



## SRK ON TOP

Shah Rukh Khan wins TIME100 Reader Poll beating the likes of Prince Harry-Meghan Markle, Lionel Messi

LEISURE P2



## NEW SUPPORT STAFF

Hockey India appoints a number of technical coaches for both the Indian men's and women's teams

SPORTS P10



## FRESH SANCTIONS

China sanctions Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and other US and Asia based organisations

INTERNATIONAL P12

## EOW BUSTS ONLINE PONZI FRAUD; 1 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) arrested the local agent of a sham company that duped thousands of investors through an online ponzi scheme.

The accused Nilesh Kumar Kar is a resident of Angaragadia in Balasore district. Kar was arrested in connection with a case registered on the basis of allegations of Mahamanya Jena, a native from Sahadevkhunta area of the same district. Jena alleged in his complaint that the accused induced him to invest in the scheme run by the sham company 'Cloud-Fut' by connecting through application or website to earn some extra money.

Jena reportedly invested ₹2,13,038 in the scheme between January to March, 2023.

"When he was to get ₹50, 57,117 on his invested amount, as shown in the wallet of 'Cloud-Fut', suddenly the website stopped functioning and the informant could not withdraw the amount," revealed EOW sources.

The EOW after investigation unearthed that 'Cloud-Fut', an online app based company, was running the multi-level marketing scheme fraudulently claiming to be a crypto mining company. According to claims on its website and the app, the company claims to be based in the USA and headed by one Richard Purcell. The agents of the company also used to show a video in which Richard was promoting schemes in American accent. Fake certificates of RBI were shown to win the trust of investors.

The company has duped 80,000 investors across the country including 200 from Balasore alone promising to multiply their money in a short period.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Just give pass marks to my son, Mr principal. I'll soon make changes in the textbooks to correct the answers

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	37.1°C	36.5°C
TEMP MIN	22.6°C	21.0°C
Humidity	62%	77%
Rainfall	1.8mm	40.2mm
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

## Train runs over jumbo



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhendipada, April 7:** An elephant died after a train ran over the animal near Jereng Dehuri Sahi under the Jarapada forest range in Angul district, Thursday night.

Sources said the incident occurred when the Sambalpur-Shalimar-Mahima Gossain Express hit the elephant while it was crossing the railway track.

The tusker died along the railway track after being dragged by the train for about 30 metre.

Senior Forest and Railways officials reached the spot Friday



**CARE FOR JUMBOS:** President Droupadi Murmu feeds elephants during the inauguration of the Gaj Utsav-2023 at the Kaziranga National Park, in Golaghat, Friday. Murmu urged people to treat elephants with compassion and keep elephant corridors free from obstructions to facilitate their easy movement

## Covid-19 surge: States asked to remain prepared

AGENCIES

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, April 7:** Amid rising cases of coronavirus, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Friday held a review meeting and advised states to stay alert and be prepared for Covid-19 management.

In the meeting with state health ministers and principal and additional chief secretaries held virtually, Mandaviya stressed on identifying emergency hotspots by monitoring trends of influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases, ramping up testing and vaccination and ensuring readiness of hospital infrastructure.

Along with enhancing genome sequencing and ramping up whole genome sequencing of positive samples, he also emphasised on creating awareness about following Covid-appropriate behaviour.

He also urged the state health ministers to conduct mock drills of all hospital infrastructure April 10 and 11 and review the health preparedness with district administrations and health officials April 8 and 9.

Meanwhile, Odisha Friday registered 104 new Covid cases, taking the state's tally to 13,37,377, a health department official said. Over 100 cases were registered in the state after a gap of six months.

# Milk prices on boil

Milk prices in the world's biggest producer have risen at their fastest pace in a decade to a record high as lumpy skin disease and the Covid-19 pandemic slowed dairy breeding

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 7:** India, the world's largest producer of milk, may have to import the dairy product amid a spurt in demand and almost stagnant output over the last one year, with industry experts warning that rates may go up further this summer.

The Centre, along with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), is monitoring the supply-demand gap in dairy products and will take a decision on imports depending on the situation.

Milk prices have risen at their fastest pace in a decade to a record high as lumpy skin disease and the Covid-19 pandemic slowed dairy breeding.

India's milk output stood at 221 million tonne in 2021-22, up 6.25 per cent from 208 million tonne in the previous year. However, the production in 2022-23 is estimated to remain flat or witness slight growth.



While announcing the monetary policy, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday said, "milk prices are also likely to remain firm going into the summer season due to tight demand-supply balance and fodder cost pressures."

The RBI Governor had also pointed out that consumer price inflation has increased since December 2022, driven by price pressure in cereals, milk and fruits.

Mother Dairy Managing Director Manish Bandlish said, "The dairy sector is going through an unprecedented time. There is a consistent surge in demand of milk and milk products, at the same time, the procurement prices of raw milk are also increasing significantly."

President of Indian Dairy Association RS Sodhi said the government is seized of the matter. "In case the government decides to allow imports, we are hopeful there will be no impact on the prices farmers get for the milk they supply," he said.

Major milk cooperatives like Amul and Mother Dairy raised retail prices by ₹2-3 per litre in two

# Editors decry govt move to police news

'Draconian' amendments to IT Rules give government 'absolute power' to determine fake news

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 7:** The Editors Guild of India Friday said it was 'deeply disturbed' by the 'draconian' amendments to the Information Technology Rules that gave the government 'absolute power' to determine fake news.

In a statement here, the Guild urged the government to withdraw the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules and hold consultations with media organisations and press bodies, as it had promised earlier.

The Guild said as per the rules, the IT Ministry has given itself the power to constitute a 'fact checking unit', which will have sweeping powers to determine what is 'fake or false or misleading', with respect to 'any business of the Central Government.'

The ministry has also empowered itself to issue instructions to 'intermediaries' (including social

media intermediaries, Internet Service Providers, and other service providers), to not host such content, the Guild said.

"In effect, the government has given itself absolute power to determine what is fake or not, in respect of its own work, and order take down," the statement said.

The Guild said there was no mention of the governing mechanism for such a fact checking unit, the judicial oversight, the right to appeal, or adherence to the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court of India in Shreya Singhal v Union of India case, with respect to take down of content or blocking of social media handles.

"All this is against principles of natural justice, and akin to censorship," it said.

The Guild said it was surprising that the Ministry had notified this amendment, without any meaningful consultation that it had promised after withdrawing the earlier draft amendments it had put out in January 2023.

# Indian jewels in UK royal treasury, reveals document

THE REPORT, FROM 1912, EXPLAINS HOW PRICELESS PIECES, INCLUDING CHARLES' EMERALD BELT, WERE EXTRACTED FROM INDIA AS TROPHIES OF CONQUEST AND LATER GIVEN TO QUEEN VICTORIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 7:** The discovery of a colonial-era file from the archives of the India Office, the then-British government department responsible for its rule over the Indian subcontinent, has shed light on many precious gems and jewels that came into the possession of the royal family, including many jewels of King Charles III.

As part of a 'Cost of the crown' series, The Guardian newspaper has been chronicling an investigation into Britain's royal wealth and finances in the lead-up to the Coronation of Charles III May 6.

In one of the reports this week, it references a "remarkable" 46-page file uncovered from the India Office archives that detail an investigation, apparently commis-

sioned by Queen Mary – the grandmother of the late Queen Elizabeth II, into the imperial origins of her jewels.

Among its references is an emerald-encrusted gold girdle used to decorate the horses in the stables of Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, which now forms part of King Charles' royal collection.

"The report, from 1912, explains how priceless pieces, including Charles's emerald belt, were extracted from India as trophies of conquest and later given to Queen Victoria," The Guardian investigation reveals.

"The items described are now owned by the monarch as property of the British crown," it notes.

Among the discoveries included a journal recording a tour in 1837 of Punjab by the British society



diarist Fanny Eden and her brother George, then Britain's governor general of India, who

visited Ranjit Singh – the powerful king who had signed a so-called "treaty of friendship" with the

British at the time. Dazzled by his kingdom's jewels, Eden wrote: "He puts his very finest jewels on his horses, and the splendour of their harness and housings surpasses anything you can imagine."

"If ever we are allowed to plunder this kingdom, I shall go straight to their stables," Eden wrote.

Later in the 19th century, Ranjit Singh's son and heir, Duleep Singh, was forced to sign Punjab over to the East India Company and according to historical records, the kingdom's stables would have been among the many targets of plunder.

The infamous Koh-i-Noor diamond is said to have come into the possession of Queen Victoria as a result of just such a plunder by East India Company officials.

Contd...P4

# leisure



## DRAKE ANNOUNCES CONTROVERSIAL SONG FEATURING KIM AND KANYE

Drake completely took his fans by surprise when he announced that his newest track *Search & Rescue* will be released April 7. Fans were quite excited for this new spicy track as it also allegedly involves socialite Kim Kardashian and her ex-husband and rapper Kanye West.

## DIAZ'S MOVIE HIT BY BOMB SCARE

Filming of *Charlie's Angels* actor Cameron Diaz's comeback movie was disrupted after the crew discovered an unexploded WWII bomb. The 50-year-old actress has been busy working on her first new movie in a decade - *Back In Action* for streaming service Netflix.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

You will be the focus of everyone's attention today - for your visual appeal or for your abilities. Ganesh suggests that you should make the best of the opportunity and recharge yourself. You can accomplish quite a lot with the energy you gain.

#### TAURUS

This day could be full of surprises, mostly unpleasant, fears Ganesh. Nothing is likely to turn out as planned and expected. There will be sharp and sudden twist and turns, unexpected shocks and setbacks all day long. You will, however, with the grace and blessings of the Almighty, manage to stay steady and unruffled, and move ahead.

#### GEMINI

You will be in the mood to spend the day doing the things that you really love. You will consider helping people in need and will be in a generous mood. Your charitable bent of mind will bring you elevated social status and improved self-esteem, says Ganesh.

#### CANCER

Your career will reach a decisive moment. You can expect a transfer, promotion or pay hike. Alongside your responsibilities will also increase. A chance of new job is also indicated. You can reject a tempting job offer.

#### LEO

You will spend an enjoyable day with your favourite relatives and friends. In the office also, you will be afforded rare cooperation from all your colleagues. Financial gains are indicated. It is a good time for lovers, who will experience an intimate bond with their partners, says Ganesh.

#### VIRGO

Business and pleasure will be well balanced. Ganesh says you will enjoy the party which will seem endless today. Your monetary outflow will be in direct proportion to the time you spend just lazing around. However, Ganesh advises you to spend sensibly and not to worry about it.

#### LIBRA

Ganesh says those of you in the field of business will find this to be a good time for them. In any work that you undertake your vision and ability will be showcased. You will have to spend more time at your workplace. Ganesh says you should try and maintain a balance between your work and your family.

#### SCORPIO

You go on a shopping spree and that too with your beloved. This may be quite therapeutic for your relationship. You may be just happy to use your bargaining skills to the optimum. Spending lavishly, first on shopping and then on sumptuous dinner to treat your taste buds. What more one wants in life!

#### SAGITTARIUS

A tiring day is in store for you today. Find yourself labouring worse than Hercules. The positive outcome would be that you would lose a few extra calories. But late in the day, a nice quiet time with family and friends would relieve you of all the stress.

#### CAPRICORN

Everything you do today will be driven by the desire to meet the expectations of your family members, says Ganesh. For those of you pursuing studies, pending projects will finally get completed, and you will look forward to taking up new assignments.

#### AQUARIUS

You will receive some good news today. Whatever has been in the pipe line may come out in the open and you'll see the desired output, feels Ganesh. Courageous and patient, you can deal with the toughest of challenges with an ease and Ganesh gives a pat on your back for that. It will be a good day for people associated with Stock Market and finance.

#### PISCES

You will work hard to organize your day to day routine but due to the ill alignment of the planets you will not be able to sort things out successfully today. Ganesh advises you to be patient and let things be as they are but also to hold on to the sentiments of change.



## SRK tops TIME100 Reader Poll 2023

The 'Pathaan' actor beats the likes of royal couple Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Argentinian player Lionel Messi, and Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg

**Mumbai:** Superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who is basking in the glory of the success of the blockbuster *Pathaan*, has once again proved he is the ultimate king. The actor won the 2023 TIME100 Reader Poll, beating the likes of royal couple Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, Argentinian player Lionel Messi, and Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg.

It is the readers of the magazine who voted for the world-renowned personalities they believe deserve a spot on TIME's annual list of the most influential people. According to the American publication, over 1.2 million votes were cast in the poll, with Shah Rukh receiving 4 per cent.

The second spot went to the Iranian women protesting for greater freedoms from the country's Islamic regime, garnering 3 per cent of the vote.

Other stars and noteworthy figures who featured on the poll included Argentinian footballer Lionel Messi, Oscar winner Michelle Yeoh, former tennis player Serena Williams, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The 57-year-old actor made a mega comeback after his absence from leading man roles for more than four years with *Pathaan*, which has earned over Rs 1,000 crore worldwide and sealed his popularity among the masses.



### DIGITAL MEDIUM

## Taapsee banks on thriller genre

**Mumbai:** Taapsee Pannu is one of the many actors who have been exploring thriller projects of late. In recent times, she has been seen in multiple films across sub-genres of thrillers and most of these have been released on digital platforms. The actress appeared in a romantic thriller, *Hasen Dillruba*; a comic thriller, *Loop Lapeta*; a sci-fi thriller, *Dobaaraa*; and a horror thriller, *Blurr*.

About what makes the genre so special on OTT platforms, Taapsee shares her piece of mind, saying, "I think people like to enjoy thrillers in silence. They want to see the film in their own space, without bothering about who is sitting next to them (which happens in cinema halls)."

She further adds, "The digital medium helps the audience with better engagement. And thrillers, if written well, can get very engaging. So, unlike other genre content, say, drama, where you can pause and play or watch it over breaks, you watch thrillers in continuation."

The actress is currently venturing into the genre of comedy with upcoming projects like *Woh Ladki Hai Kahan*, an investigative comedy with Pratik Gandhi and *Dunki*, an emotional comedy-drama with a strong female protagonist alongside Shah Rukh Khan.

## Prosenjit on changing dynamics in showbiz

**Mumbai:** Actor Prosenjit Chatterjee, one of the prominent actors from Bengali film industry, will be seen in the upcoming series *Jubilee*. In a recent interview with a news portal, the actor revealed on rise of OTT platform and why he didn't take up more films in Hindi film industry even after starring in so many films.

He said, "It's not like regional actors who come to Mumbai, get a lot of work. I last worked in Shanghai, which was a long time now. Right now, new platforms have come up and everyone is getting a lot of exposure. Language is not an issue anymore. It's a great time for the younger generation. Times have changed, definitely. Bengali actors have done so much more." The actor reflected on changed

dynamics for actors of this generation and said, "That was the time of theatres and studios. But things have changed now, today it's the director and producers' vision that makes stars. I owe everything to the people who I've worked with."

The first five episodes of *Jubilee* will release on Prime Video April 7 and rest comprising the remaining five episodes, will release April 14.



