as people may judge you wrongly on the basis of it, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, your superiors at work are going to trust you with many complicated assignments. But, after exerting yourself, you are sure to come out with flying colors and have your work appreciated. Do not be surprised if cash incentives come your way. Such may indeed be your fortune, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Duplicating the wisest with your extraordinary power of convincing may have been your forte, but you may have to prove yourself all over again, for Ganesh says you will be tested today. This apart, you are likely to find answers to questions lingering in your subconscious mind for long. The outburst of creativity in the second half of the day will draw the attention of your peers, and this will also be the best time to seek their support, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
For a moment, it seems that you're swamped with problems. But you are brave enough to deal with any ugly issue that crops up suddenly. Ganesh hints at a romantic evening, which may just be time together in a jacuzzi, or simply preparing a meal together. Pure ecstasy!

PISCES
All the dieting that you have been undergoing will finally begin to show results, with compliments galore coming your way from your friends. Your energy and enthusiasm levels are likely to be high. A bright and beautiful day waits, says Ganesh.

DON'T SHOP, ADOPT PETS: JACQUELINE



Mumbai: Actress Jacqueline Fernandez, an avid animal lover, has stepped forward in support of them, urging everyone to adopt instead of shop.

Jacqueline took to Instagram and shared a video on her story section. The clip showcased distressing conditions in which dogs, including two Pomeranians, one husky, and one poodle, were kept by a breeder before being rescued.

The actress, who herself is a cat mom, captioned the clip: "Another reason to adopt and not shop. The animal breeding industry is cruel and often illegal."

On the work front, Jacqueline, who was last seen on screen in Rohit Shetty's *Cirkus*, will next be seen in *Fateh*, starring Sonu Sood.

The film, also starring Vijay Raaz, revolves around a former gangster hired to guard a young woman.

The actress will also feature in *Welcome to the Jungle*, the third instalment of the Welcome franchise, reportedly set for release in Christmas 2024. **IANS**



Ileana explains reasons for hiatus from movies

Mumbai: Actress Ileana D'Cruz, who is currently busy promoting her film *Do Aur Do Pyaar*, shared the reasons behind staying away from the cinema for an extended period. The *Rustom* actress also opened up about facing challenging times during this period.

In an interview with a media agency, Ileana stated that her absence from the limelight wasn't a deliberate choice. She mentioned being selective about her projects, but the lockdown disrupted her plans. Despite filming in 2021, her projects, like *Tera Kya Hoga Lovely* and *Do Aur Do Pyaar*, faced delays due to the pandemic's impact on release schedules.

After her hiatus from theatres, she ventured into OTT with projects like the 2021 film *The Big Bull*. Delving further into her OTT work, she revealed filming for a web series in 2022. However, her journey was briefly interrupted due to pregnancy.

The *Barfi* actress shared that in 2023, she was pregnant for most of the year and subsequently welcomed her baby. She emphasised that it was never a deliberate decision to stay away from work but rather a conscious choice to prioritise being with her baby now. She expressed gratitude for the recognition her recent work has received. **AGENCIES**

Priyanka calls for solidarity, action

Mumbai: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who has produced the streaming documentary *Women of My Billion (WOMB)*, has said that women have borne the brunt of gender bias for a very long time. Her documentary is a call for solidarity and action to help women rise above the odds, she added.

The film directed by Ajitesh Sharma, is a stark and touching chronicle of the fight against all forms of violence faced by women in India.

Discussing the documentary, Priyanka said in a statement, "Women have borne the brunt of gender bias for far too long, enduring a silent struggle

against entrenched social injustices that seek to suppress their voices. With *WOMB*, the aim is to transcend these struggles—to be a beacon of hope."

She further pointed out, "*WOMB* is not merely a depiction of pain and suffering but a rallying cry and call for solidarity and action. We hope this film takes us a step closer to a world where every woman is appreciated, honoured, and empowered to soar," she added.

Women of My Billion drops on Prime Video May 3. **IANS**



PROSENJIT SHARES HIS RELEASE JITTERS



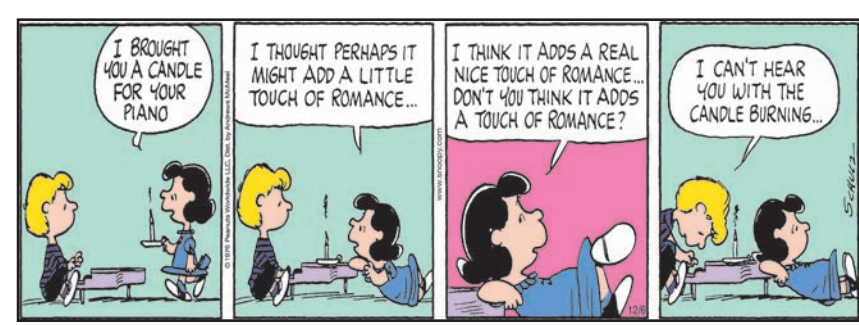
New Delhi: Bengali superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee has dedicated over three decades to the world of acting, yet he still feels the pressure to deliver. Even after working in over 300 movies, the actor admitted to feeling jittery with the release of a new film, as it feels like his first.

When asked about feeling pressure to deliver a hit film, considering his past successes, Prosenjit told *IANS*: "Yes. It is always pressure to do any kind of film, whether it is a hit or a critically acclaimed one. But for any kind of film, when it gets released, that's one pressure. I always believe any film getting released, even after the 348-349 films that I have done, it is like

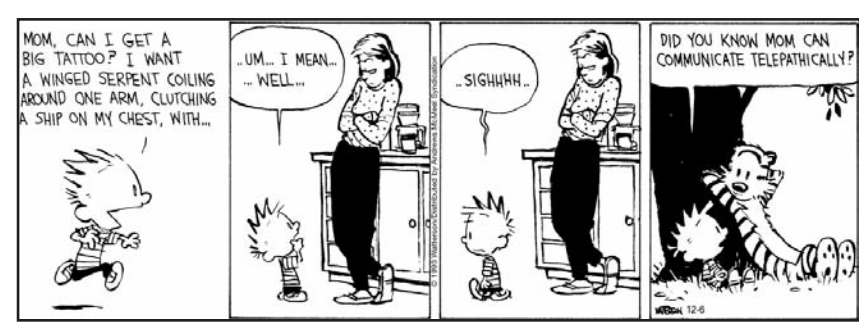
my first film getting released." "So, I am always under pressure. People like us, who have been in the cinema industry for so long, cannot say that we are very particular... You can't say that, but I try to do the right things as much as possible," added the actor. **IANS**

FUN post

PEANUTS



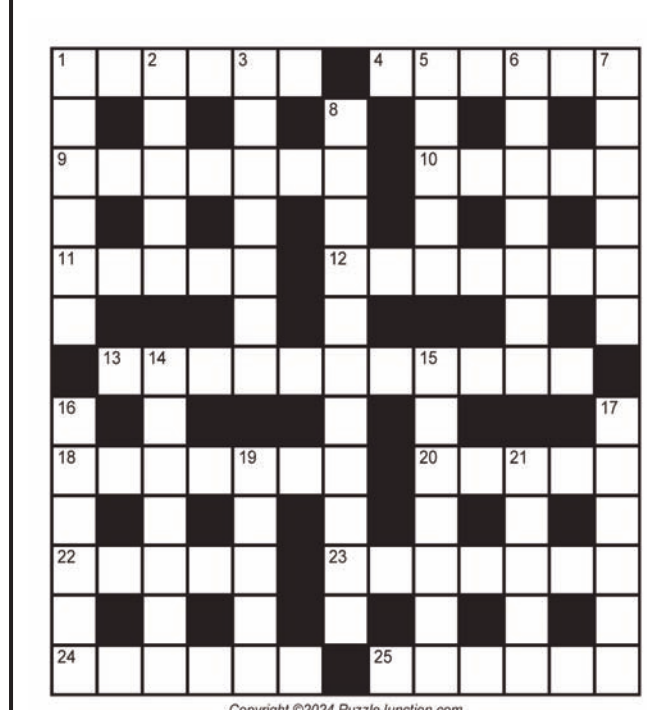
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



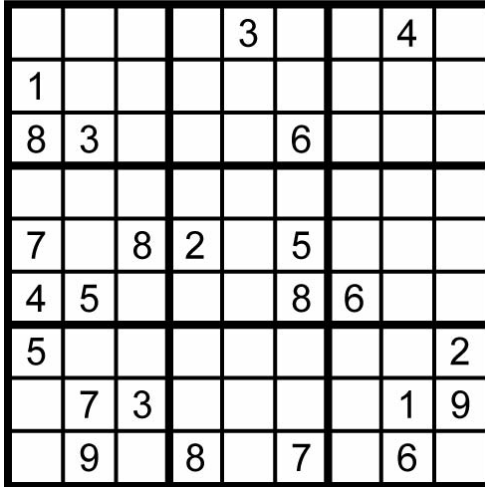
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Prescription instructions
 - 4 Mars satellite
 - 9 Cleaning liquid
 - 10 Religious rite
 - 11 Muse of poetry
 - 12 Svelte
 - 13 Carve up into sections
 - 18 Agave spirits
 - 20 Rhino relative
 - 22 Inhabit
 - 23 Skyline
 - 24 Musical groups
 - 25 "The magic word"
 - 6 Legendary creature
 - 7 Unguents
 - 8 Beautiful handwriting
 - 14 Petition
 - 15 Passing play
 - 16 Kind of apartment
 - 17 Periphery
 - 19 Cove
 - 21 Type of oven

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



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CAR FEST AHEAD

Second batch of timber for construction of three chariots reached Puri, Thursday



Severe heatwave predicted during second phase polling

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Lakhs of voters will have to bear the searing heat when they step out to exercise their franchise in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections, Friday.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Thursday warned of heatwave to severe heatwave conditions in parts of West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh during the next five days.

It has issued a red warning for West Bengal and Odisha and an orange alert for Bihar and parts of Karnataka.

The Met office said high hu-



midity could add to people's inconvenience in Tripura, Kerala, coastal Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Assam, Meghalaya and Goa.

Voters in 88 Lok Sabha constituencies in 13 states and Union Territories will exercise their

franchise during the second phase of the elections, Friday.

Kerala's 20 seats, 14 in Karnataka, 13 in Rajasthan, eight each in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, six in Madhya Pradesh, five each in Bihar and Assam, three each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and one each in Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir, and Manipur will go to polls in the second phase.

High-velocity winds, light rain and thunderstorms could provide temporary relief from the hot weather in parts of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Friday, the weather office said.

The ongoing heatwave spell is the second this month.

Heatwave conditions have been prevailing in Odisha since April 15 and in Gangetic West Bengal since April 17, according to the Met office.

The IMD also said warm night conditions are likely in Odisha during April 27-29. High night temperatures are considered dangerous because the body doesn't get a chance to cool down.

Increasing nighttime heat is more common in cities because of the urban heat island effect, in which metro areas are significantly hotter than their surroundings.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas, and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 notches.

A severe heat wave is declared if the departure from normal exceeds 6.4 notches.

Amid the prevailing but weakening El Nino conditions, the IMD had earlier warned of extreme heat during the April-June period, coinciding with the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections.

Voting for the first phase took place, April 19.



BEATING HEAT: A fruit vendor splashes water on his face as temperature reaches 42.2 degrees Celsius in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Jharsuguda hottest at 43.8°C

Bhubaneswar: Jharsuguda emerged the hottest place in the state Thursday at 43.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Baripada (43.6 degrees) and Nuapada (43.5 degrees Celsius). The Capital City too reeled under intense heatwave conditions as the mercury went up to 42.2 degrees Celsius. 33 places across the state recorded 40 degree Celsius

temperature during the day. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) Thursday said due to prevailing northerly to westerly dry air and high solar insolation day temperature is very likely to be 40°C or above at many places over the districts of coastal Odisha. It also said that there will be further rise of temperature by 2-3°C in the next two days and no large change thereafter at many places over the districts of Odisha. IMD warned heatwave to severe heatwave conditions very likely to prevail in Gajapati and Ganjam districts during the next 24 hours. Heatwave condition is very likely to prevail in Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Angul, Nayagarh, Bolangir, Boudh, Nuapada, Kandhamal, Khurda, Cuttack and Dhenkanal districts during the next 24 hours., it said. The weather office said though the present heat is tolerable for general public but it can cause slight health concerns for vulnerable people such as infants, elderly, pregnant women and sick people. The IMD has appealed people to take precautionary measures while going outside during peak hours (11am to 3pm) as the heat may cause heat cramp and heat rash.



Blistering heat: City's stray animals left high & dry

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: The searing heatwave conditions have not only taken a heavy toll on the lives of denizens but also hit the stray animals like dogs, cats and the bovines hard. It appears that the 'orange warning' alert issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for the next few days has no impact on the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) which is yet to take preventive measures to protect the stray animals, it was alleged.

According to Rashmiranjan Swain who runs an NGO for animal welfare in the City, "In 2023, BMC placed water pots at several



locations here after much hue and cry. However, this year only a handful of water pots have been put up by BMC."

The irony, however, is that after some days of installation of the water pots, locals started using them as dustbins, rued Swain.

"In many instances, miscreants have stolen the water pots. This has disheartened the voluntary outfits to reinstall water

pots," he added.

When asked, BMC Commissioner Rajesh Pravakar Patil said the civic body has installed new water pots in strategic locations like PMG Square, AG Square, Market Building and others. Water in these pots is being filled regularly to quench the thirst of stray animals, he added.

However, some residents of the City have a different story to tell.

Abhilipsa Jagdev, a resident of Chandrasekharpur, said no such water storage pot has been installed by the civic body in this area to keep the stray animals hydrated in the scorching summer.

"Only those who have concern for stray animals have placed cement water pots outside their houses," she added. Similarly, Omkar Sahoo, a resident of Nayapalli, said, "A majority of the residents in my locality consider stray animals as threat to them and a nuisance. So, they shoo away the animals when find them taking shelter under a tree or near their residence. No one offers a pot of water to the stray animals to quench their thirst."

Spl buses ready for Naveen's campaign

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 25: The ruling BJD has readied two specially-designed buses for Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to tour the state during the campaign trail, party leaders said Thursday.

Patnaik, who kicked off the party's campaign from his home turf Hinjili in Ganjam district Wednesday, is slated to address 36 rallies across the 21 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state amid the ongoing heatwave conditions, they said.

Odisha will vote for its 147-member Assembly along with 21 Lok Sabha seats in four phases, starting May 13.

The air-conditioned buses, which cost around Rs 1 crore each, have hydraulic lift, bed, sofa set, audio-visual system, washroom, conference hall and VSAT facility for communication.

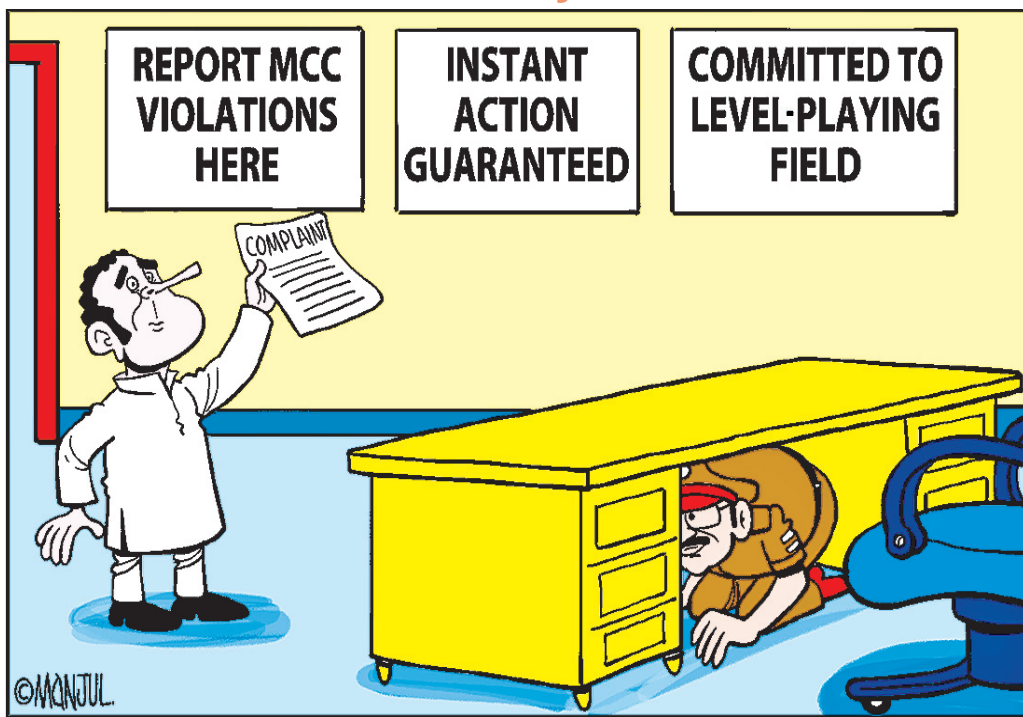
"During roadshows, with the help of the hydraulic lift, Patnaik can get out of the sunroof and address the people," a party leader said.

