



SETTING THE BAR HIGH

Actress Alaya F likes to push herself to deliver the expectations of her idol Priyanka Chopra Jonas

LEISURE P2



TAIWAN TENSIONS FLARE UP

China's military simulates precision strikes against Taiwan in a second day of drills around the island Sunday

INTERNATIONAL P10



RINKU STEALS SHOW

Rinku Singh hits five consecutive sixes in the final over to help KKR beat Gujarat Giants in a thriller

SPORTS P12

Police book rapper for anti-govt song; 2nd case this week

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 9: Mumbai Police have registered a case against rapper Umesh Khade for his song allegedly against government and the administrative system, an official said Sunday.

With this, the Maharashtra Police have registered cases against two different rappers in a week for allegedly targeting the government.

In the latest case, a complaint was filed by an official of the Mumbai Police's Crime Intelligence Unit.

Based on the complaint, an FIR was registered Friday against rapper Umesh Khade, who stays in Wadala area of Mumbai, for his song 'Bhongli keli janata' (referring to sufferings faced by people), the official said.

Khade had uploaded the song on a social media platform having the account name Shambho, and the song went viral, he said.

The case was registered against Khade under Sections 504 (intentional insult to provoke breach of peace), 505(2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill will between classes) of the Indian Penal Code, and Section 67 (publishing or transmitting obscene material in electronic form) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, he said. He was called for questioning by the police Thursday and later allowed to go, the official said.

After registration of the FIR Friday a notice was served to Khade asking him to appear before the investigating officer whenever required, he said, adding the rapper was not arrested. Earlier, the Ambernath police Wednesday registered a case against rapper Raj Mungse for his song which allegedly targeted the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra using derogatory language.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



He's upset. A neta tried to intimidate the judiciary recently. He feels the opposition is meddling with his work

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	37.8°C	37.2°C
TEMP MIN	22.9°C	23.5°C
Humidity	68%	68%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast		
Light rain very likely		

'Pushpa 2' to be shot in Swabhiman Anchal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, April 9: In a good news for movie buffs, Allu Arjun-starrer upcoming film 'Pushpa 2' will be shot in Swabhiman Anchal of Malkangiri district.

The film will be shot at various locations of Swabhiman Anchal and in Saptadhar of Malkangiri district. The production house Mythri Movie Makers after selecting locations has written to Malkangiri Collector Vishal Singh and Superintendent of Police (SP) Nitesh Wadhvani seeking their permission for the shooting of the film. This has spread cheers among the movie lovers in the state.

A six-member team led by the director of the movie Sukumar, production manager of Mythri Movie



Makers, visited Hantalaguda, Sarkubandha hanging bridge, Chitrakonda spillway and other locations of the area ahead of the shooting. Recently, the production house released the poster and teaser of the upcoming movie.

They met the district Collector and SP to seek permission for the shooting, which is likely to start by the first week of May. They also assured the officials regarding adherence to rules and regulations during the shooting.

The much-awaited movie is likely to hit the theatres in 2024.

MODI MEETS 'THE ELEPHANT WHISPERERS'



SHARING THE FAME: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Bellie and Bomman, the elephant caretakers who featured in the Oscar-winning documentary, at Theppakadu elephant camp at Mudumalai in the hilly Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu, Sunday

Chennai, April 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday visited the Theppakadu Elephant camp in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu and interacted with the mahout couple, Bomman and Bellie.

The couple had featured in the Oscar winning documentary 'The Elephant Whisperers'. He also appreciated the care shown by the couple towards the elephants Reghu and Bommi in the 'The Elephant Whisperers'.

Prime Minister Modi arrived at the Theppakadu Elephant Camp from Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka by road.

He spoke to the couple for quite some time and also interacted with other mahouts and 'kavadis' who take care of elephants at the camp. The Prime Minister also fed sugarcane to the elephants in the camp.

After interacting with the mahouts, kavadis, and Bomman, Bellie and spending time with captive elephants, the Prime Minister left for Mysore.

Heavy security arrangements were in place during his visit to the camp.

Video shows Dalai Lama kissing boy, sparks controversy



AGENCIES

Chandigarh, April 9: Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama has been caught on video, kissing a young boy on the lips at a Buddhist event and telling him to suck my tongue.

This has created a flutter, even prompting outrage, on the social media and micro blogging sites, raising question marks. For some, this is akin to paedophilia.

However, his followers and sympathizers the elderly Buddhist monk was joking around with the boy. However, victims of child sexual abuse argue that being sexualised by a powerful adult is serious matter.

Last week, student musicians from various schools made the long life prayer offering to the Dalai Lama, singing and playing traditional instruments at the Main Tibetan Temple in Dharamsala.

Govt to set up Directorate of Odisha Parivar for NROs

■ THE DIRECTORATE WILL DEVELOP A DEDICATED PORTAL TITLED PARIBAR-THE PORTAL FOR PRAVASI ODIAS-CONNECTING THE ROOTS

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 9: The state government Sunday decided to set up a Directorate of Odisha Parivar and a dedicated portal to create a one stop point of contact and support for people of the state who live in other parts of the country and across the world.

The proposal in this regard was approved at the state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in digital mode during his stay in Japan. Besides, the Cabinet also took six other decisions mostly relating to finalisation of tenders to facilitate piped drinking water facilities.

Food, Supplies and Consumer Welfare and Cooperation Minister Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak and Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena briefed the media after the Cabinet



The directorate will act as a single point of interface with departments of the Odisha government and will enlist Odia associations in different parts of India and in foreign countries

meeting. The minister said that the new Directorate of Odisha Parivar will function under the Department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture. It will have a better connect with 'Pravasi Odias' within the country and across the world.

The directorate will also engage with the diaspora in the growth journey of Odisha by leveraging their knowledge, skills, and global reach while also making efforts to resolve any issues they may be facing, said Satyabrata Sahu, additional

chief secretary of Odia Language, Literature and Culture department.

This apart, the directorate will act as a single point of interface with departments of the Odisha government for resolution of specific issues relating to labour, students, cultural promotions, clearances and others. The directorate will enlist Odia associations in different parts of India and in foreign countries. This will develop a closer relationship with the people of Odisha living in different states and abroad including gen next through partnerships at individual, institutional, and civil society levels on matters relating to promotion of Odia Language, culture, and heritage, tourism and sports, handlooms and handicrafts, Sahu said. Contd...4

Naveen conducts Cabinet meeting online from Japan

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday conducted a Cabinet meeting online from Japan. This was his first Cabinet meeting held from a foreign location. Patnaik, who is on a visit to the East Asian nation to attract investments to Odisha, presided over the cabinet meeting through the virtual mode from Kyoto, around 6,000 km from state capital Bhubaneswar. His Cabinet colleagues also took part in the meeting separately through virtual mode. They held threadbare discussions and files were processed and documents signed online through the Odisha State Wide Area Network (OSWAN), a CMO statement said. "We have been a pioneer in leveraging the latest technology as part of our ST charter to improve the effectiveness of the governance systems and delivery of public services. Technology has served as an enabling tool in transforming the delivery of good governance and public goods and services," Patnaik was quoted as saying in the statement. This digital Cabinet pushes the boundary of technology and speed of governance, he said.

India's tiger count up at 3,167 in 2022

■ To mark 50 years of 'Project Tiger', Prime Minister Modi unveils the 'International Big Cat Alliance' (IBCA)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mysuru (K'taka), April 9: India's tiger population rose by 200 in the past four years to reach 3,167 in 2022, the latest tiger census data released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here Sunday revealed.

According to the data, the tiger population was 1,411 in 2006, 1,706 in 2010, 2,226 in 2014, 2,967 in 2018 and 3,167 in 2022.

At the inaugural session of the commemoration of 50 years of 'Project Tiger', the Prime Minister also launched the 'International Big Cat Alliance' (IBCA) and released a booklet 'Amrit Kaal Ka Tiger Vision', presenting the vision for tiger conservation in the next 25 years.

The Prime Minister said that protection of wildlife was a universal issue, adding that IBCA was India's endeavour for the protection and conservation of big cats.

"Cheetahs had become extinct in India decades ago. We brought this magnificent big cat to India from Namibia and South Africa. This is



the first successful transcontinental translocation of the big cat," Modi said. For wildlife to thrive, it is important for ecosystems to thrive, Modi said adding that this has been happening in India.

"India is a country where protecting nature is part of culture... We do not believe in conflict between ecology and economy, but give importance to coexistence between the two," he noted.

In July 2019, the Prime Minister had called for an 'Alliance of Global Leaders' to obliterate demand and firmly curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade in Asia. India launched the IBCA to bring focus to protection and conservation of seven major big cats of the world - Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar and Cheetah - with membership of the range countries harbouring these species.

India launched 'Project Tiger' April 1, 1973 to promote tiger conservation. Initially, it covered nine tiger reserves spread over 18,278 sq km. At present, there are 53 tiger reserves spanning more than 75,000 sq km (approximately 2.4 per cent of the country's geographical area).

Sometimes, science is better over a pint of beer!

■ 'Science on Tap' is a one-of-its-kind outreach initiative to bring science that happens within laboratories to everyone in the community

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, April 9: Discussions and workshops on science topics are common in schools, colleges and formal events, but people have now started having casual chats on a plethora of science topics such as machines, universe and climate change in informal settings like pubs, lounges and cafes and that too over a pint of beer. Their logic is science + craft beer = jargon and seriousness = super fun! Yes, you heard it right! A bunch

of science enthusiasts from Pune, led by climate scientist Anoop Mahajan from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), are on a mission to reduce the gap between science and the common public with their unique outreach initiative called 'Science on Tap'.

As part of the initiative, they rope in experts to unlock mysteries around some of the complex subjects during the interactive sessions. Mahajan, the brain behind 'Science on Tap', which offers discussions on science at local pubs and bars, said the outreach initiative has been started with an aim to reduce the gap between science and people.

"There is a lot of misinformation. People do not know what information is correct and what is fake. Most people are exposed to information on social media that is un-



verified, and this dissemination of misinformation is for all subjects, including science," he told PTI.

Generally, a lot of science outreach programmes are conducted, mostly aimed at children and those

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ANOOP MAHAJAN | CLIMATE SCIENTIST, IITM, PUNE

who are already doing some work in that particular subject.

All such outreach events take place in formal settings like auditoriums, schools and colleges where access is limited. Even if we or-

ganise such by inviting experts to an auditorium and keep them open to all, the chances are people won't come, Mahajan said.

"So, we decided to reach out to the general public and tried to find out where these young people go to have a good time. The answer was restaurants, lounges, cafes or their favourite bar or pub, and then it was decided to hold discussions at such places," he said. Mahajan said they keep the chats casual and interactive so that these sessions go well with the place and mood.

"We wanted people to ask questions without thinking about how simple or basic the question is. As far as the audience is concerned, our target is not only young people, but those who are currently running the world, making decisions and owning businesses," he said. Contd...4



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You need to be very cautious today, says Ganesha. The results of a lot of hard work over a long time may be undone by one impulsive decision. After a stressful morning, you could just wish to spend time with children, playing their childish games.

TAURUS

There is a strong likelihood of some dispute or misunderstanding cropping up between you and your parents. This, Ganesha assures, could easily be resolved through a positive, meaningful dialogue. You will be clear, coherent and persuasive in your communications.

GEMINI

You will keep your emotions aside and concentrate solely on your work today. You will have to waste a lot of time in fulfilling the demands made by those around you. However, the more demands you fulfill, the more their expectations will rise, says Ganesha.

CANCER

New positive turn in life of lovers. It may lead to marriage. You will play role in bonding all members of the joint family and will meet with success. You will respect tradition and custom. Adopt a careful approach, counsels Ganesha.

LEO

Your entire day will be spent at work. Those working in large corporations will have to fulfill heightened expectations from their superiors. Housewives will need to tackle other work, apart from their daily chores. It is an important day for you, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

You will stay away from partnership ventures. Ganesha says you have the ability to control large-scale projects on your own. You have leadership qualities, and will be able to coordinate team work and direct your colleagues to get the required amount of work from them.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that you will be able to attain a huge benefit because of your nature to take chances. Higher ups in the office will take notice of your skills and ability to work well. Seniors in your office will promote and inspire you to give your best. Ganesha says this is not a good time to get into a direct fight with anyone since it will lead to more problems and issues.

SCORPIO

You are ready to take up the challenges that life has to throw at you. Thanks to the confidence within you, which gives you power to fight it out against all odds. Even if you take up a mammoth task, you are bound to succeed today, predicts Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Your business is likely to grow with leaps and bounds, foresees Ganesha. Increase in financial returns will keep you happy for the entire day. Work in progress gives out positive signals. Your expert advice will be valued at work. In short, a day full of activities.

CAPRICORN

Practical and creative, you are able to utilise your talents in the best possible manner. You will smartly solve family issues, without favouring or hurting anybody, says Ganesha. You'll like to play the role of a peace maker, as it gives you satisfaction from within. Also, you will love to help others as much as you can.

AQUARIUS

Be it about solving financial issues or concerns about income, money matters will keep your mind occupied through out the day. You will have a gala time with your friends later on the day, predicts Ganesha. Not that you don't value your friends, but today, you will realise how important you are for one another.

PISCES

You are fond of traveling and are always looking for an excuse to set off. Hence it comes as no surprise if you pack your bags and decide to embark upon a journey on a whim today. It is a much needed break too, from the daily stresses of earning a livelihood.



TAYLOR AND JOE BREAK UP AFTER SIX YEARS OF DATING

British actor Joe Alwyn and American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift broke up a few weeks ago after six years of dating. According to Entertainment Tonight, the split was amicable and 'it was not dramatic'. The actress spoke to the portal and said, "The relationship had just run its course."

KEANU TO MAKE BROADWAY DEBUT

John Wick star Keanu Reeves is reported to make his first major theatre performance in a Broadway revival of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The actor, 58, once portrayed Prince Hamlet in a 1995, but is now said to be ready to take on his first play role in decades, reports aceshowbiz.com.