## I've been a risk-taker: Kareena

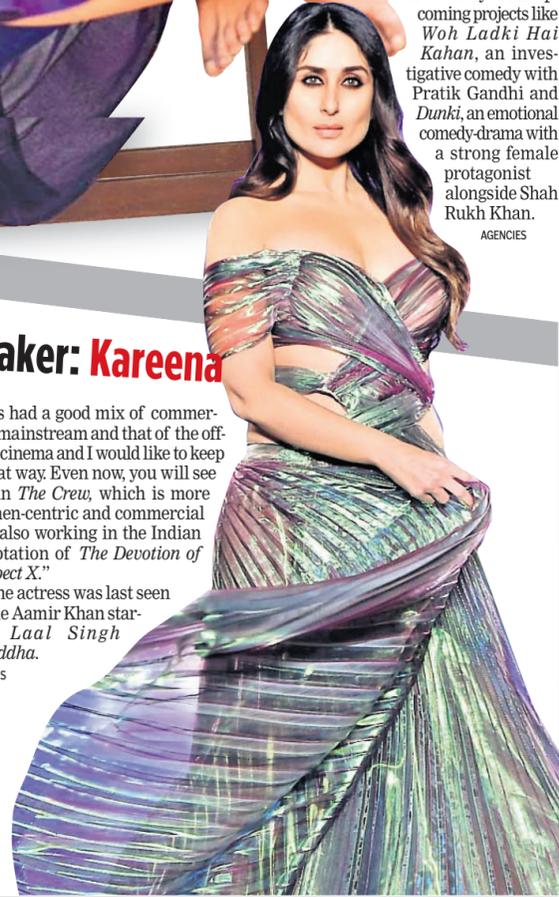
**Mumbai:** Heroine actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, who recently kickstarted the shoot of her upcoming film *The Crew*, has shared that she likes to keep a healthy mix of mainstream and off-beat films in her filmography and that her titular role in *Chameli* is a testament to that.

Talking about making brave choices, Kareena told a news portal, "I have always been a risk-taker and it's because of my passion for acting. That's the reason behind me doing a *Golmaal* and an off-beat film like *Omkar*, *Yuva* or *Chameli*."

Talking about her role in *Chameli*, she said, "I was 21 years old when I played Chameli at a time when nobody was doing films like that. Today, I'm 42 and people still talk about that film. So, I have

always had a good mix of commercial mainstream and that of the off-beat cinema and I would like to keep it that way. Even now, you will see me in *The Crew*, which is more women-centric and commercial and also working in the Indian adaptation of *The Devotion of Suspect X*."

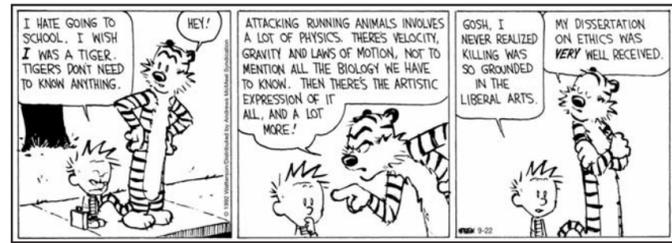
The actress was last seen in the Amir Khan starrer *Laal Singh Chaddha*.



### PEANUTS



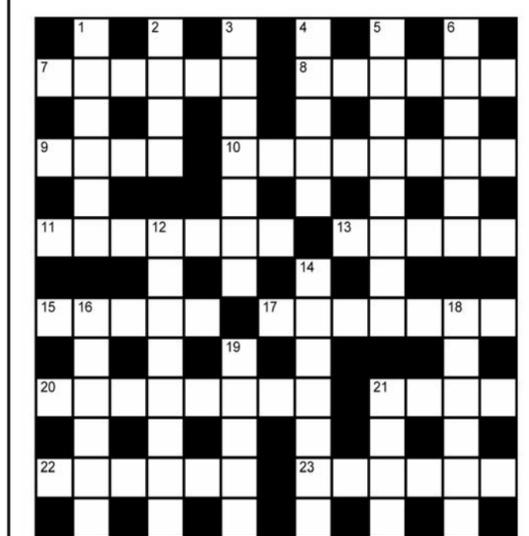
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



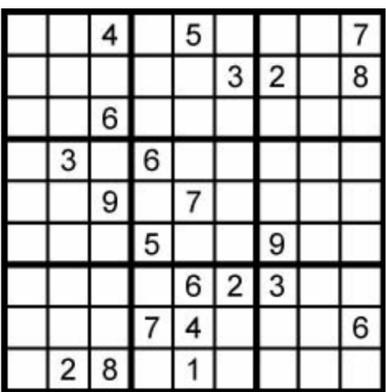
### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Morals and such
  - 8 \_\_\_ of Nations
  - 9 Nobleman
  - 10 Precisely (2,3,3)
  - 11 Chorus
  - 13 A small fruit
  - 15 Black and white mammal
  - 17 Sand traps
  - 20 Off-white colour
  - 21 Ill-mannered
  - 22 Airplane storage unit
  - 23 Refinement
  - Down**
  - 1 Caress
  - 2 Current of air
  - 3 Diffusion of molecules
  - 4 After dental or photographic
  - 5 Electronic equipment (4,4)
  - 6 Hearsay
  - 12 Change a plan
  - 14 Game played on ice
  - 16 Hound dog or blanket
  - 18 Lose weight
  - 19 Fatigued
  - 21 Chew out

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



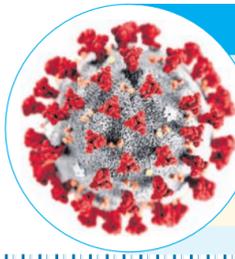
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## BACK TO ROOTS

A woman prepares bamboo-based products near Puri railway station, Friday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,46,49,198	65,75,36,294	68,36,548
India	4,47,45,104	4,41,85,858	5,30,943
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

# BJD fields dozen of leaders as observers

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Friday appointed 12 senior leaders as observers for four blocks and the municipality ahead of the May 10 Jharsuguda Assembly bypoll.

According to an order of the ruling party, ministers Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak and Tukuni Sahu have been appointed as observers for Kirmira block, while minister Niranjan Pujari and MLA Saroj Meher have been appointed for Kolabira block. MLAs Padmanabha Behera and Arun Kumar Sahoo will look after Jharsuguda block.

While minister Pratap Keshari Deb and ex-minister Dibya Shankar Mishra have been appointed as observers for Laikera block, senior leaders Pratap Jena, Puspendra Singh Deo, Snehangini Chhuria and Rita Sahu will look after Jharsuguda municipality, the ruling dispensation said.

The BJD had earlier appointed three senior leaders – Prasanna Acharya, Devi Prasad Mishra and Sarada Prasad Nayak – as observers for the byelection, which was necessitated following the death of Naba Kishore Das January 29 this year, it was learnt.

As the bypoll would be the last election before the upcoming Assembly and general elections in 2024, the BJD is leaving no stone unturned to retain the seat. The party has fielded Dipali Das – the slain minister's daughter – to garner sympathy votes, it was learnt.

The BJP and Congress, however, are yet to name their candidates for the bypoll, whose result will be declared May 13.

The saffron party is likely to field its youth leader Tankadhar Tripathy for the big-ticket seat.

On the other hand, the Congress panel on selection of candidates, led by senior leader and MLA Santosh Singh Saluja, has submitted its report with the party office.



**EYEING HIGH YIELD:** A farmer applies fertiliser on his crop in Mangalpur area of Puri, Friday

OP PHOTO

# 1.5 tonne single-use plastic seized in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** As part of its crackdown against single-use plastic, the central enforcement team of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Friday, seized more than 1.5 tonne of the banned materials from near Damana market here.

On its way to north administrative zone of BMC, the team detected the stock of single-use plastic near Damana market. During the raid, the team stumbled upon a house near the market that was serving as the stock room for the materials. The team members entered into the house where they found about 1.5 tonne of plastic cups, thermocol plates, polythene carry bags and other such items.

"The civic authority is restricting the use of single-use plastic from time to time and regular checks at different vending units are continuing along with awareness drives. Swachh Sathis are orienting community members in this regard. We are approaching at domestic, market and corporate levels to get community support for the cause," said BMC commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange.

# No link between arrival of EVMs and polls: CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** Amid the arrival of a number of new electronic voting machines (EVMs) in Odisha, the state chief electoral officer (CEO) Nikunja Bihari Dhal Friday asked the media to refrain from speculations about early Assembly polls.

The CEO's office said in a statement that there is no connection between EVMs being supplied to the state and timing of the Assembly elections that would be held simultaneously with that of the Lok Sabha.

"EVMs have a life span. The factory-made machines are being supplied to different states, including Odisha for use in future elections," the statement said.

Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had earlier dropped hints about early polls in Odisha. The arrival of a batch of 8,200 new EVMs in the first phase from Electronics Corporation of India Limited, Hyderabad Tuesday triggered speculation in the media about early Assembly elections in the coastal state.

Representatives of different political parties were present when



File photo of EVMs being unloaded from a truck in Puri

OP PHOTO

the EVMs arrived at the Puri district warehouse.

Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are both due in April 2024.

The state requires 95,000 EVMs for its about 37,100 polling booths in 147 Assembly and 21 Lok Sabha constituencies. This is double the number of EVMs required for holding a single election in the state and the requirement will be met by direct procurement from the manufacturer and other states as man-

dated by the Election Commission, an official in the CEO's office said.

The new EVMs that arrived will soon be sent to Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bolangir, Sonepur, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts, he added.

Meanwhile, three major political parties of the state – the ruling BJD, and opposition BJP and Congress – have said that they are prepared to face elections any time.

# Youth found hanging in Nayapalli



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** A 28-year-old youth was found hanging from the ceiling fan of his room at Behera Sahi in Nayapalli area here, Friday.

The deceased, Bikram Kumar Sahoo, who was a greengrocer, had been residing at a rented accommodation at Behera Sahi, while his family stayed nearby.

"As Bikram did not open his shop Thursday and Friday, his family grew suspicious and landed at his place in the morning. Despite knocks, the 28-year-old did not open the door. Anxious family members, along with locals, broke open the door to find a lifeless Bikram hanging from the ceiling fan of his room," said a police official.

The official added that the body was sent for postmortem to Capital Hospital and an unnatural death case (28/23) has been registered in this regard. The family is yet to file any complaint regarding foul play, it was learnt.

# STATE DELEGATION HOLDS SERIES OF MEETS IN TOKYO

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** In a continuing effort to be the country's leading investment destination, the high-level delegation led by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik continued its deep foray into hard selling Odisha to a plethora of business delegations in Tokyo, Japan for the third day.

Taking the momentum forward on the early gains made on the last few days in Tokyo, the delegation continued with its series of one-on-one meetings.

In line with the huge potential that the state offers in the field of IT and ITeS, the Fuji Soft Group has proposed to open a "Centre of Excellence" in Bhubaneswar.

Keeping in focus the skill development initiatives of the state, NITKAL (Nihon-UTKAL) has tied up with OUTR (Odisha University of Technology & Research) to set up a dedicated skill development centre in the state to cater to the huge demand for trained workforce in Japan. NITKAL is also continuing its dialogue with IIT for establishing a dedicated Japan centric centre for skill development in the relevant field. Logistics and storage for the new sunrise sector of green hydrogen and green ammonia continues to attract a large amount of traction. Two of

the stalwarts in the field met the high-level delegation led by the Chief Minister.

The block NYK Lines (Nippon Yusen Kabushiki Kaisha) evinced keen interest in setting up dedicated shipping lines, starting from the port-of-call Paradeep/Gopalpur/Dhamra to transport out green ammonia to the countries which are committed to the greening of the said sector, especially the South East Asia right up to Japan. Sumitomo Corporation, a Fortune 500 company, met the delegation and evinced interest in creating tankage and storage facilities for the green hydrogen and green ammonia sector. They are zeroing in at Gopalpur, which, with its SEZ located just next door, happens to be an ideal location for the same.

The CM instructed all officials to create a roadmap for all these investments in the sunrise sector and create timelines to achieve a quick turnaround for all the proposals received. The CM's visit to Japan continues to buttress the commitment of the state government to promote Odisha as a favourable investment destination and strengthen the emerging economic and cultural ties with Japan. The group would proceed to Kyoto today, to continue with the initiatives and initiate further bulwark in the field of sports and tourism.

# CM's visit aimed at holidaying: Oppn

**Bhubaneswar:** Slamming the CM over his Japan tour, Opposition BJP Friday sought clarifications from the state government on the proposed steel facilities by Nippon Steel Corporation in Odisha. The CM began his weeklong tour to Japan Monday to attract investments. Alleging that the visit of a state government delegation, led by the CM, to Japan, is aimed at holidaying, BJP spokesperson Satyabrata Panda said, "Though Patnaik has gone on a weeklong trip to Japan, the programme is actually for 5/6 hours. The rest of the time is spent on holidaying." Referring to the state government's claim that Nippon Steel has agreed to set up world's largest steel plant with a production capacity of 30 MTPA in Odisha, Panda said, "The government needs to clarify whether it is the old agreement for setting up a 24MTPA plant at Kendrapara and 7MTPA facility in Jagatsinghpur." Panda said when Dharmendra Pradhan was the Steel Minister, he visited Japan and Nippon Steel in October 2022 following which the company delegation visited Odisha and discussed the Kendrapara project.

# 'Moonlighting a monetary boon but may cause anxiety, stroke'

The word 'moonlighting' has been used and heard across India a lot in recent months.

Broadly, moonlighting is working for a business of the same niche while being a permanent employee of another. Post the Covid pandemic, the practice gained momentum due to remote working and reduced job security.

Many multinational companies have passed policy diktats over this issue and quite a few people have possibly lost their jobs in the process. While the jury is out to decide whether moonlighting is ethically and morally right what was not spoken much was its side-effects.

Doctors from Hyderabad, who have treated many patients suffering brain and heart-related ailments due to moonlighting, have a word of caution.

Hyderabad, a key IT and ITes destination in the country, is home to millions of technology professionals. There would be thousands of professionals who might be working for more than one company and this trend would have only multiplied since the start of 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, and work from home became the new normal. However, hospitals in Hyderabad have now started receiving more and more patients with complaints and ailments which are believed to be the side-effects of moonlighting.

Vijay Bathina, director and chief of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Uchchvas Transitionalcare, said, "Over the past six months, we have received patients from various hospitals in the city who needed recovery after suffering a

**When a human body is put under stress, it releases cortisol and adrenaline hormones, which further lead to anxiety and depression. And these two are the major causes for mental health disorders. Sustained anxiety or depression is likely to cause high blood pressure which will have a direct impact on the heart**

MANOJ VASIREDDY | NEUROLOGIST AT AMOR HOSPITALS

brain stroke or heart attack." "The most common factor is that they were all IT professionals who were doing more than one job. All worked for more than 60 hours a week, and were working late into the night. These three common factors indicate that moonlighting, which is a growing phenomenon among the new generation professionals, has started impacting their health."

Bathina explained that working for more than 60 hours a week will have an adverse impact on the health of a person and will also reduce the quality of work.

"It is important that professionals understand the fact that every individual has limitations to his/her physical ability. Adding more work hours will result in sleep deprivation, which will result in mental health complications like increased stress and decrease in cognitive performance. Hence, it is very important that profes-

sionals understand how much physical and mental strain they can take. Else, the body could give up suddenly, causing severe health complications," he added.

Highlighting certain key reasons, Manoj Vasireddy, neurologist at Amor Hospitals, said, "When a human body is put under stress, it releases cortisol and adrenaline hormones, which further lead to anxiety and depression. And these two are the major causes for mental health disorders. Sustained anxiety or depression is likely to cause high blood pressure which will have a direct impact on the heart."

Shivaram Rao Komandla, consultant neurophysician, Yashoda Hospitals, said, "Working for long hours or engaging in physically or mentally demanding work can lead to chronic stress, which can contribute to a range of health issues, including neurological problems. Chronic stress has been linked to changes in the brain that can increase the risk of developing anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders."

"It can also cause physical changes in the brain, such as reduced volume in the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making, planning, and impulse control. Also, chronic stress can contribute to the development of hypertension, which is a major risk factor for stroke. It's important to prioritise self-care and manage stress when doing multiple jobs. This can include taking breaks, getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and engaging in stress-reducing activities such as exercise or meditation."