Along with BJD's election symbol 'conch' and photo of the chief minister, the customised vehicles display the photos of former CM Biju Patnaik, and party leaders Kartik Pandian and Pranab Prakash Das prominently.

BJD had made similar arrangements during the 2019 elections as well.



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



SC verdict on EVM efficacy today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The Supreme Court is scheduled to pronounce its verdict Friday on a batch of pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail, or VVPAT.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta is likely to pronounce the verdict.

The top court had on Wednesday said it cannot 'control the elections' or issue directions simply because doubts have been raised about the efficacy of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), as it reserved its judgement on the clutch of petitions, which also claimed the polling devices can be tinkered with to manipulate the results.

The court said it cannot change the thought process of those doubting the advantages of



The petitioners have sought the court's direction to revert to the old system of ballot papers

polling machines and advocating going back to ballot papers.

The bench also took note of the answers to queries it posed to the Election Commission.

It sought answers from an official of the poll panel to five questions related to the func-

tioning of EVMs, including whether the microcontrollers fitted in them are reprogrammable.

After a two-day hearing, the bench had April 18 reserved its verdict on the pleas. However, the matter was listed again Wednesday as the court wanted some clarifications from the EC.

NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms', one of the petitioners, has sought reversal of the poll panel's 2017 decision to replace the transparent glass on VVPAT machines with an opaque glass through which a voter can see the slip only when the light is on for seven seconds.

The petitioners have also sought the court's direction to revert to the old system of ballot papers.

The seven-phase Lok Sabha polls began April 19 and will conclude with the announcement of results June 4.

Oldest evidence of Earth's magnetic field in Greenland rocks

RESEARCHERS SAID THE EARTH'S MAGNETIC FIELD IS POWERED BY ITS MOLTEN IRON CORE, SLOWLY CHURNING UP ELECTRIC CURRENTS IN A SELF-GENERATING 'DYNAMO', AND EXTENDING OUT AND AROUND THE PLANET LIKE A 'PROTECTIVE BUBBLE'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Rocks uncovered from Greenland have been found to bear the 'oldest evidence of Earth's magnetic field,' according to new research.

Scientists found these rocks to be about 3.7 billion years old, and the strength of the magnetic field to be at least 15 microtesla. This was comparable to the strength of Earth's magnetic field today, they said.

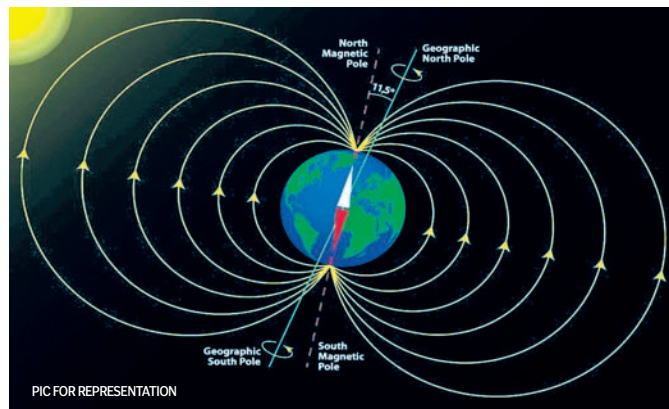
"The fact that it's similar in strength as today's field implies whatever is driving Earth's magnetic field has not changed massively in power over billions of years," said Claire Nichols, a

former postdoctoral researcher at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US, and co-author of the study published in the Journal of Geophysical Research.

The team explained that iron particles in these rocks effectively act as 'tiny magnets' that can detect and record the Earth's magnetic field. The rocks were uncovered from the Isua Supracrustal Belt in Greenland.

Previously estimated to be at least 3.5 billion years old, the lifetime of the planet's magnetic field may now extend by another 200 million years, according to the study.

"That's important because that's the time when we think life



was emerging," said co-lead author Benjamin Weiss, a professor of planetary sciences, MIT.

The team described their estimate as a "more accurate and reliable assessment than previ-

ous studies which used individual crystals."

"If the Earth's magnetic field was around a few hundred million years earlier, it could have played a critical role in making the planet habitable," said Weiss.

"The magnetic field is, in theory, one of the reasons we think Earth is really unique as a habitable planet," said Nichols.

"It's thought our magnetic field protects us from harmful radiation from space and also helps us to have oceans and atmospheres that can be stable for long periods of time."

The findings may shed light on the planet's early conditions that

helped life take hold, the researchers said.

The Earth's magnetic field is powered by its molten iron core, slowly churning up electric currents in a self-generating 'dynamo', and extending out and around the planet like a 'protective bubble', the team explained.

While today, the field is powered in this manner, it's thought that the inner core had not yet formed so early in the planet's evolution.

Therefore, the researchers said, the results also raise questions about how the ancient Earth could have powered such a robust magnetic field.

Vacate medicine stores from campuses: Govt



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP
Bhubaneswar, April 25: In a significant move, Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department Thursday directed all the public health institutions to vacate medicine stores from all the hospital premises.

In a letter, H&FW Commissioner-cum-Secretary Shalini Pandit said, "Certain campus medicine stores had approached the Orissa High Court assailing the communication of this department dated 27.02.2015, wherein it was directed that no extension of licence of on-campus medical stores is to be permitted, and further, no new campus medical store is to be opened. Despite expiry of their licence agreements, these campus medicine stores had been running their businesses in pursuant to interim orders passed by the High Court."

H&FW dept asks hospital authorities to issue 'vacation notices' to campus medicine shops affording a time period of 15 days for vacating the premises

Pandit also said, "The High Court after adjudicating the matters has, vide final order and judgement dated 19.04.2024, dismissed all the aforementioned writ petitions. The court has further been pleased to vacate all interim orders passed on the matters."

"In light of the aforesaid development, you are hereby directed to immediately issue 'vacation notices' to campus medicine shops affording therein a time period of 15 days for vacating the premises. All pending dues as per the last executed licence agreements have also to be recovered. You are further directed to take all possible steps in accordance with law to recover possession of the premises immediately after expiry of the 15 days period," she said.

The department also sought a compliance report with regard to issuance of notices to campus medicine stores within two working days without fail.

Earlier, the HC had upheld the decision of the state government not to extend the licences of medicine stores set up on the premises of government medical college and hospitals.

Delivering its order on a petition challenging the move of the Health department, the court upheld the decision of non-renewal of licences of on-campus medicine stores at government medical college and hospitals as well as district headquarters hospitals, sub-divisional hospitals and community health centres.

Proprietors and owners of on-campus medicine stores had challenged the order of the department prohibiting extension of licences of any on-campus medicine stores citing that the state government had started providing free medicines to patients under its 'Niramaya Scheme'.

The HC in its ruling observed that free medicinal care policy of the state marks a monumental step forward in prioritising public health and welfare.

meeting involving heads of the General Medicine, Trauma & Emergency, and Ayush departments was conducted to strategise and ensure efficient management of heat stroke cases.

Assistant Professor of General Medicine, Srikanta Behera, has been appointed as the nodal officer of the Heat Stroke Unit. Adequate stock of medicines and oral rehydration solution (ORS) has been maintained, and medical staff remains vigilant to respond to any emergency situations.

The institute reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding public health and urges individuals to prioritise their well-being during this period of heightened heat exposure.



FOR A GOOD HAUL: A fisherman waiting for a catch at Jobra Anicut in Cuttack, Thursday

OP PHOTO

AIIMS BHUB OPENS HEAT STROKE UNIT

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: In response to the prevailing scorching heatwave in the state, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhubaneswar has taken proactive measures to address the potential rise in heat stroke cases by establishing a dedicated Heat Stroke Unit, officials said Thursday.

Institute's executive director Ashutosh Biswas emphasised the necessity of this unit in light of the intense heatwave conditions. The unit, equipped with necessary medical facilities and staffed by doctors from various departments, aims to provide prompt and effective treatment to individuals suffering from sunstroke.

Biswas advised the public to avoid exposure to direct sunlight whenever possible and to take precautionary measures such as carrying an umbrella, a wet towel, and a water bottle when outdoors.



The Heat Stroke Unit, located within the Ayush department, comprises six beds and has been operational since last week. Medical Superintendent Dillip Kumar Parida reported that the unit has already treated over fifteen patients. An emergency

meeting involving heads of the General Medicine, Trauma & Emergency, and Ayush departments was conducted to strategise and ensure efficient management of heat stroke cases.

Assistant Professor of General Medicine, Srikanta Behera, has been appointed as the nodal officer of the Heat Stroke Unit. Adequate stock of medicines and oral rehydration solution (ORS) has been maintained, and medical staff remains vigilant to respond to any emergency situations.

The institute reaffirms its commitment to safeguarding public health and urges individuals to prioritise their well-being during this period of heightened heat exposure.

Yi to shape future leaders through YIP

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: In a bid to shape tomorrow's leaders today, the Young Indians (Yi) is organising Young Indians Parliament (YIP) for the first time in the country. Yi is a youth wing of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for young entrepreneurs.

Yi has launched the initiative with an aim to bring the parliamentary process in a new format to the youth of India. Students from Class X to XII across the country will have the opportunity to engage in debates, discussions, and decision-making processes that mirror the real workings of parliamentary democracy.

Students can prepare their campaign pitch reflecting on five topics which includes Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change, Education and Digital Literacy, Mental Health Awareness, Gender Equality and Inclusivity, and Entrepreneurship and Innovation. In open category, a student can choose any topic which affects India's youth.

Students are advised to login YIP website (<https://yischoolhub.org>) and register. The last date of registration is May 15, while the regional parliamentarians' names will be announced by June 15. For more details, students and schools can contact at yi.bhubaneswarofficial@gmail.com. "Our mission is to empower the next generation of leaders by providing them with a platform to voice their opinions, develop critical thinking, and enhance public speaking skills," said a senior official.



IIM Sambalpur to offer MBA in Fintech Mgmt

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Sambalpur, April 25: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Sambalpur has opened registration for its first-ever MBA in Fintech Management, offered in both single and dual degree formats. Eligible candidates can apply from April 25 to May 24 from the official website.

The dual degree program allows candidates to earn a certificate in Fintech Management from IIM Sambalpur and an MBA in International Finance from Sorbonne Business School, Paris. IIM Sambalpur is the first IIM to launch MBA in Fintech Management programmes in collaboration with NSE Academy (a subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange). These programmes cater to candidates interested in understanding the dynamic needs of the financial and technology sectors, claimed the press release.

Institution director Mahadeo Jaiswal said, "With a growing number of job openings and a thriving startup ecosystem, the



fintech sector presents abundant employment and entrepreneurial prospects. We are launching MBA in Fintech Management to impart specialised skills, knowledge, and experience so that you can start your journey as an entrepreneur or intrapreneur in the blooming Fintech ecosystem".

The 18-month programme, comprising 17 meticulously crafted courses across three terms, is designed for working professionals and includes a comprehensive curriculum with 17 specialised courses. Considering the blended nature of the programmes, working professionals from Asian and European countries are also invited to apply.

The programmes also offer immersion at IIM Sambalpur and with the NSE Academy in

Mumbai, as well as International Immersion at Sorbonne Business School, Paris for students who opted for dual degrees. The deadline for submitting the online application is May 24.

The applicant should hold a bachelor's degree or an equivalent qualification in any discipline with a minimum of 50 per cent marks. While degrees in any field are accepted, backgrounds in business, economics, mathematics, engineering, computer science or related disciplines are preferred.

IIM Sambalpur programme chairperson DiwaharNadar said, "The MBA in Fintech Management programme features a blended learning approach with online lectures on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, complemented by in-person sessions at IIM Sambalpur each semester."

3 held over fake bail bonds

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: Badagada police Thursday arrested three conmen who were involved in furnishing fake property surety bonds of Rs 3 crore before a local court, to secure the bail of an accused, presently lodged at Jharpada jail.

Those arrested have been identified as Gurucharan Mohanty, 32, a resident of Tankapani road area in Bhubaneswar, SK Azam Ali, 70, a resident of Pipili area in Puri district and Ashok Parida, 44, a resident of Chheda Kani in Ganjam district.

IC Trupti Ranjan Nayak said that said that the trio arranged the documents of a property whose land owner passed away in 1999. They teamed up to release Sameer Patnaik who has been in

Son of accused, Ayush, conspired to get the forged documents with Gurucharan and SK Azam

prison since August 2022 for involvement in a crime committed under Nandankanan police station, he added.

Last year, Sameer applied for a bail where the court directed him to produce bonds to the tune of Rs 3 crore. The son of accused, Ayush, who was desperate to secure his father's bail, conspired to get the forged documents with Gurucharan and SK Azam.

The police booked the trio under Sections 420, 467 and 468 of IPC and produced them before a local court for remand.

State sets global benchmark in malaria eradication: CM

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: The state has set global benchmark in malaria eradication by significantly curbing cases of the vector borne disease through multi-pronged interventions like 'Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran' (DAMaN), said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on World Malaria Day Thursday.

The CM called upon the people to take firm action saying, "Let's reaffirm pledge to further intensify efforts to eliminate Malaria completely from our state." Department of Health & Family Welfare observed World Malaria Day by raising awareness about the importance of cleaning surroundings, covering stagnant sources of water and proper usage of long lasting insecticidal nets (LLIN) to curb malaria. It asked the people to ensure zero malaria across Odisha by 2030.

AESL felicitates top scorers in JEE Main



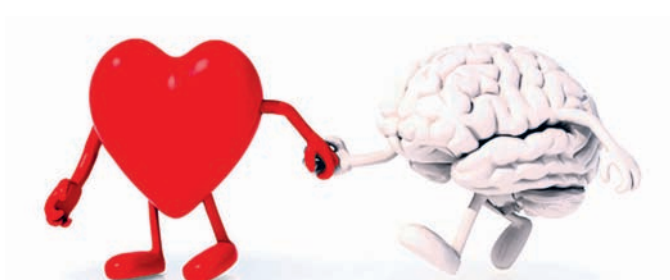
ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 25: As many as 21 students from the state, who excelled in the JEE Main (2024), were felicitated by Aakash Education Services Limited (AESL) in an event here Thursday.

Keshaw Ranjan, a student of SAI International School, etched his name in the annals of academic excellence by securing 99.97 percentile thereby achieving AIR 576. He was closely followed by Swayam Prakash Pani, who secured 99.97 percentile (100 percentile in Physics and Chemistry) and achieved AIR 596.

Other students who have secured 99 percentile and above are Koustuv Sahoo, 99.96 percentile (100 percentile in Physics) with AIR 631 and Debashish Panda, 99.95 percentile with AIR 856. Congratulating the students, AESL regional director Ajay Bahadur Singh said, "Their remarkable performance is a testament to AESL's commitment and determination to providing them with comprehensive coaching and innovative learning solutions, empowering them to excel in competitive examinations. We wish them continued success in their future endeavours."

Genetic factors link heart diseases, depression



We looked at gene expression profile in the blood of people with depression and CVD and found 256 genes in a single gene module whose expression at levels higher or lower than average puts people at greater risk of both diseases

BINISHA H MISHRA | POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER, TAMPERE UNIVERSITY, FINLAND

Studies have found that people with depression run a greater risk of cardiovascular disease. Conversely, studies have also shown that people having cardiovascular disease tend to have depression as well

Researchers, including those from the Tampere University, Finland, said that the link between the two conditions could be partly explained by lifestyle commonly observed in depression patients such as poor diet and lack of exercise

A group of genes could be common to both depression and heart disease, a finding that researchers said

could explain why having one of them increases risk of developing the other. The 'puzzling' link between

the diseases has been known to exist since the 1990s, they said. Studies have found that people with depression run a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, with early and effective treatment of the mental illness lowering the risk of developing

heart-related conditions. Conversely, studies have also shown that people having cardiovascular disease tend to have depression as well.

The researchers, including those from the Tampere University, Finland, said that the link between the two conditions could be partly explained by lifestyle commonly observed in depression patients such as poor diet and lack of exercise.