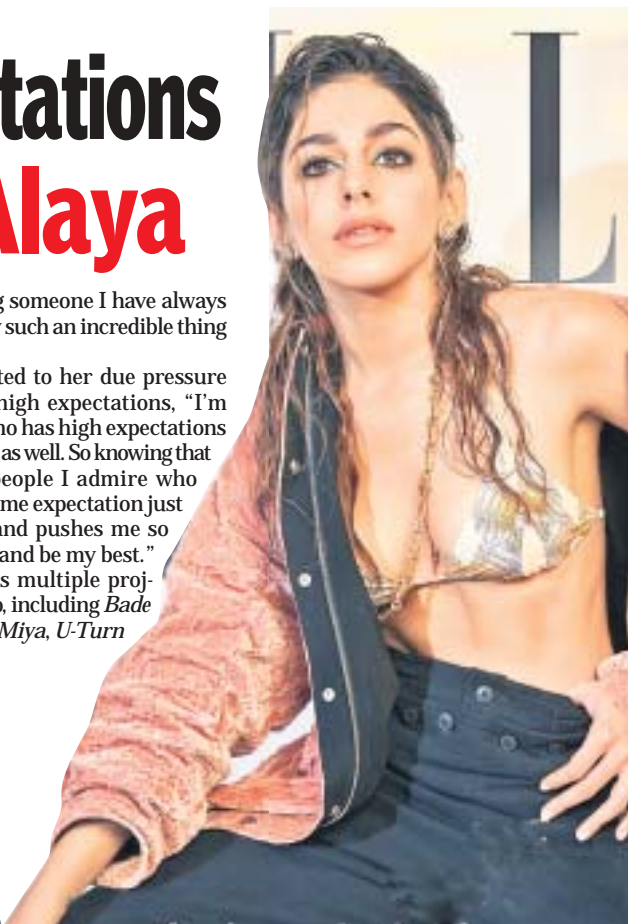


I've high expectations from myself: Alaya

**Mumbai:** Alaya F has been the talk of the town with her back to back performances in *Freddy, Almost Pyaar with DJ Mohabbat*. Recently, the global star Priyanka Chopra labelled her, next superstar in the industry. In response to her remarks, Alaya said that such high praise from Priyanka Chopra Jonas has only pushed and motivated her to strive and be her best. Speaking about her first reaction to PC's interview the 25-year-old said, "My hands were shaking while I was watching that interview. It was a surreal moment." Narrating her admiration for the *Citadel* star, she adds, "Priyanka has always been my favourite. I love how she carries herself in interviews and how she has been representing our country so beautifully. There is no better feeling

than having someone I have always admired say such an incredible thing about me." She reacted to her due pressure with such high expectations, "I'm someone who has high expectations from myself as well. So knowing that there are people I admire who have that same expectation just motivates and pushes me so much to do and be my best." Alaya has multiple projects lined up, including *Bade Miya Chote Miya*, *U-Turn* and *Sri*.

AGENCIES



Raveena hits back at trolls

**Mumbai:** Actress Raveena Tandon was recently feted with India's fourth highest civilian honour, Padma Shri, at Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi for her contribution to Indian cinema. While many flooded the internet with congratulatory messages, there was a section of netizens who trolled her as they questioned the win. Hitting back at the trolls, the actress said that she is not bothered by people with a following of no more than 20, as they come with their own agenda. She said, "I don't want to give any importance to them as they have their own agenda. The comments of a few, who have 20 followers but haven't seen the work that I have done, will not diminish my body of work." The 48-year-old further said, "They only see

the glamour; they don't see the hard work and long hours we put in. We know how polarised things are on social media today, but others

have sent such beautiful wishes." Talking about the Padma awards ceremony, the actress and her family attended the gilded ceremony, which was graced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. IANS



Preity speaks out on two shocking events

**Mumbai:** Veteran actress Preity Zinta hasn't appeared in a movie for a while, but the actress' popularity has never seen a dip. The actress recently welcomed twins via surrogacy. The actress, who is quite active on social media, dropped a video and shared two incidents that have shaken her. Preity decided to speak up about it because it involved her children. The actress said that

a stranger woman tried to take her daughter Gia's photo and even 'planted a big wet kiss' next to the baby's mouth. She also talked about how a 'handicapped man kept trying to stop' her for money. She even lashed out at the paparazzi, who found it funny and filmed it instead of helping. Preity made her voice strong and clarified that while she's a star, it's high time people think of her

as a human being first. In reaction to her social media post, many of the celebrities from B-town came in to support her. Reacting to Preity Zinta's post, Hrithik Roshan commented, "Well done, Pree," along with a heart emoji. Priyanka Chopra dropped a clap and a high-five emoji, showing her support. Malaika Arora commented, "You said it out loud and clear." IANS

25TH UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2023

Odia feature film *Whispers of a Storm* set for world premiere

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odia feature film *Whispers of a Storm* is all set for its world premiere at the 25th UK Asian Film Festival in London this May. The film is set against the backdrop of Fani-affected coastal villages in Odisha. A photographer, greedy of success, tries to extract benefit from the calamity. A villager finds his home shattered after his return from a rescue camp. A young devotee of God, Daya tries to explain to people that it's all God's will. And a lady, after losing her son to the cyclone, leaves her village and finds solace in nature. These characters, apparently independent of each other,

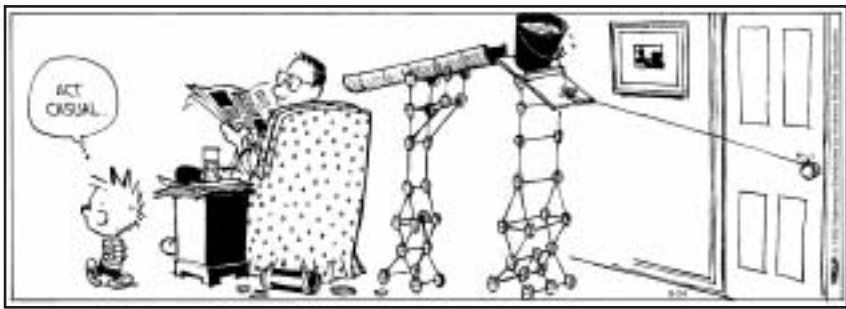
find relevance and connection in the context of their losses. The film is directed by Amartya Bhattacharyya and produced by Swastik Choudhury under the banner of Swastik Arthouse, in association with U T Rao and Filmstop Entertainment. As in all his films, Amartya is the writer, cinematographer, and editor as well. The lead roles are played by Dipanwit Dashmohapatra, Swastik Choudhury, Priyanka Ghosh Roy and Radha Krishna. The music is scored by Kisaloy Roy and the sound design is by Sujoy Das. PNN



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

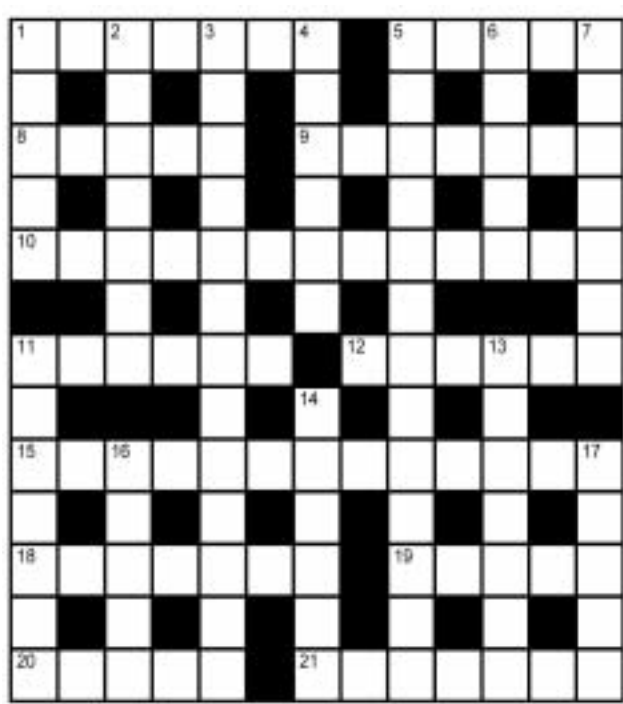


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Amaze
  - 5 Baby's ailment
  - 8 Sluggish
  - 9 Some flights
  - 10 Lacking smarts
  - 11 Fisherman
  - 12 Hyde's alter-ego
  - 15 Angler's need (7,6)
  - 18 Virtuosity
  - 19 Golf clubs
  - 20 Eagle's nest
  - 21 Danced latin-style
- Down**
- 1 Goodbye
  - 2 Swarming
  - 3 Breaking news (2-2-3-6)
  - 4 Swing gently from above
  - 5 Thoughtfulness
  - 6 Metric unit
  - 7 Government building
  - 11 Cordial
  - 13 Beatle wife (4,3)
  - 14 Dismayed
  - 16 Ringo is one
  - 17 Alleviated

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.

							1	
7					1	9		
	5				3	7		6
		2		5				
5			1	4	9			
	3			7				1
			2				7	
	9	3				5		
				4			3	

SOLUTIONS

U	S	A	P	B	A
I	N	F	R	M	I
B	L	U	O	U	G
B	O	I	L	S	O
E	T	C	H	I	N
G	R	I	P	E	F
E	A	B	O	T	E
A	B	O	T	E	C
A	F	L	A	M	E
F	R	R	N	L	E

CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

9	6	8	4	7	3	1	5	2
2	4	7	1	6	5	9	3	8
1	5	3	2	9	8	6	7	4
7	1	9	3	2	4	5	8	6
6	8	2	9	5	7	3	4	1
4	3	5	8	1	6	7	2	9
8	9	6	7	3	2	4	1	5
3	2	1	5	4	9	8	6	7
5	7	4	6	8	1	2	9	3

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# Cabinet nod to ₹1,138cr drinking water projects



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** The state Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik digitally from Japan, Sunday approved over ₹1,138.31 crore for execution of 11 piped water projects that are expected to benefit around 7 lakh people in four districts.

Briefing media, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena said the projects, which would be funded under Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), are scheduled for completion within 24 months.

The Cabinet has approved the tender of M/s Larsen and Toubro Limited, Chennai, of ₹479.50 crore for execution of three mega water supply projects in Koraput and Nabarangpur.

"Around 2,46,340 people in Lamtaput, Koraput and Dabugaon

The Cabinet has approved the tender of M/s Larsen and Toubro Limited, Chennai, of ₹479.50 crore for execution of three mega water supply projects in Koraput and Nabarangpur

Around 2,46,340 people in Lamtaput, Koraput and Dabugaon blocks of Koraput and Jharigam block of Nabarangpur would be benefitted on the completion of the projects," Jena said.

He said the tender of M/s Dineshchandra R Agarwal Infracore Pvt Ltd and Bhugan Infracore Pvt Ltd, Ahmedabad, of ₹153.51 crore for the execution of rural piped



## BUDDING ARTISTS

Children during a drawing competition aimed at spreading awareness on Hepatitis B at Kala Vikash Kendra in Cuttack, Sunday

## ‘Golden Hour’ drive launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Kalinga Gourav trust launched ‘Golden Hour’ drive, an awareness campaign to inform public regarding the importance of taking life-saving measures during accidents, particularly within the first hour of the incident, at Utkal Mandap in Bhubaneswar Sunday.

The launch event featured a range of activities and initiatives, including the introduction of the Golden Hour Hero Privilege Card, Golden Hour Accident Kit, Golden Hour Song, Golden Hour Brand Ambassadors Awards and Golden Hour Hero Awards. The event also honoured women who have excelled in various fields through the ‘I Woman of Substance Award 2023’.

water supply project in Cuttack also got the Cabinet's nod.

"The project would benefit 1,47,542 people of 149 villages under 23 gram panchayats of Tangi-Chowdwar of Cuttack," the Chief Secretary said.

The Naveen-led Cabinet approved the tender of M/s Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited, Hyderabad of ₹205.31 crore for execution of three projects in Tureikela, Bangomunda and Muribahal blocks of Bolangir. The tender of M/s NCC Limited, Hyderabad of ₹299.99 crore for the execution of four drinking water projects in Puintala, Agalpur, Loisingha and Deogarh blocks of Bolangir.

The projects would benefit over three lakh people in 361 villages of eight blocks, the Chief Secretary said.

**₹313.61 crore for FPOs**

The state Cabinet Sunday approved ₹313.61 crore towards Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) for five years – 2023-24 to 2027-28.

The state sector scheme has been introduced to support over 1,000 FPOs reaching at least 3 lakh farmers in five years. "The initiative will help farmers obtain remunerative price of their produce with an additional incremental income at the end of first implementation year of the scheme," the Chief Secretary said.

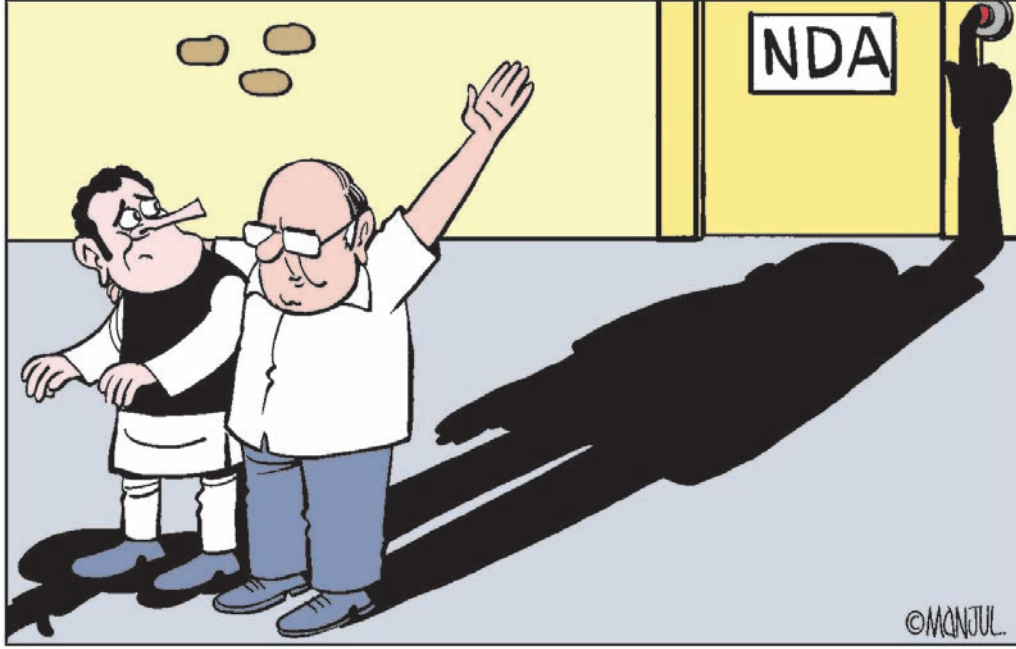
# RD Univ wall caves in; shoddy work alleged

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** A 100-ft long boundary wall surrounding the Rama Devi Women's University that was constructed a couple of months back before the President's visit, collapsed Sunday morning. However, no injuries were reported part of the boundary wall facing Janpath collapsed.

University Vice-Chancellor Aparajita Chowdhury said the waste water from nearby vending zones is passing through the drain which has led to weakening of the boundary wall. "We had written to the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and Smart City officials earlier urging them to look

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



into the matter and sought change of the drainage course. We had instructed the in-charge personnel to use pillars during construction," said Chowdhury.

The college authorities have said

they had informed the BMC about the incident of seepage of water from the walls but the civic body cold-shouldered it.

It was alleged that the boundary wall collapsed due to substandard

work as it was constructed and beautified in a haphazard manner in view of President Droupadi Murmu's visit to the university – her alma mater.

Jeevan Rout, local corporator said, "We are thankful to God that no student was near the boundary wall. The students are unsafe there. It is less than three months since the boundary wall was constructed and such an incident happened."

As per reports, the boundary wall which was constructed at the cost of ₹70 lakh was constructed on the old boundary wall without necessary support.

The university was preparing to celebrate Basant Utsav April 10 when the incident occurred.



BUSINESS EXPO: Huge footfall witnessed on the concluding day of Baishakhi Baniya Mela being held at Baliyatra ground in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

# BJP demands white paper on migration

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** The BJD got richer while ruling Odisha, but the common people became poorer because of 'which they have to go outside the state to work as labourers, the BJP alleged Sunday, demanding a white paper on migration.

Citing an ADR report which showed that the BJD recorded the second-highest income among regional parties at ₹307 crore, BJP general secretary Lekhashree Samantasinghar said the ruling party of the state has become richer, but made the people of the state poorer during its 23 years' rule.

Odisha is a rich state as it has huge mineral deposits and natural resources, but the local people were not engaged to unlock the potential of these resources, she said.