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# Depts asked to expedite spending in 1st quarter



The secretaries of administrative departments were advised to review physical achievement against expenditure by 15th of every month against monthly/quarterly targets

All the departments were asked to give priority to capital asset creation and timely completion of ongoing projects

FUNDS WOULD BE RELEASED ACCORDING TO A DEFINITE ACTION PLAN TO ACHIEVE QUANTIFIABLE PHYSICAL TARGETS FIXED FOR THE YEAR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** The state government has asked all departments to expedite the pace of expenditure during the first quarter of the financial year before the onset of monsoon.

In a recent letter to all departments, Finance Secretary Vishal Dev said, "The departments should carefully chalk out their work programmes from the beginning of the financial year and make available the provision made in the

annual budget to the spending units in the month of April 2023 itself."

The departments were asked to give priority to capital asset creation and completion of ongoing projects. Funds should be released according to a definite action plan for achieving the quantifiable physical targets fixed for the year. The secretaries of administrative departments were advised to review physical achievement against expenditure by 15th of every month against

monthly/quarterly targets.

He further advised the departments to incur expenditure up to 50 per cent of provision made under Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the budget, in case of urgency.

Dev also asked the departments to furnish utilization certificates and statements of expenditure in time to the respective ministries of Government of India.

If any department will delay paying taxes, electricity dues, water charges and rents, the head of the office or DDO will be personally responsible for that, he said. In any circumstances, the budgetary funds will be transferred to civil deposits, warned the secretary.

For the 20 departments coming under Cash Management System, Dev said the minimum level of expenditure up to the third quarter must be 60 per cent including Programme Expenditure and Transfer from state. The programme expenditure must be 60 per cent. Less than of the target is non-negotiable, he added.



REMEMBERING A LEGEND: Members of 'We for Bhubaneswar' paid tribute to Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra on the occasion of his 19th death anniversary at the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Friday

## CONTINUED FROM P1 Indian jewels...

While modern-day royals averted a diplomatic row by not choosing the traditional Koh-i-Noor encrusted crown for Queen Camilla's Coronation May 6, the 'Cost of the crown' has cast a spotlight on the wider extent of colonial-era jewels in royal possession today.

Among the jewels identified in the document uncovered by The Guardian is a "short necklace of four very large spinel rubies," the largest of which is a 325.5-carat spinel that later came to be identified as the Timur ruby. However, research by the academic Susan Stronge in 1996 concluded it was probably never owned by the Mongol conqueror and belonged to several kings of Persia and Mughal emperors before Queen Victoria sent it from India.

Another Indian item chronicled is a pearl necklace consisting of 224 large pearls, which is also believed to have come from Ranjit Singh's treasury. "We have finally entered an era where colonial loot and pillage is being recognised for what it really was, rather than being dressed up as the incidental spoils of some noble 'civilising mission'," Congress MP and author of 'Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India' Shashi Tharoor told the newspaper.

## WORLD HEALTH DAY CM commits to robust health infrastructure

# CM commits to robust health infrastructure

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** Taking to his Twitter handle on the World Health Day, Friday, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reaffirmed his commitment to build a robust healthcare system for the people of the state to ensure for them a healthy and happy life.

"Quality and affordable healthcare continues to be a top priority for our government, and we will run the extra mile to get best of healthcare infrastructure in Odisha. On World Health Day, reaffirm commitment to build robust healthcare for a Sustha Odisha and Sukhi Odisha," tweeted Naveen.

In recent times, the state government has focused on providing quality health facilities to all and has crossed several milestones in this regard. It achieved highest reduction in infant mortality in the country for the period 2005 to 2020. Through its globally appreciated DAMAN programme, Odisha has witnessed highest decline in Malaria cases in the country while also ranking top in full immuni-

## 'Tackling health challenges primary responsibility'

The Orissa Environmental Society and the Regional Science Centre (RSC), Bhubaneswar, jointly organised a programme to celebrate the World Health Day at RSC here Friday.

The theme for this year chosen by the World Health Organization was 'Health for All', which intends to add quality to healthcare and successfully confront challenges on the path of people living a disease-free, healthy life.

On the occasion, experts made an analysis of improvements in healthcare during the last seven decades that have improved quality of life. They suggested that it is an opportunity to motivate action for tackling challenges we confront in the health sector at the present moment.



Students from several City Schools participated in a drawing competition organised by the Orissa Environmental Society at the Regional Science Centre

Chairing the programme, the OES vice-president Bijay Ketan Patnaik stressed on the awareness on health issues, maintaining healthy lifestyles and initiating action programmes to protect our environment.

At the beginning of the event, Jayakrushna Panigrahi, Secretary OES, shed light on the relationship between high-quality environment and a healthy society.

## Human resources devpt crucial for growth: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, April 7:** Value addition to human resources is crucial for the growth of new India said Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Pritiranjana Gharai at the curtain raiser event of Odisha Skill Conclave 2023 held in New Delhi Friday.

The Odisha Skill Conclave 2023 will be hosted from April 20 to 22 in Bhubaneswar.

"Value addition is the need of the hour for India, but value addition of human resources is crucial for the growth of New India," said Pritiranjana.

"We are delighted to host the Odisha Skill Conclave in our state. The objective of the conclave is to encourage, motivate and build the confidence of the youth that will help them drive their careers and make a change for the larger interest of the country," the minister added.

In his address, Odisha Skill Development Authority Chairman Subroto Bagchi said, "We are thankful to National Skill Development Corporation that helped us to show-

case the immense potential of the skilled workforce from Odisha. The brand 'Skilled in Odisha' has been created with the intention of drawing national and international attention to the skilling ecosystem in Odisha. After the state witnessed success at the World Skill Competition, we are looking forward to expanding and strengthening the position of the state on a global pedestal."

Skill Development and Technical Education department principal secretary Usha Padhee said, "There is a global demand for skilled workers and we are working towards building a workforce that can cater to the rising demand across sectors. Additionally, we are also enabling the youth of the state to meet their aspirations." A video depicting the facilities provided by the World Skill Centre of Odisha was showcased during the event.

The 3-day event will witness various upcoming MoUs, conferences, exhibitions, demonstration, and cultural activities and will offer a plethora of opportunities to the skilled workforce from the state.

## JK Mohanty invited to G20 Tourism Expo

**Bhubaneswar:** Swosti Group CMD and FICCI National Tourism Committee Co-Chairman JK Mohanty has been invited to attend the G20 Tourism Expo scheduled to be held in Jaipur April 23. As part of India's G20 Presidency, Union Tourism Ministry, in collaboration with FICCI, is organising the G20 Tourism Expo along with 12th edition of Great Indian Travel Bazaar (GITB) from April 23 to 25, in Jaipur. The event will see participation of 280 foreign tour operators from 55 countries, including G20 members, who will interact with Indian exhibitors from travel and tourism industry through structured face to face business meetings. The G20 Tourism Expo will feature a dedicated conference highlighting five key priority areas for tourism - green tourism, digitisation, skill development, nurturing tourism MSME's and destination management - at a global level, April 23, the first day of the Great Indian Travel Bazaar 2023. Mohanty will join a panel discussion titled 'Developing Tourism Economy by Destination Management and Empowered MSME's' as a distinguished speaker at the Expo.

## KIIT to host Y20 Consultation Meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 7:** KIIT University will host the prestigious Youth 20 (Y20) Consultation Meet, which comes under the framework of the G20 Leadership Summit, at the KIIT Convention Centre April 14 and 15. The meeting will see participation of 50 international personalities and more than 50 national-level speakers, including MPs, ministers and other dignitaries.

As India is holding the G20 pres-

idency this year, the Y20 meet is being organised as part of the G20 Leadership Summit to encourage youths to identify and discuss problems and recommend a framework to address them.

KIIT has been chosen by the Youth Affairs and Sports Ministry to host the event that will engage around 10,000 students from over 200 colleges in different events of Y20.

"The deliberations and suggestions received from events will be shared with the delegates during



## NC Panda new director of IQAC

**Bhubaneswar:** Eminent educationist Narasingha Charan Panda has taken over as the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) director of the Central University of Odisha. He took the charge from School of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources Dean S K Palita April 3. Panda joined as a regular professor in the Sanskrit department of the University January 23, 2023. Prior to it, he served the Sanskrit and Indological Studies department in Sadhu Ashram Sanskrit College of Panjab University. Panda has also served reputed international institutions like Silpakorn University in Thailand and Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius.

# Non-drug interventions to treat Alzheimer's prove effective

### EMPOWERING FAMILY CAREGIVERS WITH KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND SUPPORT TAILORED TO THEIR CARE CHALLENGES HAD SHOWN TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BOTH THE CAREGIVER AND THE PERSON LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

A computer simulation model has shown that four dementia-care interventions reduced nursing home admissions and improved quality of life compared to usual care, thereby proving their effectiveness and economy, according to researchers.

The researchers said that while Alzheimer's drugs hold great promise and tend to receive a lot of public attention, many well-researched ways to care for people with dementia do not involve medication. These methods could also help them stay safely at home longer.

"Now that we can show that these effective interventions can also save money, it just makes sense to find ways to make them available to more families," said lead study author Eric Jutkowitz, an associate professor at Brown University's School of Public Health, US.

"These interventions can be used to help people with dementia starting today," he said.

The model has been published in Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association.



The interventions studied included these: Maximizing Independence at Home, involving care planning, skill-building and care monitoring delivered at-home, New York University Caregiver,

providing caregivers with six counselling sessions over four months plus support, Alzheimer's and Dementia Care, a needs assessment provided by a healthcare system for people with dementia and their caregivers and Adult Day Service Plus, augmenting adult day care services with staff providing face-to-face caregiver support, disease education and skill-building.

Empowering family caregivers with knowledge, skills and support tailored to their care challenges had shown to improve quality of life

for both the caregiver and the person living with dementia. Along with reducing nursing home admissions, they were associated with fewer adverse events such as hospitalizations and mortality.

The scientists said that despite being well-studied, such interventions have not been widely implemented in clinical care centres owing to infrastructural limitations such as fewer mechanisms in place to reimburse providers and support these methods of care.

In this study, the researchers simulated the likelihood of nurs-

ing home admission for four evidence-based Alzheimer's and dementia nonpharmacological interventions compared to usual care. Each intervention was evaluated for societal costs, quality-adjusted life-years and cost-effectiveness.

A future analysis will look at similar non-drug interventions that reduce or maintain functional decline and challenging behaviours. The researchers are also designing a trial that would test these interventions with patients in a healthcare setting.

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**MYTHOLOGY ON DISPLAY:** Artists enacting a scene from 'Nagaphasa Bandhan' on the ninth day of Rameela Mahotsav in Boudh, Friday OP PHOTO

# ASI eyes world heritage site tag for Odisha's Diamond Triangle

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chandikhole, April 7:** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has launched efforts to include the three famous Buddhist sites of Udayagiri, Lalitgiri and Ratnagiri, the Langudi hill as well as the newly-discovered Parabhadi hill in the world heritage list, a report said Friday.

The world famous Buddhist heritage sites Udayagiri, Lalitgiri and Ratnagiri are known as the Diamond Triangle of Odisha. The Langudi hill and the newly-discovered Parabhadi hill with a Buddhist stupa are also significant places of interest indicative of a flourishing Buddhist culture and religion in the past. The announcement has spread cheers among the local residents.

Taking these things into consideration, the ASI has launched efforts to include these five places in the world heritage site list. The ASI will establish a museum at Udayagiri, employ staff and build quarters for them to protect the museum. This was stated here by senior ASI officials who took a tour of Udayagiri, Parabhadi and Lalitgiri and launched survey works on the sites, last Tuesday.

The ASI team consisting of Puri circle Superintendent Brajasundar Debashish Gadnayak, former superintendents Ashok Patel, Jeevan Patnaik, Sunil Pattanaik and students engaged in archaeological research participated in the visit.



THE WORLD FAMOUS BUDDHIST HERITAGE SITES UDAYAGIRI, LALITGIRI AND RATNAGIRI ARE KNOWN AS THE DIAMOND TRIANGLE OF ODISHA

LANGUDI HILL AND THE NEWLY-DISCOVERED PARABHADI HILL ARE ALSO SIGNIFICANT PLACES OF INTEREST INDICATIVE OF A FLOURISHING BUDDHIST CULTURE IN THE REGION IN PAST

They said a proposal to this effect has been sent for including these sites in the world heritage list on the lines of Bodhagaya and Nalanda of Bihar.

The officials said that among the various Buddhist sculptures discovered in the world, the Buddhist shrines of Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri and Udayagiri have many Buddhist sculptures which are of ancient times. These sites have

many Buddhist era stupas, 'Bouddha Vihars' and idols which date back to 2nd century BC to 12th century BC. They said that very soon a museum will be established at Udayagiri while museums have already been established at Lalitgiri and Ratnagiri.

They said that India is storehouse of art, culture and heritage. The ancient sculptures discovered from these sites are indicative of our rich culture and heritage. They hoped that very soon these sites will get the world heritage site tag.

The ASI team after their arrival was welcomed by Arundhati Devi, convener Maheswar Bal, Bhagyadhar Sahu, Shailendra Ray, Pradipta Deo, Ramachandra Samal, Kishore Chandra Das and Surmohan Mohapatra and the members of Udayagiri Buddha Mahotsav committee.

## Clues from girlfriend help Rajasthan cops nab paper leak mastermind from Odisha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, April 7:** A Rajasthan Police team tracked down and arrested teacher recruitment examination paper leak's alleged mastermind Sher Singh Meena - absconding for months now - from Odisha's Kalahandi where he was hiding in the guise of a labourer working at a construction site, officials said Friday.

Initially, the police team was confused as Meena was found shoddily dressed and was sporting a long beard as he worked at the under-construction building of a government school, but identified and arrested him Thursday.

Anil Meena alias Sher Singh Meena, a resident of Dola's Bas in Jaipur's Chaunmun, was working as vice principal in a government school in a village in Sirohi district, when he allegedly leaked the senior teacher recruitment exam paper, selling it to Bhupendra Saran for ₹1 crore.

Saran and Suresh Dhaka sold the paper to other candidates for ₹8-10 lakh. When the state police's SOG caught Saran from Bangalore, Meena apprehended that he would be next on the police list and went absconding. The SOG and Udaipur police were continuously searching for him.

However, they received clues about Meena's whereabouts from his girlfriend as he was in constant touch with her.

Udaipur police had arrested Meena's girlfriend Anita Meena from Jaipur April 2, and it was from her the information that Meena was hiding in Odisha was obtained.

Officials said that Meena changed

7 cities to evade arrest. After fleeing his village after he came to know of Saran's arrest, he came to Jaipur and from there, went to Delhi and finally to Odisha through Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

The SOG team reached Odisha three days ago and came to know that Meena was living somewhere near Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi. It was then found that he was working at the construction site of a government school in a village 40 km away from Bhawanipatna.

Meena was living in a kutcha house in the guise of a Rajasthan labourer.

The Rajasthan Police team left for Jaipur with Meena, where he would be interrogated to find out from where and with whose help he had leaked the senior teacher recruitment exam paper.

## Construction of new Junagarh-Nabarangpur rly line gets NPG nod

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 7:** A project for construction of a new Broad-Gauge line between Junagarh to Nabarangpur station in Odisha was among four infrastructure projects examined and recommended by the Network Planning Group (NPG) under PM GatiShakti.

The proposed project spans approximately 116 kilometre from Junagarh to Nabarangpur. The construction of this new line is expected to reduce the distance from Bailadela iron ore mines to various steel plants in the Raipur region by 131 kilometre.