However, they said, it is also possible that the two diseases could be related on a "deeper level" by sharing biological processes such as inflammation, which are important to developing these conditions. The findings are published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychiatry*.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

NH-26 expansion hit hard by delay in land acquisition



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, April 25: Delay in land acquisition has become a major hurdle in the expansion of NH-26 connecting Bargarh and Bolangir districts. Part of the NH-26 will also pass through Subarnapur district before reaching Bolangir. However, work on a 1,400-metre stretch of road from a temple to the FCI godown in Dunguripali town of Subarnapur district has not started at all due to land issues, sources informed Thursday. The deadline for completion of the expansion project was December 14, 2023. Now however, no one knows when the project will be completed. This stretch is holding up work indefinitely, the sources added.

The delay has sparked concern and resentment among people who commute on the highway on a regular basis. They blamed the administrations of Bargarh, Subarnapur and Bolangir dis-

tricts for the delay in the project. They pointed out that officials have failed to evict those who are forcibly occupying government land. Sources added that the failure of the district administrations to obtain permission from the Forest department for cutting down trees is another reason for the inordinate delay in completion of the expansion project.

The NH-26 is a major road for commuting and connects these three districts with Rajapuloa in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh. It is also a connector with National Highway-5.

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) had floated a tender worth ₹208 crore two-and-half-years back for construction of 72 kilometres of road from Bargarh to Bolangir passing through Subarnapur. The project included expansion of a 21-km stretch from Bargarh town to Barpali into four lanes and the building of another 51

kilometres of road from Barpali to Bolangir. However, till date the officials involved with the project have failed to give a clear idea regarding its completion. Huge potholes, craters and uneven roads are now the order of the day for all the commuters who use NH-26. After rainfall, these potholes turn into death traps once they are filled with water and slush. It becomes difficult for commuters to identify the potholes and craters leading to accidents. In the last two years, road fatalities and injuries have increased substantially on NH-26.

Sources informed that a large number of residents living in the vicinity of the project have refused to give up their lands as they have not been offered proper compensation. Many business establishments have also refused to vacate government land, sources added. As a result, the company entrusted with the construction of the road is sitting idle. Even though some of the trees that were a hindrance to the project have been cut off, many still remain, the sources pointed out.

Residents of Bargarh, Subarnapur and Bolangir districts meanwhile said that it is high time that officials step in to expedite the project. They pointed out that they are suffering due to the apathetic attitude shown by them. Some of the commuters added that NHAI authorities should step in for completion of the project or people will continue to suffer in future also.



BEATING THE HEAT: A solitary man pedals on the deserted Chaurnpur bridge over the Mahanadi river in Sambalpur district, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Girl trampled to death by jumbo

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, April 25: A 20-year-old girl was trampled to death by an elephant Thursday at a jungle near Gurutuan village under Champua forest range in Keonjhar district.

The deceased was identified as Somabari Munda, a native of the same village under Jajang panchayat. She was on her way to her maternal grandfather's house using a road through the jungle when she came face to face with an elephant herd. One of the elephants attacked her and trampled her to death on the spot.

Officials from Bamebari police station and Forest department staff reached the spot and launched an investigation after sending her body for post-mortem. Bamebari IIC Dipti Ranjan Sahu confirmed the development as death due to elephant attack.

A case of unnatural death has been registered at the police station. Forest department staff have driven back the herd into the forest, officials informed.

Couple critically injured as wife tries to die by suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 25: A couple suffered serious burn injuries during a suicide bid following an argument at Kathakata village under Anandapur police limits in Keonjhar district, late Wednesday night. The injured couple was identified as Sanjay Ho and his wife Sasmita.

Sources informed that Sanjay and Sasmita used to quarrel frequently and were not on good terms for the last few months. Their frequent arguments attracted the attention of other villagers also. They again had a bitter argument Wednesday evening following which Sasmita poured kerosene and set herself on fire.

As Sasmita screamed in pain, Sanjay tried to save her by dousing the flames. In the process, his clothes also caught fire and he suffered serious injuries. Hearing their cries, neighbours rushed to their rescue and doused the flames.

Both were initially rushed to



the Anandapur sub-divisional hospital for treatment. However, after their conditions deteriorated, the two were shifted to the SCB Medical College & Hospital in Cuttack. According to doctors at the medical facility both are still in critical condition.

On being informed, police rushed to the spot and launched an investigation. Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), Anandapur, Prasant Behera

said, "We are waiting for the two injured persons to regain consciousness to get more details regarding the incident. Their neighbours informed that the two used to have arguments on a regular basis."

The entire incident has come as a huge shock to others leaving in the village. They said that they never thought that the situation would take such a drastic turn.

8 trucks seized for ferrying iron ore lumps

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, April 25: Acting on a tip-off, officials of the district Mining department seized eight trucks late Wednesday night while the vehicles were illegally transporting iron ore lumps instead of iron ore fines in violation of norms from the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC)-owned Khandabandha mines under this division in Keonjhar district. The officials seized the trucks when the vehicles reached a weigh bridge station at Nayagarh. A



probe has been initiated to find out how the trucks were allowed to carry the iron ore lumps.

Officials informed that the trucks were carrying the iron ore lumps to the godown of a West Bengal-based company known as 'Dhanbad Fuels'.

When contacted, a mining Department official informed that permission has been given only for the transportation of iron ore fines from Khandabandha mines. Hence the vehicles had violated rules by carrying iron ore lumps, he added.

Man gets 20 yrs RI for raping minor

Balase: A special POCSO Court here Thursday convicted Tanmaya Dhupal for raping a 14-year-old girl and sentenced him to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment. Judge Ranjan Kumar Sutar also imposed a fine of ₹5,000 on the convict. If Dhupal is unable to pay the penalty he will have to undergo an additional two years in prison, the judge ordered. Dhupal, a resident of Bishnupur village, had lured the minor of the same locality to his house and had raped her. Initially, the girl did not narrate her ordeal to anyone. However, when she showed symptoms of pregnancy, her family members took her to a doctor. After confirmation from the doctor, the victim's family members came to know about the entire incident. A complaint was lodged at the Gopalpur police station, following which the cops arrested Dhupal and registered a case (No-133/23) against him in November 2023. The judge pronounced the verdict after examining 13 witnesses and going through 18 documents, said special public prosecutor Pranab Kumar Panda who was pleading the case from the government's side.



CULTURAL SHOW: Artistes perform at the Hingula Lok Mahotsav in Talcher of Angul district Wednesday night

OP PHOTO

Drone crash-lands near BJP MP's house

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, April 25: The crash-landing of a drone in front of the rented house of Suresh Pujari, the sitting BJP MP of Bargarh Lok Sabha constituency created a consternation Thursday. Police were informed about the development and they arrived at the spot quickly. Later on, the police said that the drone belonged to the Forest department.

The drone flew over Pujari's house for a few minutes before it fell after crashing against an electric tower. Immediately people gathered around it and rumours flew thick and fast. When the incident happened, Pujari was not present in the house located at Gandhi Square in Belpahar locality of this district.

After the caretaker of the house informed Pujari, the latter called up Jharsuguda SP,



Parmar Smit Parshottamdas. "We immediately sent a team from the Belpahar police station to the spot and the drone was seized. Further investigation is on," the SP informed. "We later came to know that the drone was being used for plantation survey by the Forest department. However, even then we are investigating the matter," Parshottamdas added.

Pujari this time has been nominated as a candidate for the Brajrajnagar Assembly constituency while Pradip Purohit will contest in the Lok Sabha seat.

2 killed after bike collides with scooter

Keonjhar: In what appears to be an unending tale of road mishaps in Odisha, two persons were killed after a bike collided with a scooter on National Highway-20 near Dhenikote under Ghatagaon police station limits in this district, Thursday. The deceased were identified as Debakanta Majhi (22) of Tikira village and Bibhu Nandan Pradhan who was a student and staying at Golabandha village under Ghatagaon block. Sources said that Debakanta was driving a bike (Registration No OD-09T 8772) and going towards his village when the accident happened. He collided with the scooter (Registration No OR-09L 4214) driven by Bibhu coming from the opposite direction. Due to the impact both suffered serious injuries. Debakanta and Bibhu were rushed to the Ghatagaon CHC where they died while undergoing treatment.

RSP scholarships for 31 students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 25: As a part of its CSR initiative, the Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) has recently awarded scholarships to 31 students, as per a release issued by the organisation. All the students are currently pursuing various courses and belong to the SC/ST category or to the economically backward segment. A total of ₹27 lakh have been spent for awarding the scholarships.

Every year 10 boys and 10 girls pursuing graduate courses and 11 students (both boys and girls) studying in PG courses are selected for the scholarships. Each of the students gets ₹30,000 as financial assistance annually for the courses they pursue.



The amount is paid in installments depending on the tenure of the courses.

In a ceremony organised at the 'Institute of Periphery Development', under the CSR de-

partment, Sudip Pal Chowdhury, CGM (Projects and Modernisation) handed over the appreciation letters and cheques to the 31 students who have been inducted under the scheme this year.

Kids' parks lie in shambles in Bonai

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 25: Due to negligence of officials of the local administration, two parks meant for children in Bonai town are in complete shambles, locals said. These two parks were inaugurated few years back with lot of fanfare.

Currently they wear a dilapidated look. "When the parks were set up, all of us were happy. Now no one visits the parks anymore because they are in shambles," said Rabindra Pradhan, a resident of Bonai town.

The park in front of the 'Niyam Centre' still has a few iron bars and poles for kids to ride on. However, other stuff like slides and swings have gone missing. Interestingly, the park is located in a high security area with top



officials of Bonai town staying close to the park. "Despite the park being located in a VIP area, no one is bothered about its maintenance," opined another local. The disappearance of lights and the untamed growth of plants have given the park a 'haunted' look. People stay away from it once dusk sets in.

Likewise, the other park in front of the Sri Aurobindo School

is no better. The place is now a safe haven for anti-socials. All the installations and beautifications have long disappeared.

Bonai sub-collector Suranjan Sahoo assured that the matter will be looked into once Bonai gets NAC status. "We will take all measures to restore the beauty of the parks, once the elections are over," Sahoo said.

FOCUS DIPLOMACY

TACKLING GLOBAL CRITICISM



We cannot dismiss all rankings and reports. We need to be sensitive to them and use them as self-introspection



DK Giri

INSTEAD OF BEING DEFENSIVE, WE SHOULD DEEPEN OUR DEMOCRACY TO SILENCE THE CRITICS



Brahma Chellaney

Not only do Western sanctions fail to change the behaviour of the government being targeted, whether Russia, Iran, Myanmar, or Syria; they also almost invariably advance China's commercial and strategic interests

The West's Decline

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than two years ago, the West has desperately sought ways to punish Russia without harming itself in the process. It has mostly failed. So far, not even unprecedented sanctions have derailed Russia's economy, let alone compelled the Kremlin to change its behaviour. Instead, Russia has pivoted to a war economy: it now produces nearly three times as many munitions as NATO, including more missiles than it was producing before the war began.

Much of the West, by contrast, is facing economic stagnation, owing not least to the switch away from cheap Russian energy to costlier supplies from elsewhere. The United Kingdom is officially in recession, and there has been no growth in the eurozone since the third quarter of 2022, when gas prices surged, leading the European Central Bank to start raising interest rates to stem runaway inflation. Higher fuel prices have helped turn former economic powerhouse Germany into the worst-performing developed economy.

European growth is not the only casualty of Western sanctions against Russia. The US dollar – which was already facing “stealth erosion” before the Ukraine war – appears to have lost some of its global influence, even in oil markets, as countries pursue alternatives to the greenback in response to the West's decision to weaponize finance. Meanwhile, rising gold purchases by central banks in China, Turkey, India, Kazakhstan, and Eastern Europe, coupled with greater geopolitical uncertainty, have helped drive prices to a record high.

The European Commission's move to seize the profits generated by frozen Russian central-bank assets would reinforce these trends. Given the centrality of central banks in the global financial system, their assets have historically been considered sacrosanct. But Russia's assets – over two-thirds of which are held by the Brussels-based clearing house Euroclear – were frozen unilaterally by Western governments, without authorisation from the International Court of Justice or the United Nations Security Council, as required by international law.

Now, with “Ukraine fatigue” weakening Western support for continued military and financial aid, the European Commission wants to start tapping the €3.25 billion (\$3.45 billion) in annual accrued interest on the frozen assets. Under its current proposal, most of the revenues would be channelled through the European Peace Facility, which refunds EU states for sending arms to Ukraine, with the rest going to the EU's central budget, to be used to strengthen Ukraine's weapons-manufacturing capacity.

But such a move would be unlikely to help turn the tide in the Ukraine war. What Ukraine really needs more than weapons and funds are new recruits to replenish the ranks of its exhausted and depleted forces. Here, its options are limited: not even draconian conscription practices have been able to offset the growing troop shortfall.

What seizing Russia's earnings would do is set a dangerous precedent in international law and deal a blow to Europe's credibility as a champion of a rules-based world order; the Commission's proposed “legal pathway” amounts to lawfare, pure and simple. It would also signal to other countries that their money is not safe in the West, thereby strengthening further their incentive to seek alternatives to Western institutions and currencies. If this trend continues, the West's financial-sanctions arsenal will be weakened considerably. Already, the West's routine use of sanctions is reducing their impact.

Not only do Western sanctions fail to change the behaviour of the government being targeted, whether Russia, Iran, Myanmar, or Syria; they also almost invariably advance China's commercial and strategic interests. In fact, no country is profiting more from Russia's invasion of Ukraine – and the West's response to it – than China.

Beyond expanding the international use of the renminbi, Western sanctions against Russia created an opportunity for China to secure greater cheap supplies of Russian oil, gas, and grains. Transported along secure overland routes, these supplies would likely continue being delivered even in the event of a war with the West, easing a major source of anxiety for China over its designs on Taiwan.

Moreover, China has more than doubled its nuclear-weapons arsenal since 2020, and it is expanding its conventional forces faster than any other country has since World War II. Yet the West is so fixated on punishing Russia that China has managed to avoid much scrutiny, let alone pushback. US President Joe Biden, for example, is now attempting to “manage competition” with China by laying greater stress on diplomacy than on deterrence, with his latest budget woefully underfunding key enabling capabilities for the Indo-Pacific and even slashing the production target for Virginia-class submarines from two per year to just one. Small wonder that China is quietly oiling the Kremlin's war machine. For China, the longer the West stays distracted, the better.

Make no mistake: China poses a far greater threat to Western interests and the rules-based world order than Russia. Whereas Russia's designs are largely confined to its neighbourhood, China has the ambition to supplant the US as the preeminent global power. It may well also have the means: China's population and economy are about ten times larger than Russia's, and China spends some four times as much as Russia on its military.

The West, which accounts for just 12% of the global population, should not underestimate the potential consequences of simultaneously enabling China's increasingly aggressive rise and alienating the rest of the world. Unless it abandons its strategic overreach vis-à-vis Russia and turns its attention to its real rival, China, the West is likely to lose its global supremacy, including its hold on the international financial architecture.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

“The moment you have in your heart this extraordinary thing called love and feel the depth, the delight, the ecstasy of it, you will discover that for you the world is transformed.”
JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

“A man should not strive to eliminate his complexes but to get into accord with them: they are legitimately what directs his conduct in the world.”
SIGMUND FREUD

“The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.”
BERTRAND RUSSELL

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

The impact of migration on elections



Debashish Mitra

THE DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE IN INDIA IS MANIFEST IN THE STORIES OF ITS MIGRANT LABOURERS

The voting percentage on 19 April, the first day of polling for the general and state elections underway, has shown some interesting numbers. Whilst the national average was over 60%, there were outliers. Bihar with 48% and Uttarakhnad with 53% at the lower end, and North Bengal with more than 82% at the higher end. In these numbers, lies the story of migrant labour, those who moved temporarily and those who became domiciled.

Whilst UP (mainly from Central and Eastern UP) and Bihar contribute the maximum number of migrant labourers to the rest of the country, the story of the migrant labourers in North Bengal, is different. They are mainly tribals from the Santhal regions of Eastern India, now in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand, who were employed over a hundred years ago, mainly in the tea industry. They now constitute a distinct voting constituency. Intriguingly, all these regions were part of British Bengal, prior to its first Partition in 1905,

and had a long history of outbound migration, including the nefarious indentured labour system during the British era. Migration for work, therefore is not a new phenomenon in these areas, it's almost a tradition.

Overtime, migrants become settlers. Signs of which are already visible, where long term migrants from different parts of India, irrespective of socio-economic class, have become domiciled and have voter rights. Old metros like Delhi and Mumbai have had that for years, as have new metros like Bangalore where software programmers from all over India, and paan walas from UP, who dominate the trade, now have ‘domicile’ voting rights.