Noting that the people of Odisha are forced to migrate to different states in search of work, Samantasinghar claimed that at

least 10 migrant labourers have died under unusual circumstances in the last three months.

"The ruling party and the state government are insensitive towards the plight of migrant labourers," she alleged.

She alleged that the state government was deliberately not keeping a record of migrant workers.

BJD also reported the highest increase in its income at ₹233.941 crore, according to the report released Saturday. BJD vice-president Debi Mishra said it was a sign of transparency.

Money plays a big role in electioneering at present, and it is often alleged that political parties are spending money in the wrong ways but the BJD is transparent in that manner; he told PTL. 10 regional parties, including the DMK, BJD, YSR Congress, JDU and the AAP, have declared receiving ₹352.88 crore donations through electoral bonds in 2021-22.

# Cov wave looms as immunity wanes: WHO SE Asia Chief

*Decreasing levels of immunity in population may trigger new Covid waves and to tackle this, India needs a strong disease surveillance along with high vaccine coverage, WHO Regional Director, South-East Asia, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh has stressed. India is currently seeing a surge in Covid cases, to levels last seen during the Omicron wave in early 2022. India Saturday recorded 6,155 fresh Covid-19 infections, according to the Health Ministry data. Speaking to IANS, Singh stressed the need for people to take booster vaccine doses and follow Covid-appropriate behaviour to tackle the surge in infections. Excerpts from the interview:*

■ **Are we going to see a new Covid wave, even as India is currently seeing the highest surge in infections?**

■ Over the past six months, we have been seeing surges in infection in some countries that have not been associated with a rapid increase in the need for hospitalisation, intensive care, or an increase in fatalities. As the virus continues to circulate and evolve, we will

continue to see waves of infections. While these waves are not likely to be as large as before as we have population-level immunity that has increased around the world from vaccination and prior infection, we should, by no means, downplay the threat from Covid-19 and become complacent. We must reduce risk to ourselves and to others from Covid-19. We can also expect new waves of infection as our immunity wanes. We can contain

the impact of this with strong disease surveillance, high vaccine coverage, and making our health systems more resilient.

We also need to strengthen our capacity to track the virus and urgently address any gaps in the health systems. As we continue to do all this, we need to transition to long-term control of Covid-19 and other respiratory diseases.

■ **Adoption of the second and third doses of Covid vaccines in India has been very less, compared to the first dose. What is your take?**

■ Vaccination is an important tool in our fight against Covid to prevent severe disease and death. Even in communities that have experienced high Covid-19 infection rates, vaccination and boosters provide an additional layer of protection against the future trajectory of the disease. India has already administered more than 2.2 billion doses to date, an impressive feat given the size of the country. While the vaccine rollout started at a slow pace, it picked up speed with the country

crossing a billion doses in October 2021 and crossing the two billion mark in a record 18 months in July 2022. In April 2022, India also rolled out booster doses in a phased manner for those who had completed their primary series, with a focus on the elderly, those with underlying medical conditions, and front-line workers which was gradually expanded. While vaccine coverage and prior infections has provided population level immunity globally, the effectiveness of vaccines wanes over time and it is important that the primary series should be followed by additional booster doses, especially to those at the highest risk from severe disease and death.

■ **How can we tackle the rising infections?**

■ We should isolate if we have a fever or symptoms and follow medical advice. Even individuals without infection must continue to follow protective measures to reduce transmission which include maintaining safe distance, practising good hand and respiratory hygiene, wearing well-fitting masks, and

avoiding crowded and poorly ventilated places, where possible. Booster doses provide additional protection against infection and severe disease beyond the primary series. Persons at high risk of developing severe Covid-19 disease should continue to be prioritised for the booster dose.

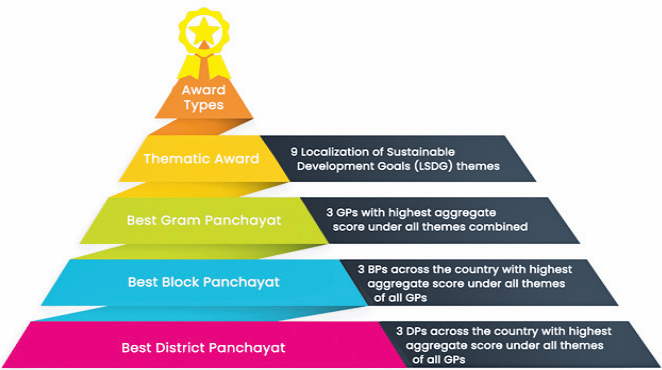
■ **Should children under 11 years of age be vaccinated?**

■ Children and adolescents are generally at low risk of infection and in case they do get infected; it is likely to be a mild disease in most instances. However, children and adolescents with co-morbidities or obesity are at a higher risk and must be vaccinated and should receive primary series vaccination and one booster dose. Vaccination of healthy children and adolescents could be considered by individual countries based on disease burden, and other health or programmatic priorities and opportunity costs. Achieving high vaccination coverage with primary series and boosters in the at-risk population groups remains a priority.



# State bags 8 National Panchayat Awards

PRESIDENT DROUPADI MURMU WILL PRESENT THE AWARDS AT VIGYAN BHAWAN IN NEW DELHI APRIL 17



AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** Odisha has been chosen for eight awards under National Panchayat Awards 2022 which is amongst the highest for a state.

President Droupadi Murmu will present the awards at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi April 17.

Ganjam Zilla Parishad as well as Hinjilicut block secured the first rank in the country on the basis of the performance of respective Gram Panchayats of the district and the performance of all the panchayats of the block

Both were awarded under the category 'Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikash Puraskar'.

In addition, six other GPs have

also receive Rs 50-75 lakh cash prizes.

The award scheme was instituted by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj, to recognise the good work being done by Panchayati Raj Institutions as well as to encourage them to perform better.

Under this scheme, 'National Panchayat Awards' are given to the best performing Panchayats (Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and GPs) in recognition of their good work for improving the delivery services and public goods focusing on nine identified themes under Localisation of SDGs LSDGs for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The Nine Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals themes are —Poverty free and enhanced livelihoods, Healthy, Child Friendly, Water Sufficient, Clean and Green Panchayat, Self-sufficient infrastructure, Socially Secured, Good governance, and Women-friendly.

In addition, Special Category Awards for Carbon Neutral and Gram Urja Swaraj Vishesh Panchayat Puraskar were also instituted.

The awards were finalised after a detailed evaluation based on 113 parameters under nine themes of LSDGs as well as field verification, said sources.

Ganjam Zilla Parishad as well as Hinjilicut block secured the first rank in the country on the basis of the performance of respective Gram Panchayats of the district and the performance of all the panchayats of the block

In addition, six other GPs have also won National Awards under various themes.

The awards carry cash prizes and accordingly Ganjam will receive ₹5 crore and Hinjilicut block will receive ₹2 crore. The GPs will also receive ₹50-75 lakh cash prizes

also won National Awards under various themes.

The awards carry cash prizes and accordingly Ganjam will receive Rs 5 crore and Hinjilicut block will receive Rs 2 crore. The GPs will



**SEEKING SECURITY:** Members of Odisha Government High School Contract Teacher's Association demonstrate near PMG Square demanding job regularisation in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## CP nabs fleeing convict from Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 9:** The Commissionerate Police Sunday arrested a convict who had escaped from the Biju Patnaik Open Air Ashram at Jamujhari a few months ago. The convict, identified as Nabin Patra alias Bhuri, 32, is a resident of Bangurkola village under Hemgiri police limits of Sundargarh district.

The convict, along with other inmates, December 23, 2022, had gone outside the Ashram for morn-



ing walk. While other inmates returned to the Ashram after the walk, two prisoners including Patra sneaked away taking advantage of the situation.

On the basis of a complaint lodged by the Ashram Superintendent Saroj Kumar Biswal the Chandaka police registered a case (313/22) and launched manhunt to arrest the two convicts.

The police received a vital input from reliable sources regarding the whereabouts of Patra April 7, 2023. Following the intelligence, a

team of Chandaka police, with the help of Sundargarh police, arrested him from his hideout in Lephripara area.

Patra was produced before a local court here Sunday that later sent him to judicial custody.

Notably, the convict was awarded life imprisonment in connection with a murder case several years ago. While serving his term in a jail in Sundargarh, his good behaviour caught the attention of the jail authorities who later shifted him to the Open Air Ashram in 2021.

### Sometimes, science...

Initially, topics pertaining to climate change and monsoon were covered in which Mahajan had the expertise, but later it was realised that people had interests in a wider range of subjects related to mathematics, biology physics, and organic chemistry. "We then started conducting sessions on topics ranging from mathematics, artificial intelligence, organic chemistry, climate change, the science of food, science of machine learning, the universe, and many more," said

Mahajan.

So far, 30 sessions on varied topics have been conducted in which the experts in each respective domain were invited to discuss the subjects, he said.

"On April 23, we have organised the 'Science on Tap' session on an interesting subject - The Science of Colour - in which the thrust would be on how we perceive certain colours, if animals look at colours the same way humans do, and how these colours have evolved," Mahajan added.

### Continued from P1

#### Govt to set up...

The new directorate will also enlist organisations involved in furthering the cause of cultural heritage of Odisha. It will enlist the Jagannath temples located in different parts of India and other parts of the world.

It will promote the cultural heritage of Odisha, celebration of 'Odisha Dibasa', organising World Odia Conferences at regular intervals in association with Odia scholars, creative

writers living in different parts of the world. The directorate will bring out selected Odia works in other languages of India and important languages of the world.

In order to promote Odia economic and skill networking to harness investment opportunities in Odisha and job opportunities for Odia people, the directorate will work, he said, adding that the directorate will

reach out to NROs in distress and provide possible support.

The directorate will develop a dedicated portal titled Paribarthe portal for Pravasi Odias-Connecting the roots.

The advisory council of the directorate will be headed by the Chief Minister and executive committee will be headed by the Chief Secretary with members from various departments of the state government.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit before the Executive Magistrate, Bissamcuttack, I Sri T. Santosh Kumar, S/o. Late K. Thankappa aged about 46 years, of Village/ Post/PS: Berhampur, Dist. Ganjam now resides at Bissamcuttack, Dist. Rayagada, Odisha on behalf of Rishabh Mining Pvt. Ltd. do hereby solemnly affirm and state that I am the deponent as such well acquainted with the facts of this affidavit. That I am serving as The Manager of Rishabh Mining Private Limited, mining site situated at Plot No. 1. Village Tediligura, Tah:Bissamcuttack, Dist. Rayagada. That all the documents regarding the Decorative Stone Mine has been Accorded Environment Clearances Vide Letter No. 4108/SEIAA, Dated. 15.02.2018 And Copies of EC Letter is available with SEIAA, ODISHA and on the website of The Odisha State Pollution Control Board. That the facts stated above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

T. Santosh Kumar



**COMMITTED SERVICE:** Dignitaries including Jagannath Hospital MD doctor Arijit Mohapatra (second from right) pose for a picture during the hospital's annual day celebration at a hotel in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

## Do awards really help solve climate change problems?

Every year, tens of billions of dollars are spent by universities, research institutes and private companies to develop solutions for climate change.

Yet when a government decides to fund research for a piece of technology or branch of science, it rarely makes news.

In recent years, high-profile climate solutions prizes have started to buck that trend. These prizes are often awarded to innovators or researchers who are proposing solutions to the many problems facing the planet.

Compared to traditional funding pathways, the amounts are relatively small – in the thousands or sometimes millions of dollars –

and they are often backed by billionaires and celebrities.

In an episode of The Conversation Weekly podcast, the host spoke with three researchers who study how climate research is funded to find out whether the pomp and circumstance of these prizes outweighs the actual research they fund, or whether they actually play an important role in the larger effort to find climate solutions.

Climate innovation prizes often work like a competition or a bounty. Someone, usually a rich benefactor, will offer a sum of money to the first person who can accomplish a particular goal or solve a certain problem, and people will compete for the pot of money.



The first innovation prize was announced almost 300 years ago, explains David Reiner, a professor of technology policy at the University of Cambridge in the UK.

In the 1700s, sailors were easily able to measure their latitude using stars, but tracking one's position east to west required accurate time-keeping.

"So a prize was launched by

British Parliament offering 20,000 pounds," says Reiner. "They were trying to find a clock that would be viable on a ship."

This prize, roughly equivalent to a million and a half British pounds today, triggered a number of inventions that eventually led to the invention of the marine chronometer. The accurate timekeeping device revolutionized navigation at sea.

The nature of research funding has changed dramatically since the 1700s, as Abbas Abdul, a research fellow who studies science policy at the University of Sussex in the UK, explains.

He says the kind of work that gets funded today is "interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and cross-dis-

ciplinary research" and often done at large, Western universities.

Climate prizes can "fill in the gaps of this research," in particular with regard to climate adaptation, says Abdul. One of the reasons they are good at that is that climate prizes are often awarded to researchers or inventors in the global south who are outside of traditional funding systems.

Climate innovation prizes are not without their controversy, though. They are often bankrolled by the extremely wealthy and are announced at extravagant awards ceremonies hosted by celebrities who fly in for the occasion.

These are far from carbon neutral events. But according to Mark

Maslin, a professor of earth systems science at University College London in the UK, the entertainment is part of the value.

Maslin was hired by the BBC to fact-check their broadcast of the Earthshot Prize awards ceremony in 2022.

According Maslin, that's a good thing. "It is little bit of razzmatazz, and it basically says 'Guess what? Solving climate change is cool.' And this is something that hasn't actually happened until very recently."

Maslin believes that getting hopeful messages about climate solutions into popular media can help inspire people to action and that climate prizes are an excellent way to do just that.

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# Officers posted through UPSC are dacoits: Tudu



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Balasure, April 9:** Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Bishweswar Tudu has courted controversy by claiming that many of the officers appointed through Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) are dacoits.

A chicken thief can be punished but the mineral mafia cannot as the system protects them, the Union minister of state for tribal affairs and Jal Shakti alleged while addressing as the chief guest in the golden jubilee function of a government school at Baliapal in Balasure district Saturday.

He was heard making that controversial statement in a video which was shared on social net-

working sites. The authenticity of the video was not checked by PTI.

"I had an idea that those who are appointed through UPSC are the most knowledgeable persons and are always in high positions. But now I feel that most of those who have qualified from there perhaps are dacoits. I do not say 100 per cent, but many of them are dacoits," Tudu said.

The UPSC is the country's premier central recruitment agency that appoints top government officers.

The minister, who is an MP of Odisha, said that the UPSC office is just behind his residence in Delhi and initially he had high regard for it but that has changed now.

During his speech, Tudu also asked: "Why our society is engulfed in corruption and injustice if such educated people are there?".

Giving the reply to his own question, Tudu said, "It is because of lack of morality in our education system. Lack of spiritual education and thoughts among us."

The minister had in 2021 accused state government officials of misbehaving with him in his constituency in Mayurbhanj.



**MATTER OF FAITH:** Devotees performed *Dhuli Danda* as part of rituals for penance and austerity during 'Panchudanda Mahamilan Yatra' held at Sandhinuapalli village under Aska block in Ganjam district, Sunday

## POVERTY AMID PLENTY

# Malnutrition grips Joda kids

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, April 9:** Blessed with abundant natural resources, Keonjhar district could have been boasting of robust economic growth along with better social indicators. However, the stark reality is that the children under Joda block here are malnourished as they feed on boiled mohua and tamarind seeds.