The NPG under PM GatiShakti examined and recommended four infrastructure projects in its 46th session which took place here April 3. These projects will be developed in tandem with the PM GatiShakti Principles.

## With 27K visitors, Debrigarh ecotourism scripts success with highest-ever revenue



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sambalpur, April 7:** With a total footfall of over 27,000 visitors from different parts of India and the state as well as different European countries, South Africa, California and Sydney, ecotourism in Debrigarh sanctuary of Sambalpur district has earned the 'highest-ever' revenue of ₹2.5 crore in the last financial year (April 2022 to March 2023), DFO Anshu Pragyan Das of Hiraakud wildlife division said Friday.

Over 6,000 visitors opted for night stay at Nature Camp inside the sanctuary. "Around 5-10% of them were foreigners and 50% were from Odisha itself. The island safari package 'Hiraakud Cruise & Island Odyssey' has been popular mostly among local tourists. Adventure activities like jungle trekking with ecoguides, bird watching, kayaking and cycling were equally sought-after. More than 12,000 visitors toured the Jungle Safari in sanctuary and sighted sambar herds, bison herds, deer, bear and wild boar. Peacocks foraging together is a common sight on forest roads in the tourism zone," she said.

According to animal territories, the Jungle Safari trail has been divided into seven zones for facilitating photographers. Leopard sighting is also almost guaranteed at the forested shores of Hiraakud reservoir.

For the first time in Odisha, visitors saw a Royal Bengal Tiger thrice in the months of December and January marking its territory near the Nature Camp and entry gate of Debrigarh, she added. Never before a tiger has

ing in souvenir shop, restaurants. The fishermen families staying temporarily at Bat Island are also a part of boating packages.

Jungle Safari is for 2.30 hours and boating is for 1.30 hours. More than 2,500 visitors have availed boating facilities in Hiraakud Wetland. Strict regulations and safety measures are followed by safari and boat drivers and the sanctuary closes by 6pm.

Nature Education programmes like 'Story telling sessions' and 'Spider Talks' are also regularly organised for children and youth.

Odisha's ecotourism model has emerged as a good livelihood option for the forest dependent communities as 90 per cent of revenue generated goes to villagers managing it in the form of their wages, recurring expenses, infrastructure maintenance and also for development of villages. Debrigarh tourism zone is managed as a plastic free zone by the locals. From reception centre to night stay facilities, the managing villagers are well-trained and have learned to speak and understand different languages.

This year, 11 Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) from villages around Debrigarh were also engaged in ecotourism activities. As majority women folks venture into forests for daily requirements of firewood, bamboo and other articles, engaging them in alternative livelihood in ecotourism activities has benefitted wildlife conservation immensely.

## Dharhokusum inside Debrigarh forest declared a 'green village'



Dharhokusum, a village inside Debrigarh forest situated in Bargarh district close to Hiraakud reservoir, has been declared as a 'green village'.

The Forest department and district administration declared it a green village for the smooth movement of wild animals and to give them an independent and free atmosphere.

The Forest department has shifted some villages out of the forest to create more space and habitat for the wild animals.

The Forest department is taking

every care of the village and its inhabitants and constructed 48 numbers of quality toilets for every family to discourage open defecation and thereby curb any kind of contamination of wild animals, DFO (Wildlife) Anshu Pragyan Das said.

"At the same time, dustbins have been provided to all 48 families so that they will not throw garbage haphazardly," Das said.

"Since deer are coming in large numbers close to Dharhokusum village to graze on grass and leaves, we are making all-out efforts to keep the surroundings of the village totally clean and pollution free," the DFO said. All these apart, solar street lights have been installed in the village and each family were provided smokeless chullas for cooking with less fuel.

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## Reform Losing Sheen

Lateral entry was a much-awaited administrative reform introduced in 2018 as part of Modi sarkar's larger civil service reform agenda. The noble aim was to bring fresh perspectives, expertise, and efficiency into the government system.

The bold experiment is now being seen as losing its sheen. Saurabh Mishra, joint secretary in the Department of Financial Services in the Ministry of Finance, who was among the initial six lateral entrants, is reportedly quitting the service, even after receiving a two-year extension in August last year. With his exit, only five lateral entrants remain, namely Rajeev Saksena (DEA), DD Jagdale (MNRE), Sujit Kumar Bajpayee (MoEF), Suman Prasad Singh (Road Transport) and Bhushan Kumar (Shipping). Those who preceded Mishra to the exit are Arun Goel (joint secretary, Commerce) who resigned in December 2020, and Amber Dubey (joint secretary, Civil Aviation) who left on the completion of this three-year contract in September last year.

Some observers believe that Mishra has quit for the lure of the corporate world, but there are also some who think that Mishra will join the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) as a Member (Life). Clearly, lateral entry into government is facing stiff headwinds. One of the main challenges is a rather obvious one. There is resistance from the existing bureaucracy, often due to a lack of trust and acceptance of lateral entrants. Also, when the government introduced this initiative, it only opened up a handful of positions for lateral entry, which limits its impact on the larger bureaucracy. Some babus have criticised lateral entry for lacking transparency and objectivity in the selection process.

Now after Mishra's exit, the government will be under increasing pressure to address these challenges and limitations.

### Yogi retains retired babu

Uttar Pradesh's chief minister, Yogi Adityanath, has been trying to shape a new image for the state, aimed at bringing in global investments and making UP the biggest economy in the country. International events like the Global Investors Summit and the G20 have brought the spotlight to the state. The recent appointment of 1988-batch IAS officer Arvind Kumar as Advisor to Yogi Adityanath for Industries is being viewed in this context.

Kumar's appointment comes barely a month after his retirement as infrastructure and industrial development commissioner. During his last month of service, Kumar oversaw the Global Investors Summit, whose success Yogi claims has given recognition to "a new UP all over the world." Apparently, 10,000 investors attended the summit and pledged more than Rs 33 lakh crores in industrial investment. Kumar is seen as the architect of this success, and Yogi has prudently retained Kumar's services.

Interestingly, Kumar's appointment as advisor to the CM is a temporary post created for a period of 11 months, until February 29, 2024. Not surprisingly, the term of his service coincides with the end of the term of the G20 secretariat. Some babus clearly are indispensable, and if Kumar can help Yogi improve UP's economic outlook, it would be no mean feat.

### Babu turf war in Uttarakhand

In the Modi sarkar, turf wars between the IAS and IPS and other services have become more frequent, and decidedly one-sided. In recent years, the IAS officers have watched with growing trepidation the 'encroachment' on senior positions by the other All India Services. The trend now is catching on in some states too.

The Secretariat Association in Uttarakhand has objected to the recent appointment of IPS officer Riddhim Agarwal as the Special Secretary in the Secretariat. Despite being promoted to the rank of Inspector General, the association is unhappy with the increased authority given to Agarwal. The association believes that creating a new post of special secretary is unnecessary, and the responsibilities of the position should, traditionally, come under the additional secretary and secretary roles.

Sources have informed DKB that the aggrieved babus are blaming additional chief secretary Radha Raturi for ceding ground in the Home Department by appointing Agarwal as Special Secretary. Further, the president of the Uttarakhand Secretariat Association, Deepak Joshi, has complained to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama and strongly opposed Agarwal's new appointment. With the association taking a firm stance, the situation looks ripe for an escalation in the days ahead. Dhama will have to act soon and put out this bushfire before the resentment spreads.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](mailto:dilipthecherian@twitter.com). Let's multiply the effect

## WISDOM CORNER

Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers. VOLTAIRE

Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric. BERTRAND RUSSELL

Each one of us has built up this competitive, ruthless civilization, in which man is against man. JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

## WORDSWORTH

### Woot

This weird term was the word of the year 2007 from the dictionary maker Merriam-Webster. It presented a list of 20 words on its Web site that had been the subject of a large number of searches during the past year and asked visitors to vote. Woot came out top. Woot is spelled with a couple of zeroes in the middle but it's said as "woot". It's a small cry of joy, perhaps after completing a task, after besting an opponent, or for no reason at all. Merriam-Webster says, "It became popular in online gaming as part of what is known as 133t ('leet', or 'elite') speak, an esoteric computer hacker language in which numbers and symbols are put together to look like letters." Its origins are disputed. Some say it's a blend from the cry Wow! Loo!, one that might be uttered when a Dungeons & Dragons player came across treasure; Merriam-Webster notes that it has been said to be an acronym for we owned the other team (meaning that our team bested them utterly); others argue that it derives from the Scots hoot!, which really is a bit of a hoot, since the Oxford English Dictionary describes that as an "ejaculation expressing dissatisfaction with, or impatient and somewhat contemptuous dismissal of, a statement or notion", which hardly fits the context. Grant Barrett, who runs the Double-Tongued Dictionary site, is sure these are all folk etymologies.

### Archaeon

Scientists investigating smokers, vents on the ocean floor which spew hot seawater rich in dissolved minerals, were startled to discover in the early eighties that they were home for bacteria-like organisms. They are almost the only living things on Earth which survive independently of heat and light from the Sun and thrive at temperatures near the boiling point of water, which would kill any other organism. These bacteria were at first called archaeobacteria (from the Greek archaeos, "ancient"), but more recently the term archaeon (plural archaea; also spelled archeon and archea) has come into use, recognising their unique place in evolution as a third type of organism, separate from the eucaryotes and bacteria. The archaea are believed to be living fossils surviving from a time when the Earth had little oxygen in its atmosphere.

# CONG UNDER ILLUSION

FOCUS POLITICS



Sagameel Sinha

LET'S NOT FORGET THAT THE BHARAT JODO YATRA WAS LESS ABOUT CONGRESS BUT WAS MORE ABOUT STRENGTHENING RAHUL'S IMAGE AS THE MAIN OPPOSITION FACE

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha has almost all the Opposition parties, including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress, voicing their support to him. For the grand old party, Rahul's disqualification is a "murder of democracy", although the fact remains the indictment by the Surat Court over his speech from 2019, followed the procedures laid down by the Supreme Court in its judgement of 2013, which was then supported by Rahul Gandhi himself.

Nevertheless, Congress wants to propagate that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP are "scared of Rahul Gandhi". Elections to the Lok Sabha are only a year away and the Congress doesn't want to let go of such a crucial issue that brings the focus back on Rahul Gandhi. However, here lies the problem. While Congress wants to keep the focus on Rahul Vs Modi, the Opposition parties have trouble with it. They are merely supporting Rahul on the issue only to portray themselves as being against the BJP and nothing more.

Opposition leaders such as Kejriwal, Mamata Banerjee, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, who heads the Bharat Rashtira Samithi, and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of Janata Dal (United) too are said to be eyeing the Prime Minister's post just like Rahul Gandhi, though he may deny it. In addition to this, Mamata, Nitish and Rao are far senior to Rahul and would have their own hesitations working under his leadership, if at all.

Just days ahead of Rahul's disqualification, Mamata herself had said, as reported in the media, that "Rahul Gandhi is PM Modi's biggest TRP". Her statement came at a time when the ruling BJP was stalling the proceedings of Parliament over Rahul's comments attacking the state of Indian democ-



If the grand old party is serious about challenging the Modi-led BJP juggernaut next year, then it must regularly engage with the other Opposition parties, instead of taking their support for granted

racy during his visit to the United Kingdom. She was not wrong. It's not only unusual but simply not done that the Treasury benches stall Parliament. However, this was done by the saffron party to hit out at Rahul, who had made waves during his Bharat Jodo yatra as well as break ranks in the Opposition, trying to forge a united front against Modi in the upcoming 2024 polls.

The grand old party must understand that the politics of the country has gone through a complete change. It is no longer a strong force as it used to be. Even in States like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh—where it's ruling in some and in others remains the main opponent to the BJP, there is a big question mark on how the Congress will fare in the 2024 battle. In the last 2019 General elections, the BJP almost swept these states and in Gujarat, AAP emerged as a force by mostly eating into the Congress base as was seen in the state Assembly polls in December last year.

On the other hand, in States like

Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, the grand old party has been reduced to a minor force.

Given the situation of Congress, parties like AAP and TMC are trying to fill the vacuum created by it.

Nationally, AAP can be a part of the Opposition, but on the ground it has to fight against Congress too. It was this contradiction that prevented the grand old party from lending its voice of support to AAP when its then Education Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was arrested.

Although West Bengal based TMC isn't yet successful in spreading its wings outside its stronghold, its attempts in Goa, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya were executed by poaching top leaders of Congress.

More than that, Congress is an opponent of TMC in West Bengal and its leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Chowdhury, also state unit's president, is known to be a staunch critic of Mamata Banerjee. His statements of reiterating that TMC is a B-team of BJP, have not gone well with the senior leadership of

TMC. Besides, after the loss of Sagardighi bypoll seat to Left supported Congress candidate Byron Bishas, the TMC has been forced to go into introspection mode. Although Mamata has tried to give a signal of being soft towards Congress after Rahul's disqualification, much would depend on the latter. If it maintains its partnership with CPM, TMC's arch rival in the State, then the TMC's current malleability towards the party isn't going to last long.

Just look at the recent developments in Maharashtra, where the Opposition alliance of Maha Vikas Aghadi, in a position to challenge the BJP-led NDA, has developed fissures between Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress over Rahul's immature statement over freedom fighter Veer Savarkar. In Bihar, the JD(U) initially maintained a distance on Rahul's disqualification issue but later joined the Opposition chorus. The message wasn't lost and JD(U) silently reminded Congress to keep in mind the ground reality of Indian politics, that there's a world beyond Rahul Gandhi. Kerala's ruling party CPM, which has been an ally of Congress in almost every state, also maintained a distance as in the southern state the Left and Congress are sworn enemies. Samajwadi party, which also came in support of Rahul Gandhi, is not keen to strike an alliance with the Congress after realising its blunder to ally with the latter in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

However, if one listens to the speeches of Congress leaders, it seems that the party's focus is mainly on Rahul Gandhi. Let's not forget that the Bharat Jodo Yatra was less about Congress but was more about strengthening Rahul's image as the main Opposition face. If Congress is serious about challenging the Modi-led BJP juggernaut next year, then it must regularly engage with the other Opposition parties, instead of taking their support for granted.

INFA

## SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

# A reality check for the renminbi



Shang-Jin Wei

WHILE CHINA HAS ACHIEVED NOTABLE PROGRESS TOWARD MAKING THE RENMINBI A GLOBAL RESERVE CURRENCY, IT IS STILL FAR FROM REACHING ITS GOAL

After years of speculation and false starts, it seems that the internationalisation of the renminbi is well underway. On March 29, China and Brazil announced plans to trade using their own currencies, rather than the US dollar. The day before, the China National Offshore Oil Corporation and France's TotalEnergies completed their first-ever renminbi-denominated liquefied natural gas trade. Russian President Vladimir Putin recently said that he wants to use the Chinese currency not just for trading with China but also as a form of payment in trade with other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And Saudi Arabia has been in talks with China since last year about accepting payments for some oil exports in renminbi.

It is no secret that China would like to convert the renminbi into an international currency and move away from the global dominance of the US dollar. While this is often interpreted as a geopolitical move, a way to insulate China from possible US-led economic sanctions in the future, transforming the renminbi into one of the world's leading settlement currencies would also greatly benefit the Chinese economy. Moreover, it would help protect the country from an exchange-rate crisis, which is why other countries, including India

and ASEAN countries, are trying to internationalise their currencies, too.

In October 2016, the renminbi became part of the basket of currencies underpinning the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset, special drawing rights, joining an exclusive club alongside the dollar, the euro, the yen, and the British pound.