There are two important aspects of migration, ‘out’ migration (from where people leave) and ‘in’ migration (where people go). In India, these categories have a clear trend, which was startlingly apparent, during the COVID lockdown. When hundreds of millions, walked, cycled, and somehow travelled braving all sorts of challenges including police lathis or being

deluged with chlorine sprays to ‘disinfect’ them, to get back home.

‘Out’ migration is mainly from the eastern parts from Central UP, to the North East, and ‘in’ to the North, South, and West, including millions who move temporarily for agriculture operations, as well as the now ubiquitous construction industry. The Eastern parts particularly Odisha, Bengal, Assam and the North Eastern states are the more recent and significant contributors, as mobility within the country improved. They work mainly in lower skilled jobs, and the informal sector, or labour intensive industries like textiles, with the Coimbatore region of Tamil Nadu and Surat in Gujarat being major centres. Kerala and TN also see an out migration, predominantly overseas, to the Middle East.

The main reason for migration, of course, is the vast difference not only in jobs being created, but also wages for the same work in the ‘in’ regions vs the ‘out’.

Whilst there is no exact number of migrant labour on record,

current estimates are in excess of 400 million. With no census records available after 2011, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) done during July 2020 to June 2021, the latest official data, shows the average migrant figure for India as over 25%.

The cost of travel, time taken, and importantly, loss of income, to move from the distant ‘in’ regions to the ‘out’, will adversely impact the ability of these large number of migrant workers to return in time to vote. It is therefore likely that trends of 19 April could be repeated in the next phases in the states and constituencies that are major suppliers of migrant labour. A 25% of a voting base migrating is not a small number. This could impact the results of the ongoing elections.

The development divide in India is manifest in the stories of its migrant labourers. Sadly, many may not be able to participate in their most basic and important right, the right to vote.

The writer is a researcher and agripreneur.

Tech savvy Indians

Sir, This refers to “Indians most confident in adapting to tech changes,” Orissa Post, April 24. The success of individuals from India in embracing new technologies can be attributed to a combination of factors. One significant factor is the emphasis on education and the value placed on academic achievement within Indian culture. Additionally, the availability of high-quality technical education and the presence of prestigious institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have contributed to the development of strong technical skills among Indian professionals. Furthermore, the global demand for skilled IT professionals has provided opportunities for Indian individuals to excel in the field of programming and computer science. It's important to recognise that individual talent, dedication, and hard work also play a significant role in the success of any professional in the field. Add to this, Indians are often known for their troubleshooting skills and analytical thinking. These qualities are valuable in technology-related fields, where complex problems need to be addressed through logical and systematic approaches. Also, proficiency in English among Indians is an advantage that is widely used in the global technology industry which facilitates collaboration and communication with international colleagues and clients.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Prevent green loss

Sir, There has been a steady decrease in tree cover in the country due to incidents of forest fire. More than 200 hectares of green cover are lost per year; according to a global forest watchdog. On an average, 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide was released into the atmosphere as a result of tree cover loss in India. Five states that “lead” the rest in terms of tree cover loss are Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam and Meghalaya. Contrary to perception, tree cover loss is not always deforestation. Logging, wildfires, diseases and storms are other causes. Remote sensing technique to map and protect the forests, dedicated forest corridors and agro-forestry will help. In the common parlance, desisting from cutting down trees for infrastructure projects can go a long way in preserving tree cover.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

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

22 candidates in fray for Jammu LS polls today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 25: The Jammu parliamentary constituency is all set to go to polls in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections amid tight security arrangements Friday. Over 17.81 lakh eligible voters are set to exercise their franchise across 2,416 polling stations to decide the fate of 22 candidates.

The Jammu Lok Sabha seat is one of the 89 constituencies in 13 states and Union territories across the country going to polls Friday. The campaigning for the elections to the Jammu Lok Sabha seat concluded peacefully on Wednesday evening.

"The preparations are underway and tomorrow (Friday) is the election date. The teams have been dispatched and will reach the polling stations in Jammu by evening," said Sachin Kumar Vaishya, the returning officer for Jammu Lok Sabha constituency.

The officials said that all arrangements have been put in place for an incident free polls.

"Security and other related arrangements are in place to ensure free, fair and peaceful voting. A contingency plan has been also worked out to ensure no disruption in polling along the borders," Jammu and Kashmir Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Pandurang K Pole said.

He expressed hope that polling would remain peaceful. Pole said that no untoward incident was reported during the campaigning, which ended Wednesday evening. He added that necessary action has been taken against violators of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), with



With the terror threat on the wane and changing dynamics in the Kashmir region, Jammu and Kashmir CEO Pandurang K Pole is hopeful of a significant surge in voter participation during the Lok Sabha elections in the Valley.

The traditional narrative of poll boycotts orchestrated by separatist groups, prevalent for more than three decades, appears to be losing momentum and Pole expressed optimism regarding a manifold increase in voter turnout in the Valley.

cash, drugs, liquor and other goods worth over ₹20 crore seized since the announcement of the elections.

Polling will take place from 7 am to 6 pm, with a mock poll in the presence of polling agents before voting begins.

"Voting will continue even after 6 pm if the voters queue is still there in the polling station premises to ensure their right to vote," the officials said.

This is the second Lok Sabha seat in Jammu and Kashmir to go to polls in this election. Earlier, polling was held in the Udhampur seat April 19, recording a voter turnout of over 68 per cent.

A total of 17,80,835 voters, including 9,21,095 male and 8,59,712 female voters, besides 28 third-

gender electorates, are enrolled in the Jammu Lok Sabha constituency, they said.

The officials said there are around 10,498 persons with disabilities and 666 persons above the age of 100 years who will also be exercising their franchise.

Around 2,416 polling stations are set to go to polls in the second phase across four districts of Jammu, Samba, Reasi and Rajouri's one Kalakote-Sunderbani assembly segment, out of which 36 polling stations are P-2, they said.

The election staff, including the presiding officers, will be stationed in every polling station.

"In total, more than 15,000 polling staff, including reserves, will be deployed on duty on the

Pole highlighted the current favourable environment created by the proactive engagement of political parties and candidates with the electorate, signalling a potential surge in voter participation.

Despite historical trends of low voter turnout in Kashmir, 2014 showed promising signs with assembly polls in the then-state witnessing a record turnout of more than 65 per cent in the region.

The Anantnag-Rajouri seat goes to the polls May 7, Srinagar May 13 and Baramulla May 20. Udhampur-Kathua, which went to the polls in the first phase April 19, recorded a turnout of 68.27 per cent. Polling will be held for the Jammu seat today.

Sunderbani constituency of Rajouri, Gulabgarh, Reasi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi segments of Reasi district and Rangarh, Samba and Vijaypur segments of Samba district. Jammu recorded a turnout of 74 per cent in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Twenty-two candidates are in the fray from the constituency spread across 17 assembly segments of Jammu, Samba and Reasi districts, and one assembly constituency in Rajouri district.

A direct contest is on the cards between sitting BJP MP Jugal Kishore Sharma and INDIA bloc candidate Ramban Bhalla, the working president of the J-K Congress unit.

Jagdish Raj of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and advocate Ankur Sharma of the Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal are two other prominent faces contesting the seat.

The BJP candidate, seeking his third term, defeated Bhalla by a margin of over three lakh votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. He had won the seat in 2014 as well.

Union Ministers Amit Shah, Anurag Thakur, Jitendra Singh and J&K BJP chief Ravinder Raina have campaigned in support of Sharma. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed a rally in Udhampur April 12.

The Congress' star campaigner and former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot, Mahila Congress president Alka Lamba, J&K Congress president Vikar Rasool Wani and AICC in-charge for J&K Bharat Singh Solanki have addressed election campaign rallies in Bhalla's support.

polling day. Among the districts, Jammu has 50 critical booths, while Samba has around 12 border polling stations," the official said.

As many as 2,416 polling stations, including 158 along the International Border and Line of Control (LoC), have been set up in the constituency, they said.

The officials said there will be 10 polling booths managed by women - also called as pink polling stations, 10 polling booths manned by specially abled persons and nine by youths. There will be 12 green polling stations in order to spread messages about environmental concern.

In addition to the 11 assembly constituencies of Jammu district, the Jammu Lok Sabha seat includes the Kalakote-

NCBC to summon K'taka Chief Secy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) would be summoning the Karnataka chief secretary over the "blanket reservation" given to the Muslim community in the state, chairperson Hansraj Ahir said Thursday.

The NCBC has criticised the Karnataka government's decision to categorise the entire Muslim community as a backward caste for reservation purposes saying such blanket categorisation undermines the principles of social justice.

"All castes/communities of Muslim religion in Karnataka are considered socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and are categorised as Muslim Caste separately under Category-IIB in the State List of Backward Classes," NCBC chairperson Ahir said.

"This classification enables them to receive reservation in educational institution admissions and in appointments to posts and vacancies in the services of the State, as per Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution of India," he said.

The NCBC has emphasised that while there are indeed underprivileged and historically

marginalised sections within the Muslim community, treating the entire religion as backward overlooks the diversity and complexities within Muslim society.

Ahir said the response received from the state government on the matter has not been satisfactory and he would be summoning the Karnataka chief secretary to give an explanation over the move.

According to the data submitted by the Karnataka Backward Classes Welfare Department, all castes and communities within the Muslim religion have been enlisted as socially and educationally backward classes under Category-IIB in the State List of Backward Classes.

The commission, during a field visit last year, examined Karnataka's reservation policy for OBCs in educational institutions and government jobs.

While Karnataka provides 32 per cent reservation to backward classes in local body elections, including Muslims, the NCBC stressed the need for a nuanced approach that accounts for the diversity within these communities. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims constitute 12.92 per cent of the population in Karnataka.

'BJP raking up religious sentiments in J&K'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 25: The BJP is raking up religious sentiments as the ground beneath its feet is slipping, National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah said Thursday.

He also said it is no secret that such attacks, especially against

the Muslims, were carried out after the first phase of voting.

"As far as the use of religion is concerned, this is not the first time. As the BJP sees the ground slipping beneath its feet, it starts talking again in the context of religion," Omar told reporters.

"It seems that the BJP had some expectations from the first phase of the elections and perhaps those expectations were not met," he added.

The NC vice-president said the party has decided to field a covering candidate in wake of the BJP candidate winning unopposed from Gujarat's Surat after all other nominees withdrew from the fray.

NC president Farooq Abdullah said that the INDIA bloc is fighting against Prime Narendra Modi's attempts to 'create a rift among people' and the opposition alliance will 'undo the wrongdoings' committed during the BJP rule.

"The Election Commission has to be changed and made independent. The judiciary has to be made independent as it is the place where people get justice if they do not get justice anywhere else," Farooq added.

Omar and Farooq Abdullah were addressing an NC and Congress joint rally at Congress party headquarters, after its candidate from Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, submitted nomination papers.



A shepherd from the nomadic Gujjar community with his herd of sheep walk along the Jammu-Srinagar highway, in Jammu, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

KSNDMC issues advisory ahead of Orange alert I-T dept working like 'BJP agent': DK Shivakumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 25: Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) has issued a series of animated shorts in Kannada advising people of appropriate measures to take during extreme temperatures to keep oneself safe.

"Karnataka has not seen such extreme temperatures and heat waves in the recent past. So, we wanted to ensure a wider reach for safety measures, therefore we decided to issue them in a reader-friendly format," said an official from KSNDMC.

Meteorological Centre Bangalore and Indian Meteorological Department had issued a five-day heat wave orange alert for parts of Karnataka, lasting till April 29.

"In places like Bagalkote, Vijayapura, Kalaburgi, Yadgir, Raichur, Koppal, Ballari, Tumkur, Mandya, Gadag, Davangere and Chitradurga, the temperature is likely to touch 40 degrees Celsius tomorrow," said C P Patil, director of the centre.

On April 25, these places recorded a maximum temperature of 39 degrees Celsius.

Orange alert would mean increased likelihood of heat illness symptoms in people who are exposed to sun for a pro-



longed period of time as well as those who do heavy manual work.

According to Patil, coastal Karnataka will also have very hot and humid weather conditions, making it very uncomfortable for people there.

"It's best for children and old people to avoid exposure to heat in coastal areas too," added Patil.

In places where heat wave is predicted, people are advised to avoid direct exposure to sunlight between 12 noon and 3pm.

"When they go out, it is best to use protective goggles, an umbrella or a hat. Also aerated drinks must be avoided since they cause dehydration. Best to drink water as much as possible,

even if you don't feel thirsty," said M Rajavel, head of LACD, Meteorological Centre, Bangalore.

People are also advised not to leave the children or pets inside parked vehicles. The maximum and minimum temperatures of Bangalore are very likely to be around 37 degree Celsius and 23 degree Celsius respectively for the next 48 hours, said Patil.

Hassan recorded the highest jump from its normal minimum temperature. It recorded 22.6 degrees Celsius, about 2.8 degrees more than usual.

According to IMD, April 29 light rain is also very likely in isolated places over Bidar, Kalaburgi, Yadgir, Vijayapura, Chikkamagaluru, Hassan, Kodagu, Mysuru, Mandya and Chitradurga districts.

Light rain is predicted again for Bidar, Kalaburgi, Yadgir, Vijayapura, Raichur, Koppal, Ballari, Chikkamagaluru, Tumkur, Chikkaballapura, Bangalore Rural, Bangalore Urban and Kodagu districts April 30.

Incidentally, KSNDMC has also issued a series of animated advisory for lightning safety.

"We also update temperature every 15 minutes in our X handle in coordination with IMD," added the KSNDMC official.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 25: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar Thursday alleged that Income Tax (IT) department officials were conducting raids targeting the Congress, ahead of Lok Sabha polls, and are threatening leaders who faced raids to claim that money belongs to him and the party.

The state Congress president also claimed that the department is working like "BJP agents".

IT sleuths Wednesday conducted simultaneous raids at some locations in and around Bangalore, belonging to businessmen and associates of prominent political leaders ahead of the Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka.

"The Income Tax department is being used to target only Congress party people, they haven't got money from anyone. Income Tax people are threatening everyone to say that money belongs to Shivakumar, Congress money," Shivakumar said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "they have to do searches for an hour or so and go back; instead, people are being forced



to sit with them for an entire day, not allowing them to be involved in election activities. I did not expect such politics from the Income Tax."

"Let them go, do searches. Did they go to anyone from BJP? Don't they know where BJP is distributing money? Is there no list? You have kept people for watch, what are they doing? Like BJP agents you are working. Yesterday at three or four places our Congress leaders specifically from Bangalore Rural segment were targeted," he added.

Shivakumar's brother and present MP DK Suresh is the

Congress candidate from Bangalore Rural, which goes to the polls Friday.

According to sources, the search was focused on places belonging to a prominent leader who organised campaign rallies for the Congress.

He accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of making certain statements recently against the ruling Congress in the state, out of "frustration."

"But, they will fail once again here. I have already said they won't get double digits here," he said. Karnataka has a total of 28 Lok Sabha constituencies.



5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman Kartik Pandian campaigning for Koraput Lok Sabha nominee Kaushalya Hikaka and MLA nominee Jagannath Saraka at the mini stadium in Bissam Cuttack of Rayagada district, Thursday



BJP's Sundargarh Lok Sabha nominee Jual Oram and other party leaders releasing the Modi Guarantee and party manifesto during a press meet at the party office in Sundargarh, Thursday

SAMBALPUR SCENARIO

BJD on back foot as two top leaders quit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 25: The ruling BJD is caught on the wrong foot following the resignation of former MLA Raseswari Panigrahi from the party which delivered a big blow to the party at the time of elections, sources said.

The development comes at a time when BJP is strengthening its position in Sambalpur Lok Sabha segment under the leadership of Union Education Minister and the saffron party candidate for the seat Dharmendra Pradhan while BJD is apparently struggling to retain its position.

Sources said Panigrahi won 2014 election by a margin of 10,000 votes while she lost to BJP by over 4,380 votes in 2019 polls. However, she still carries an image of the most powerful leader of BJD in the district. Her strong organisational skill and personal connect with the ground level workers of the party had won her respect and elevated her stature in the party. As a result, her resignation from the party will not only impact the ruling BJD in Sambalpur Assembly seat but also affect other constituencies under the Lok Sabha segment.

Panigrahi, as a public leader, had come from a powerful political family and Jharsuguda's



most powerful leader late Naba Kishore Das also grew in politics under the patronage and shadow of her family.

The ruling party not giving the ticket to Panigrahi has not only eroded BJD's control on Sambalpur Assembly constituency but has also raised questions on the party's much hyped slogan 'Maa ku Samman' (respect to women).