According to sources, more than 30 children of Sargitalia area under this block in mineral rich Keonjhar district are in the grip of malnutrition as the benefits of the Union and state government schemes have failed to reach the locals.

The matter came to the fore after a medical team conducted a check-up of the afflicted children and admitted two of them to the nutritional rehabilitation centre (NRC) in Barbil.

A team member, Ramani Ranjan Patra, rejected the death of two children which occurred last Wednesday and Friday due to malnutrition. He said that the two children perished due to pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Sources said the residents of Sargitalia area under ward no-13 of Joda Municipality in Keonjhar district are all poor due to lack of livelihood opportunities. They are living a helpless life and are unable to arrange two square meals a day. They have to consume boiled mohua, tamarind seeds and forest produce due to lack of nutritious food. As a result, over 30 children have reportedly been afflicted with malnutrition.

Sargitalia area is surrounded by various mines and geographically it is the largest ward under Joda Municipality. The Surisahi, Latarsahi and Chitansahi localities in Sargitalia are some of the places where basic facilities still



OP PHOTO

OVER 300 PEOPLE FROM TRIBAL COMMUNITY RESIDE IN SARGITALIA AREA WHICH IS ABUZZ WITH ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES LIKE MINING, AND TRANSPORTATION OF MINERALS THROUGH A RAILWAY SIDING AND TRUCKS. HOWEVER, THE LOCALS ARE JOBLESS.

THEY COLLECT MINOR FOREST PRODUCE LIKE TOOTH STICKS, SAL LEAVES, MANGOES, WILD BERRIES AND FIREWOOD AND SELL THEM IN THE LOCAL MARKET TO EARN A LIVING

elude the residents.

As per the electoral roll, over 300 people from tribal community reside in the area which is abuzz with economic activities like mining, and transportation of minerals through a railway siding and trucks. However, the locals are jobless.

They collect minor forest produce like tooth sticks, sal leaves, mangoes, wild berries and firewood and sell them in the local market to earn a living.

They get rice under the government scheme but that falls short to feed their entire family. Left with no option, they consume boiled mohua, tamarind seeds, wild tubers, sal seeds and a kind of wild ants as food, locals Sonu Munda, Tamba Munda and Guru Charan Munda alleged.

Their children also eat the same food for which they are down with malnutrition.

Kailash Munda of the area alleged that his three-year-old daughter Shalini Munda fell sick and became anaemic as he could not provide her with nutritious food. Initially, he admitted Shalini to Tata Hospital in Joda and later shifted her to Keonjhar district headquarters hospital before shifting her to Sishu Bhawan in Cuttack. She, however, failed to recover and succumbed to her illness.

He said that he did not received any financial assistance from the state government during treatment in Cuttack and only received Rs 200 from the district mineral foundation which he was spending

to meet his daily expenses.

Sudura Munda, an elderly tribal, said that the responsibility of his three grandchildren befall on him after the death of his son. The children eat only once in a day and remain starved at night as the rice supplied to him falls short for the whole family.

Tribals Julu Munda, Sudan Munda and Sonu Munda alleged that over 30 children have become feeble and sick due to lack of adequate food to eat and medical care.

They alleged that there is an Anganwadi centre at Khuntapani, about 3 km from Sargitalia. However, it is of no use as the children do not get healthcare and study facilities at the centre. Consequently, the children do odd jobs to earn a living.

They also alleged that Baitarani river flows near Sargitalia but they do not get safe drinking water, while a tube well in the area has become defunct. Moreover, the area witnesses regular power outage due to elephant protection plan.

A social activist Churchill Mahakur is spending from his own pocket to renovate a defunct well and supply water to the residents. Tata Steel has installed a motor pump in the area for supply of drinking water to the residents. However, frequent power cuts have made it redundant.

In a bid to make the people self-reliant, Joda Municipality authorities are constructing a park near Baitarani river bank. However, construction of the park is only halfway through due to lack of coordination between the Forest department and the civic body authorities.

Joda Municipality chairman Jagdish Prasad Patra said that steps will be taken to complete the park soon.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur/Korei, April 9:** Rice mills in Jajpur district have turned out to be the bane of the local environment as they are discharging toxic water into open spaces, a report said.

The discharge of toxic effluents is assuming alarming proportions by the day as the rice mills have not installed effluent treatment plants on their premises. The toxic water discharged overflows on the ground and pollutes the groundwater, atmosphere and soil in their respective areas.

The matter came to the fore after residents of Muluri mouza under Patharpada panchayat of Korei block lodged a complaint against Ashirbad Rice Mill in their area with the regional officer of State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) at Kalinganagar.

They alleged that the rice mill is discharging toxic water after 10pm on a regular basis. The toxic water flows down into nearby ponds and water bodies through a nullah. The pollution of the water bodies has affected the livestock and farmers in the area.

Kailash Kabi, a villager, alleged that he had dug up a fishery pond on his farmland after taking loan from a bank. However, the whole lot of fish died after the toxic water discharged from the rice mill entered the pond.

This has pushed him to the brink as he ponders over repayment of the loan after suffering loss. Kabi is not the lone person to have incurred losses, but villagers Akshaya Samal, Madanmohan Jena, Golakh Dhal, Alok Behera, Prakash Mallick and Satish Dhal have also lodged complaints against the rice mill with the SPCB.

The toxic water is also destroy-



The discharge of toxic effluents is assuming alarming proportions as the rice mills have not installed effluent treatment plants on their premises

ing the fertility of the farmlands after it overflows on them. They demanded a permanent solution to the problem and warned to take to the streets if their demands are not met at the earliest.

Reports said that in 2009, the Orissa High Court, citing that the discharge of toxic water is violating the Section 33(A) of Air and Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act-1981, had made it mandatory for rice mills to install effluent treatment plants on their premises. The HC had even directed to close down the rice mills that are not installing ETPs in their premises. After the court order, various rice mills in Jajpur district installed ETPs in their premises. The rice mills were also directed to renew and upgrade the ETPs subsequently.

However, some old rice mills in

Panikoli and Barchana areas were alleged to have not renewed their ETPs. Irregularities were even alleged in construction of ETP and sanction of plans. It was alleged that some rice mills have installed sub-standard ETPs and are discharging toxic water in a separate channel outside the ETP.

Sources said that the rice mills use 1 lakh litre of water daily to soak the paddy out of which 15 per cent of the water gets soaked but the remaining is discharged outside.

This waste water destroys the fertility of the soil when it overflows on land and also contributes to air and water pollution. People are being afflicted by various ailments after coming in contact with the water. The livestock are also affected.

Aware of its ill effects, the SPCB has issued guidelines for proper management of the toxic water. However, the rice mills are blatantly violating these norms and discharging toxic water outside.

When contacted, SPCB's Kalinganagar regional officer said that action will be taken against erring rice mills after conducting a probe into the charges. Ashirbad Rice Mill manager Babula Das rejected the charges and termed the allegations as false.

## Fake currency racket busted in Baripada

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, April 9:** Baripada police busted an Indian fake currency note racket during the investigation into an FIR lodged over a missing person related to this incident, a source said Sunday.

According to the source, police arrested seven persons in connection with the fake note racket and booked three in connection with the kidnapping case.

A senior police official said that a man and his wife were the main suspect in the fake note racket. They allegedly lured people into a return of Rs 10 lakh – which were fake currency notes – against a deposit of Rs 3 lakh.

According to police, the couple was operating the racket with some other agents. They were circulating fake notes in Mayurbhanj, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

However, one of their agents named Gajendra Behera was detained by some locals after they discovered the fake notes. Later, Gajendra's father lodged an FIR on allegations of kidnapping, said the source. During the probe, police discovered the fake currency note racket and detained seven persons in this connection, the police source said.



**ENGINEERING EXPO:** Guests going around an exhibition held on the occasion of annual function titled 'Spectrum' of electrical and electronics department of Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology, Burla in Sambalpur, Sunday

## 3 held for supplying 1,740 ltr illegal spirit

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, April 9:** An excise team Sunday arrested three people in this city for transporting 1,740 litres of illicit spirit. The excise sleuths raided two places and seized 3,768 spirit bottles reportedly kept to be used in the making of fake liquor.

Acting on a tip-off, the excise

team led by Deputy Superintendent Kuber Sethi recovered 40 litres of unauthorised spirit from a scooter rider and arrested Sibashis Dakua of Bhanja Vihar area. The accused admitted that the spirit would have been used in the making of adulterated liquor.

Acting on the accused's statement, the team carried out another raid and seized 157 cartons

of spirit and a van amounting to Rs 10 lakh, said Sethi. A case (16/23-24) has been registered with the arrest of accused Dakua. Later, police arrested Shankar and Sanjib and filed another case (17/23-24) at the police station. Other officers including Inspector Geetanjali Sahoo and ASI Sushant Mahakud were also present during the raid.

## Tiger kills woman, 19 livestock in a month

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nuapada, April 9:** With the death of another cow reported Saturday from Chulabhat village under Nuapada Sadar forest range, the tiger on the prowl reportedly has claimed the life of an elderly woman and as many as 19 cattle within a span of one month.

A fearful atmosphere has gripped the area, with the local residents fearing to venture out of homes after sunset.

The latest victim of tiger attack was Gobardhan Majhi's cow, which had gone to the forest for grazing and did not return in the evening. Later, the family members searched for the cow nearby and failed to find it. Some Mahua flower collectors spotted its carcass near a stream in the same village. On being informed, Nuapada forest range officials later arrived at the spot and buried the dead cow after conducting a post-mortem.

Reports said, forest officials do not enter into Sunabeda wildlife sanctuary which spreads across Komana, Boden and Nuapada blocks as Maoists are mostly active



REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

in the region throughout the year. On the other hand, rampant deforestation by timber mafia is forcing tigers and leopards to enter human settlements triggering man-animal conflicts.

The tiger has been on the prowl in the area for the past few weeks. It is attacking cattle and occasionally venturing into human settlements. Despite the Forest department's efforts to capture it, the big cat has managed to evade all attempts so far.

The incident has once again brought to the forefront the issue of human-wildlife conflict and the need for effective measures to mitigate such incidents.

As the search for the tiger continues, the villagers in the affected areas remain in fear and uncertainty, hoping for a swift resolution to the crisis.

## MAN HELD FOR RAPING MINOR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Gopalpur, April 9:** Police Sunday arrested a man on charge of raping a 12-year-old girl inside his shop under Golanthara police limits in Ganjam district.

The accused was identified as Jairam Sahu, 50. Medical examination was conducted on the accused and the survivor before the former was produced in the court. The survivor also recorded her statement under Section-164 of CrPC before the magistrate, Golanthara IIC Bibekenanda Mohanta said.


Police said that the accused runs a shop at a village under this police limits. The incident occurred when the minor had gone to buy biscuits from his shop, April 2. Sahu lured the girl and asked her to come inside the shop. There he raped the girl and warned her not to divulge the matter before others.

The matter came to the fore after the girl narrated her ordeal before her mother. Family members lodged a complaint at the police station. Police picked up Sahu from his house Saturday night and arrested him Sunday.



True knowledge is not attained by thinking. It is what you are; it is what you become.

SRI AUROBINDO



# Post-Human Desert

The Future of Life Institute’s open letter demanding a six-month precautionary pause on artificial-intelligence development has already been signed by thousands of high-profile figures, including Elon Musk. The signatories worry that AI labs are “locked in an out-of-control race” to develop and deploy increasingly powerful systems that no one – including their creators – can understand, predict, or control.

What explains this outburst of panic among a certain cohort of elites? Control and regulation are obviously at the center of the story, but whose? During the proposed half-year pause when humanity can take stock of the risks, who will stand for humanity? Since AI labs in China and Russia will continue their work (perhaps in secret), a global public debate on the issue is inconceivable.

Still, we should consider what is at stake, here. In his 2015 book, Homo Deus, the historian Yuval Harari predicted that the most likely outcome of AI would be a radical division – much stronger than the class divide – within human society. Soon enough, biotechnology and computer algorithms will join their powers in producing “bodies, brains, and minds,” resulting in a widening gap “between those who know how to engineer bodies and brains and those who do not.” In such a world, “those who ride the train of progress will acquire divine abilities of creation and destruction, while those left behind will face extinction.”

The panic reflected in the AI letter stems from the fear that even those who are on the “train of progress” will be unable to steer it. Our current digital feudal masters are scared. What they want, however, is not public debate, but rather an agreement among governments and tech corporations to keep power where it belongs.

A massive expansion of AI capabilities is a serious threat to those in power – including those who develop, own, and control AI. It points to nothing less than the end of capitalism as we know it, manifest in the prospect of a self-reproducing AI system that will need less and less input from human agents (algorithmic market trading is merely the first step in this direction). The choice left to us will be between a new form of communism and uncontrollable chaos.

The new chatbots will offer many lonely (or not so lonely) people endless evenings of friendly dialogue about movies, books, cooking, or politics. To reuse an old metaphor of mine, what people will get is the AI version of decaffeinated coffee or sugar-free soda: a friendly neighbour with no skeletons in its closet, an Other that will simply accommodate itself to your own needs. There is a structure of fetishist disavowal here: “I know very well that I am not talking to a real person, but it feels as though I am – and without any of the accompanying risks!”

In any case, a close examination of the AI letter shows it to be yet another attempt at prohibiting the impossible. This is an old paradox: it is impossible for us, as humans, to participate in a post-human future, so we must prohibit its development. To orient ourselves around these technologies, we should ask Lenin’s old question: Freedom for whom to do what? In what sense were we free before? Were we not already controlled much more than we realised? Instead of complaining about the threat to our freedom and dignity in the future, perhaps we should first consider what freedom means now. Until we do this, we will act like hysterics who, according to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, are desperate for a master, but only one that we can dominate.

The futurist Ray Kurzweil predicts that, owing to the exponential nature of technological progress, we will soon be dealing with “spiritual” machines that will not only display all the signs of self-awareness but also far surpass human intelligence. But one should not confuse this “post-human” stance for the paradigmatically modern preoccupation with achieving total technological domination over nature. What we are witnessing, instead, is a dialectical reversal of this process.

Today’s “post-human” sciences are no longer about domination. Their credo is surprise: what kind of contingent, unplanned emergent properties might “black-box” AI models acquire for themselves? No one knows, and therein lies the thrill – or, indeed, the banality – of the entire enterprise.

Hence, earlier this century, the French philosopher-engineer Jean-Pierre Dupuy discerned in the new robotics, genetics, nanotechnology, artificial life, and AI a strange inversion of the traditional anthropocentric arrogance that technology enables:

“How are we to explain that science became such a ‘risky’ activity that, according to some top scientists, it poses today the principal threat to the survival of humanity? Some philosophers reply to this question by saying that Descartes’ dream – ‘to become master and possessor of nature’ – has turned wrong, and that we should urgently return to the ‘mastery of mastery.’ They have understood nothing. They don’t see that the technology profiling itself at our horizon through ‘convergence’ of all disciplines aims precisely at nonmastery. The engineer of tomorrow will not be a sorcerer’s apprentice because of his negligence or ignorance, but by choice.”

Humanity is creating its own god or devil. While the outcome cannot be predicted, one thing is certain. If something resembling “post-humanity” emerges as a collective fact, our worldview will lose all three of its defining, overlapping subjects: humanity, nature, and divinity.