While these are impressive milestones, one should not exaggerate the degree to which the renminbi is encroaching on the greenback's position. The US dollar's share of South Korean exports to China declined from nearly 98% in 2006 to roughly 87% in 2020. In other words, the dollar has gone from overwhelmingly dominant to slightly less dominant. Even in China-South Korea bilateral trade, the renminbi is not even close to displacing the dollar.

Moreover, roughly 99% of South Korean exports to the United States during the same period were denominated in dollars; none were denominated in renminbi. By contrast, the dollar's share of South Korean exports to Japan was 45%, about equal to that of the yen, with the won and the euro accounting for the rest. In other words, the US dollar continues to dominate global trade, including bilateral trade not involving the US, while the renminbi is essentially used only in

transactions involving China.

Part of the reason for the greenback's continued preeminence is that, in addition to its status as a trading power, the US has very large and liquid capital markets where foreign investors can park their dollar-denominated assets. Because of its capital controls, China's domestic financial market is far less liquid, making the renminbi unattractive to international investors.

Theoretically, China could raise the renminbi's global profile by loosening capital controls. But doing so could come at significant cost, exposing the Chinese economy to the (often negative) consequences of US interest-rate movements and global financial cycles. Moreover, premature capital-account liberalisation could exacerbate existing distortions within China's financial system, where domestic savings are not always channelled to the most productive firms. The Chinese authorities are keenly aware of these risks, which is why they have been prioritising financial stability over renminbi internationalisation.

There are, however, other ways to promote the renminbi. A series of currency swap agreements between the People's Bank of China and its counterparts in other countries, for example, could help make the renminbi less risky for inter-

national firms and investors.

In addition, a digital renminbi could facilitate partial capital-account liberalisation without formally removing capital controls. By removing the anonymity of foreign investors, a digital renminbi would allow the PBOC to limit cross-border financial transactions to less volatile types and more conveniently activate a circuit-breaker when needed. Being able to separate inflows of "hot money" from more stable types of foreign investment could convince the central bank to relax some capital controls and allow financial capital to flow more freely.

In sum, while China has achieved notable progress toward making the renminbi a global reserve currency, it is still far from reaching its goal. While it could use a digital currency to deliver de facto partial capital-account liberalisation, it will not undermine the dollar's hegemony without going much further in loosening capital controls.

The writer, a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank, is Professor of Finance and Economics at Columbia Business School and Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

## Orissa POST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

### A pragmatic call

Sir, This refers to Friday's report "No charge in RBI repo rate," OrissaPOST. India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has taken a pragmatic call in deciding to pause policy rate hikes in its April review. After the series of increases totalling 250 basis points since last May, it was prudent to take stock of the impact of this tightening spree on economic activity, borrowers and lending institutions. Given the recently elevated inflation readings, the MPC has also done well to adopt hawkish language in its statement, leaving the market in no doubt that further hikes will be considered, should inflation fail to moderate to its comfort zone of 2-6 per cent. However, the case for a pause was strong on several counts. While there are already reports of rising floating rates pressuring home loan borrowers, there is a growing worry that India's growth momentum this year will be impacted by a US recession, a shaky Chinese economy and the unfolding banking crisis in the West. Also, with the global economy set to weaken this year and China-Russia supply constraints easing, the MPC seems to believe that the threat to domestic price stability from imported inflation is receding. But the tightrope walk for MPC is far from over. It has projected inflation at 5.2 per cent for FY24, based on the assumption of a normal monsoon. But a brewing El Nino could resuscitate inflation. Overall, the growth-inflation trade-off is unlikely to ease up in the months ahead.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

### Curb betting games

Sir, The Central Government, which recently issued new rules for online gaming, prohibits betting and wagering on the surface, but when examined in depth, most of them are involved in provoking gambling in the name of prizes and skill development. New online gaming rules are still not clear to differentiate which online games involve wagering or skill development. The Minister of State for Information Technology should continue to develop clear rules that distinguish between skill developing games and betting games. Multiple self-regulatory organisations (SROs) and stakeholder decisions should be considered to comprehensively determine what types of games are permissible. Permissibility should be determined with the mere principle of whether wagering/gambling is involved and if wagering is involved, the SROs should be in a position to say that those online games are not permissible.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

# national

## of the day quote

Social service by Hindu spiritual gurus in the southern states is several times more than that provided by missionaries, but this is not a matter of competition

**MOHAN BHAGWAT** | RSS CHIEF

9 Times MLA, Thrice Member Parliament, Champion for the cause of underprivileged, voice of truth... 'Credibility thy name is Mallikarjun Kharge'. Met and took blessings of Hon'ble Congress President, he brings positive vibes and good fortune for the party

**NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU** | CONGRESS LEADER

We will demolish illegal mazars in Uttarakhand. This is a new Uttarakhand. No one should even think about encroaching on land here, let alone doing it

**PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMI** | UTTARAKHAND CHIEF MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Bus catches fire

**Hyderabad:** An electric bus of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) caught fire in Hyderabad Friday. The incident occurred near Begumpet Airport when the city bus was on its way from Shamshabad to Jubilee Bus Station. On noticing smoke in the engine, the bus driver stopped the vehicle and alerted the passengers. All the passengers safely alighted from the bus.

### Woman arrested

**New Delhi:** A 29-year-old woman has been arrested by the Delhi Police's Crime Branch for allegedly killing a businessman at a hotel in south Delhi's Safdarjung Enclave area, and then robbing him, an official said Friday. The arrested woman has been identified as Usha, a resident of Panipat in Haryana. The police said that Usha has three aliases -- Anjali, Nikki and Nikita, and she also possessed a fake Aadhaar card.

### Man ends life

**Lucknow:** A 26-year-old man ended his life by suicide after being publicly humiliated for not returning a loan. The deceased has been identified as Amrendra Singh Deepak. He had taken money from one Shiv Murti Verma and was being bullied by the latter for not paying it back. A case of abetment to suicide has been registered against the money lender after the deceased's sister, Puja Verma lodged a case.



**Some Indians in some foreign institutions are scheming to stall the country's growth**  
**JAGDEEP DHANKHAR** | VICE PRESIDENT

## 2,856 VISAS ISSUED

The Pakistan High Commission Friday said it issued 2,856 visas to Sikh pilgrims from India for their participation in annual festivals relating to Baisakhi celebrations in Pakistan from April 9 to 18



## PAWAR'S ADANI-HINDENBURG COMMENT

# NCP may have its view: Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** With NCP supremo Sharad Pawar stating that the Adani Group was seemingly targeted by the US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research, the Congress Friday said its ally NCP may have its view but 19 like-minded Opposition parties are convinced that the charges against the conglomerate are real and very serious.

The Congress also said all 20 like-minded Opposition parties, including the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), are united and will be together in saving the Constitution and democracy from the "BJP's assaults".

In an interview, Pawar came out in support of the Adani Group and criticised the narrative around the Hindenburg Research's report on the conglomerate. "Such statements were given by other individuals too earlier and there was a ruckus in Parliament for a few days but this time out-of-proportion importance was given to the issue. The issues that were kept, who kept them, we



In an interview, Pawar came out in support of the Adani Group and criticised the narrative around the Hindenburg Research's report on the conglomerate

Several Opposition parties, led by the Congress, protested through the second half of the budget session of Parliament demanding a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the Adani issue

had never heard of these people who gave the statement, what is the background. When they raise issues that cause a ruckus across the country, the cost is borne by the country's economy, we cannot dis-

regard these things. It seems this was targeted," Pawar said.

Asked about Pawar's remarks, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the NCP may have its view but 19 like-minded

## Masks compulsory in Pondicherry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pondicherry, April 7:** The Pondicherry administration Friday made mask wearing compulsory in the union territory with immediate effect owing to the rise in number of Covid-19 cases.

District Collector E Vallavan said with the union territory currently witnessing a surge in coronavirus positive cases, the territorial administration has enforced with immediate effect a slew of precautionary measures "to minimise the risk of increase in transmission of Covid-19 in the coming days."

Vallavan, who is Member-Secretary of the Executive committee of the Disaster Management Authority here, told reporters "public shall compulsory wear masks in public places, on the beach road, parks and theatres."

He said the government has also issued an order enforcing the "precautionary measures in the whole of the Union Territory of Puducherry with immediate effect and there would be focus on test, track, treat and vaccination."

Vallavan said the public "should adhere to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour of wearing masks maintaining hand hygiene and physical distancing enforced in the while of the Union Territory of Puducherry." Wearing of mask is compulsory in public places, on beach road, parks and theatres, he added.

Staff working in hospitals, hotels, bars, restaurants, liquor shops, hospitality and entertainment sectors, government offices and commercial establishments should compulsorily wear masks, the Collector said. "Hundred per cent vaccination should be ensured in all government offices and private establishments."

## Third gender marked as 'caste' in Bihar



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, April 7:** The much publicized ongoing exercise of the headcount of social groups in Bihar by the state government has run into fresh controversy over enumeration of members of 'third gender' as a separate caste.

Castes in Bihar will now be identified on the basis of codes, in the form of numbers, and each caste has been given a numerical code for use during the month-long second phase of caste-based headcount from April 15 to May 15.

For instance, the sub-categories of Maithil, Kanyakubj and other Brahmins have been merged into a single social entity called Brahmin, which will have caste code as 126. No separate enumeration of its sub-categories will be done. Similarly, the caste code of the Rajput is 169, Bhumihaar (142), Kayastha (21) and for members of 'third gender' is 22. Total 215 codes have been allotted to different castes and 'third gender' has also been considered as caste with the allotment of a separate caste code.

Terming the state government's move of considering 'third gender' a separate caste in the ongoing exercise as a 'criminal act', Reshma Prasad, founder secretary of Dostanasafar, a Bihar-based NGO, on Friday said, "How can gender identity of a human being, become his/her caste? Can 'male' or 'female' be considered as caste... similarly, how can 'transgender' be considered as caste? People belonging to transgender community can be of any caste".

The move is against the "Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules" that talk about the prevention of non-discrimination of transgender persons, said Reshma Prasad. "The social welfare department of the state government must intervene into the matter so that gender identity of a person should not be considered as caste. I will definitely write to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in this regard and seek his immediate intervention into the matter. It's a sheer injustice with people belonging to transgender community".

## Mob attacks police station, frees dacoit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Burhanpur, April 7:** A mob of more than 60 people launched an attack on a police station in Madhya Pradesh's Burhanpur district on Friday and freed three accused persons, including a dacoit, lodged in the lock-up, an official said.

The incident took place around 3 am, when the mob entered Napanagar police station, attacked and injured on-duty policemen and damaged several police vehicles, the official said.

Four policemen were injured in the incident and are undergoing treatment at a private hospital, he said.

The mob freed dacoit Hema Meghwal, who was carrying a reward of Rs 32,000, and their two other associates lodged in the lock-up. Meghwal was arrested a few days ago, Burhanpur SP, Rahul Kumar Lodha said.

## Shah targets Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kaushambi/Azamgarh (UP), April 7:** Attacking Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his recent remarks in the UK, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday said that it's not democracy that is in danger, but "your family" and the idea of dynasty politics that is under threat.

At two public meetings in Uttar Pradesh during the day, he also slammed the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. In Azamgarh, which has a sizeable Muslim population, he said under the previous state governments, 24-hour power supply was available "only during Ramzan". "Now the BJP government has ensured power to entire Uttar Pradesh and heralded a new period of development," he added.

Shah inaugurated the Kaushambi Mahotsav and honoured several players of the Sansad Khel Spardha. Later, he laid the foundation stone for the Harihar music college in Azamgarh. He said Azamgarh was earlier known as the "centre of terrorism", a reference to some of the accused in terror cases like the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts hailing from the district. But now its identity has changed to a hub of development, Shah said.

"I was the home minister of Gujarat when there were bomb blasts in Ahmedabad. The police had caught the main 'sutradaar' (culprit) of it from Azamgarh," he said. "I want to congratulate Yogi ji (CM Yogi Adityanath). In Azamgarh, which was considered the centre of terror across the country, he got the foundation of a music college laid to give respect to its heritage," Shah said.



In Kaushambi, Shah hit out at Rahul Gandhi for claiming in the UK that democracy is under threat, accusing his party of surrounding the Indian democracy with three "naasuron" (ulcerous wounds) — casteism, dynasty politics and appeasement. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi defeated all three and hence "you are afraid," he added.

"They say democracy is in danger. Brother, democracy is not in danger, your family is in danger. It is not the idea of India which is in danger, it is the idea of dynasty, your politics of 'parivarvad' (dynasty), which are in danger. It is not the democracy of India, but the autocracy of your family, which is in danger," the senior BJP leader said.

The BJP has accused Rahul Gandhi of "insulting" the country on foreign soil and demanded an apology, but the Congress leader has said his position that India's democracy was under attack "was known" to all.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Before my marriage with Shiddalingayya Hosamath, my surname was Bhagyashree Chikkamath. Now by virtue of be married my surname changed to Bhagyashree Shiddalingayya Hosamath, C/o - Shiddalingayya Hosamath, 30, At-Mudakavi, P.O.-Mudakavi, Belgaum, Karnataka - 591123.

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## No written exams till Class 2: Draft NCF

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** Explicit tests and exams are completely inappropriate assessment tools for children up to Class 2 and written tests should be introduced from Class 3 onwards, the draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) has recommended stressing that assessment methods should be such that they do not contribute to any additional burden for the child.

The framework which is being developed on the lines of new National Education Policy (NEP) suggests that two important methods of assessment that are appropriate for the foundational stage are observations of the child and analysing artefacts that the child has produced as part of their learning experience.

The draft notes that explicit tests and examinations are completely inappropriate assessment tools for the Foundational stage (preschool to class 2). "Assessment should allow for diversity among children and



in their learning. Children learn differently and express their learning differently too. There might be many ways to assess the achievement of a learning outcome or competency. The teacher should have the ability to design different kinds of assessment for the same learning outcome and use each assessment

appropriately." Assessment should enable recording and documentation. Children's progress should be described and analysed through systematic collection of evidence. Assessment should not contribute to any additional burden for the child. Assessment tools and processes should be designed such

that they are a natural extension of the learning experience for the child," it adds.

Describing the assessment for preparatory stage (class 3 to 5), the draft recommends that "written tests should be introduced at this stage". "A variety of assessment methods should be used to promote learning. Portfolios can be used to capture student progress holistically through their work. This could also provide a reliable picture of their learning to parents. Peer and self-assessments could also be introduced to help students monitor the trajectory of their own learning. "At the end of the preparatory stage, there should be a comprehensive summative assessment of the student's readiness to enter the middle stage where several new curricular areas are introduced," it adds.

The education ministry released a "pre-draft" of the NCF for school education on Thursday and invited suggestions from stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers and scholars.

# national

## of the day quote

No one thought Scindia, Azad would use such low level language against Rahul  
**ASHOK GEHLOT** | RAJASTHAN CM

In Bihar cases are very few but we are alert, nonetheless. In places like hospitals wearing of masks is being reinforced. We were also carrying out vaccination till our supply dried up. We hope the Centre would do the needful soon  
**NITISH KUMAR** | BIHAR CM

The state has cleared its entire electricity subsidy bill of Rs 20,200 crore for the last financial year and has witnessed a jump in excise and GST revenue  
**BHAGWANT MANN** | PUNJAB CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Trinamool leader shot dead

**Kolkata:** In a shocking incident at Hanskhali in West Bengal's Nadia district, a local Trinamool Congress leader was shot dead in broad daylight by miscreants on Friday morning. The deceased has been identified as Amod Ali Biswas, who was an area vice-president of Trinamool at Hanskhali. According to eyewitnesses, Biswas came to the market on Friday morning and ordered a cup of tea at a tea-stall, something he did regularly. Suddenly, a group of around eight bike-borne miscreants arrived at the spot and started firing indiscriminately at Biswas from a close range.