Along with Panigrahi, another BJD leader and former Athamallik MLA Ramesh Sai has joined BJP after resigning from the party citing misbehaviour with him. Sai is also a leader from dominant Gond community in Athamallik Assembly seat under Sambalpur Lok Sabha segment.

Similarly, BJD has also nominated a party hopper from Kuchinda Assembly constituency instead of the incumbent MLA Kishore Chandra Nayak who is a tribal leader.

The resignation of the two most prominent tribal leaders of the party has raised questions on the party's tribal policy. As a result, BJD's base has not only weakened among the tribals but also raised questions on BJD's strategy and its political future.

Dharmendra's connect at ground level and political skills have boosted his popularity among the people in Sambalpur. Moreover, his pitch for 'Modi ki guarantee' and 'son of the soil' slogans has strengthened his position in the Lok Sabha segment.

The resignation of important political leaders will directly impact Pranab Das. The Modi wave in Sambalpur had posed a stiff challenge to Das. However, going by the present situation he has been caught in a whirlpool before he could make a mark for him in Lok Sabha segment.

It is alleged that BJD organisation has crumbled like a pack of cards in front Pradhan's political skill and rising popularity. Moreover, Pradhan's strong political management has halted the BJD election campaign halfway.

Going by the present situation, Pradhan's victory appears to be certain while it will be a herculean task for the BJD to retain Assembly seats under the Lok Sabha segment which it had won in the 2019 elections.

Cong will become extinct like dinosaurs: Rajnath

AGENCIES

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP), April 25: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Thursday slammed the Congress saying the way the party is going, it will soon become extinct like dinosaurs.

"The BJP is the only party which did what it promised to the people," Singh said, while addressing an election rally here in support of party candidates (Union minister) Ajay Kumar Mishra from Kheri and Rekha Verma from Dhaurahra constituencies.

In his over half-an-hour long address, Singh highlighted how India has moved forward in terms of defence, internal security, economy and development since 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the reins of the country.

Attacking the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Congress, the defence minister said days are near when these parties will become a thing of the past.

"The way Congress is going,



it will get extinct like dinosaurs," he remarked.

Reminding the people of the recent remark of Indian Overseas Congress (IOC) chairman Sam Pitroda about inheritance tax, he cautioned them saying that "no Indian will allow parting with 55% of his property after the death of the head of the family".

Urging the people to vote the BJP government to power again, the Union minister said the BJP is the only party which acts on what it promises and mentioned some of the steps like the abrogation of Article 370, the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, banning instant triple talaq and legislating the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"Ram Lalla has now moved to his royal palace from the hutment indicating that Ram Rajya in India has started," Singh stressed.

Criticising the earlier Congress governments for ignoring the security threat on the India-China border, he said, "The Congress governments refrained from road constructions on the China border fearing Chinese incursions... However, under the Modi government today, infrastructure on the border has been strengthened and the army is ready to give a befitting response in case of need."

Lauding Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Singh said, "I felt proud when I came to know that UP's economy is fast-moving towards a one-trillion economy. Under the able leadership of UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath, law and order situation in the state has improved and its respect and stature has risen to new heights."

Similarly, under the leadership of Modi, the country is

heading towards new heights of development and prosperity, he said, adding, "Those who visited abroad earlier and then after Modi government came to power in 2014, will know how the status and reputation of India has progressed on the global front."

"Today, when India says something, the whole world becomes attentive. This is the stature and reputation of India in the world today," he stressed.

Attacking the main opposition party, he said, "The Congress accused the BJP of doing politics of Hindu-Muslim but they should know that five Islamic countries of the Arab world have conferred their highest civilian award upon PM Narendra Modi."

Singh said the Congress governments failed to curb terrorist activities and the then Congress home minister had dubbed even the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack as a small incident. The BJP government after coming to power in 2014 earned global repute in uprooting the terrorism in the country.

Congress MP Ulaka's annual income dips

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Koraput, April 25: The annual income of Congress's Koraput MP Saptagiri Ulaka, who is seeking re-election for a second consecutive term, shrank by around 62 per cent to ₹9.60 lakh in the last financial year as against when he was first elected in 2019.

Ulaka's annual income in 2018-19 was ₹24.88, according to his election affidavit.

However, there is a significant jump in the value of his total assets, from ₹2.83 crore in 2019 to ₹4.77 crore. The rise is primarily due to the purchase of an apartment worth ₹2.15 crore in New Delhi jointly with his wife.

His movable assets rose from ₹76.83 lakh to ₹77.46 lakh.

"Earlier, I was a software professional and had a six-digit salary package. Now, my income is the salary I receive as an MP, from agriculture and a few thousand in rent," Ulaka said.

He has been pitted against Kausaliya Hikaka of the BJD, and Kaleram Majhi of the BJP in a triangular contest.

Prabodh Tirkey joins BJP

Sonepur: Former Indian hockey captain Prabodh Tirkey Thursday joined the BJP, days after resigning from Congress which withdrew his election nomination.

Tirkey was fielded by Congress in Talsara Assembly seat in Sundergarh district, but the party later withdrew his nomination and named Devendra Bhatia in his place. He was welcomed to the BJP by its state president Manmohan Samal. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, senior BJP leader Jayanarayan Mishra and Bolangir MP Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo were also present on the occasion. Tirkey joined BJP on a day Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the state to kick-start the party's campaign for the twin polls. Reacting to the development, Congress general secretary Ajay Kumar said the party withdrew his candidature because he was not active in the constituency despite being named as a candidate.

2024 Lok Sabha polls pegged as costliest ever: Expert

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 25: The 2024 Lok Sabha elections are on track to break past records and become the most expensive electoral event in the world, according to a poll expert.

The estimated expenditure is expected to reach a staggering ₹1.35 lakh crore, more than double the ₹60,000 crore spent in 2019, claimed N Bhaskara Rao, who chairs the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), a not-for-profit organisation, and has been tracking election spending for 35 years.

Rao stated that this comprehensive expenditure encompasses all spending, direct or indirect, related to polls, including that by political parties and organisations, candidates, the government, and the Election Commission.

With the BJP vying for a third consecutive term under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, industry observers have noted the party's dominant presence in campaigns, irrespective of the mediums used for publicity.

In an interview with PTL, Rao said he revised the initial expenditure estimate from ₹1.2 lakh crore to ₹1.35 lakh crore, factoring in electoral bond disclosures and accounting for all

election-related expenses.

"Initially, we estimated the expenditure at ₹1.2 lakh crore. However, post the electoral bond stake disclosures, we've revised the figure to ₹1.35 lakh crore," he said, adding that this estimate covered spending that took place 3-4 months before voting dates were announced.

Rao emphasised that money flowed into the process through various means beyond electoral bonds.

Recent observations by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) revealed a "significant lack of transparency" in political funding in India.

From 2004-05 to 2022-23, approximately 60 per cent of contributions to the nation's six major political parties, totalling ₹19,083 crore, came from undisclosed sources, including funds from electoral bonds, it claimed.

The ADR has, however, refrained from providing any cumulative expenditure projections for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.

"Pre-election activities are integral to campaign spending by parties and candidates, covering political rallies, transportation, hiring of workers including field and influencers and even the controversial horse-trading of political leaders,"



Rao said.

The Election Commission's budget to manage the polls is expected to be 10-15 per cent of the total expenditure projection, he added.

With a voter base of 96.6 crore, per-voter spending is estimated at around ₹1,400. This surpasses the expenditure of the 2020 US elections, which stood at USD 14.4 billion or ₹1.2 lakh crore, according to OpenSecrets.org, a nonprofit organisation based in Washington, DC, that tracks and publishes data on campaign finance and lobbying.

Media campaigns across various platforms are predicted to account for 30 per cent of the

total election spend, Rao said.

"While visible spending is concentrated in the 45-day direct campaign period, the actual expenditure far exceeds this amount," he added.

Parties and candidates often find ways to circumvent spending restrictions imposed by the Model Code of Conduct. In 2019, the CMS reported that the BJP accounted for 45 per cent of the total spending of ₹60,000 crore, a share that Rao believes will increase in the 2024 elections.

In his latest book, 'Next Big Game Changer of Elections', Rao highlighted the growing reliance on 'money power' over ideology in Indian politics.

He lamented the transformation of election campaigns from ideology-driven movements to "jingoistic apparatuses" that leverage demographics to create divisive tactics and polarisation.

Rao identified six key trends in the ongoing general election - prolonged pre-poll activities, affluent candidates dominating the fray, the 'Mandi' phenomenon of political crossovers, manipulation through various channels, lack of fair play, and the power dynamics favouring incumbents.

As digital campaigning gains prominence, political parties are engaging professional agencies for higher brand recall.

Amit Wadhwa, CEO of leading advertising agency Dentsu Creative, said that there has been a significant surge in digital campaigning this year.

He said political parties were behaving like corporate brands and were engaging professional agencies for higher brand recall. "With the inclusion of both direct and indirect digital campaigns, this medium's footprint is poised to become the mainstay, potentially outshining all others in this election. Television, digital platforms, and outdoor advertising are ahead, relegating print to fourth place," he pro-

jected, based on his observations.

A top ad agency official said voters unaffiliated to any political ideology, referred to as 'fence-sitters', are the primary targets of the intense visual campaigns launched by parties across various media.

Social media giants like Meta and Google play significant roles in political campaigns, he said.

Advertisement professional Jadavendra Sen categorised advertisements into three types - Above the Line (ATL) activities, which include outdoor, television, and print; Below the Line (BTL) activities, encompassing wall writings and posters; and Through the Line (TTL) activities, which involve third-party like influencers and digital platforms.

Sen highlighted that during the initial voting phase in North Bengal, there was a notable demand for flex advertising.

He anticipated that the intensity of visual campaigning would escalate with every passing election phase.

In response to the spending budget this year, agencies associated with leading national parties like BJP and Congress did not offer any comments but acknowledged the increase had been significant.

national

of the day quote

Listen with your ears wide open about the sins the Congress has committed. I want to put forth an interesting fact. When sister Indira Gandhi passed away, there was a law by virtue of which half of the wealth used to go to the government. There were talks then that Indiraji would her wealth in her son Rajiv Gandhi's name

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

Within a decade, we are witnessing the emergence of a 'new India'. PM Modi is committed to realising a self-reliant and prosperous India

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

The Congress will do injustice to Dalits by snatching their quota and giving it to Muslims...The Congress party has insulted Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Babu Jagjivan Ram and is carrying out opportunistic politics

PRALHAD JOSHI | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

10 killed in separate road mishaps in T'gana

Hyderabad: Ten people, including a girl child, have died in two separate road accidents in Telangana. Six persons died in Suryapet district Thursday when the car they were travelling in collided with a stationary truck, police said. The accident took place near Kodada town in this district, located about 180 km from Hyderabad. In another tragic incident, four intermediate students died Wednesday night after the two-wheeler on which they were riding rammed into a speeding private travel bus coming in the opposite direction at Yellanda village in Warangal District.

Vendor stabbed to death near India Gate

New Delhi: An ice cream vendor was stabbed to death near India Gate, a high-security area in central Delhi, in what has emerged to be a crime related to a love triangle, an officer said Thursday. The victim, 25-year-old Prabhat, was manning his ice cream cart, when he was attacked by Ajay alias Akshay at the C-Hexagon of India Gate on Wednesday around 9 pm. Passersby informed the police after they saw Prabhat lying on the ground in unconscious, the police officer said. He was taken to RML hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Gunfight breaks out in J&K's Sopore

Srinagar: A gunfight between the security forces and terrorists began in J&K's Sopore area Thursday evening, officials said. Officials said that following specific information, security forces started a cordon and search operation in the Nowpora locality of the Sopore area in Baramulla district. "When the security forces closed on the hiding terrorists, they fired at the security forces triggering an encounter which is now going on," an official said.

Actor Tamannaah Bhatia summoned

Mumbai: Maharashtra cyber cell has summoned actor Tamannaah Bhatia in connection with the alleged promotion of the viewing of IPL matches on a subsidiary app of the Mahadev online gaming and betting application, officials said Thursday. The actor has been asked to appear before the Maharashtra cyber personnel April 29, a police official said.



The Prime Minister wants us to play on the pitch that has been prepared by Jay Shah and Amit Shah. We will not play on that pitch that has issues of unemployment, inflation, increasing economic inequalities

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

AI-POWERED MENTAL HEALTHCARE APP

A private hospital group is looking at leveraging the power of artificial intelligence to enhance mental wellbeing and accessibility to care for patients. 'Adayu', a free app, has been launched by Adayu Mindfulness, a Fortis Healthcare Group company, in collaboration with deep-tech company United We Care to address critical needs of mental healthcare



Apex court imposes ₹5 lakh costs on Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The Supreme Court has imposed costs of ₹5 lakh on the Centre for challenging a Meghalaya High Court order, holding it was "sheer abuse" of the process of law. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Satish Chandra Sharma said there was no oc-

casation or justification for the Union of India to have challenged the order by way of a Special Leave Petition. "The present petition is sheer abuse of the process of law. The petitioners are cautioned not to file such frivolous petitions in future." "We are not inclined to interfere with the impugned judgment(s) and order(s) of the High Court.

Accordingly, the Special Leave Petition is dismissed with costs for the reason that before the High Court counsel for the petitioner (UoI) submitted that the matter was squarely covered by a previous decision and, accordingly, the High Court had disposed of the matter on the statement of the counsel for Union of India," the bench said.

The top court was hearing an appeal against the High Court order which upheld a Central Administrative Tribunal judgement. The High Court had disposed of the matter after noting the Central government's submission that a similar plea had been rejected earlier. "We, accordingly, impose a fine of Rs.5,00,000 to be paid by the pe-

tioners which shall be deposited in Account of the Armed Forces Battle Casualties Welfare Fund, Canara Bank, Branch South Block, Defence Headquarters, within eight weeks..." "After depositing the said amount in the aforesaid fund, the petitioners to file proof of such deposit with the Registry of this Court within a week thereafter," the bench said.

IndiGo to buy up to 100 wide-body A350 planes



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The country's largest airline IndiGo Thursday announced placing a firm order for 30 A350-900 planes and the option to buy 70 more such aircraft, foraying into the wide-body aircraft segment nearly two decades after starting operations. IndiGo, which started flying in 2006, currently has a fleet of more than 350 narrow-body planes and is expanding its presence overseas. The carrier is also operating two wide-body Boeing 777 aircraft leased from Turkish Airlines to Istanbul from Delhi and Mumbai.

The airline aims to double in size by 2030 with new domestic and international routes as well as destinations as the airline pursues soaring global ambitions to match India's economic growth potential. The A350-900 planes will be powered by Rolls Royce's Trent XWB engine and the exact configuration of these aircraft, whose delivery is expected to start from 2027, will be decided later.

In a release, IndiGo said it is entering the "wide-body space with an order for 30 firm Airbus A350-900 aircraft". IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers termed it as a "historic moment".

The carrier, which has a domestic market share of more than 60 per cent, also has purchase rights for an additional 70 Airbus A350 family aircraft, "at its discretion, for possible future needs under certain conditions". The pricing of the A350-900 aircraft was not available as Airbus has discontinued the practice of publishing the list price of its planes.

At present, Air India is the only Indian carrier operating A350. Among the domestic airlines, currently, Air India and Vistara have wide-body aircraft in their fleets while SpiceJet has leased some wide-body planes. IndiGo's latest order also comes at a time when efforts are on to make India a global aviation hub.

In June last year, IndiGo placed the largest-ever single aircraft order by any airline for 500 aircraft with Airbus.

The outstanding order book of A320 family aircraft stands at almost 1,000 which are yet to be delivered well into the next decade. The order book comprises a mix of A320 neo, A321 neo and A321 XLR aircraft. With A350 planes, IndiGo said it will be able to connect to the world from various Indian metros.

2023 attack on High Commission in London: NIA makes first arrest



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: In a major breakthrough, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Thursday arrested a key accused in a case related to the attack on the Indian High Commission in London in March last year.

Inderpal Singh Gaba, a resident of Hounslow in the UK, has been arrested for carrying out unlawful activities during protests that took place March 22, 2023, in London, a statement issued by the agency said.

NIA investigations in the case so far have revealed that the incidents in London March 19 and 22 last year were part of a larger conspiracy to unleash vicious attacks on the Indian missions and its officials.

The attacks in London in March 2023 were found to be in retaliation to the action taken by the Punjab Police against pro-Khalistani separatist Amritpal Singh March 18, 2023, it added. Further investigations in the case are continuing, the statement said.