Our identity as humans can exist only against the background of impenetrable nature, but if life becomes something that can be fully manipulated by technology, it will lose its “natural” character. A fully controlled existence is one bereft of meaning, not to mention serendipity and wonder.

The same, of course, holds for any sense of the divine. The human experience of “god” has meaning only from the standpoint of human finitude and mortality. Once we become homo deus and create properties that seem “supernatural” from our old human standpoint, “gods” as we knew them will disappear. The question is what, if anything, will be left. Will we worship the AIs that we created?

There is every reason to worry that tech-gnostic visions of a post-human world are ideological fantasies obfuscating the abyss that awaits us. Needless to say, it would take more than a six-month pause to ensure that humans do not become irrelevant, and their lives meaningless, in the not-too-distant future.

The writer is Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School.

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## WISDOM CORNER

The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential... these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence.

CONFUCIUS

There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success.

PABLO PICASSO

## FOCUS REPO RATE

# A TIMELY PAUSE



Satya Narayan Misra

FISCAL POLICY AND MONETARY POLICY ARE LIKE TWO WHEELS OF A COUNTRY’S ECONOMIC CHARIOT

After seven successive increases in repo rates since May 2022 with a 250 bps hike, the MPC has finally pushed the pause button and retained the repo rate at 6.5%. The increases in the past were basically to tame inflation which has been exceeding the 6% tolerance limit, which was agreed to by the MoF and RBI while amending the RBI Act 1934 in 2016. The primary objective of amending the Act was to maintain price stability (inflation in the range of 4-6%) while keeping in mind the objective of growth. The RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das reiterated this policy leitmotif by observing: “We must remain unwavering in our commitment to bring down inflation towards a target of 5.4% over the medium-term while being mindful of growth.” India has been following the US Fed in this regard which has increased the benchmark rate to 3.25% as the USA has been witnessing double-digit inflation due to the cash stimulus infused by the government to revive the slump in demand during the pandemic.

While the MPC meeting on 6 April has been unanimous, in its previous meeting in February when four members voted for a hike of 25 bps, two outside members strongly dissented. Prof Ashima Goyal noted that excessive front loading of rate hikes carries the risk of overshooting. More so, when there are no signs of demand-pull inflation and core inflation moderating. Prof Jayanth Varma was far more critical when he noted: “In the second half of 2021-22 monetary policy was complacent about inflation, and we are paying the price for that in terms of unacceptably high inflation in 2022-23. In the second half of 2022-23, monetary policy has become complacent about growth and we may pay the price for this in terms of low growth in 2023-24.”



The pause button must now move into an accommodative stand which rules out repo rate hikes in the future

The trade-off between growth and inflation is indeed problematic. It was Jan Tinbergen, the Nobel laureate, who had famously said that ideally there should be one policy tool for each policy target; like the repo rate to combat inflation. It may recall that when Paul Volcker, the US Fed Governor applied this rule to increase the Fed rates to around 20% in the 70s to bring down inflation which was in two digits, inflation indeed came down drastically. But it also ushered in an economic recession in the USA.

George Santayana, the philosopher, famously observed: “Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.” The MPC must be complimented for not increasing the repo rates in view of the fact the GDP growth rate during 2023-24 is now being scaled down to around 6.3%-6.4% by IMF & RFI from their 7% earlier projected as the manufacturing sector is likely to grow by only 1.6% during 2022-23 as against a growth of 9.9% during 2021-22, as per the latest NSSO data. The unemployment rate has risen to 7.8% in March as per the

CMIE report. This does not include the vast pool of disguisedly employed in the agricultural sector and informal sector. In such a situation where capacity utilisation is quite low in most industries, adding to their cost by way of a high repo rate is inadvisable and the RBI seems to have gone wrong in going for successive rate hikes, after it set a reasonable repo rate of 4% in October 2020 to ease the cost pressure of MSMEs during the pandemic.

The RBI must be complimented for the way it acted in unison with the MoF to combat the unprecedented economic recession in 2020-21. When the FM announced a slew of fiscal stimulus in 2020 to revive various sectors of the economy including MSMEs by providing a 3 lakh cr window and collateral-free loans, the RBI promptly followed it up, bringing massive relief to MSMEs. The repo rate was also scaled down to 4%. It is often said that monetary policy has efficient brakes but weak accelerators. This is where appropriate fiscal policy comes as a more potent weapon. It was John Maynard

Keynes who had flagged the importance of creating more employment through public investment, which through the multiplier effect will take the economy out of the quagmire of economic depression. He was proved prescient when FDR through his New Deal Programs not only bailed the US economy out of depression but made the USA a fully employed global hegemon by 1944. The fiscal policy of India by bolstering in infrastructural spending to around 10 lakh crores in our budget of 2023-24 has a Keynesian and timely touch to it.

Fiscal policy and monetary policy are like two wheels of a country’s economic chariot. The RBI must come out of its ostrich-like approach of slaying inflation alone and be a complement to the progressive fiscal policy of India to boost growth, and employment and break the vicious cycle of likely recession. The pause button must now move into an accommodative stand which rules out repo rate hikes in the future. Prof Varma has also underscored the need to have an accommodative stand by the RBI. Prof Goyal & Prof Varma must be complimented for bringing to public discourse the need not to trade off growth at the altar of inflation control. It was Robert Taylor, who in 1992 formulated the famous Taylor rule as per which the apex banking institution should look at three parameters viz potential GDP vs actual GDP, desirable inflation vs actual, and an optimal repo rate to determine the repo rate. Alan Greenspan, the longest serving US Fed Governor, adopted this rule with considerable success, marrying growth, inflation, and interest rate adroitly. It’s time the RBI Governor and other MPC members took a hard look at the Taylor rule.

The writer teaches Macro Economics.

## SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

# Case for nature-based carbon markets



Giulio Boccaletti

THE ATMOSPHERE DOES NOT CARE ABOUT OUR MOTIVATIONS, COUNTERFACTUALS, OR MORAL HAZARDS. ALL IT SEES IS CARBON FLOWING IN AND OUT

Voluntary markets for carbon offsets have recently come under fire, with critics questioning the efficacy of contracts that aim to reduce atmospheric carbon dioxide relative to what would have happened in the contract’s absence. The biggest concerns are about “nature-based” projects involving various land-use changes – such as protecting forests, planting new ones (afforestation), and so forth.

But these instruments’ imperfections are no secret. For well over two decades, ecologists and foresters have been working to develop more sophisticated methods to satisfy economists’ faith in market instruments, and they have made good progress. Though offset schemes are still riddled with complexity, there is no question that they pay for something that matters.

Imagine seeing what the atmosphere sees. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Sixth Assessment Report provides an outline of the planet’s carbon cycle, which makes evident the fundamental role of plants’ conversion of CO2 into cellulose and back on a massive scale. Terrestrial photosynthesis alone draws down 113 billion tonnes of carbon every year. By comparison, humanity added about 11 billion tonnes of carbon to the atmosphere last year.

The problem, of course, is that humans’ cumulative contributions go in only one direction,

whereas the carbon captured by vegetation is normally balanced by an equal, opposite flow from plant respiration and degradation. By interfering with the climate system, we have thrown this balance off, adding a net flow of about 5.9 billion tonnes to the landscape and the ocean every year. In other words, the planet is drawing down only half of what we inject into the atmosphere.

Even a relatively small perturbation in this vast natural cycle can reach an enormous scale. That is why nature is such an attractive climate-mitigation option. Suppose we succeed in eliminating fossil-fuel combustion. Keeping global average temperatures within 1.5° or 2° Celsius of pre-industrial levels will still require substantial carbon removal. Estimates vary, but they are on the order of 200-300 billion tonnes removed by plants before 2100.

Nor will the story end there. The atmosphere contains about 870 billion tonnes of carbon in the form of CO2, and the carbon cycle connects that atmospheric stock to vast reservoirs. The largest is the ocean, which holds 900 billion tonnes at the surface and another 37 trillion tonnes deeper below. Terrestrial vegetation and soils also hold about 2.15 trillion tonnes, and permafrost contains another 1.2 trillion. As far as the atmosphere is concerned, losses from any of these reservoirs could easily exceed the carbon we burn. Far from being a secondary concern,

managing the stocks and flows of carbon through the planet’s ecosystems is essential to keeping the entire Earth system in balance. But to carry out that task, we will need to think differently about the landscape. Landscapes and seascapes are not just the backdrop to our life. They are public infrastructure, and like all infrastructure, they must be paid for and maintained.

Since the nineteenth century, however, we have known that paying for infrastructure by rewarding its marginal benefit almost never covers the total cost. Because public-utility infrastructure like a highway or an airport tends not to command a high enough marginal value, taxation must cover the rest. Whom to tax then becomes the most important question.

To illustrate the point, consider Brazil, whose ecosystems contain some 60 billion tonnes of carbon in above-ground biomass. One way to estimate how much this stock is worth is to assume that we value carbon at a given price, say, \$50 per tonne. In this scenario, Brazil is home to ecosystems worth \$10 trillion, which is over six times the country’s GDP and far greater than the value of its 13 billion barrels of oil reserves.

Now, how much should the world pay Brazil to keep that forest in trust for everyone? Assuming a 2% fee on the value of the assets, the country ought to receive \$200 billion per year. On those terms, Brazil would almost certainly put

a stop to deforestation in the Amazon.

But here we run into a sad truth. There is simply no evidence that the international community has any appetite to pay such sums. In 2022, total overseas direct assistance amounted to just \$186 billion. For years, rich countries have failed to honor a 2009 pledge of mobilising \$100 billion per year to help developing countries adapt to climate change.

By thinking of natural assets not as infrastructure but as service producers, we end up relying on the voluntary payments companies make at the margin in exchange for “offsetting” some other reduction that they cannot or will not carry out. But, for all this mechanism’s shortcomings, at least it directs some money – albeit a drop in the ocean – toward carbon-landscape management.

The atmosphere does not care about our motivations, counterfactuals, or moral hazards. All it sees is carbon flowing in and out. Ecosystems store carbon and draw it from the atmosphere at scales that matter. All of us – taxpayers, consumers, and companies – must pay for this critical public good.

The writer is an honorary research associate at the University of Oxford’s Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment.

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## Not hassle-free

Sir, The Parivahan Sarathi, a website owned and maintained by the Ministry of Road transport and Highways in order to provide online services to the citizens seeking the services for driving license and other vehicle related services has several flaws. The main objective of the online platform is to provide hassle-free services to the citizens, but the purpose isn’t served. For instance, the user is unable to upload all the mandatory documents required for a particular service. The provisions available in the drop-down box don’t possess the list of all the mandatory documents to select and upload. This leaves the document uploading process incomplete, thereby, causing hindrance to proceed to the next step. Thus, citizens are forced to visit the agents/ Regional Transport Offices (RTOs) that paves the way for corruption. The centralised helpline services either through voice call or e-mail are helpless and render no use, at most the caller is advised to contact local RTO. In the end, the common man is left with no option other than greasing the palms of the officials to get the services done. The concerned authorities need to pay attention to set right the issues which help the citizens.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

## Trump’s gimmicks

Sir, Of late, we find political leaders, particularly those in power terming any criminal charges filed against them as insult to their country equating and replicating them as the nation itself which they belong to. The latest to jump on to the above the bandwagon is Donald Trump against whom serious criminal charges were filed, tried on 34 felony counts in a dramatic hearing in New York, arrested and released on bail. Some of the grievous charges against Trump relate to hush money payments to a porn star to hide the crime just before the elections and for repeatedly and fraudulently falsifying New York business records to conceal criminal conduct that had damaging information, from the voting public during the 2016 election. It should also be noted that Allen Weisselberg, Trump’s chief financial officer is already serving a five-month jail term for the same charge of falsifying business records. This being the case, it is really amusing that Trump is attributing such criminal charges against him as an affront and insult to his country! We have also witnessed how a mob of his supporters went on a rampage, attacked the US Capitol building in Washington on 6 January, 2021 and created law and order problem.

Tharcus S. Fernando, CHENNAI

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST  
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**of the day quote**

The Congress started an agitation seeking explanation of Rs 20,000 crore in the Adani group. Even Uddhav Thackeray continuously spoke on this issue. Now Pawar has commented and those who are protesting should heed these comments

EKNATH SHINDE | MAHARASHTRA CM

Be it (West Bengal chief minister) Mamata Banerjee or NCP, there could be different opinions about Adani, but that will not lead to cracks in (opposition) unity in Maharashtra or in the country

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) RAJYA SABHA MP

The mafia raj in Punjab has grown stronger under the "patronage" of the AAP, which had promised to demolish it before coming to power

NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU | CONGRESS LEADER

**SHORT TAKES**

**Smoke in train triggers panic**

**Amaravati:** Smoke in Chennai-Delhi Rajdhani Express triggered panic among passengers in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district Sunday. There was panic among passengers when smoke was noticed near the wheels at B-5 compartment. An alert loco pilot stopped the train, averting a tragedy. The train was stopped near Kavali Railway Station for 20 minutes. Railway officials said smoke was because of brake jam. No one was injured in the incident. The train resumed its journey after the repair.

**One killed, 900 left homeless**

**Dimapur:** A massive fire broke out at the Burma Camp in Nagaland's Dimapur district on Sunday, killing a woman and leaving around 900 people homeless, an official said. The fire broke out at Burma Camp's East Block around 12 pm, he said. Around 260 kutcha houses, made of thatch, were gutted in the blaze, he said. A woman, who was in her 70s, was charred to death in the fire, and many others were injured.

**New KPCC working president appointed**

**New Delhi:** Days ahead of the Karnataka Assembly polls, the Congress Sunday appointed B N Chandrappa as working president of its state unit. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed Chandrappa as working president in the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC), a party statement said. The Karnataka unit is headed by D K Shivakumar.

**Mowgli Schools: Oasis of learning for children in Bahraich's forest**

**THE SCHOOLS -- ONE LOCATED IN MOTIPUR AND ANOTHER IN BARDA AREAS OF THE FOREST RESERVE -- IMPART EDUCATION TOGETHER TO AROUND 350 CHILDREN, MOST OF THEM AGED BETWEEN 7 AND 10 YEARS**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bahraich (UP), April 9:** Mowgli Schools, set up deep in the Dudhwa-Katarniya forest area here, have become an oasis of learning for children of forest dwellers.

The schools -- one located in Motipur and another in Barda areas of the forest reserve -- impart education together to around 350 children, most of them aged between seven and 10 years. These chil-

dren used to wander in the forest area to collect firewood which made them susceptible prey for the wild animals, before the schools were set up by the forest department officials.

Named after the main character "Mowgli" of Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Book', the schools operate in the evening from forest department buildings. "The children are provided with colourful books, comics, sports items, and are also shown cartoons. The schools



are run more like tuition centres where children from nearby areas come in the evening and study," said Akashdeep Badhawan,

Divisional Forest Officer. Forest department officials said most of the children are from marginalised families. They help their



Out of the approximately four lakh square kilometres of forests in states that have tiger habitats, only one-third are in relatively healthy condition, the report said

The survey was carried out in five landscapes, namely Shivalik Range and Gangetic plains; central India highlands and Eastern Ghats; Western Ghats; North East hills and Brahmaputra flood plains and Sundarbans

gal, the demand for tiger products remains high, and poachers continue to kill tigers for profit," the report noted. The tiger census was a result of a major exercise carried out by the forest departments of various states. The frontline staff of 20 states that potentially have tiger populations were trained to collect the Phase-1 data in a digital format on a mobile application called M-STripes. Further, field guides were pub-

lished in nine regional languages and provided to each beat guard. Data was collected on carnivore sign encounters, ungulate (hoofed herbivores) abundance, vegetation, human disturbance and dung counts.