### Three hacked to death

**Kolkata:** Three members of a family were hacked to death at Sitalkuchi in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district on Friday. Those killed have been identified as Bimal Kumar Burman (68), his wife Nilima Burman (52) and their elder daughter Runa Burman (24). The couple's younger daughter Iti Burman (22) was also injured in the attack and is currently undergoing treatment at a local hospital, where her condition is stated to be critical. While Nilima Burman was an elected Gram Panchayat member for Trinamool Congress from Sitalkuchi, her husband was the Sitalkuchi block president of the Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe/Other Backward Class cell of the state's ruling party.

### Charges framed against Atiq

**Lucknow:** The CBI court on Friday framed charges against gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmad and his son Umar in a case related to kidnapping and assault of a businessman in Deoria jail where Atiq was then lodged. Charges were framed under various sections of IPC. Atiq appeared in court via video conferencing. Atiq had allegedly assaulted a Lucknow-based businessman Mohit Jaiswal in Deoria jail -- where he was lodged -- in December 2018 after getting him abducted.

### Three arrested

**New Delhi:** Three people have been arrested on the charges of looting two kg gold and Rs 4 lakh cash at gunpoint from a jewellery shop in Nangloi village in the national capital, police said Friday. Outer Delhi DCP Harender Kumar Singh said that the accused, identified as Paramjeet, Nitesh and Abhishek, were arrested from Mundka on Thursday. Around 259 gram gold, Rs 30,000 cash and guns were recovered from their possession, Singh said.



**BJP-appointed governors are trampling upon democracy by transgressing their powers**  
**P CHIDAMBARAM** | CONGRESS LEADER

## ILLEGAL FILM STUDIOS DEMOLISHED

A day after the National Green Tribunal (West)'s verdict, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has started demolishing around half-dozen illegal film shooting studios that had come up at Malad's picturesque coastal Madh, Erangal, Marve and Batti, in Mumbai



## Ex-CM Kiran Reddy joins BJP, slams Cong



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** Former Congress leader and last chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh N Kiran Kumar Reddy joined the BJP on Friday, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi and slamming his earlier organisation's leadership for "damaging" it across the country. Reddy joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and hit out at the Congress "high command", an apparent reference to the Gandhi family, for its inability to accept people's verdict and make a course correction. This is the reason why he has left the party, he said. "My king is very intelligent. He does not think on his own and he does not listen to anyone's advice," he cited a saying to attack his former leaders. They believe they are correct and all others, including the people of India, are wrong, he said, accusing them of being unable to analyse repeated electoral failures of the party.

## T'gana BJP president released from jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, April 7:** Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay Kumar who was arrested in a case related to class X exam paper leak was released from jail after a court in Hanumakonda granted him bail on Thursday night.

Sanjay Kumar, a Lok Sabha MP from Karimnagar constituency, was named as the prime accused in the case relating to the alleged circulation of Class 10 (SSC) Hindi examination question paper in groups of an instant messaging app. He was arrested by the Warangal Police on April 5 on charges of criminal conspiracy and malpractices, among others. Speaking to reporters after being released from jail, Kumar demanded that the state government inquire into the paper leak case with a sitting judge and Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu's son and minister KT Rama Rao should be expelled from the cabinet. "The state government should announce an ex-gratia of Rs one lakh to each student who suffered due to question paper leak. These three demands should be met," he said. He alleged that 30 lakh candidates who appeared for service commission exam suffered due to paper leak and hence KT Rama Rao should be dropped from the cabinet.



INDIAN OIL



Christians offer prayers at a church on the occasion of Good Friday in Bangalore

## Covid surge indicates endemicity: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** The rise in Covid cases is indicative of the SARS-CoV-2 virus moving into an endemic state in India and behaving like other coronaviruses that cause common cold-like symptoms and can keep reinfecting, say scientists. Giving the reassurance that a monster spike on the lines of the Delta wave in the spring of 2021 is unlikely due to the endemic nature of the virus, they also cautioned that the spread could be halted by following established protocols. "COVID-19 is effectively endemic in the country, and virtually all of us will have sustained an infection by now, whether we knew it or not. The virus is behaving like coronaviruses that cause common-cold-like symptoms and can keep reinfecting us," said Gautam I. Menon, dean (research) and professor, Departments of Physics and Biology at Haryana's Ashoka University.



The surge is being attributed to a new COVID-19 subvariant, XBB.1.16, which has been circulating through India for the last few months. According to the WHO, XBB.1.16 is very similar in profile to the earlier XBB.1.5 variant. It has one additional mutation in the spike protein which in lab studies shows increased infectivity, as well as potential increased pathogenicity.

Immunologist Satyajit Rath added that the actual magnitude of the infection is unknown. Questioning the reliability of reported Covid case numbers, he said, "We are likely to keep seeing ups and downs of Covid cases, at different times in different places, for a long time to come." According to the Union Health Ministry on Friday, India recorded 6,050 fresh coronavirus cases, the highest in 203 days, with 28,303 active cases. The death toll has increased to 5,30,943 (over 5.3 lakh) with 14 new fatalities while the daily positivity rate has been recorded at 3.39 per cent. The surge is being attributed to a new COVID-19 subvariant, XBB.1.16, which has been circulating through India for the last few months. "At the present time, there are only about 800 sequences of XBB.1.16 from 22 countries. Most of the sequences are from India and in

India XBB.1.16 has replaced the other variants that are in circulation. So, this is one to watch. It has been in circulation for a few months," the World Health Organisation said in a recent statement. According to the WHO, XBB.1.16 is very similar in profile to the earlier XBB.1.5 variant. It has one additional mutation in the spike protein which in lab studies shows increased infectivity, as well as potential increased pathogenicity. Viswesvaran Balasubramanian, consultant, interventional pulmonology and sleep medicine, at Hyderabad's Yashoda Hospitals said there are active Covid cases in the hospital but the numbers are minimal. "Most of the infections are mild and are treated on an outpatient basis," he said. He said the need for hospital admissions in view of severe Covid infection is seen among the elderly and those with immunocompromised conditions. "Currently, COVID-19 infections are mild, with predominantly upper respiratory tract symptoms like sore throat, running nose, fever, and body aches. In patients requiring admission, cough, breathlessness, and fall in oxygen saturation are seen in most," the doctor explained.

## Assassination threat to PM, UP CM; schoolboy held



The 16-year-old boy, who hails from Bihar, was picked up from the Chinhat area of the state capital on Friday morning and has been brought here, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Noida) Rajneesh Verma said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Noida, April 7:** The Noida Police Friday apprehended a teenager from Lucknow who is believed to have sent an email to a media house, threatening to assassinate Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, officials said. The 16-year-old boy, who hails from Bihar, was picked up from the Chinhat area of the state capital on Friday morning and has been brought here, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Noida) Rajneesh Verma said. "An FIR was lodged in connection with the case of April 5 at Sector 20 police station here after which the matter was investigated, technical teams also roped in to trace the sender of the email, which contained the threat message," Verma said. "On the basis of the investigation, the email sender was traced and found in Lucknow's Chinhat area. The sender turned out to be a schoolboy, who has just completed

his Class 11 and will be beginning Class 12 in this session," the police officer said. The boy is being produced in a juvenile court here and further legal proceedings are being carried out, Verma added. The police had lodged an FIR against "unknown" person after a media house representative approached them with a complaint, stating they have received an email threatening to assassinate the prime minister and the Uttar Pradesh chief minister. The FIR was lodged under the Indian Penal Code sections 133A (1b) (act prejudicial to maintenance of harmony, or likely to disturb public tranquility), 505 (1b) (act likely to cause, fear or alarm to the public, or to any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the state or against the public tranquility), 506 (criminal intimidation), 507 (criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication), police said. The police also invoked provisions of the Information Technology Act in the case.

## Residual emissions need to be tackled to meet net-zero goal in 2050: Study

**RESIDUAL EMISSIONS ARE THOSE THAT REMAIN AFTER EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE GHG EMISSIONS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** Calling for strategies to tackle residual emissions, scientists said they would need to be balanced by carbon dioxide removal techniques to meet net-zero goals, meaning that greenhouse gases (GHG) entering the atmosphere are offset by those being removed. Residual emissions are those

that remain after efforts to eliminate GHG emissions have been implemented. For example, agriculture and shipping industries are likely to continue releasing GHG in the atmosphere, even with concerted efforts towards eliminating emissions. "Our plans are not adequate to meet the goal of limiting the earth's temperature increase to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050," said lead researcher Holly Jean Buck, assistant professor of environment and sustainability, University of Buffalo, New York, US. Buck and her international team argued for a better understanding of residual emissions in their paper published in the journal Nature Climate Change. They said that according to long-term strategies of countries, the average level of residual emissions by 2050 will be



18 per cent of the current levels. They also found that only 28 out of 50 of these countries even quantified the amount of residual emissions expected by 2050. Buck and her colleagues have identified several steps necessary to tackle the problem of managing residual emissions, critical to achieving the net-zero goal. The

first step, they said, was to develop clear projections for the amount of residual emissions. Identifying the amount, source and the type of gas was important so that appropriate offsetting strategies could be developed. Such strategies, they said, included enhancing existing carbon sinks, which absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than they release. Naturally occurring ones include the ocean, forests and soil. "We can enhance carbon sinks," Buck said. "We can plant trees, we can conserve land, we can engineer carbon removal, but it's not enough to bring us to net-zero by 2050 with these projections of residual emissions." Further, they also said that clarifying issues surrounding carbon-emitting activities such as aviation and shipping, which are gener-

ally seen as hard to abate, establishes the groundwork for including residual emissions in strategies to achieve net zero by 2050. Net-zero also needs to be clarified as a temporary target or as a permanent fix requiring permanent offsetting. Residual emissions are an obstacle to achieving the net-zero goal of emissions, not meeting which could see more frequent floods, devastating heat waves and extreme economic damage from extreme weather, according to the scientists. To limit the earth's temperature increase, the United Nations' panel of scientific advisors says that the world must reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions this century. Greenhouse gas emissions are a major cause of the rise in temperature.

# business

## of the day quote

The entire concern is that very easy money (and) high liquidity over a long period creates perverse incentives and perverse structures that become fragile when you reverse everything

The wheat production would be 5-5.5 million tonne higher than the last year's government estimate

We intend to leverage our understanding of consumer space and learnings over the last decades to enable early-stage founders focused on building strong offline as well as online presence by offering differentiated products in India

## SHORT TAKES

### Investors' richer by ₹10.43L-cr

**New Delhi:** Equity investors became richer by over ₹10.43 lakh crore in the past five days, as markets continued their winning momentum helped by foreign fund inflows and stable global trends. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms have surged ₹10,43,216.79 crore to ₹2,62,37,776.13 crore in the last five trading sessions (March 29-April 6). The 30-share BSE Sensex has jumped 2,219.25 points or 3.85 per cent in the past five trading sessions. On Thursday, the BSE Sensex had climbed 143.66 points or 0.24 per cent to settle at 59,832.97 after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) unexpectedly kept the benchmark rate unchanged.

### Tata Motors posts 8% growth in sales

**New Delhi:** Tata Motors Friday reported an 8 per cent year-on-year increase in group global wholesales, including that of Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), at 3,61,361 units in the fourth quarter of FY23. Global wholesales of all Tata Motors' commercial vehicles and Tata Daewoo range in the January-March period this year stood at 1,18,321 units, up 3 per cent over the same period of FY22, Tata Motors said in a statement. Despatches of all passenger vehicles in the fourth quarter increased 10 per cent to 1,35,654 units over the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal, it said. Global sales of JLR stood at 1,07,386 vehicles in the March quarter, which comprised 15,499 units of Jaguar and 91,887 units of Land Rover, it said.

## DESPITE ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

### THE GOVERNMENT ALSO RULED OUT THE INDUSTRY'S DEMAND TO LIFT THE BAN ON THE EXPORT OF WHEAT PRODUCTS CONSIDERING THE BUMPER OUTPUT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Delhi, April 7:** The government Friday said wheat production loss due to recent inclement weather is likely to be in the range of 1-2 million tonne but overall production will reach a record 112.2 million tonne in the current year on higher acreage and yield. The government's wheat procurement at minimum support price (MSP) is underway and about 7 lakh tonne have been purchased so far, higher than 2 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. The Centre also asked roller flour millers to directly procure from farmers to meet their requirements instead of seeking stock from state-owned FCI under



We have got a group of 22 British defence companies, with collective revenues of about \$60 billion, really focused on doing business with and in India

**RICHARD MCCALLUM** | CEO, UK-INDIA BUSINESS COUNCIL

## TWITTER TO SHOW LESS ADVERTS

In order to woo more users, Elon Musk-run Twitter will now show at least 50 per cent less ads to Blue subscribers, along with a boost in their visibility on the platform. The micro-blogging platform has implemented the new tool on both 'For You' and 'Following' tabs



## NEW GAS PRICING FORMULA

# April gas price at \$7.92

Govt has set natural gas price at \$7.92 for April but rates for customers were capped at \$6.5

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** The government Friday announced a natural gas price of \$7.92 per unit for the remainder of April according to the just approved new pricing formula, but rates for consumers have been capped at \$6.5 per unit.

According to an order of the Oil Ministry's Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell, the price of natural gas for April 8 to April 30 period comes to \$7.92 per million British thermal unit going by the new indexation of pricing it at 10 per cent of imported cost of crude oil.

However, the Union Cabinet had while changing the pricing formula capped the rates at \$6.5 per mmbtu for two years ending March 31, 2025.

"For the gas produced by ONGC/OIL from their nomination fields, the price shall be subject to ceiling of \$6.5 per mmbtu," the order said.

The capped rates which are about a quarter less than the current prices, will lead to CNG and piped cooking gas prices being cut by up to 10 per cent.

Following the decision, the CNG price in Delhi is likely to be cut



CNG AND PNG PRICES HAD WITNESSED AN 80% JUMP SINCE AUGUST 2021, ON THE BACK OF A SURGE IN INTERNATIONAL ENERGY PRICES

## 'NO CLARITY ON DEREGULATION'

CNG and piped cooking gas prices will be cut by 9-11 per cent after the government revised the formula for pricing of natural gas, but there is no clarity on deregulation of the fuel, analysts said. "City gas distributors could reduce prices of compressed natural gas (CNG), used by vehicles, and piped natural gas (PNG), used by homes, by 9-11 per cent, with the government accepting the key recommendations of the Kirit Parikh Committee," Crisil Ratings said. "Had the previous pricing regime continued, prices would have likely risen." But the government has not acted on the panel's recommendation to fully deregulate prices in 2027. Also, the government tinkered with the recommendation of a \$0.50 per mmbtu annual increase till full deregulation in 2027. The Cabinet decided that rates will not change for two years and will be increased by \$0.25 annually thereafter. The committee had also recommended that gas should be brought under the Goods and Services Tax, or GST, regime. Having a common taxation such as GST for gas in lieu of state level VATs, which vary from 3 per cent to as high as 24 per cent, will help develop the market.

from ₹79.56 per kg to ₹73.59 and that of PNG from ₹53.59 per thousand cubic meters to ₹47.59. In Mumbai, CNG may cost ₹79 per kg instead of ₹87 and PNG may cost ₹49 per scm instead of ₹54.

### New mechanism

The Government Thursday accepted several key recommendations made by the Kirit Parikh Committee with respect to the pricing of natural gas produced from

# Forex kitty slides by \$329mn to \$578.45bn

## FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES RETREATED FROM MORE THAN EIGHT-MONTH HIGHS

AGENCIES

**Mumbai, April 7:** India's forex reserves dropped by \$329 million to \$578.449 billion for the week ended March 31, on decline in gold reserves, the RBI said Friday.