FIRING OUTSIDE SALMAN'S HOME

Cops claim 'international link'



The claim by the crime branch, which is probing the case, came as it sought further remand of the two accused in the case. The court extended the custody of the duo till April 29

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 25: The Mumbai police Thursday told a court here that there is a possibility of an "international connection" in the recent firing outside Hindi film actor Salman Khan's residence. The claim by the crime branch, which is probing the case, came as it sought further remand of the two accused in the case. The court extended the custody of the duo till April 29.

Vicky Gupta (24) and Sagar Pal (21), both residents of Bihar, were produced before metropolitan magistrate court at the end of the previous remand

Thursday. The police sought the extension of their custody by four days for further probe into the matter. During the earlier custody, the court was told, firearms, cartridges and mobile phones were seized at the instance of the accused duo. Police told the court that the accused had 40 cartridges of which two were used for checking the weapon, five while firing at the actor's residence in the city.

They have recovered 17 cartridges and the remaining were yet to be found, the police said. Police said they wanted to know who supplied the weapons and financial help to the accused. Huge technical information from the mobile phones of the accused has been recovered and its analysis is possible only in the presence of the accused, the police said, making a case for extension in the custody of the accused.

There is the possibility of an "international connection" in this crime, the cops claimed. In

view of all these aspects, further custody of the accused was needed, the police said.

Advocate Amit Mishra, who represented the accused, argued that his client's further custody was not required as the weapon used in the firing had been recovered and the two were cooperating with the investigation.

After hearing both sides, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate L S Padhen extended the custody of Gupta and Pal till April 29. Gupta and Pal allegedly fired outside 58-year-old Khan's house at the Galaxy Apartment in Bandra in the early hours of April 14 before fleeing the spot on a motorbike.

The accused were nabbed on April 16 from Mata No Madh village in Gujarat's Kutch district. Later, the Mumbai police's crime branch recovered two pistols, magazines and bullets from the Tapi river in Gujarat during a search operation to recover weapons allegedly used in the firing, an official had said earlier.

The Mumbai police have also declared jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and his younger brother Anmol Bishnoi as "wanted accused" in the case.

So far, the police have recorded nine statements, including two before a magistrate under CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure).

In a related development, the Mumbai police Thursday arrested two persons in Punjab in connection with the firing.

The two had provided two country-made pistols and cartridges to the shooters March 15, a police official said.

WB govt to pay April salary to 25K teachers

Kolkata: The West Bengal government Thursday said it will pay the salaries for April to 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff in state government-sponsored and aided schools whose appointments were cancelled by a Calcutta High Court order, a senior official said. The state government, which has moved the Supreme Court challenging the order, is also mulling paying salaries to the teachers and non-teaching staff until the apex court gives its verdict, he said.

Six dead, 15 injured in fire at Patna hotel

Patna/Sasaram: Six persons, including three women, were killed and 15 injured in a major fire that erupted inside a hotel near Patna junction Thursday, police said. In another incident in Sasaram, a woman and her 12-year-old grandson were charred to death when their hut caught fire in the evening, officials said. Bihar Governor Rajendra V Arlekar and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar have expressed grief over the loss of lives in the Patna incident. "The CM has expressed deep grief over the loss of lives in the fire incident at Hotel Pal near Patna junction. Instructions have been given for proper treatment of the injured. The CM has expressed condolences to the bereaved family members. I wish for the speedy recovery of those who sustained burn injuries", the Chief Minister's Office said.

Now get top court case info through WhatsApp

CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA (CJI) DY CHANDRACHUD THURSDAY ANNOUNCED THE INTEGRATION OF WHATSAPP MESSAGING SERVICES WITH THE ICT (INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY) SERVICES OF THE SUPREME COURT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: In a significant step towards digitisation, Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud Thursday announced that the Supreme Court will share information relating to cause lists and filing and listing of cases to advocates through WhatsApp messages, saying it will have a "big-bang impact" and will go a long way in saving paper and the earth.

The announcement on integration of WhatsApp with its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services was made by the CJI before a nine-judge bench headed by him commenced the hearing on the vexed legal question arising from the petitions about whether private properties can be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39(b) of the Constitution, which is a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).

"In the 75th year of its existence, the Supreme Court launches a small initiative. It has the potential to have a big-bang impact. WhatsApp messenger has been a ubiquitous service in our daily lives and has taken the role of a powerful communication tool. To strengthen the right to access justice and enhance transparency in the judicial system, the Supreme Court announces integration of WhatsApp messaging services with its IT services," the CJI said.

Elaborating further, Justice Chandrachud said under this initiative, the Advocates-on-Records (AoRs) and the litigants, who appear in person before the top court, will get automated messages regarding electronic filing of cases, cause lists, orders and judgements. "The cause lists will be sent to all members of the bar by the registry as and when published. The orders and judgements available on the web-



site will also be sent through WhatsApp," he said.

A cause list features the cases to be heard by a court on a given day. "This is another revolutionary step..." Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said.

The CJI also shared the top court's official WhatsApp number 8767687676 and said it will not be receiving any messages and calls.

"This will bring a significant change in our working habits and will go a long way in saving papers and our planet Earth," Justice Chandrachud said. The CJI, referring to digitisation of judicial functions, said now more and more lawyers will have access to the courts and "even people from remote areas can access simple cases involving

citizen issues as well."

"We are also migrating all our services into Meghraj cloud 2.0 which is the cloud infrastructure created by National Informatics Centre (NIC)..." The data is preserved on servers in India," he said.

Taking note of the submissions of a lawyer that high courts and tribunals are not on the same page as the Supreme Court on the issue of technological advancement, he said, "Some high courts say tell us 48 hours in advance for video conference links and you can get only if you are above 60 years of age (and have difficulties attending the proceedings physically). We had to pass a judicial order saying what this is and how it can be done." Underscoring the importance

of video conferencing facilities, the CJI said if the investigation officer (IO) of a case has been transferred, he should be able to appear virtually. The trial court proceedings need not be adjourned if the IO has been shifted, he said.

"We are moving rapidly by pushing the high courts to do this and there is financial backing also. And now the money goes straight from the central government through the e-court committee of the high courts," he said. The top court, under the leadership of CJI Chandrachud, has been taking steps to digitise the functioning of the judiciary.

He said the Centre has sanctioned ₹7,000 crore for the e-court project. The solicitor general shared the views of the central government and the prime minister and said they were committed to digitisation of the judiciary to enhance the access to justice for common litigants and lawyers.

"There is a direction from the prime minister that gives first priority to digitisation because access to justice is possible to the common man if there is digitisation and this is the priority of the government too," the top law officer said.

international



When it comes to the oppressor, when it comes to the usurper, the Zionist Israeli regime has been committing oppression against the people of Palestine for 75 years, they have been usurping their territory
EBRAHIM RAISI | IRANIAN PRESIDENT

282MN PEOPLE FACED ACUTE HUNGER IN 2023

Nearly 282 million people in 59 countries suffered from acute hunger in 2023, with war-torn Gaza as the territory with the largest number of people facing famine, according to the Global Report on Food Crises released.



of the day quote

Like teachers, classrooms, books and computers, nutritious school meals are an essential part of the school environment, and when we raise the bar for school meals, it empowers our kids to achieve greater success inside and outside of the classroom

TOM VILSACK | UNITED STATES SECY OF AGRICULTURE

As President and as a military dad, he (Biden) never loses sight of that conviction. And that's why he's working tirelessly to make sure that you and your families have what you need to thrive

JILL BIDEN | FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES

I have no doubt that this icon (ITC Ratnadipa) will help increase tourism into Sri Lanka, more particularly from India. Now these are part of the vision statement which Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi and I signed last year on how do we integrate our economies and we get closer

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

SHORT TAKES

China, B'desh to hold 1st military exercises

Beijing: The Chinese army will hold its first military exercises with its Bangladesh counterpart next month, it was announced here Thursday, as the PLA steadily enhanced its ties with India's neighbour by supplying a host of military equipment in recent years. According to the consensus reached between the two militaries, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will send a team to Bangladesh in the first half of next month to hold joint military exercises, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman, Sr Col Wu Qian announced at a media briefing here.

Taiwan gets new ministers

Taipei: Taiwan's President-elect has appointed new foreign and defence ministers to join his incoming administration as the island faces continuing military threats and diplomatic isolation from China. Lai Ching-te, who assumes the presidency May 20, announced Thursday that current Presidential Secretary General Lin Chia-lung will take over as foreign minister.

Fears grow over mass resignations

Seoul: Resignations by medical professors in South Korea in protest against the government's medical school quota hike plan were supposed to take effect from Thursday, sparking concerns over its impact on the medical system already reeling from the monthslong walkout by trainee doctors. Officials said most professors, who work as senior doctors at major hospitals, appeared to have continued to serve on the first day of resignations coming into force and no issues had been reported at hospitals regarding the resignation submission, Yonhap news agency reported.

Haiti PM resigns

Port Au Prince: Ariel Henry resigned Thursday as Prime Minister of Haiti, leaving the way clear for a new government to be formed in the Caribbean country, which has been wracked by gang violence that killed or injured more than 2,500 people from January to March. Henry presented his resignation in a letter signed in Los Angeles, dated April 24, and released Thursday by his office on the same day.

US secretly sent long-range missiles to Ukraine

AGENCIES

Washington, April 25: The US has secretly delivered long-range ballistic missiles to Ukraine to be used against Russian forces, the Pentagon has confirmed, while President Joe Biden alleged that China, Iran and North Korea were supplying weapons and technology to Moscow to boost its military. The US previously supplied Ukraine with a mid-range version of the Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) but had been reluctant to send anything more powerful, partly over concerns about compromising US military readiness.

The ballistic missiles have a range of up to 300 kilometres, nearly doubling the striking distance of Ukraine's missiles.

President Biden directed his team to take this step following Russia's procurement and use of North Korean ballistic missiles against Ukraine, according to US media outlets. Ukrainian officials have been urging the US for the long-range missiles to target deeper behind Russian lines. American officials have previously resisted, citing



President Biden secretly approved the transfer of the long-range ATACMS missiles in February for use inside Ukrainian territory

The ATACMS missiles were then quietly included in the USD 300 million aid package announced March 12 and ultimately delivered to Ukraine earlier this month, according to Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Garron Garn said Wednesday

supply issues and concerns about further provoking Russia if they are deployed.

Speaking from the White House Wednesday after signing into law a \$61 billion aid package providing crucial military assistance to Ukraine, Biden said it was a "good day for America, a good day for Ukraine and a good day for world peace." Over two years, Russia has been responsible for a brutal campaign against Ukraine, he said.

Biden Wednesday signed the National Security Supplemental \$95.3 billion aid package to Ukraine and Israel and to strengthen the security of America and its allies in the Indo-Pacific, including Taiwan. "With all this support, Russia has ramped up its airstrikes against Ukrainian cities and critical infrastructure, rained down munitions on brave Ukrainians defending their homeland. And now, America

Biden Wednesday signed the National Security Supplemental \$95.3 billion aid package to Ukraine and Israel and to strengthen the security of America and its allies in the Indo-Pacific, including Taiwan

is going to send Ukraine the supplies they need to keep them in the fight," Biden said on the aid package which was passed by Congress after months of negotiations and debate. Hours later, the United States started shipping and airlifting equipment to Ukraine for air defence munitions, artillery, rocket systems and armoured vehicles.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken also announced a new package of weapons and equipment for Ukraine. "We are sending a powerful message today about the power of American leadership as we support Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression. The United States

will continue to work with the coalition of more than 50 countries we have assembled to provide critical support for Ukraine's forces," Blinken said in a statement. The Pentagon said this package will surge munitions, weapons and equipment forward to support Ukraine's ability to defend its frontlines, protect its cities and counter Russia's continued attacks.

Biden warned that if Putin triumphs in Ukraine, the next move of Russian forces could very well be a direct attack on a NATO ally.

"You all know full well that invoking article five of the North Atlantic Treaty would be the first thing that comes to mind, which declares an attack on one as an attack on all. If Putin attacks a NATO ally like he is attacking Ukraine today, we would have no choice but to come to their aid, just like our NATO allies came to our aid after the September 11 (2001) attacks here," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in an interview with Fox News, thanked the US for sending much-needed military aid amounting to \$61 billion.

Mass arrest of students as chaos sweeps US varsities

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Austin, April 25: Some US universities called in police to break up demonstrations against the Israel-Hamas war, resulting in ugly scuffles and dozens of arrests, while others appeared content to wait out student protests Thursday, as the final days of the semester ticked down and graduation ceremonies loomed.

At Emerson College in Boston, 108 people were arrested at an encampment overnight and four police officers suffered injuries that were not life-threatening, Boston police said. Those arrested were expected to appear Thursday in Boston Municipal Court.

Another 93 people were arrested Wednesday night during a protest at the University of Southern California, the Los Angeles Police Department said. There were no reports of injuries.

At Columbia University in New York, students defiantly erected an encampment where many are set to graduate in front of families in just a few weeks. Columbia continued to negotiate with students after several failed attempts — and more than 100 arrests — to clear the encampment. At USC, tensions were already high after the university cancelled a planned commencement speech by the school's pro-Palestinian valedictorian, citing safety concerns. After scuffles with police early Wednesday, a few dozen demonstrators standing in a circle with locked arms were detained one by one without incident later in the evening.

Earlier Wednesday, officers at the University of Texas at Austin aggressively detained dozens of protesters. Hundreds of local and state police — including some on horseback and holding batons — bulldozed into protesters, at one point sending some tumbling into the street. Officers pushed their way into the crowd and made 34 arrests at the behest of the university and Texas Gov. Gregg Abbott, according to the state Department of Public Safety.

North of USC, protesters at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, were barricaded inside a building for a third day. The school shut down campus through the weekend and made classes virtual.

Harvard University in Massachusetts had sought to stay ahead of protests this week

by limiting access to Harvard Yard and requiring permission for tents and tables. That didn't stop protesters from setting up a camp with 14 tents Wednesday after a rally against the university's suspension of the Harvard Undergraduate Palestine Solidarity Committee. Students protesting the Israel-Hamas war are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies enabling its monthslong conflict. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made them afraid to set foot on campus as graduation nears, partly prompting a heavier hand from universities.



Two of the four riderless horses that bolted during a routine exercise causing mayhem on the streets of central London have undergone surgery but are expected to return to duty in due course, the British Army said in a statement Thursday. The chaos is said to have erupted when the horses were alarmed by construction noise nearby. Five of the seven horses ran off from where the exercise was taking place in Belgravia, a posh neighbourhood to the west of Buckingham Palace -- the residence of King Charles III

SNIPPETS

Court bars Imran, wife from making statements against state institutions

Islamabad: An anti-corruption court in Pakistan Thursday barred former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi from issuing provocative statements against state institutions, including the army, and officials. During the hearing of a petition seeking a fair trial, Judge Basir Javed Rana of the Accountability Court in Islamabad also said the media should limit its reporting to court proceedings and not report statements of the accused. "Such statements disrupt judicial decorum and also obstruct judicial functions such as the dispensation of justice," the judge stated. According to the order, Khan, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, made provocative political statements against senior officials of state institutions, including the army, the judiciary and the Army chief.

China launches rocket carrying three astronauts to Tiangong space station

Jiuquan (China): China launched a three-member crew to its orbiting space station Thursday as part of its ambitious programme that aims to put astronauts on the moon by 2030. The Shenzhou-18 spacecraft lifted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northwestern China atop a Long March 2-F rocket at 8:59 pm (12:59 GMT). The spacecraft's three-member crew will relieve the Shenzhou-17 team, which has been staffing China's Tiangong space station since last October. The China Manned Space Agency, or CMSA, held a send-off ceremony — complete with flag-waving children and patriotic music — for the Shenzhou-18 crew earlier Thursday, as the three astronauts prepared to enter the spacecraft. The trio is made of Commander Ye Guangfu, 43, a veteran astronaut who took part in the Shenzhou-13 mission in 2021, and fighter pilots Li Cong, 34, and Li Guangsu, 36, who are spaceflight rookies.

More than 100 pilot whales stranded in Western Oz

AGENCIES

Sydney, April 25: Marine wildlife experts were frantically trying to rescue some 140 pilot whales stranded Thursday in the shallow waters of an estuary in the southwest of the state of Western Australia.

The whales are stranded at Toby Inlet in Geopraphe Bay, the Western Australia Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions said. The area is near the town of Dunsborough in a region popular with tourists, and about 236 km (146 miles) south of state capital Perth.