For the Sundarbans, the above protocol was modified so as to allow sampling using a boat along river channels (khals) and in Northeast India, barring Assam, the polygon search method was used. A news report from 2019 explains the poly-

gon search method thus: The faeces of tigers is collected in manner that involves making polygons -- squares in this case -- of 25 sq km each in an area of 400 sq km in the northeastern region, and then physically going there and collecting faeces for genetic sampling. Phase-1 sampling took a maximum of 10 days for each forest beat, with the sampling effort of two persons. In Phase-2, remote-sensing of spatial and attribute covariates were employed and in Phase-3, a camera trap survey was used.

In areas where camera trapping was not possible either logistically or due to insurgency and tiger densities were very low, molecular tools were used to determine the presence of tigers by extracting DNA from scat collected in such areas. The survey was carried out in five landscapes, namely Shivalik Range and Gangetic plains; central India highlands and Eastern Ghats; Western Ghats; North East hills and Brahmaputra flood plains; and Sundarbans.

"A total of 3,080 individual tigers (less than one year of age) were photo-captured, which are larger than the ones captured in 2018. The minimum population estimate is 3,167 individuals," the Status Tiger-2022 report said.



Women and children light candles on the occasion of Easter in Moradabad

PTI PHOTO

**AAP launches 'Degree Dikhaao Campaign'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** The AAP Sunday launched the "Degree Dikhaao Campaign" under which party leaders will share with the public their educational qualifications every day.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who studied at the Indian Institute of Technology, and his party have launched a fresh attack on the issue since Gujarat High Court recently quashed a seven-year-old order of the Central Information Commission that had asked the Gujarat University to provide information on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's degree to the

*The campaign kicked off with Delhi Education Minister Atishi presenting her undergraduate degree from the University of Delhi and two master's degrees from the University of Oxford at a press conference*

AAP chief.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on Kejriwal, who had sought information on the prime minister's academic qualifications under the Right to

Information Act. The campaign kicked off with senior party leader and Delhi Education Minister Atishi presenting her undergraduate degree from the University of Delhi and two master's degrees from the University of Oxford at a press conference.

While displaying her degrees to the media, Atishi said, "From today onwards, every day an AAP leader will present his/her degree in front of the country. I am starting this by sharing my three degrees. BA (Bachelor of Arts) from the University of Delhi, a Master of Arts from the University of Oxford and another Master of Science from the University of Oxford."

of the society rather than becoming a victim of man-animal conflict," Badhawan said.

The children are also taught about the ecology of the area and various animals residing in the reserve. Though there is a dedicated teacher at schools, forest officials, veterinary experts, Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) personnel and other government officials also volunteer and take classes.

"The parents and other villagers after seeing the educational development of the children are supporting the initiative," the DFO said. The forest department gets support from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and other social organisations to run the schools. These organisations donate teaching equipment, projectors, books and sports items to the schools on regular basis, he said.

**ADANI TWEET**

**Himanta to sue Rahul Gandhi for defamation**

*Addressing a press conference, Sarma said the defamation case will be filed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Guwahati on April 14*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, March 9:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Sunday said he will file a defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over a tweet that linked him to the Adani group.

Addressing a press conference here, Sarma said the defamation case will be filed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Guwahati on April 14. "Whatever Rahul Gandhi tweeted, it's defamatory. We will respond after the PM leaves the state," he said.

"Definitely, a defamation case will be filed in Guwahati," he added. Rahul Gandhi Saturday took a swipe at some leaders who have quit the Congress in recent years and some of whom have



joined the BJP as he kept up his offensive against the government over the Adani issue.

"They hide the truth, that's why they mislead everyday! The question remains the same - whose Rs 20,000 crore benami money is in Adani's companies?" Rahul Gandhi asked in a tweet in Hindi, sharing an image with 'Adani' written as an acronym of sorts with letters of the names of the leaders.

He cited the names of Ghulam Nabi Azad, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Himanta Biswa Sarma, Kiran Kumar Reddy and Anil K Antony in his tweet. After quitting the Congress, Azad formed his own party, while the rest joined the B.J.P. Scindia is now a Union Minister and Sarma the Chief Minister of Assam.

**Pak intruder shot dead, 2 more held**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Poonch/Jammu, April 9:** A Pakistani intruder was killed and two more were arrested as Army troops foiled an attempt to smuggle in 17 kg of narcotics through the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district early Sunday, a defence spokesperson said.

Officials said the infiltrators, all residents of Maidan Mohalla in Chanjal village of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK), were intercepted by the troops in Shahpur sector. Jammu-based Army PRO Lt Col Devender Anand said the troops noticed suspicious movement of a group of three individuals close to the LoC around 10.15 pm on Saturday.

"Around midnight, the group crossed the LoC and started infiltrating into this side. The alert troops kept the movement of the infiltrating group under continuous observation. At approximately 2 am, as the group approached the fence, the alert Army troops challenged them," he said.

The official said as the intruders started to run away, they were fired upon. One of them was shot dead while the other two managed to escape into a jungle taking advantage of the thick foliage, darkness and rocky outcrop, he added.

"The area was immediately cordoned off to prevent their escape across the LoC and a search operation was launched at first light wherein the body of the slain intruder was recovered at the encounter site," Lt Col Anand said.

As the search progressed into the jungle, he said, the other two intruders were apprehended.





# Naga women denied 33% quota in urban local bodies

INFLUENTIAL NAGA ORGANISATIONS CLAIM THAT RESERVATION FOR WOMEN WAS A VIOLATION OF THE NAGA CUSTOMARY LAWS, AS ENSHRINED IN ARTICLE 371 OF THE CONSTITUTION THAT PROTECTS ITS TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kohima, April 9:** Scripting history, two women were for the first time elected in the February 27 elections to the Nagaland Assembly. However, within a month the 33 per cent reservation for women in urban local body (ULB) elections push, gave an air of uncertainty to the elections to three municipal and 36 town councils in the north-eastern state.

The ULB polls in Nagaland were recently cancelled till further orders by the State Election Commission soon after the Assembly passed the Nagaland Municipal Act (Repeal Act 2023).

The Assembly repealed the Nagaland Municipal Act 2001 in toto following the strong protest against the women reservations in ULBs by the various Naga tribal hohos and civil societies demanding the total review of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2021.

The Naga organisations claimed reservations for women in ULBs would go against their community's customary laws.

The Supreme Court had earlier directed the state government to conduct the ULB elections, to which the State Election Commissioner notified to hold the election May 16.

The Supreme Court hearing a petition April 5 stayed the March 30 Nagaland poll panel notification cancelling the ULBs elections in Nagaland.

The apex court order comes after the People's Union for Civil Liberties and others filed the petitions challenging the cancellation of the elections. The petitioners urged the apex court to initiate contempt action for 'disobeying' its March 14, 2023 order.

The cultural, societal, traditional and religious practices, land and resources in Nagaland are protected under Article 371A, which also exempted from the 73rd Amendment

to the Constitution for the setting up of municipalities.

But the 74th Amendment did not give that exemption on the grounds that the state's urban administrations were not part of the customary practices.

In 2001, Nagaland enacted its Municipal Act and the first civic bodies elections were held in 2004 but without reservation.

The government issued a notification for the next civic bodies elections in 2012 but the polls could not be held following objections from tribal bodies, who strongly opposed women reservations.

In 2017, violent protests over this contentious issue left two people dead and the then Chief Minister TR Zeliang resigned, forcing the government to declare the poll process null and void.

Agitators attacked and set ablaze government buildings and properties in parts of the state.

The influential Naga organisations claimed that reservation for women was a violation of the Naga customary laws, as enshrined in Article 371 of the Constitution that protects its traditional way of life.

The Naga bodies and civil society organisations have insisted that they are not against the participation of women in politics but accepting the reservations for women in ULBs would pave the way for dilution of the special protections Nagas enjoy under the Constitutional provision.

# Bihar small parties to play big role in '24 polls

Bihar is a non-BJP ruled state and hence the saffron leaders are dependent only on the mood of voters. In that case, negotiating with smaller parties is the only way to get success

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, April 9:** The 2024 Lok Sabha elections may be contested between the Mahagathbandhan and the BJP in Bihar, but the importance of smaller parties cannot be ruled out.

The political leaders know this fact and hence they are going all-out to bring them in their side.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Friday invited Chirag Paswan during the Iftar party in former official residence probably to pacify him. Chirag however refused to go there.

Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav invited Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav (Jan Adhikar Party) to the Iftar party scheduled in Rabri Devi's residence. Pappu Yadav accepted the invitation.

Upendra Kushwaha, who recently left JD-U and formed a new political party Rashtriya Lok Janata Dal (RLJD), is making a strategy to become a strong contender at a time when he opts for an alliance. Similar situations are with Pashupati Kumar Paras (RLJP), Mukesh Sahani (Vikasheel Insaan Party) and Jitan Ram Manjhi (Hindustani Awam Morcha) as well.

In Bihar, Chirag Paswan is considered as the strongest leader of all smaller parties. His popularity was seen several times during by-polls in Mokama, Gopalganj, Kurhani and other places.

For BJP, making alliance with smaller parties is its political compulsion. At the same time, if Chirag would opt for the strategy of 2020 Assembly election, his political existence could be over in Bihar. During the 2020 election, Chirag had given the tickets to candidates



In Bihar, Chirag Paswan is considered as the strongest leader of all smaller parties. During the 2020 election, Chirag had given the tickets to candidates against JD-U only to cut the votes of its candidates. He had deeply hurt the JD-U at that time, reduced it from 69 in 2015 to 43 in 2020

against JD-U only to cut the votes of its candidates. He had deeply hurt the JD-U at that time, reduced it from 69 in 2015 to 43 in 2020.

Pasupati Kumar Paras, the MP from Hajipur and national president of Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party (RLJP), is another leader in Bihar who is currently sharing the cabinet of Narendra Modi government. After the separation with Chirag Paswan, five MPs came

into RLSP. In case of alliance with BJP, it will be a tough challenge to accommodate Paras in NDA. Chirag Paswan already announced that he will not make alliance with his uncle Pasupati Kumar Paras' party.

Mukesh Sahani is another leader in Bihar who claimed himself as son of mallah (fisherman community). The Modi government had given Y plus category security to him. The idea could be to make an alliance

with his party VIP in the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Sahani is considered as an influential leader in the fisherman community and he had proved it in the 2020 Assembly election when VIP won four seats. Mukesh Sahani however lost his own seat at that time. Later, three of his MLAs joined the BJP and another MLA died in 2021. Sahani has not opened his cards about which way he will go. Since, Mahagathbandhan has seven parties, the chances of negotiation for the alliance are thin. So, he may side with BJP.

Upendra Kushwaha is another prominent face of Kushwaha community in Bihar. Like Chirag Paswan, Upendra Kushwaha is another leader who has openly supported BJP in Bihar.

However, BJP has given a clear message to Upendra Kushwaha that the former is not dependent only on him for the Kushwaha vote bank. BJP recently appointed Samrat Chaudhary as state president of the party. He also comes from Kushwaha community.

For the BJP, the vote of the Kushwaha community is important. It is a core vote bank of Nitish Kumar's Lav-Kush equation. BJP wants to intrude into Nitish Kumar's vote-bank and separation of Upendra Kushwaha followed by appointment of Samrat Chaudhary could be a plan of its strategy.

The Lok Sabha election 2024 is crucial for BJP in Bihar. The state has 40 seats which will decide the fate of Narendra Modi. It is a non-BJP ruled state and hence the saffron leaders are dependent only on the mood of voters. In that case, negotiating with smaller parties is the only way to get success.

# Sikkimese are feeling betrayed: Chamling



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gangtok, April 9:** SDF supremo Pawan Kumar Chamling claimed that the Sikkimese people feel betrayed as Article 371F, which guarantees special provisions for Sikkim, was 'violated'. The former chief minister, in a telephonic interview with PTI, also alleged Sikkim had become a hotbed for political violence and sought President's rule to ensure a free and fair election in 2024.

According to Article 371F, only the descendants of Sikkim subjects (those who lived in the state before its merger with India) whose names were mentioned in the 1961 register are Sikkimese with rights to own land and get state govern-

The former CM says that Article 371F, which guarantees special provisions for Sikkim, was 'violated'

ment jobs. They were also exempted from paying income tax.

"But now, the Financial Bill, 2023 redefines Sikkimese as any Indian citizen domiciled in Sikkim, extending to them the same benefits as that of the original inhabitants whose forefathers' names were in the 1961 register," Chamling said.

"This violates Article 371F, which was the basis for the merger of Sikkim with India in 1975. People of Sikkim feel betrayed as the special provisions extended to them have been taken away," he said.

Analysts feel the main concern of Sikkim's politicians is that land rights which are now enjoyed by only those Sikkimese whose parents were subjects of the earlier princely kingdom will be extended to any Indian domiciled in the state.

Asked whether this will be a major poll issue, he said, "People are very angry over the issue. We have a very small population of only 6-7 lakh and we fear we will be swamped by settlers within 2-3 years."

# 27K cases withdrawn in Assam to lower burden on judiciary: Sarma

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Guwahati, April 9:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that the state government has withdrawn at least 27,000 cases related to minor crimes with an aim to reduce the burden on the judiciary.

Attending the platinum jubilee celebrations of Gauhati High Court, Sarma said, "For facilitating ease of justice, the Assam government took a decision of withdrawing petty offence cases to bring down the pendency of cases."

"Cases punishable for up to three years with or without fine were taken into consideration for withdrawal, barring the cases of heinous nature," Sarma said, adding that till February this year, around 27,000 such cases have been withdrawn and it is estimated that through this action around one lakh criminal cases will be disposed of.

Sarma also asserted that this will reduce the load on lower courts.

The Chief Minister hailed the role played by the Gauhati High Court as the true guardian of human rights, protector of the Constitution and promoter of the age-old democratic ethos.

He mentioned that the Gauhati High Court has a unique identity



For facilitating ease of justice, the Assam government took a decision of withdrawing petty offence cases to bring down the pendency of cases

for being the common high court for all the seven states of the north-east for a longer span of its existence.

"This court has been dealing

with the fascinating task of interpreting enacted laws as well as tribal laws and customs and has judicial authority on subjects falling under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India, which is unique to this region only," Sarma said.

The Chief Minister also expressed his commitment to create as many posts as required in the lower judiciary with adequate infrastructure.

He said, "The state government has decided to create a new campus of Gauhati High Court, work for which will start this year."

# Bihar farmers encouraged to take up new litchi varieties

Bihar produces 43 per cent of litchi in the country and occupies nearly 35 per cent of the area under cultivation of the fruit in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, April 9:** To improve the production of litchi in Bihar, the state government and National Research Centre on Litchi (NRCL) are encouraging growers to produce newly developed varieties of the fruit by addressing issues like "productivity gap" and post-harvest management.

Bihar produces 43 per cent of litchi in the country and occupies nearly 35 per cent of the area under cultivation of the fruit in India, state Agriculture Minister Kumar Sarjeet said.