The forex kitty had risen handsomely in the previous two reporting weeks, and rose by \$5.977 billion to \$578.778 billion for the week ended March 24.

For FY23, the overall kitty has dropped by \$28.86 billion. It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion.

The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

For the week ended March 31, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$36 million to \$509.691 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Friday.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.



Gold reserves decreased by \$279 million to \$45.20 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by \$27 million to \$18.392 billion, the apex bank said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was up by \$14 million to \$5.165 billion in the reporting week.

A comfortable level of foreign exchange reserves will further bolster macroeconomic stability, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the bank's monetary policy decision Thursday.

In the week for which the forex reserves data pertains, the rupee ended 0.38% higher against the dollar, having traded in a range of 82.08 to 82.425 to the dollar. The rupee strengthened past 82 per dollar for the first time since mid-March to end at 81.8850 Thursday.

The central bank intervenes in the spot and forwards markets to prevent runaway moves in the rupee which affects the overall reserves position while changes also stem from valuation gains or losses.

# World food prices dip YoY

## World food prices fall for 12th month running in March

REUTERS

**Washington, April 7:** The United Nations food agency's world price index fell in March for a 12th consecutive month, and is now down 20.5% from a record high hit one year ago following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 126.9 points last month against 129.7 for February, the agency said Friday. It was the lowest reading since July 2021.

The February reading was originally given as 129.8.

A combination of ample supplies, subdued import demand and the extension of a deal allowing the safe export of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea contributed to the drop, FAO said. The Rome-based agency said the decline in the index reflected lower prices for cereals, vegetable oils and dairy products, which offset rises in sugar and meat prices.

"While prices dropped at the global level, they are still very high and continue to increase in domestic markets, posing additional challenges to food security," Maximo Torero, FAO's chief economist said in a statement.

"This is particularly so in net food

## WAR EFFECTS EBB



PRICES HAVE FALLEN 20.5% SINCE MARCH LAST YEAR AFTER A 12TH STRAIGHT MONTHLY DROP

FAO INDEX AVERAGED 126.9 POINTS, DOWN 2.1% FROM THE END OF FEBRUARY

importing developing countries, with the situation aggravated by the depreciation of their currencies against the US dollar or the euro and a mounting debt burden," he added. The FAO cereal price index fell 5.6% month-on-month in March, with wheat registering a 7.1% drop, maize a 4.6% decline and rice easing 3.2 percent.

Vegetable oils fell 3.0%, some 47.7% down on the level the index hit in March 2022, while the dairy index was down 0.8%.

By contrast, sugar rose 1.5% to its highest level since October 2016, hit by concerns over declining production prospects in India, Thailand and China. The meat price index

# RBI growth hope too optimistic: Nomura

The brokerage agency feels that RBI will pivot to rate cuts in October

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 7:** Japanese brokerage Nomura Friday said Reserve Bank's 6.5 per cent real GDP growth estimate for FY24 is "too optimistic", and the central bank will pivot to rate cuts from October.

The brokerage said it agrees with the Reserve Bank's projections on price rise, and said that the worst of headline inflation is behind us.

"However, the revised GDP growth forecast of 6.5 per cent in FY24 appears too optimistic," the brokerage said, adding that it estimates growth to slow down to 5.3 per cent.

A slew of agencies and analysts has cut the FY24 growth forecasts in the recent past, with many of them pegging it under 6 per cent as well.

Nomura said it expects a downside of over 1 percentage point to the RBI's growth estimate on weaker global growth, high uncertainty and the lagged effects of domestic policy tightening.

The RBI had attributed the upward revision in growth to a dip in crude oil prices to \$85 per barrel as against \$90 per barrel.

After announcing the policy,



Governor Shaktikanta Das Thursday said that the policy call is a pause on rates, and not a pivot, and made it clear that the RBI will not hesitate to act if it sees any risks.

In the note, the brokerage said the RBI is likely to pause in June as well, saying the central bank will take time to assess the impact of its past rates hikes, where it has raised rates by 2.50 per cent in the last 11 months.

"Beyond June, we expect inflation to marginally undershoot and a more significant disappointment on growth," the brokerage said.

The risks to its estimate of a rate cut in October appear skewed towards an action earlier than expected, it said.

The brokerage said the six-member Monetary Policy Committee surprised markets by unanimously voting to pause in the April meeting, while retaining its stance at a "withdrawal of accommodation" Thursday.

# RCap resolution process deadline to be extended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 7:** Lenders of debt-ridden Reliance Capital (RCap) may consider extending the deadline for completing the resolution process till May 30 this year, sources said.

The current deadline ends April 16. Considering the fact that the second round of auction is yet to take place, it is not possible to wrap up the resolution process within the current deadline.

Earlier this week, lenders postponed the second auction to April 11. The deadline to complete the resolution process of RCap has been extended multiple times in the past.

On the other hand, sources said, all the three bidders - IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) of Hinduja Group; Torrent Investment and Singapore-based Oaktree - who will be participating in the extended challenge mechanism (second round of auction), are still engaged with the Committee of Creditors (CoC) on certain issues or concerns raised by them.



The major concern of the bidders is compliance of resolution plans as per the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and Request for Resolution Plan (RFRP) guidelines, as in the first round of auction, bid by the Hinduja Group firm was submitted post auction. This bidding post auction date is being contested by Torrent Investment in the Supreme Court as it was the highest bidder as per the auction.

Therefore, sources said, this time bidders want compliance of resolution plans as per IBC and RFRP guidelines, before going in for the second round of auction.

Suitors are also seeking more transparency from the CoC in the extended challenge mechanism and have demanded that a separate e-portal be created on the extended challenge mechanism.

Sources have indicated that the second round of auction, scheduled for April 11, is likely to be postponed by another week, till all the issues raised by the bidders are resolved to their satisfaction.

The second round of auction for Reliance Capital has been postponed twice in the past due to litigation. The first round of auction was held December 21, 2022. Earlier, a dispute around RCap's bidding arose when Hindujas offered to pay ₹9,000 crore in upfront cash to the lenders, a day after the first round of auction concluded.

# WHEAT OUTPUT TO REACH RECORD LEVEL

## THE GOVERNMENT ALSO RULED OUT THE INDUSTRY'S DEMAND TO LIFT THE BAN ON THE EXPORT OF WHEAT PRODUCTS CONSIDERING THE BUMPER OUTPUT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Delhi, April 7:** The government Friday said wheat production loss due to recent inclement weather is likely to be in the range of 1-2 million tonne but overall production will reach a record 112.2 million tonne in the current year on higher acreage and yield. The government's wheat procurement at minimum support price (MSP) is underway and about 7 lakh tonne have been purchased so far, higher than 2 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. The Centre also asked roller flour millers to directly procure from farmers to meet their requirements instead of seeking stock from state-owned FCI under



About 7 lakh tonne of wheat has been procured so far, higher than 2 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. We are hopeful that a target of 342 lakh tonne of procurement will be achieved this year

**ASHOK K MEENA** | CHAIRMAN AND MD, FOOD CORPORATION OF INDIA

"The production would be 5-5.5 million tonne higher than the last year's government estimate," he said.

This means the overall wheat production would be touching the record 112.2 million tonne set for 2022-23 crop year (July-June) and even surpass this level.

AgriWatch had initially projected wheat output at 104.24 mil-

lion tonne for 2022-23, as against 97.7 million tonne in the previous year. However, it revised the estimate downward to 102.9 million tonne factoring in the crop loss due to untimely rains.

In 2021-22 crop year (July-June), wheat production had declined by 1.84 million tonne to 107.74 million tonne due to heat waves in some parts of the growing states.

Consequently, the government's procurement had dropped to 19 million tonne, as per the government data.

The Additional Secretary further said the surveys are important as commodity prices have gone up across the world. The production varies and estimates are important to take a policy decision on export and OMSS.

He said there is going to be a significant increase in production and the availability will be better than last year.

Stating that there is quality loss due to recent rains, the Additional Secretary said the government has taken a timely decision to relax norms for procurement for Madhya Pradesh where grain with lustre loss is being purchased at MSP.

The government is considering requests from Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana governments, he said.

"We hope the government pro-

urement will be better this year. We will have sufficient supply of stock to meet the PDS and market intervention," he said.

Meanwhile, domestic prices of wheat and wheat products like atta at present have declined on account of the export ban and sale of grain at discounted rates to bulk consumers via the open market sale scheme (OMSS), he added.

Wheat stock with FCI stood at 8.4 lakh tonne as on April 1 after taking into account the wheat sale under the OMSS, he said adding that the country has enough wheat to meet the food security demand and market intervention.

On the occasion, the Federation's President Pramod Kumar requested the government to reconsider lifting the ban on the export of wheat products after the government's procurement. The government has banned wheat exports since May 22 in order to arrest the rise in domestic prices.

# LSG ride on spinners' show

HYDERABAD BATTERS FAIL TO SHOW DISCIPLINE AS SUNRISERS SUFFER 2ND SUCCESSIVE DEFEAT

AGENCIES

Lucknow, April 7: Brilliant bowling by the spinners of Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) helped the hosts trounce Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) by five wickets in a match of the IPL here Friday. Left-arm spinner Krunal Pandya (3/18) destroyed the top-order of SRH and then the old-young leg-spinning combo of Amit Mishra (2/23) and Ravi Bishnoi (1/16) ran through the middle and lower-order as SRH could only muster 121 for the loss of eight wickets in their 20 overs. Even though it was a tad dicey



Krunal Pandya (R) put up a fine all-round show for LSG against Sunrisers

The Hyderabad bowlers failed to learn from their Lucknow counterparts who bowled with a lot of discipline. Defending 121, SRH conceded 17 extras out of which 15 were wides. It was a cardinal sin when they did not have much to fight for.

Earlier Pandya scalped the wickets of Mayank Agarwal (8), Anmolpreet Singh (31) and captain Aiden Mackram (0) – the last two dismissals off successive balls in the eighth over – to reduce SRH to 50 for the loss of three wickets.

Playing his first match of the season as well as the first as SRH captain, Markram went for a drive in the first ball he faced but it spun away to disturb his off stump.

Nicholas Pooran as SRH were in tatters at 55 for 4 in nine overs. SRH could not recover from there.

Veteran leg-spinner Mishra produced a fine spell later in the innings to restrict SRH to a small total.

Skipper Rahul's ploy to introduce spin in the third over in the form of Pandya on a difficult wicket having variable bounce paid off. Pandya dismissed Agarwal first as the batter went for a drive only to hit the ball straight to Marcus Stoinis in cover to give LSG their first wicket. Five overs later, he trapped well-set batter Anmolpreet (31) plumb in front before dismissing Makram.

One-down batter Rahul Tripathi (34, 41b, 4x4) played a lone hand in the second half of the innings as he stitched 39 runs for the sixth wicket, the highest partnership for SRH, with Washington Sundar (16), before he fell in the 18th over off the bowling of Yash Thakur. Abdul Samad hit two sixes in the final over bowled by Jaydev Unadkat to take the SRH score past 120.

**BRIEF SCORES**

SRH 121 for 8 (Rahul Tripathi 34, Krunal Pandya 3/18, Amit Mishra 2/23, Ravi Bishnoi 1/16) lost to LSG 127 for 5 in 16 overs (KL Rahul 35, Krunal Pandya 34, Adil Rashid 2/23) by five wickets

Ravi Bishnoi then removed Harry Brook (3), stumped by



Bhuvneshwar Kumar took a fine tumbling catch off his own bowling to dismiss Deepak Hooda

# Hockey teams get new support staff

The changes have been implemented with the aim of winning the gold medal at the Asian Games this year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 7: Renowned Australian coach Anthony Farry has been appointed as the analytical coach of the Indian women's hockey team while South African Rhett Halkett will perform the same role with the men's team, Hockey India (HI) announced Friday. The national hockey body also announced other support staff members for both the squads.

Farry, under whose supervision Canada men's team qualified for the 2016 Rio Olympics and who also helped Japan women win their maiden Asian Games gold medal in 2018, will assist head coach Janneke Schopman in his new role.

Farry also helped the Canada U-21 men's team qualify for two consecutive editions of the Junior World Cup and was the head coach and High Performance Director of USA women's side from August 2020 to April 2022.

Besides Farry and Halkett, the

national hockey body also announced Australian Alan Tan's appointment as scientific advisor to the national men's team. Both Halkett and Tan will be a part of the coaching set up of the men's team led by newly-appointed chief

with over 10 years of experience working as the strength and conditioning coach at the New South Wales Institute of Sport.

"We welcome the new coaching staff for the Indian men and women teams. On behalf of Hockey India, I thank Sports Authority of India (SAI) for processing their appointments on an immediate basis and appreciate their continued support in preparing the Indian teams for the upcoming Asian Games in China in 2023," HI president Dilip Tirkey said.

Tirkey also stated that the new appointees come with a lot of experience and will only

help the Indian men's and women's team to improve on their performances.

The main aim of both the men's and women's hockey teams is to win the gold at the Asian Games as it will help them qualify directly for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

In the 2020 Tokyo Olympics which was held in 2021, the men's team won the bronze and ended a 41-year wait for a medal in hockey. Prior to that, India had won the gold in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. However, many sides had boycotted the Moscow Games. The women's team however, missed out on a medal by a whisker and finished fourth in Tokyo.



coach Craig Fulton of South Africa.

Rhett earned 155 international caps between 2010 and 2018 for South Africa. In 2020, he was assistant coach of the Netherlands women's side before moving to Scotland, where he coached both the senior as well as the U-21 outfits. Tan, meanwhile, comes



**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**Priyanshu in semis**

ORLEANS (FRANCE): India's upcoming shuttle Priyanshu Rajawat continued his brilliant run at the Orleans Masters Badminton 2023 tournament, storming into the semifinals with a straight games victory against Chinese Taipei's Chi Yu Jen here Friday. Rajawat, who had stunned top seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan in the second round, defeated Chi Yu Jen 21-18, 21-18 in a 44-minute quarterfinal clash at the Palais Des Sports here. Rajawat had defeated World No. 12 Nishimoto 21-8, 21-16 to seal a place in the last eight of the tournament. He continued in the same vein Friday, playing aggressively and keeping the Chinese Taipei player on his toes throughout.

**Amazing comeback**

CHARLESTON (SOUTH CAROLINA, USA): Top-seeded Jessica Pegula lost 10 straight games and trailed 0-4 in the final set before rallying to reach the quarterfinals of the Charleston Open tennis tournament here Thursday. Pegula, the World No. 3 won the first set 7-5 against Irina-Camelia Begu and looked on course for an easy win when she led 4-0 in the second set. However, Begu won 10 straight games in a row and led 4-0 in the third set. It was then the turn of Pegula to reel off six straight games to win the match 7-5, 4-6, 6-4. Pegula will now meet 12th-seeded Paula Badosa, a 6-3, 6-1 winner over Diana Snaider.

**2 Indians shine in ITF tourney**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 7: It will be an all-Korean affair in the under-14 boys' singles final of the ITF Asia 14 and Underdevelopment Tennis Championships 2023 being played at the Kalinga Stadium here. In the semifinals played Friday, top seed Min Hyuk Cho of Korea easily defeated Hong Kong's Alex Lap Hang 6-3, 6-3 to book his spot in the summit clash round. He will face compatriot Kim Won Min who had to fight hard before subduing Andre Lam of Hong Kong 6-2, 3-6, 6-0.

However, there were some reasons for the Indians to cheer for. In the girls' event top-seeded Maaya Revathi defeated sixth seed Natrara Sakulvongtana of Thailand 6-4, 6-4 to enter the finals. Maaya also entered the girls' doubles final with Haritha Venkatesh Ilima and Emily 1-6, 6-2, 10-6.