"We understand there are four pods of up to 160 pilot whales in total spread across about 500 metres. Unfortunately, 26 whales that stranded on the beach



died," a department spokesperson said in a statement.

"A team of experienced staff including wildlife officers, marine scientists, veterinarians are on site or on their way."

Based on previous strandings, "these events usually result in the beached animals having to be

euthanised as the most humane outcome," the spokesperson said.

Photos posted on Facebook by the state's Parks and Wildlife agency showed a crowd of people near several beached whales.

Ian Wiese, from whale conservation group Geopraphe Marine Research, said more than

■ In July, almost 100 long-finned pilot whales died or were euthanised after a two-day rescue attempt in a mass stranding on Cheynes Beach near the former whaling station of Albany, 355 kilometers (220 miles) southeast of Dunsborough

■ Dunsborough is 285 kilometers (177 miles) by road south of Perth, Western Australia state's capital and largest city

experienced its largest whale stranding at Dunsborough in 1996 when 320 pilot whales beached themselves.

Pilot whales are known for their tight-knit social bonds, so when one gets into difficulty and strands, the rest often follow, according to the University of Western Australia.

Dunsborough was the scene of a mass stranding of 320 long-finned pilot whales in 1996. Only 20 died on that occasion, with rescuers returning the rest to sea.

Scientists don't know what causes whales to strand, although it appears their location systems can be confused by gently sloping, sandy beaches.

Theories include that they are avoiding predators such as killer whales, or following a sick leader ashore.

SC hears immunity case in DC while Trump is in NY for hush money trial

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, April 25: A reluctant Donald Trump returned to a New York City courtroom Thursday as his hush money trial resumed at the same time that the US Supreme Court hears arguments in Washington over whether he should be immune from prosecution for actions he took during his time as President.

Jurors will hear more witness testimony from a long-time tabloid publisher, and Trump faces a looming decision over whether he violated a gag order imposed by the judge.

But he had asked to skip out on his criminal trial for the day so he could sit in on the high court's special session, where the justices will weigh whether he can be prosecuted over his efforts to reverse his 2020 election loss to Joe Biden.

"I think the Supreme Court has a very important argument before it today," Trump said as he walked into his trial. "I should be there."

His request was denied by New York state Supreme Court Judge Juan Merchan, who is overseeing the trial on the hush money scheme that was allegedly meant to prevent harmful stories about Trump from surfacing in the final days of the 2016 campaign. "Arguing before the Supreme Court is a big deal, and I can certainly appreciate why your client would want to be there, but a trial in New York Supreme Court ... is also a big deal," Merchan told Trump's lawyer Todd Blanche last week when he nixed the idea.

155 people killed in Tanzania as heavy rains lash East Africa

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nairobi (Kenya), April 25: Flooding in Tanzania caused by weeks of heavy rain has killed 155 people and affected more than 2,00,000 others, the prime minister said Thursday.

That is more than double the number of deaths reported two weeks ago as the amount of rainfall increases, especially in the coastal region and the capital, Dar es Salaam.

Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa told Parliament that the El Niño climate pattern has worsened the ongoing rainy season, causing the flooding and destroying roads, bridges and railways.

Flooded schools have been closed and emergency services have rescued people marooned by the flood waters.

Majaliwa warned those living in low-lying areas to move to higher ground and urged district officials to ensure that provisions meant for those whose homes were washed away go to those in need of the supplies. He said more than 51,000 households have been affected by the rains.

The East African region is experiencing heavy rains, with flooding also reported in neighboring Burundi and Kenya.

In Kenya, 35 people were reported dead as of Monday, and the number was expected to increase as flooding continues across the country.

In the Mathare slum in the capital, Nairobi, at least four bodies were retrieved from flooded houses Wednesday.

Local media reported that more bodies were retrieved from the Mathare River.

Kenyan President William Ruto chaired a multi-agency flood response meeting Thursday and directed the National Youth Service to provide land for people in flood-affected areas.



of the day quote

The digitisation of agricultural lending will ensure instant doorstep delivery of credit to farmers while improving the efficiency of banks, advancing NABARD's mission of fostering rural prosperity

SHAJI KV | CHAIRMAN, NABARD

India has remarkable opportunity with hybrid AI to be able to do on-device AI and show the world possible use cases on these devices, PCs, phones, cars, or two-wheelers

SAVI SOIN | PRESIDENT, QUALCOMM INDIA

Rising input costs are compelling us to increase prices by up to 2 per cent effective June 1, 2024. It's our endeavour that the impact of rising costs is as minimal as possible for our customers

BALBIR SINGH DHILLON | HEAD, AUDI INDIA

Q4 RESULTS

Big gain for ACC

BANGALORE: Indian cement producer ACC (ACC.NS) topped fourth-quarter profit estimates on Thursday, as lower prices helped boost sales volumes. The Adani Group-owned company's profit after tax rose over three-fold to 7.49 billion rupees (\$89.9 million) in the January-March period, surpassing analysts' average estimate of 4.86 billion rupees, according to LSEG data. Revenue from operations rose nearly 13% to 53.98 billion rupees, helped by a 22.4% rise in consolidated sales volumes. Analysts were expecting a 14%-15% volume growth.

Vedanta profit drops

NEW DELHI: Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Ltd Thursday reported a 27.2 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to ₹1,369 crore for the March quarter. The company had posted consolidated net profit of ₹1,881 crore in the year-ago period, Vedanta said in a filing to the BSE. The consolidated income of the company in the January-March period dropped to ₹36,093 crore as against ₹38,635 crore in the year-ago period.

Huge drop in profit

NEW DELHI: IT services company Tech Mahindra Thursday reported about 41 per cent year-on-year fall in its consolidated net profit to ₹661 crore for the quarter ended March 2024. The net profit in the year-ago period was ₹1,117.7 crore. For Q4FY24, the Tech Mahindra's revenue dropped by 6.2 per cent to ₹12,871 crore. During the full fiscal FY24, the consolidated net profit tanked 51.2 per cent year-on-year to ₹2,358 crore. The revenue during FY24 at ₹51,996 crore, translated to a decline of 2.4 per cent over the previous fiscal.



We need significant investments in the latest technologies for tracking and handling cargo, and in addition, training our workforce. We must prioritize the completion of critical infrastructure projects, such as dedicated freight corridors, which are essential for reducing bottlenecks and improving turnaround times

SANJAY BUDHIA | CHAIRMAN, CII NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EXIM

DEADLINE EXTENDED

The income tax department Thursday extended the deadline for charitable and religious trusts to furnish registration application with tax authorities till June 30. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had earlier extended the due date for filing Form 10A, Form 10AB by trusts, institutions and funds multiple times and the last such extension was till September 30, 2023



Hyundai, Kia to launch first India-made EVs next year

REUTERS

Bangalore, April 25: South Korea's Hyundai Motor Group will launch its first India-manufactured electric vehicles by 2025 as the parent of the Hyundai (005380.KS) and Kia (000270.KS) brands looks to boost its presence in the nascent space dominated by Tata Motors (TAMO.NS).

Production of Hyundai's locally manufactured EVs will begin by the end of 2024 and will be launched by 2025, along with Kia's India-made EV, the Hyundai Motor Group said in a statement Thursday, adding that it would unveil five models by 2030.



Both brands will use batteries made by Exide Energy Solutions to power their EVs, they had said earlier this month. India is the biggest market outside North America and Europe for Hyundai, where its unit is headed for a \$3 billion IPO - the country's largest. Hyundai, India's No.2 car-maker, known for its top-selling 'Creta' sport utility vehicle, currently sells two electric models

Production of Hyundai's locally manufactured EVs will begin by the end of 2024 and will be launched by 2025, along with Kia's India-made EV. Both brands will use batteries made by Exide Energy Solutions to power their EVs

in India, the Kona and IONIQ 5, neither of which are produced

in the country. Kia's lone electric offering, the EV6, is imported.

The company also reaffirmed Hyundai's target of reaching annual production of 1 million by 2025, adding it would expand capacity at Kia to 432,000 from about 300,000. The combined capacity will grow to 1.5 million units.

Earlier this year, Hyundai completed the acquisition of a former Chevrolet plant in western Maharashtra state as part of its push to get production to 1 million units. The announcements came during Hyundai Motor Group Executive Chair Euisun Chung's visit to India - his second in less than a year.

JioCinema subscription prices cut as streaming war heats up in India



REUTERS

Mumbai, April 25: JioCinema, the streaming platform run by India's Reliance Industries, Thursday cut prices of its premium offering to as low as 29 rupees a month, heating up competition for Netflix and Amazon Prime.

Reliance runs multiple TV channels and JioCinema streaming app through its media unit Viacom18 and has a sizeable hold over India's \$28-billion media and entertainment market.

An advertisement-free version would start at an introductory price of 29 rupees per month for streaming on a single device and go up to 89 rupees for a "Family" plan to stream on four simultaneous devices, JioCinema said in a statement.

The platform previously priced its premium offering at 99 rupees a month, or 999 rupees a year, for streaming on up to four devices simultaneously. The plan was not ad-free. Existing JioCinema premium members will get all the additional benefits of the "Family" plan at no extra cost, it said.

Lower prices would place JioCinema in a stronger footing to compete with Netflix and Amazon after an agreement with Disney to merge India TV and streaming assets, and content deals with the likes of Warner Bros Discovery and NBCUniversal. JioCinema hosts popular titles such as "Succession" and shows featuring the character Harry Potter, alongside a variety of offerings targeting kids including popular Japanese anime series, Pokemon.

Audit firm penalised by NFRA for lapses in Vikas WSP audit case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has slapped a penalty of ₹5 lakh on an audit firm for professional misconduct and other lapses in the audit of Vikas WSP Ltd for FY20. Vikas WSP Ltd is a BSE and NSE-listed company.

The order came after NFRA received information from the Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi), that Vikas WSP Ltd did not recognise in its FY20 financial statements the interest expense on its borrowings from banks, which resulted in overstatement of profits by the company.

Thereafter, NFRA initiated action against the audit firm (S Prakash Aggarwal & Co), for professional or other misconduct in the statutory audit of Vikas WSP Ltd (VWL) for FY20.

The regulator noted that the financial statements of VWL were materially misstated due to partial recognition of interest cost on borrowings classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) by banks in FY20, resulting in overstatement of profits.

"The audit firm that was primarily responsible for establishing and maintaining a system of quality control that the firm and its personnel comply with professional standards and regulatory and legal requirements.

"Further, the reports issued by the firm or engagement partners are appropriate in the circumstances, failed to properly implement its quality control policies and procedures," NFRA said in the order Tuesday.

Accordingly, the regulator penalised the audit firm for the audit lapses. "The audit firm failed to meet relevant requirements of the Companies Act, Standards on Quality Control (SQC 12), standards on auditing in several significant respects, and was grossly negligent and failed to apply professional skepticism and due diligence in the audit," it added.

Sensex revisits 74k

MARKETS EXTEND GAINS FOR 5TH CONSECUTIVE SESSION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 25: Rising for the fifth straight session, equity benchmark Sensex rallied nearly 500 points to reclaim the 74,000 mark, while the Nifty closed above the 22,550 level Thursday due to heavy buying in banking, financial and metal stocks.

Recovering after a sell-off in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 486.50 points or 0.66 per cent to settle at 74,339.44. During the day, it surged 718.31 points or 0.97 per cent to 74,571.25. The NSE Nifty advanced 167.95 points or 0.75 per cent to 22,570.35.

From the Sensex basket, Axis Bank jumped 6 per cent after the company reported a consolidated net profit of ₹7,599 crore during the March 2024 quarter. State Bank of India, NTPC, Nestle, Sun Pharma, JSW Steel, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra and HCL Technologies were among the other major gainers.

Hindustan Unilever, Titan, Bajaj Finance, Maruti and Asian Paints were among the laggards. Kotak Mahindra Bank tanked 10.85 per cent after the RBI barred the company from onboarding customers online and issuing credit cards.

Cracking down on repeated non-compliance with IT norms, the RBI Wednesday barred Kotak Mahindra Bank from onboarding new customers through its online and mobile banking channels and issuing fresh credit cards with immediate effect after



The RBI's regulatory ecosystem on private banks led the PSU banks to outperform. The global market largely traded on a mixed note and is now focused on earnings reports, with initial reports suggesting a disappointing outlook for technology stocks, which led to the US yield inching higher

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

the regulator found "serious deficiencies" in the lender's IT risk management.

FMCG major Nestle India Thursday reported a 27 per cent increase in net profit at ₹394 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2024, on account of strong growth momentum across its product portfolio.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.71 per cent and smallcap advanced 0.54 per cent. Among the indices, serv-

ices advanced 1.71 per cent, metal (1.16 per cent), healthcare (0.97 per cent), power (0.94 per cent) and energy (0.87 per cent).

Consumer durables and realty were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled lower, while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in positive territory. European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street ended on a mixed note Wednesday.

The BSE benchmark rose 114.49 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 73,852.94 Wednesday, while the NSE Nifty advanced 34.40 points or 0.15 per cent to 22,402.40

Swiggy gets shareholders' nod to raise over ₹10,400 cr via IPO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Food and grocery delivery major Swiggy has received shareholders' approval for an initial public offering to raise ₹10,414 crore fund through issue of fresh equity shares and an offer for sale, according to sources.

A special resolution was passed at an extraordinary general meeting of Swiggy April 23, they said. According to sources, the Bengaluru-based company plans to raise up to

₹3,750 crore funds through fresh equity shares, in addition to an offer-for-sale component of up to ₹6,664 crore. The company is looking to shore up about ₹750 crore from anchor investors in a pre-IPO round, they added.

Swiggy, founded in 2014, has a valuation of USD 12.7 billion as April 10, 2024. Its annual revenue stood at USD 1.09 billion as March 31, 2023. The company has more than 4,700 employees, according to Tracxn, a global startup data platform.

India granted over 1 lakh patents in FY24: Official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: India granted 1.03 lakh patents in financial year 2023-24, Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks Unnat Pandit said Thursday, as he assured that there will be "no delay" in the Intellectual Property Office as it prioritises timely clearance of applications.

Addressing an Assocham event here, he shared that 40 per cent of the applications were disposed of within 30 months of the request for examination.

"We are going to have no delay in the IP office, that's the motive with which we have...that IP should be granted and under Chapter 8 of the Act it should also

be utilised by the applicant...that will generate the economic value of IP," Pandit said.

"All the pendency got cleared so now whatever application which is going to come for examination or hearing will be within the period of 30-36 months. So there is no delay which is going to happen now," he said on the sidelines of the event.

The commerce and industry ministry had earlier said every 6 minutes one technology is seeking IP protection in India. In 2023, an all-time high of 90,300 patent applications were received. Patent office granted over one lakh patents in the last one year (March 15, 2023 to March 14, 2024). Every working day, 250

patents were granted.

It added that the Patent Rules, 2024 have been notified and these rules introduced several provisions aimed at simplifying the process of obtaining and managing patents.

In the revamped rules, a unique provision for New 'Certificate of Inventorship' has been introduced to acknowledge the contribution of inventors in the patented invention.

Besides, the time limit to furnish foreign application filing details in a specified form has been changed from six months from the date of filing of application to three months from the date of issuance of the first examination report.

Tech companies plug into India's smaller cities for talent

THE TECH SECTOR'S SHARE IN INDIA'S TOP SEVEN MARKETS FELL TO 20.9% IN 2023, ITS LOWEST IN MORE THAN A DECADE, JLL DATA SHOWED

REUTERS

Madurai/Bangalore, April 25: Indian engineer B Ramachandran now prefers living in the smaller cities than the major tech hubs of Bangalore and Chennai.

After the pandemic, the 47-year-old moved to Madurai, a temple town in the southern

state of Tamil Nadu. He has no plans to leave his hometown, saying the chance to live with his ageing mother while working for New York-based technology services firm Genpact (G.N) is a "blessing".

IT companies are now expanding into smaller cities, in part to tap on workers like Ramachandran, and to capitalise on cheaper land costs, rents and wages.

Some are already finding it easier to hire staff in tier 2 cities, in contrast to before the pandemic when workers largely went from smaller cities into the country's major IT hubs for jobs.

"The HR and I used to drive down to Bangalore and Chennai to interview experienced talent



and convince them to move to Madurai," said Selvaganesh MP, founder of IT firm SMI that was bought by mid-cap IT company Happiest Minds (HAPP.NS) in 2023. "This is no longer needed

as the equation has changed after COVID-19."