"Currently, the Bihar government and NRCL (Muzaffarpur) are taking joint initiatives to improve litchi production, its quality and

Talking to PTI, Bikash Das, Director, ICAR-NRCL (Muzaffarpur), said, "The contribution of Muzaffarpur district in litchi production is impressive, but there is a need to increase the productivity of litchi. The ICAR-NRCL has the mandate to address the productivity gap through basic and strategic research in areas of crop improvement and genetic enhancement, development of sustainable production technologies, integrated pest management systems, and post-harvest management and value addition."

Since litchi is a non-climacteric fruit that possesses poor shelf life, the post-harvest losses have been assessed to the tune of 18-23 per cent, the official said.



shelf-life. Apart from increasing the production of GI-tagged Shahi Litchi, farmers are also being encouraged to produce newly developed varieties of the fruit," the minister told PTI.

Efforts are on to grow three new litchi varieties - 'Gandaki Yogita', 'Gandaki Sampada', 'Gandaki Lalima' - in the eastern state.

The Shahi Litchi, a speciality of the north Bihar district of Muzaffarpur, which earned the Geographical Indication (GI) tag a couple of years ago, stands apart from other varieties by virtue of its unique fragrance, extra-juicy pulp, and smaller-than-usual seed.

India is the second largest producer of litchi in the world, after China.

"It is another challenge to reduce the losses with suitable post-harvest management tools", the official said.

According to Bihar Economic Survey (2022-23), the production of litchi in the state was 308.1 tonnes in 2021-22, whereas it was 308 tonnes in 2020-21.

Shahi Litchi got the GI tag, thereby becoming an "exclusive brand" in national and international markets, in 2018.

Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, Samastipur, Champaran, Begusarai districts, and adjoining areas of Bihar have a favourable climate for this variety.

The Department of Posts recently issued a postage stamp on Shahi Litchi of Muzaffarpur.

# Tripura's first all-woman band on cloud nine

In 2017, guitarist Moon Saha gathered five women and started rehearsals for music events, naming the band 'Meghbalika' (cloud girl)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Agartala, April 9:** Thirty-two-year-old Moon Saha, a guitarist, was being pressurised by her family members to get married.

However, Saha, who was then 26, wanted to pursue her interest in music and scoured social media for other women who went to music schools.

Finally, in 2017, she could gather five women and started rehearsals for music events, naming the band 'Meghbalika' (cloud girl).

"Renowned vocalist Amar Ghosh helped us compose a title song and we began performing shows on the outskirts of Agartala. Gradually, we started gaining popularity," she



told PTI.

The group came into prominence after the band was invited by 'Chhandanir', a cultural organisation in the state capital, to perform in shows.

Subsequently, they received an

invitation to perform for Doordarshan, Akashvani and other programmes.

"We did not have any place for rehearsal. We used to practice in the houses of our members. After coming to know about our problems,

Samiran Roy, the editor of a local newspaper, gave us a room in his office for the purpose. That helped us a lot," she said.

The band then had only a guitar and a harmonium. While performing at a programme organised by ONGC, the oil company donated a set of drums.

By 2023, the band has become well-known across the tiny north-eastern state and performed in many shows, especially in college programmes and during Durga Puja organised by local clubs.

The band, which has now grown to 10 members between the age group of 16-32 years, has also performed in Santiniketan in West Bengal.

"Renowned Rabindra Sangeet artiste Mohan Singh Khandora, who was present there, appreciated us," lyricist Ankita Roy said.

Some of the band members are students while Roy has a government job and Saha gives guitar tuitions.

"We now have a dream of establishing a music institution where elderly people, besides youngsters, get to learn music at a minimal expense. We have come across many elderly people who could not chase their dreams due to monetary constraints or other barriers," she said.

Amar Ghosh, when contacted, said the band performs well on Hindi film songs, Rabindra Sangeet, Bengali folk songs and Baul songs of Lalon Shah.

"They have composed their own songs, which we hope they would do more," he said.

Other members of the band include Ananya Sarkar (lead vocalist), Debjani Nandi (vocalist), Mamon Debnath (flautist), Jyotishree Chakraborty (key-board), Portia Chowdhury (key-board), Dishari Saha and Soniya De (drums and tabla) and Sharmistha Sarkar (keyboard). Some of the members are trained while others are self-taught.



**of the day** **quote**

After abrogation of Article 370 from J&K, many changes are visible in the field of development like completion of mega projects, progress of ongoing works and implementation of different centrally-sponsored schemes

**KIREN RIJU** | UNION MINISTER

Alliance is the only thing which will unite us. We cannot fight individually. That is why even the opposition parties at the national level are trying to find ways to unite so that we can win the elections

**FAROOQ ABDULLAH** | NC PRESIDENT

The party will send to Prime Minister Narendra Modi one crore signed letters of daily wage earners of West Bengal, who could not get employment under MGNREGA as the Centre allegedly did not release funds for the project for the state

**ABHISHEK BANERJEE** | TRINAMOL CONGRESS NATIONAL GENERAL SECRETARY

**SHORT TAKES**

**Man kills son**

**Chandrapur:** An inebriated man in Chandrapur in Maharashtra allegedly killed his three-and-half-year-old son and then attempted suicide Sunday, a police official said. The incident took place in Rajoli village in Mul tehsil, some 45 kilometres away from the district headquarters, he said. "The 33-year-old man strangled his son after he had a fight with his wife over a petty issue. His wife had left home and was at a kin's place when the murder took place. The man then tried to end his life by stabbing himself in the neck," the official said.

**Tourists rescued**

**Khandwa:** At least 15 tourists were rescued from a rock they were on after water was released from a dam on Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district n Sunday, an official said. The incident occurred at Nagar Ghat of Omkareshwar when water was released from the dam, sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Chandar Singh Solanki said. Water is routinely released from the dam by the Narmada Hydroelectric Development Corporation Limited during power generation. The water was released after sounding the siren, as usual but some people did not come out of the water and got trapped on rocks, he said.

**Body found**

**Lucknow:** A partially charred body of a man has been found near a garbage dump at Hanumant Dham, a temple, under Hazratganj police circle in Lucknow. This is the second incident of a charred body being recovered in the state capital. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP), (Central), Manisha Singh said that the primary investigation has revealed that the deceased was mentally disturbed and lived near Hanumant Dham for past five years.

**Man dies**

**Ujjain:** A 42-year-old man whose name had cropped up in connection with a bribery incident was found ablaze under mysterious circumstances on a road in Ujjain city of Madhya Pradesh and later died during treatment, police said Sunday. Police are investigating the incident from various angles, an officer said. The incident occurred Saturday night when a burning man came out rushing from a public toilet under the Kotwali police station area.

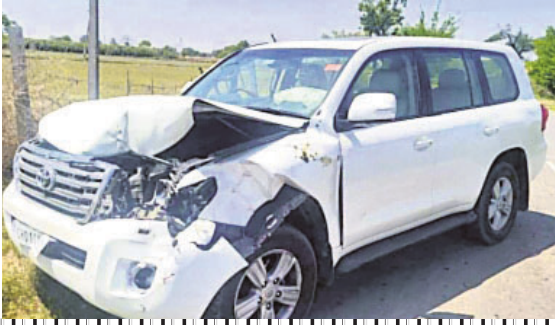


How will inflation come down? How will the pain of the public be seen? The entire focus of the government is on increasing Adani's income and protecting it from investigation

**RAHUL GANDHI** | CONGRESS LEADER

**NARROW ESCAPE FOR HOODA**

Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda had a narrow escape as his SUV car collided with a stray blue bull in Hisar. The Congress leader was on his way to attend a function when the accident occurred



**CBI under fire for delayed investigations**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 9:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's premier anti-corruption agency, is facing criticism for its inability to bring cases related to high-profile scams to their logical end because of delayed investigations.

Take for instance the two cases that the CBI has filed against former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in the Delhi excise policy scam and snooping case. The bureau has made Sisodia the accused number one in both the cases, but it is yet to file a chargesheet in either.

The ICICI-Chanda Kochhar matter has also raised eyebrows, as the CBI filed the FIR in January



2019, two years after the preliminary inquiry into the case was initiated. The CBI arrested former ICICI bank CEO Chanda Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar, and Videocon group MD V N Dhoot in December 2022, five years after lodging the case. The delay in action has raised questions about the agency's effectiveness. Recently

the CBI has filed a chargesheet in connection with the ICICI-Videocon loan case.

The CBI has failed to complete its investigation into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who passed away in June 2020 under mysterious circumstances. His body was found hanging from the ceiling fan of his rented accom-

modation in Mumbai. The CBI had recreated the crime scene but the investigation is still pending.

Arushi Talwar and domestic help Hemraj Banjade were murdered during the intervening night of May 15 and 16 in 2008. The case was handed over to the CBI in 2009. The Allahabad High Court acquitted the accused saying the evidence was not beyond reasonable doubt.

The CBI had failed to prove its case in the alleged 2G spectrum scam that cost the exchequer Rs 176,000 crore. Special Judge O.P. Saini, who oversaw the trial of all 2G spectrum cases since early 2011, had said in 2017 that his seven-year anticipation for evidence ended "all in vain" because the case was mainly based on "rumour, gossip and speculation".

**Pilot revives war with Gehlot**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, April 9:** Congress leader Sachin Pilot Sunday alleged that the Ashok Gehlot-led government failed to investigate cases of alleged corruption during the BJP rule in Rajasthan and announced a day-long fast to press for action, in a sign of escalating tussle in the party's state unit ahead of assembly polls.

Without referring to Pilot's demand, the Congress issued a statement in Delhi that its government with Ashok Gehlot as chief minister has implemented schemes that have benefited people and the party will seek a renewed mandate later this year "on the strength of these landmark achievements and the collective efforts of our organisation".

The move by former Deputy Chief Minister Pilot to open the new front against Gehlot amid the factional fighting is seen as an attempt to pressure the high command to resolve the leadership issue ahead of the year-end polls. "No action was taken (by the Gehlot government) on the corruption by the previous Vasundhara Raje government. While in the Opposition, we promised an inquiry into the mines scam of Rs 45,000 crore," Pilot said at a press conference at his residence here, announcing a hunger strike on Tuesday.



When we were in opposition, at that time we had said that we will investigate corruption in the BJP government. I wrote a letter to CM Ashok Gehlot on March 28, 2022 and on November 2, 2022, but did not get any answer

**SACHIN PILOT** | FORMER DEPUTY CM OF RAJASTHAN

He said he wrote to Gehlot last year on March 28 and November 2 on the issue but did not get any answer to his letters. "With six seven months left for the elections, the opponents can spread an illusion that there is some collusion. Therefore, action will have to be taken soon so that the Congress workers feel that there is no difference between our words and actions," he said.

He also showed videos of statements of Gehlot in the Assembly and outside in which he had levelled corruption allegations against the previous BJP government. He said he will observe a day-long fast at Shaheed Smarak on April 11, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule who was from the Saini community to which Gehlot belongs.

Gehlot and Pilot have been at

loggerheads over the post of the chief minister ever since the Congress formed the government in Rajasthan in December 2018. The opposition BJP said that Pilot should also demand an investigation into the alleged corruption during the Congress government's tenure.

Leader of Opposition Rajendra Rathore said in a statement that the infighting between the chief minister and his former deputy has increased to such an extent that now Pilot will sit on hunger strike against his own government.

While a section of Congress leaders supported Pilot's demand, others claimed it would inflict great harm to the party in the upcoming election, particularly when it is working on a strategy to repeat its government in the state.

In a statement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the Congress government in Rajasthan with Ashok Gehlot as CM has implemented a large number of schemes and taken many new initiatives that have impacted the people profoundly.

"This has given the state a leadership position in governance in our country. The Bharat Jodo Yatra in Rajasthan was an outstanding success made possible by the dedication and determination of the party organisation in the state," he said.

**Congress fires fresh salvo at govt**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Firing a fresh salvo at the government, the Congress Sunday pointed to Adani Group's alleged China links and asked why the conglomerate is still being permitted to operate ports in India.

Attacking the Centre, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh cited a media report which claimed that the government denied security clearance in 2022 to a consortium of APM Terminals Management and Taiwan's Wan Hai Lines after agencies discovered a connection between a Wan Hai director and a Chinese firm. This blocked the consortium's bid to operate a container handling terminal at the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, Ramesh said in a statement, pointing out that it is a government policy to prevent Chinese firms and entities with Chinese connections from operating ports and terminals in India.

"This raises fresh questions about the Adani Group's China links. As we have repeatedly pointed out in our Hum Adani ke Hain Kaun (HAHK) series of questions to PM Narendra Modi, Chinese citizen Chang Chung-Ling is closely associated with the Adani Group," Ramesh alleged.



The Opposition led by the Congress has been seeking a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe in the Adani issue

The Gautam Adani-led group has dismissed the charges as lies, and said they comply with all laws and disclosure requirements

"His son owns PMC Projects, a firm that has constructed ports, terminals, rail lines, power lines and other infrastructure assets for the Adani Group. The Adani Group and PMC were alleged to be involved in a Rs 5,500 crore power equipment over-invoicing scam by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence," he claimed.

Ramesh also said the Adani Group has been known to have operated at least two Shanghai-based shipping companies, one of which was involved in the "illegal sale of petroleum products to the close China ally North Korea". Given these close China links, why is the Adani Group being permitted to operate ports in India, Ramesh asked.

**Man, sister tied to tree; thrashed**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Khandwa, April 9:** A 21-year-old man and his cousin sister were allegedly tied to a tree and beaten up by villagers in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district on the suspicion of having an illicit relationship, police said Sunday.

The incident took place on April 3 in Bamanda village under Piplod police station limits and came to light when a video of it surfaced on Thursday, following which the police registered a case, an official said.

Based on a complaint, three persons were arrested and booked under relevant provisions while the others involved in the incident

were being identified, Deputy Superintendent of Police Anil Chouhan said.

A video surfaced on social media in which the married woman and her cousin brother were seen tied to a tree with a rope. The man had come to meet his sister in the village and both were sitting on a cot and talking outside her home, Chouhan said.

Since the woman's husband was not at home, some villagers raised suspicion over their relation and surrounded them, he said. Even after the woman's husband confirmed over phone that the man was his wife's cousin, some villagers beat them up.

**Security breach during Union minister's visit**



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna April 9:** A major security breach has been reported during the visit of Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district when his convoy was attacked by a man.

The man is said to be mentally-challenged and is on the run. The incident occurred at Bishanpur Saraiya Chowk under Deoria police station in the district. The person smashed the window panes of two vehicles of Rai's convoy. He, however, could not identify the vehicle in which Rai was travelling. Rai was on the way from Satohar

The incident occurred at Bishanpur Saraiya Chowk under Deoria police station in the district. The person smashed the window panes of two vehicles of Rai's convoy

block in West Champaran to Patna on Saturday evening. When he came to Bishunpur Saraiya Chowk, the mentally-challenged person attacked his convoy. The alleged person was also injured during the incident.

"We have learnt about the incident through local residents, but have not received any written complaint so far. The attacker was a mentally-challenged person and he is on the run. We are making efforts to nab him and will admit him to a hospital for treatment," said Uday Kumar Singh, SHO of Deoria police station.



Children bathe in a river in Ghaziabad

PTI PHOTO



**Significant decision**

The Lokpal has directed the CSIR (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research) to put on hold all recruitment in laboratories. The CSIR is in a hurry with the recruitment drive under the existent rules despite the directions by Union Minister for

Science & Technology to wait as the revised Recruitment Rules are under process. The decision came in the backdrop of Central Vigilance Commission's extensive study of complaints against rampant perpetual irregularities and lobby-driven recruitment. As of now, recruitment processes in two of the labs of CSIR have been put on hold.