# LOTS AT STAKE FOR MI, CSK

Humdinger on cards Saturday as multiple winners of IPL title clash

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 7: Rohit Sharma will like to get his act together both as a batter as well as skipper, when his star-studded Mumbai Indians (MI) take on an astute Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in what could be safely billed as a Saturday night IPL blockbuster. It is a battle of two former champions

with MI winning the IPL title five times and CSK four times.

Batting coach Kieron Pollard however, feels that all the MI batters need to fire in unison if the side have to come out on top against their arch rivals.

"I believe all batters have to fire. I do not think we should single out any individual. Cricket is played with 11 players, and again, the tournament has just started so everyone is just looking to start (on a) high," Pollard said on the eve of the game here Friday.

"Yes we did not get off to a great start as a batting unit but in the end we managed a decent total against Bangalore (RCB). Let us see what happens since we are back at Wankhede," the batting coach added.

Pollard categorically declined that the team were concerned over the form of mainstay Suryakumar Yadav, the World No. 1 T20I batter who flopped in the first game while coming off a horrendous ODI series against Australia. "We have no concerns on Surya's form. I believe

you guys make more of it than we do sometimes within the team set up," Pollard asserted.

The advantage that MI have is that they will come up against a somewhat inexperienced bowling line-up of CSK. Both Rajvardhan Hangargekar and Tushar Deshpande, were warned by Dhoni for bowling too many wides and no-balls. They will certainly find the batting-friendly Wankhede track very challenging.

However, eyes will also be on some of the MI bowlers like Jofra Archer, Cameron Green and Arshad Khan. They were found wanting in the game against RCB and the three will need to come good if MI are to pose a decent challenge to CSK.

**Parnell, Vyshak are RCB replacements**

NEW DELHI: RCB have named Wayne Parnell and Vyshak Vijay Kumar as replacements for the injured Reece Topley and Rajat Patidar respectively for the remainder of IPL. Topley suffered a shoulder injury while fielding during RCB's opening match of the season against MI. Patidar did not feature in RCB's first game due to a heel injury. He is yet to recover and has been ruled out of the 16th edition of the tournament, read a media advisory from the IPL.



# GURBUX 'SHOCKED' ON RECEIVING HI AWARD

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 7: "It was a real surprise for me, shocking and a pleasant one too," Indian hockey legend Gurbux Singh said Friday as he reminisced about the moment he was presented with the prestigious 'Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award' at the Vth Hockey India Annual Awards 2022 held last month here. Gurbux, who resides in Kolkata, made the observations in the latest episode of 'Hockey Te Charcha'.

The two-time Olympic medallist shared the feeling of winning the award and spoke on a variety of topics including the recent developments in the Indian hockey domes-

tic structure. Gurbux won the gold medal in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and bronze in the 1968 Mexico Games.

"I am 88 today and whatever I have been able to do for hockey, I've always enjoyed it. Even to this day, at this stage, I become part of it in whatever small way possible. In my 65 years of hockey life, I've enjoyed doing everything and I take great pride in doing this. I've been a player, a coach, an international hockey umpire and manager," Gurbux said.

"I think one should value it (award) a lot. It brought tears to my eyes, I almost choked while speaking because it was such a wonderful moment for me to go to the podium and speak. If I had known earlier, I would have prepared a speech," added the hockey legend.

I have been associated with hockey for 65 years of my life in various capacities and I have enjoyed every moment of it

GURBUX SINGH

# Klopp banking on players' reactions

LIVERPOOL MANAGER WANTS TEAM TO RISE TO THE OCCASION WHEN THEY FACE ARSENAL

AGENCIES

London, April 7: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp hopes to see a reaction from his underperforming players when they face Arsenal in their Premier League game Sunday. Klopp has been critical of his players after a listless display in a goalless draw at Chelsea in midweek, which came on the back of a run of poor performances.

Liverpool slipped two spots to eighth in the league after Tuesday's draw, with 43 points after 28 games. The result at Stamford Bridge was a fourth straight game in all competitions without a victory for Klopp's side.

However, Liverpool have an excellent record at home in the league this season with Leeds United the



only team to beat them. Klopp said they would try to build on that when they welcome Arsenal, the first visitors to Anfield since

Liverpool dished out a 7-0 thrashing of Manchester United at the start of last month.

"This (Chelsea) game has gone

**Haaland available**

MANCHESTER: Prolific striker Erling Haaland is available to play Saturday when Manchester City visit last-place Southampton, manager Pep Guardiola said Friday. The Norway international returned to training this week after a groin injury forced him to miss City's 4-1 victory over Liverpool last weekend. Haaland has scored 42 goals in all competitions this season for City including 28 in the Premier League. He has scored nine goals in his last three games for City.

and now we have another chance. We will give it a proper try (to win) and we will need support of Anfield," Klopp told reporters Friday. "We're at home and we still have to show a reaction and an improvement to the standards we are known for," the German manager added.

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# international

## of the day quote

We think that the developed world, especially the EU and the US, had the option not to enter the war the way they did, so fast, without spending time trying to negotiate

Lebanon is committed to UN Resolution 1701 and the close coordination between the Lebanese Army and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)

Egypt encourages all efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive and sustainable political solution in Yemen

## SHORT TAKES

**Massive fire at Mexican market**

**Mexico City:** Some 200 firefighters battled a huge blaze in Mexico City's sprawling wholesale market Thursday night without any reported injuries. The Central de Abasto supplies the capital's other neighbourhood markets, restaurants and other parts of the country. Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said the fire started in an area of the market where wooden pallets and crates are built and stored, meaning there was substantial fuel on a breezy evening.

**Inmate sets fire at jail, 20 injured**

**New York:** A fire set by an inmate at New York City's troubled Rikers Island injured 20 people on a day that lawmakers visited the jail complex, authorities said. Fifteen staff members and five inmates were injured in the fire that started about 1:30 p.m. Thursday, the city Correction Department said.

**Two killed in Colorado shooting**

**Denver:** Two people were killed and another hospitalised after a shooting at a residence in US state of Colorado, authorities said. Police were called to the residence for reports of shots being fired at 11.52 a.m. Thursday in City of Lakewood, located southwest of state capital Denver.

**WHO turns 75**

**Geneva:** On the eve of its 75th anniversary, the WHO marked the occasion by calling for a renewed drive for health equity in the face of unprecedented threats. Seventy-five years ago, after years of war, the nations of the world agreed to set up a new organisation and "debated and agreed what this organisation would be and do in a document called the Constitution of the World Health Organisation," the organisation's Director General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, recalled at a press briefing here Thursday.

**Indian gets jail term**

**New York:** An Indian national has been sentenced to 33 months in prison, and ordered to pay \$2.4 million in restitution for his role in an international conspiracy that preyed on elderly victims in the US. Ashish Bajaj, 29, pleaded guilty in August last year before District Judge Kevin McNulty in Newark federal court to information charging him with conspiracy to commit wire fraud.



Russia may pull out of a wartime deal that allows the export of Ukrainian grain to global markets if the West fails to remove obstacles to Russian agricultural exports

SERGEY LAVROV | RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

## BIRTHS IN ITALY HIT RECORD LOW IN '22

Births in Italy dropped to a new historic low below 4,00,000 in 2022, national statistics bureau ISTAT said Friday, as the population continued to shrink



# China sanctions US organisations

AGENCIES

**Beijing, April 7:** China Friday sanctioned the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and other US- and Asian-based organisations in retaliation to the US House Speaker meeting Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, a day after President Xi Jinping said it is "wishful" thinking to expect Beijing to compromise on its stand on the self-ruled island.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, was the site where Tsai met McCarthy and a bipartisan group of congressional leaders. It was the second high-profile meeting between an American official and Taiwan's president.

China also sanctioned the Hudson Institute, which hosted an event and presented Tsai with its global leadership award March 30. The sanctioned groups included Asia-based groups - The Prospect Foundation and the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats for their involvement in promoting Taiwan's independence.

"[The] Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests. The Chinese government and Chinese people will never agree to anyone making a fuss about the one-China issue," Xi told European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a meeting in



Tsai's meeting with Speaker McCarthy - the third most senior official in the US - Thursday took place against the backdrop of repeated warnings from Beijing to Washington that the meeting should not happen

Beijing Thursday.

It was his first comment after the US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy met Tsai in Simi Valley, California, which Beijing sharply criticised.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, von der Leyen said the Taiwan issue had been discussed and she had told Xi that "the threat to use force to change the status quo is unacceptable. It is important that some of the tensions that might occur should be resolved through dialogue", Hong Kong-based *South China*

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, was the site where Tsai met McCarthy and a bipartisan group of congressional leaders

*Morning Post* reported.

On Friday's sanctions, the foreign ministry in Beijing said that both American institutions were banned from having exchanges, cooperation, and other activities with any individuals, universities or institutions in China. "We want to stress China will take resolute measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a media briefing.

## Xi woos France to 'counter' US

**Guangzhou/Hong Kong:** China's Xi Jinping has given French President Emmanuel Macron an unusually lavish welcome on a state visit, which some analysts see as a sign of Beijing's growing offensive to woo key allies within the European Union to counter the United States. The two leaders visited southern China together Friday, where Macron was due to drink Chinese tea with Xi in a former residence of his father in the city of Guangzhou, capital of the economic and manufacturing powerhouse of Guangdong province. Such forays by Xi with visiting leaders are rare. Diplomats say it underlines the importance Beijing attaches to this relationship with a key member of the EU as it looks for support against what Xi has called "all-round containment, encirclement and suppression" by the US.



# Biden admin defends Afghan troops pullout

The White House released a 12-page document on the conditions that led to US' exit from Afghanistan in 2021, placing much of the blame on the previous Trump administration



**Washington, April 7:** Joe Biden's administration has defended its decision to pull American troops out of Afghanistan and blamed former US President Donald Trump for creating conditions that "severely constrained" his successor and led to the chaotic withdrawal from the war-torn country in 2021. The White House Thursday released a 12-page document on the conditions that led to US' exit from Afghanistan in 2021 and sent related classified documents to various Congressional committees.

The report places much of the blame on the previous Trump administration, saying President Biden was "severely constrained" by former president Trump's decisions. "President Biden's choices for how to execute a withdrawal from Afghanistan were severely constrained by conditions created by

his predecessor," the report said. The Trump administration had negotiated a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban that Biden pledged to honour. But Thursday's report criticised the former Republican president for a lack of planning to carry out the deal.

According to the report, when Biden took office on January 20, 2021, "the Taliban were in the strongest military position that they had been in since 2001, controlling or contesting nearly half of the country." At the same time, the US had only 2,500 troops on the ground, the lowest since 2001, and President Biden was facing Trump's near-term deadline to withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan by May 2021, or the Taliban would resume its attacks on US and allied troops, it said.

It said Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin testified September 28, 2021, "The intelligence was clear that if we did not leave in accordance with that agreement, the Taliban would recommence attacks on our forces."

# Two women killed in West Bank after Israel strikes Lebanon, Gaza

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Gaza/Jerusalem, April 7:** Israel unleashed rare airstrikes on Lebanon and bombarded the Gaza Strip Friday, an escalation that sparked fears of a broader conflict after days of violence over Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site.

Later in the day, there were signs that both sides were trying to keep the hostilities in check. Fighting on Israel's northern and southern borders subsided after dawn, and midday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem passed peacefully. But a Palestinian shooting attack in the Israeli-occupied West Bank killed two Israeli sisters just hours later - a grim reminder of the combustible situation.

The early morning Israeli strikes followed an unusually large rocket barrage fired at Israel from southern Lebanon - some of the heaviest and most serious cross-border violence since Israel's 2006 war

with Lebanon's Hezbollah militants. The violence erupted after Israeli police raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem earlier in the week, sparking unrest in the contested capital and outrage across the Arab world. The Israeli strikes Friday seemed designed to avoid drawing in Hezbollah, the Iran-backed Shiite group that Israel considers its most immediate threat.

The Israeli military said its warplanes struck infrastructure belonging to Hamas militants that it accused of firing the nearly three dozen rockets that slammed into open areas and towns in northern Israel Thursday. Nonetheless, the Israeli military said it believed the Palestinian militants acted with the knowledge of Hezbollah, which holds sway over much of southern Lebanon.

There were no reports of serious casualties, but several residents of the southern Lebanese town of Qalili, including Syrian refugees, said they were lightly wounded.



A visitor leaps across a narrow waterway on a drained reflecting pool, as temperatures rise past 80 degrees Fahrenheit near the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall in Washington

# UAE rejects Gupta brothers' extradition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Johannesburg, April 7:** South Africa said Friday that the UAE has turned down its request to extradite two brothers from the wealthy Indian-origin Gupta family to face trial in this country on fraud and corruption charges.

The three Gupta brothers, Ajay, Atul and Rajesh, are wanted in South Africa for their alleged roles in the looting of billions of rands from state enterprises. They are alleged to have used their



proximity to former president Jacob Zuma to do this. The South African government last year submitted a formal extradition application to the United Arab Emirates for Rajesh Gupta and

# Russia charges Journal reporter with espionage

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, April 7:** Jailed Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich has been charged with espionage in Russia and has entered a formal denial, two Russian news agencies reported Friday.

The state news agency Tass and the Interfax news agency said a law enforcement source informed them that Russia's Federal Security Service, known as the FSB, had officially charged the American journalist. The news outlets didn't say in what form Gershkovich was formally charged or when it happened, but generally suspects are presented a paper outlining the accusations.

In the Russian legal system, the filing of charges and a response from the accused represents the formal start of a criminal probe, initiating what could be a long and secretive Russian judicial process. Tass quoted its source as saying: "The FSB investigation charged Gershkovich with espionage in the interests of his country. He categorically denied all accusations and stated that he was engaged in journalistic activities in Russia."

The source declined further comment because the case is considered secret. Russian authorities arrested Gershkovich, 31, in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city, March 29. He is the first US correspondent since the Cold War to be detained for alleged spying.

# Pak needs to repay \$ 77.5bn external debt in 3 years

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Islamabad / New Delhi, April 7:** From April 2023 to June 2026, Pakistan needs to repay \$77.5 billion in external debt, according to an analysis by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP).

For a \$350 billion economy, this is a hefty burden. The major repayments in the next three years are to Chinese financial institutions, private creditors and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan's large external debt comes with considerable repayment pressure.

Pakistan faces near-term debt repayment pressure. From April to June 2023, the external debt servicing burden is \$4.5 billion, the analysis said. The major repayments are due in June when a \$1 billion Chinese SAFE deposit and a roughly \$1.4 billion Chinese commercial loan would mature. Pakistani au-

thorities hope to convince the Chinese to refinance and rollover both debts, something the Chinese government and commercial banks have done in the past.

Even if Pakistan manages to meet these obligations, the next fiscal year will be more challenging, as the debt servicing will rise to nearly \$25 billion, the analysis said. This includes \$15 billion of short-term loans and \$7 billion in long-term debt, including a vital \$1 billion repayment on a Eurobond in the fourth quarter. The short-term debt repayments include \$4 billion Chinese SAFE deposits, \$3 billion Saudi deposits

and \$2 billion UAE deposits; the Pakistan government assumes they will be rolled over by the creditors each year. Separately, Pakistan will need to repay another \$1.1 billion of long-term commercial loans to Chinese banks. In 2024-25,



Pakistan's debt servicing is likely to be around \$24.6 billion, which includes \$8.2 billion long-term debt repayments and another \$14.5 billion short-term debt repayments; this includes major repayments to Chinese lenders of \$3.8 billion.