US-based Cognizant (CTSH.O) and India's Tata Consultancy Services (TCS.NS), Infosys (INFY.NS),

Cognizant is trying to exit a major Chennai facility as part of its plan to cut real estate costs by \$100 million by 2025

Tech Mahindra (TEML.NS) is running an initiative called "Nxt.Towns" to win talent in tier 2 cities

Wipro is encouraging employees to relocate to its offices in smaller cities through "Project Lavender"

HCLTech (HCLT.NS) and Wipro (WIPR.NS) are moving into smaller cities due to cost efficiency, government incentives and availability of talent.

HCLTech has two offices in Madurai with 6,700 employees. It had originally aimed for 5,000 staff by 2025, which

it exceeded, as a result of pandemic-induced demand. It also expanded its workforce in tier 2 locations such as Nagpur in Maharashtra state, Vijayawada in southern Andhra Pradesh state and Lucknow in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh since the pandemic.

Industry watchers say the trend to smaller cities helps companies reduce attrition and cut costs at a time when the \$254 billion Indian IT sector is grappling with weak sales growth amid global economic uncertainty.

Employee salaries are 25%-30% lower and real estate rentals are around 50% cheaper than in established tech hubs, according to a report by Deloitte and industry body Nasscom.

RCB end losing streak

KKR bowling woes under spotlight vs shaky PBKS



Rajat Patidar plays a pull shot during his innings against SRH



Swapnil Singh reacts after dismissing Heinrich Klaasen (not in pic)



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, April 25: Rajat Patidar's explosive fifty and a collective effort from the spinners set up Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 35-run win over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL here Thursday, bringing an end to their six-match losing streak. Patidar's 50 off 20 balls (2x4, 5x6) stood in stark contrast to Virat Kohli's measured 51 off 43 balls (4x4, 1x6) as RCB put up 206/7 after opting to bat. For a team that has breached the 250-run mark thrice season, the target was very gettable but the in-form SRH batting line-up could not deliver on this occasion and ended at 171/8 in 20 overs. It was a much-needed result for RCB, who lost seven of their

first eight games. The loss was SRH's third in eight matches. Considering the effectiveness of the spinners in the first innings, RCB opened the bowling with part-time off-spinner Will Jacks. The English man had the destructive Travis Head (1 off 3) caught at third man to give RCB a massive boost. Head's opening partner Abhishek Sharma (31, 13b, 3x4, 2x6) did entertain the home crowd until his attempted slog ended up in the hands of wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik. Left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh (2/40 in 3 overs), making his RCB debut, struck twice in his first over removing the dangerous South Africa duo of Aiden Markram and Heinrich Klaasen. While Markram missed a full

toss to be adjudged lbw, Klaasen was caught at mid-on after mistiming a lofted drive, leaving SRH at 56 for four in five overs. Leggie Karn Sharma (2/29 in 4 overs) then dismissed Nitish Reddy and Abdul Samad to shut the door on the opposition. Earlier, Patidar did the bulk of the work in his 65-run stand with Kohli who was focused on giving the strike to his partner, an approach which was questioned by Sunil Gavaskar on air. Cameron Green (37 n o, 20b, 5x4) and Swapnil (12) came up with timely strikes in the death overs to take RCB past 200. RCB were all guns blazing in the first three overs with Kohli and Faf du Plessis (25, 12b) going hard at the SRH bowlers, including opposition skipper Pat

Cummins who conceded 19 runs in his first over. However, from 43 for no loss of the first 18 balls, RCB could only reach 61 by the end of the powerplay. Du Plessis was deceived by a slow short ball from T Natarajan to be caught by Markram at mid-off. Will Jacks (6) went for a wild slog sweep off a flighted delivery from leg-spinner Mayank Markande but could not make contact to be bowled, leaving RCB 65 for two in seven overs. That was when Kohli and Patidar got together to take the innings forward. The spinners were able to put pressure on the batters after the powerplay. As Kohli went for rotation of strike in this tough phase for RCB, Patidar broke the shackles by

smashing Markande for four straight sixes in the 11th over. The first two hits were down the ground before Patidar read Markande's googly to send it over mid-wicket. The fourth and final six came off a wide and loopy delivery which Patidar dispatched over extra cover. Such was the contrast in the style of approaches that Patidar took 19 balls to reach his fifty, while IPL's leading run-getter Kohli took 37. **BRIEF SCORES:** RCB 206/7 (Virat Kohli 51, Rajat Patidar 50, Cameron Green 37 n o; Jaydev Unadkat 3/30, T Natarajan 2/39) beat SRH 171/8 (Shahbaz Ahmed 40 n o, Abhishek Sharma 31, Pat Cummins 31; Cameron Green 2/12, Karn Sharma 2/29, Swapnil Singh 2/40) by 35 runs.

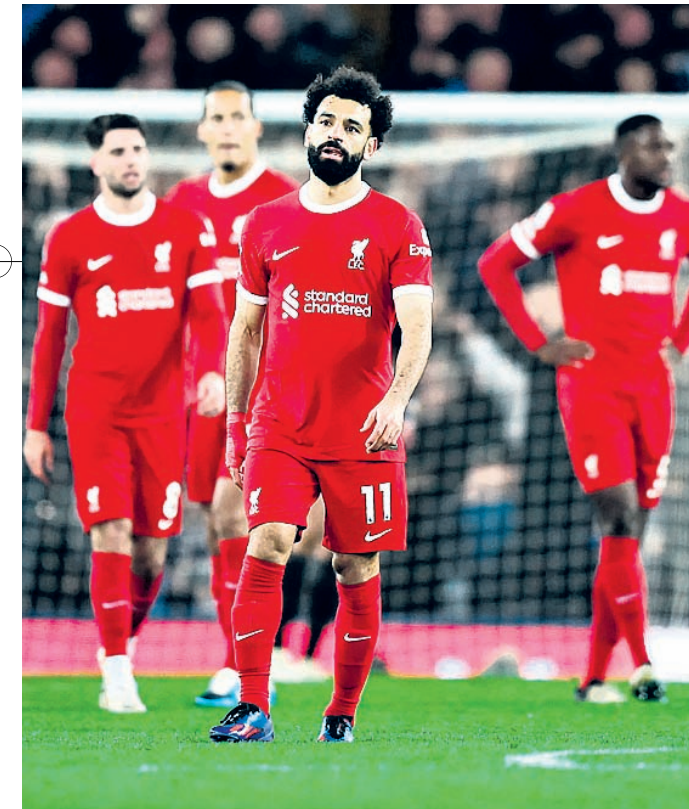
Kolkata, April 25: Mitchell Starc will be desperate to justify his USD 3 million price tag as Kolkata Knight Riders' bowling unit will be trying to find ways to be less profligate when they are pitted against a perennially under-achieving Kings XI Punjab in an IPL match here Saturday. KKR are currently second in the 10-team table with 10 points, four behind table toppers Rajasthan Royals (14 points) and the team's success is largely due to the batting efforts from the top order. In Punjab Kings, they meet a side that has been inconsistent and despite two good finds in Shashank Singh and Ashutosh Sharma, they haven't exactly done well during key moments and like every other year, they are all but out of playoff contention. Sunil Narine (286 at 176.54 SR) and Phil Salt (249 at 169.38 SR) have been phenomenal at the top, Andre Russell (155 at 184.52), skipper Shreyas Iyer (190 at 126.66) have all been among the runs. Even Rinku Singh, who has just faced 67 balls in 7 games has a strike-rate of close to 160. Save captain Iyer, all the specialist batters have scored at a strike-rate northwards of 150 and that has been instrumental in the Shah Rukh Khan co-owned team posting four 200-plus to-

tals in their seven games so far. Only Venkatesh Iyer's poor form has stuck out like a sore thumb. However the same can't be said about the bowling unit where Narine with his immaculate line and length is the only person, who has been able to maintain an economy rate of just above 7.10 which is brilliant in times when 'Impact Player' is in vogue. But it is Starc, whose underwhelming performance (6 wickets at ER 11.48) is the worst among the specialist bowler. Compared to Starc, uncapped India pacers Harshit Rana (ER 9.25, 9 wickets) and Vaibhav Arora (ER 9.57, 7 wickets) have been more impressive but they have also got hit at times. Against a side like Kings with some power-hitters at the back-end, a better performance will be warranted from the bowling unit. While KKR top order has done the bulk of their scoring, it's the opposite in case of Punjab Kings who have struggled to get it going from the outset. The likes of Prabhsimran Singh, Liam Livingstone, Rilee Rossouw and Jonny Bairstow have failed to get into the act.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League
KKR vs PBKS
Time: 07:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: Jio Cinema

Liverpool's PL title hopes hit by 0-2 loss to Everton



Mohamed Salah wears a dejected look after Liverpool's defeat against Everton which dents their hopes of the Premier League title

Liverpool, April 25: Jurgen Klopp's hopes of a dream send-off were left in tatters after a 0-2 loss at Everton dealt a major blow to Liverpool's Premier League title bid Wednesday. Goals from Jarrad Branthwaite and Dominic Calvert-Lewin at Goodison Park meant Klopp tasted a bitter defeat in his last Merseyside derby before standing down at the end of the season. The loss keeps Liverpool three points behind league leaders Arsenal in second place and one ahead of defending champions Manchester City, who are third and have two games in hand on both of their rivals. Klopp had spoken last week of needing perfection to win his second title at the club. But this was the latest setback for his team, which has lost two of its last three games in the league. While the result hurt Liverpool's title chances, it delivered a boost to Everton's survival bid, with the win moving Sean Dyche's team eight points above the relegation zone. That fact seemed to be of less concern to the home fans, who were too busy reveling in the damage caused to Liverpool's season.

"You lost the league at Goodison Park," they chanted as the final whistle approached and the majority of the 39,000 crowd remained inside the stadium to drink in the atmosphere as the players celebrated on the field. Klopp had dominated this fixture since taking over at Anfield in 2015, winning nine of the past 16 derbies before Wednesday's match. Statistics showed Everton won 75% of all duels in the opening half hour, a league record for any top flight team this season. **MAN UNITED SCORE** Manchester United survived another scare — twice coming from behind to beat last-placed Sheffield United 4-2. Having been taken to the wire by second-tier Coventry in the FA Cup semi-finals Sunday, Erik ten Hag's team looked in danger of dropping points in its bid qualify for Europe. United are up to sixth in the standings, 13 points behind fourth-place Aston Villa. Sheffield United led 1-0 and then 2-1 through goals from Jayden Bogle and Ben Brereton Diaz in each half at Old Trafford. But Harry Maguire and Bruno Fernandes equalised from the penalty spot on each occasion. Fernandes put United ahead in the 81st and Rasmus Hojlund sealed the points four minutes later.

Indian recurve men's team in WC final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shanghai, April 25: The Indian trio of Tarundeep Rai, Dhiraj Bommadevara and Pravin Jadhav set up a gold medal clash with Olympic champions Korea after storming into the men's team recurve final of the Archery World Cup Stage 1 here Thursday. It came a day after India were assured of at least two medals in the compound competition after both the men's and women's teams made the finals. The Indian recurve team, which qualified behind reigning world and Olympic champions South Korea, sailed past Italy in the last-four stage. India will be up against the South Korea's Tokyo Olympics gold medal-winning trio of Kim Woojin, Lee Woo Seok and Kim Je Deok in the final slated for Sunday. The top-seeded Korean trio defeated their Chinese Taipei rivals Tan Chih-Chun, Lin Zih-Siang and Tai Yu-Hsuan in straight sets. In the compound event, former world youth champion Priyansh and reigning Asian Games gold-medallist Jyothi Surekha Vennam advanced to their respective individual semi-finals to also remain in the hunt for a medal. Having got a first round bye in



the season-opening tournament, the second-seeded men's recurve team overcame a first set deficit to beat 15th seeded Indonesia 3-0 (55-56, 54-54, 55-51, 55-53) in their tricky opening clash. They were back to their best against seventh-seeded Spain as they began by dropping just one point (59 out of 60) before cruising to a 5-1 (59-54, 56-55, 55-55) win to make the semifinals. The Indian women's team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Bhajan Kaur, which got the sixth rank in the qualifiers, managed a below-par show and lost

a 3-1 lead to go down to Mexico in their opening clash. Having got a bye in the first round, the Indian women's team enjoyed a 3-1 lead in the second set. But their scores were below-par and they eventually lost 3-5 (50-50, 55-49, 51-54, 52-54). Later, World Cup gold-medallist Jyothi, who is seeded second, downed teammate Avneet Kaur 143-142 in a tight finish to make the semis in the compound competition. There was heartbreak for India's teenaged reigning world champion Aadi Swami who lost

out to top-seeded Andrea Becerra of Mexico 142-144 in the quarterfinals. Priyansh, who is seeded 14th, downed Batuhan Akcaoglu of Turkey in a thrilling shoot-off to set up a last-four clash against Nick Kappers of the USA. Both the archers were locked 145-145 and in the tie-breaker. The 21-year-old Indian held his nerves to produce two 10s to edge out the Akcaoglu who managed 10 and 9. Kappers eliminated the other Indian in the fray, Prathamesh Fuge 149-147 in his quarterfinal.

INDIA TO BID FOR CHESS WORLDS' HOSTING RIGHTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 25: Newly-elected All India Chess Federation (AICF) secretary Dev Patel Thursday said the country will bid for the hosting rights of this year's much-anticipated World Championship clash between teen sensation D Gukesh and defending champion Ding Liren of China. The 17-year-old Gukesh became the youngest ever challenger for the world title by winning the Candidates Tournament in Toronto on Monday. The dates and venue for the World Championship, which will be held in the last quarter of the year, are yet to be finalised. "We are open to discussion with FIDE, the apex chess body, and we are certain that the best world championship will be held in India," Patel, who is only 24 and heads the Gujarat Chess Association, told PTI. Patel said the AICF will contact FIDE on this matter Friday. The states in contention, according to him, are his home base of Gujarat, the traditional chess hub of Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Xavi to continue at Barcelona

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Barcelona, April 25: Xavi Hernandez says he walked back his decision to leave Barcelona this summer after his players convinced him "this is a winning team" even if this season will end without any trophies. "Many people, including my players, have made me see that this is not over," Xavi said Thursday at a news conference. Xavi spoke a day after he reached an agreement with Barcelona to reverse his January decision to leave his boyhood club after this season. He has committed to finishing out the final year of his contract that lasts until June 2025. Xavi said the improved play of this team has been key. That, and feeling he "has the strength" to go on. The Spain great said he has always put the good of the team and club first. And while he once thought his team needed a new approach, now he thinks he can still be successful. He denied it was about money:



"The club president knows that if I had not finished the last year of my contract I would not have asked to be paid one single euro." The decision to stay came three days after a 2-3 loss to Real Madrid that all but ended the team's chances of a trophy. The loss in Madrid left Barcelona 11 points behind its rival with six matches remaining in the Spanish league. A week ago, Barcelona were eliminated by Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League quarterfi-

nals. But at least Barcelona showed some improvement since Xavi's unexpected announcement in January to leave. After that, they strung a 13-game unbeaten streak before falling to PSG. "I don't think my time here is over and I believe that we can be successful. I am convinced of that, and these three months have made me see that," Xavi said. "And since changing one's mind is a sign of wisdom, I have decided to change my mind."

Ekta, Ranvir, Anurag bag gold in Asian U-20 meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 25: Ranvir Singh and Ekta Dey clinched men's and women's 3000m steeplechase gold medals respectively as Indians continued their dominant show Thursday in the Asian U-20 Athletics Championships in Dubai. With these two latest additions, India's gold tally has swelled to three. Ekta claimed gold with a time of 10:31.92 seconds, while Ranvir emerged victorious clocking 9:22.62 seconds. Anurag Singh Kaler earlier won the gold in the men's shot put with a distance of 19.23m as Indians added a total of seven medals to their kitty on this day. In the morning session, race walker Aarti set the ball rolling, winning a hard-fought bronze in the women's 10,000m. Aarti's bronze-winning time of 47:45.33 seconds was better than the World U20 Athletics Championships qualification

time of 49 minutes. Later, throwers added three medals, including a gold to the team's tally. Kaler took time to settle down in the shot put. He battled with South Korean Park Sihoon for gold. Kaler's gold-winning throw was achieved in the third attempt. His opening throw was 18.44 and his second attempt was 18.69m. Fourth and fifth were no marks and sixth and final throw was 18.79m. Sihoon also found a distance of 19.23m but had to be satisfied with the silver as the Indian had a better average in the contest. Defending champion Siddharth Choudhary settled for bronze with a throw of 19.02m, scored in the second attempt. His other throws were below the 19m mark. Amanat Kamboj added a silver to the team's tally. Her best throw was 50.45m. Aman Choudhary also won bronze in the men's 400m. His time was 47.53 seconds.