**Kharge ropes in G-23 group leaders**

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has decided to put dissensions in the party to an end and wants all leaders to close ranks. As part of this strategy

efforts are being made to utilize many of the G-23 group leaders in the party's activities. While Kharge has already been keeping Shashi Tharoor in good humour and made him part of the steering committee, the services of others are also being put to use. The G-23 leaders who were pressing for organisational reforms and a full-time party chief are no longer viewed as dissidents. Three prominent leaders of the G-23 grouping; Manish Tewari, Prithviraj Chavan and Anand Sharma, were part of Kharge's team of three dozen leaders to address a series of 'save democracy' campaigns. It transpires that Kharge had consulted the Gandhis before evolving this strategy. For Kharge,

he wants to send a message to Karnataka voters that he has brought unity within the party.

**BJP's secret plan**

Even as the Opposition parties are struggling to evolve a common strategy to take on the mighty BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the ruling party's strategy is already in the works to ensure the defeat of prominent Opposition leaders. It has been decided to give charge of around 20 Lok Sabha constituencies to select Union Ministers to defeat prominent Opposition leaders. The BJP had identified 165-odd Lok Sabha seats

which it had lost in 2019 Lok Sabha polls. But special attention is being paid to wrest these 20 Lok Sabha seats to defeat prominent leaders who are considered invincible.

**BJP caught in its web**

The BJP has run a highly successful campaign against the Congress on the issue of dynastic politics but tends to ignore the political heirs being groomed by its own leaders. Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia's son Mahanaryaman Scindia is the latest political scion to join this tribe going by his increasing public exposure. B S Yeddyurappa,

Karnataka's former Chief Minister, is battling for his son's ticket in the Assembly. BJP's many top leaders have the privilege of having their sons as MP in the Lok Sabha. Jyotiraditya Scindia has been taking his son to all major public events in the family strongholds of Guna and Gwalior while several fan clubs have sprung up in the Scindia bastions. These clubs have been organising cricket matches and other sporting events where Mahanaryaman is invited either as chief guest or special guest. With Madhya Pradesh headed for Assembly polls this year-end, all this activity indicates Scindia is preparing for his son's electoral debut who is now 27 years old and eligible to contest an election.



# international

## of the day quote

Deeply disturbed to hear of the violent hate crimes and racist behaviour at the Islamic Society of Markham. This violence and Islamophobia has no place in our communities

MARY NG | TRADE MINISTER, CANADA

I pledge my unwavering commitment to ensuring the security of our country, by preventing any recurrence of such (2019 Easter bombings) heinous acts

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

It is long overdue as the last Parliamentary delegation to India was six years ago. We are looking forward to engaging with senior Indian ministers to discuss matters ranging from the FTA to green technology, to gender inclusivity

SAUNDY VERMA | MEMBER OF HOUSE OF LORDS, UK

## SHORT TAKES

### Ferencz no more

**Washington:** Benjamin Ferencz, the last surviving prosecutor from the Nuremberg trials in Germany that brought Nazi war criminals to justice after World War Two and a longtime apostle of international criminal law, died Friday at age 103. Ferencz, a Harvard-educated lawyer, secured convictions of numerous German officers who led roving death squads during the war. Circumstances of his death were not immediately disclosed. The New York Times reported that Ferencz died at an assisted living facility in Boynton Beach, Florida. He was just 27 years old when he served as a prosecutor in 1947 at Nuremberg, where Nazi defendants including Hermann Göring faced a series of trials for crimes against humanity including the genocide known as the Holocaust in which six million Jewish people and millions of others were systematically killed.

### Sunak to meet Biden

**London:** British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will welcome US President Joe Biden to Belfast in Northern Ireland next week as the UK commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement, the peace treaty struck for the region in April 1998, Downing Street said Sunday. Biden will arrive in the UK Tuesday evening, when Sunak will meet him off Air Force One and the US President will then undertake a programme of engagements including a bilateral with Sunak. It comes as Monday marks a quarter of a century since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, transforming the political and economic landscape of the devolved region of Northern Ireland. "The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement was an incredible moment in our nation's history. It was a powerfully rare example of people doing the previously unthinkable to create a better future for Northern Ireland," said Sunak.

### Buildings collapse

**Paris:** As many as 10 people were thought to be under the rubble after an explosion that caused two residential buildings to collapse in the southern French city of Marseille Sunday, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said. The cause of the explosion was not yet known. The collapse caused a fire that complicated rescue efforts and that Darmanin said could take hours to put out. He said authorities estimated there were between four and 10 people under the rubble. A third building has partially collapsed and people have been evacuated from some 30 buildings in the area.



Help the beloved Ukrainian people on their journey towards peace, and shed the light of Easter upon the people of Russia  
POPE FRANCIS | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

## MPOX TERROR IN S KOREA

Health authorities reported the nation's first possible case of community transmission of mpox, bringing the total number of infections to six



## 'TREATED LIKE ANIMALS'

# Ukrainian kids back home after alleged deportation

UKRAINE BRINGS BACK 31 ABDUCTED CHILDREN FROM RUSSIA AMID WAR

AGENCIES

**Kyiv, April 9:** The head of a Ukrainian rescue organization said Saturday that the organization has brought back 31 children from Russia, where they had been taken during the war.

Mothers hugged sons and daughters as they crossed the border from Belarus into Ukraine after a complex rescue mission involving travel across four countries.

"We were treated like animals. We were closed in a separate building," said Vitaly, a child from Kherson region whose age was not clear. He added that they were told their parents no longer wanted them.

Mykola Kuleba said at a news

conference in Kyiv that the children were expected to arrive in the capital later in the day. Kuleba is the executive director of the Save Ukraine organization and is the presidential commissioner for children's rights.

Deportations of Ukrainian children have been a concern since Russia's February 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine. The International Criminal Court increased pressure on Russia when it issued arrest warrants March 17 for President Vladimir Putin and Russian children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said this week it



had been in contact with Lvova-Belova, the first confirmation of high-level international intervention to reunite families with children who were forcibly deported.

ICRC spokesman Jason Straziuso said the organization was in contact with Lvova-Belova "in line with its mandate to restore contact between separated families and facilitate re-

unification where feasible."

An Associated Press investigation revealed Lvova-Belova's involvement in the abductions and found an open effort to put Ukrainian children up for adoption in Russia.

Lvova-Belova told an informal UN Security Council meeting Wednesday that the children were taken for their safety, not abducted — a claim widely rejected by the international community.

The exact number of Ukrainian children taken to Russia has been

difficult to determine, and numbers from the warring countries differ vastly.

Kyiv estimates nearly 19,500 children have been taken to Russia or Russian-occupied Crimea since Moscow invaded in February last year, in what it condemns as illegal deportations.

Moscow, which control chunks of Ukraine's east and south, denies abducting children and says they have been transported away for their own safety. It has not concealed a programme under which it has taken thousands of Ukrainian children from occupied areas, but presents this it as a humanitarian campaign to protect orphans and children abandoned in the conflict zone.

## SECOND DAY OF DRILLS

# China intimidating Taiwan

CHINA, WHICH HAS NEVER RENOUNCED THE USE OF FORCE TO BRING THE ISLAND UNDER ITS CONTROL, SAYS TAIWAN IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND SENSITIVE ISSUE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US



REUTERS

**Taipei, April 9:** China's military simulated precision strikes against Taiwan in a second day of drills around the island Sunday, with the island's defence ministry reporting multiple air force sorties and that it was monitoring China's missile forces.

China, which claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, began three days of military drills around the island Saturday, the day after Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen returned from a visit to the United States.

Chinese state television reported that the combat readiness patrols and drills around Taiwan were continuing. "Under the unified command of the theatre joint operations command centre, multiple types of units carried out simulated joint precision strikes on key targets on Taiwan island and the surrounding sea areas, and continue to maintain an offensive posture around the island," it said.

The ministry said they were paying particular attention to the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force which is in charge of China's land-based missile system.

US, TAIWAN WATCHING CHINA'S DRILLS CLOSELY

TAIWAN SPOTS 71 AIRCRAFT, NINE NAVY VESSELS

CHINA BEGAN THREE DAYS OF DRILLS SATURDAY

CHINA ANGERED BY TAIWAN PREZ'S US VISIT

"Regarding the movements of the Chinese communists' Rocket Force, the nation's military also has a close grasp through the joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance system, and air defence forces remain on high alert," the ministry said.

It reiterated that Taiwan's forces will "not escalate conflicts nor cause disputes" and would respond "appropriately" to China's drills.

"This is a serious warning to the Taiwan independence separatist forces and external forces' collusion and provocation, and it is a necessary action to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," the Chinese army's Eastern Theatre Command said.

The security source said about 20 military ships, half from Taiwan

and half from China, were engaged in a stand-off near the Taiwan Strait's median line, which has for years served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides, but did not behave provocatively.

China's aircraft carrier Shandong, which Taiwan has been monitoring since last week, is now more than 400 nautical miles off Taiwan's southeast coast and is carrying out drills, the source said.

## 'COMFORTABLE, CONFIDENT' US

The de facto US embassy in Taiwan said Sunday the United States was monitoring China's drills around Taiwan closely and is "comfortable and confident" it has sufficient resources and capabilities regionally to ensure peace and stability.

US channels of communication with China remain open and the United States had consistently urged restraint and no change to the status quo, said a spokesperson for the American Institute in Taiwan, which serves as an embassy in the absence of formal diplomatic ties.

Washington severed diplomatic relations with Taipei in favour of Beijing in 1979 but is bound by law to provide the island with the means to defend itself. Beijing considers Tsai a separatist and has rebuffed her repeated calls for talks. Tsai says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

China has over the past three years or so stepped up its military pressure against Taiwan, flying regular missions around Taiwan, though not in its territorial air space or over the island itself. Chinese state media said the aircraft were armed with live weapons. Taiwanese air force jets also typically carry live weapons when they scramble to see off incursions.



Covered in prayer shawls, Jewish men of the Cohanim Priestly caste participate in a blessing during the holiday of Passover, in front of the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray, in Jerusalem's Old City, Sunday

AP/PTI PHOTO

# Israel strikes back after rockets fired from Syria



REUTERS

**Jerusalem, April 9:** Israeli jets hit Syrian military targets Sunday in response to rockets launched towards Israeli controlled territory overnight, Israel's military said, as violence flared again following cross-border exchanges of fire during the week.

State media in Syria reported explosions in the vicinity of the capital Damascus as Israel said its forces continued to hit Syrian territory after six rockets were fired overnight towards the Golan Heights.

Israel said artillery and drone strikes hit the rocket launchers and were followed by airstrikes against a Syrian army compound,

military radar systems and artillery posts.

The Israeli military "sees the State of Syria responsible for all activities occurring within its territory and will not allow any attempts to violate Israeli sovereignty," the Israeli Defense Forces said.

The Syrian defence ministry said its air defences had responded to the Israeli attacks and intercepted some Israeli missiles. It said no casualties had been reported with only material damage caused by the strikes.

Sirens had sounded earlier near towns in the Golan Heights as rockets were launched from Syrian territory, but no damage or casualties were reported. Israel seized the Golan Heights in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed the 1,200-square-km territory in 1981, a move not recognised by most of the international community.

Lebanon-Based Al Mayadeen TV said the rocket salvos were claimed by Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement.

# PIOs line up for Leicester Mayor role in UK polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 9:** Two Indian-origin candidates are lined up to go head-to-head for the post of Leicester Mayor in the local elections coming up in the UK early next month.

Conservative Party councillor Sanjay Modhwadia will compete with Rita Patel, a former Labour councillor who announced her bid recently in order to scrap the role.

Patel, a Rushey Mead councillor from Leicester who will run as an independent, launched her campaign saying the city needed "a fresh start" and promised one of her first jobs will be to remove the mayoral role.

Sitting Labour Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, expressed disappointment at Patel's exit from the party after she was one of four city councillors suspended for six months for their attempt to scrap the mayor's office through a vote at a council meeting last month.

Now the Tories have confirmed Modhwadia, a city councillor for North Evington, as their candidate to challenge Soulsby — who has held the job since it was created 12 years ago.

He was in the eye of the storm when Leicester witnessed sectarian clashes last September following an India-Pakistan cricket match.

Modhwadia, a local businessman, has been campaigning to push for a "Made in Leicester" brand to improve the city's perception around the globe.

While the Tories and Rita Patel have both said they want to get rid of the mayoral role, Leicester's Green Party has promised a public referendum on the matter. The Green Party have chosen Mags Lewis — who also stood in 2019, finishing third — will be their candidate.

The election is scheduled for May 4 and anyone elected may just go on to have a short stay in office.

"Many local residents have contacted our party in recent months to suggest that this is something we should do and our members have also voted in favour of removing the position of City Mayor," Richard Tutt, Chair of the City of Leicester Conservatives told 'Leicester Mercury'.

# Pakistanis reeling under skyrocketing inflation

In the month of Ramzan, buying fruits to break the fast has become a luxury for millions across the country

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, April 9:** Nazim Malik pulled out his children from a private English-medium school and enrolled them in a government-run Urdu school because he can no longer afford their fees amid the spiralling inflation that has made life miserable for most Pakistanis who are now worried about two meals a day for their families.

The Pakistani rupee in recent months has seen a dramatic erosion in its value to the US dollar, currently trading at around PKR 288 in the open market.

The economic situation has never been so grim in a country which since independence has thrice seen military coups and the ouster of elected governments.

Cash-strapped Pakistan's econ-



omy has been in a free fall mode for the last many years, bringing untold pressure on the poor masses in the form of unchecked inflation, making it almost impossible for a vast number of people to make ends meet. Their woes increased manifold after last year's catastrophic floods that killed more than 1,700 people and caused massive economic losses.

During the last six months, inflation climbed to a level where his salary — 65,000 Pakistani rupees (PKR) — seems to be only meant to buy food for his wife and three children.

Over two-dozen people, mostly women, have died during the last two weeks in the country in their bid to get free food or wheat.

The prices of fruits and veg-

Pakistan's economy is in a tailspin, going from crisis to catastrophe and now the system is becoming unhinged. I blame the judiciary, politicians, and generals. Inflation in Pakistan is not only being fuelled by large deficits and money printing but foolish policy choices that have seriously impacted the productive capacity of the economy

ATIF MIAN | PAKISTANI-AMERICAN ECONOMIST

etables have gone beyond the reach of most people and the poor are only considered with flour and rice. In Lahore, one kg of flour is priced at PKR 170 and onions are considered a highly-priced everyday item as their price per kilogram has been fluctuating between PKR 150 to 200.

The people complain that they no longer have any money left for medicines, new clothing or travelling.

As prices of essentials spiked, the State Bank of Pakistan in a meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) April 4 decided to increase the interest rate by 100 basis points to 21 per cent.

The MPC noted that "inflation in March 2023 rose further to 35.4 per cent, and is expected to remain high in the near term."

With a per year tax collection of around PKR 5,000 billion of which PKR 3,500 billion goes into debt servicing and the remaining taken by the Army (for defence purposes), the country is left at the mercy of borrowing more loans.

Cash-starved Pakistan is awaiting a much-needed \$1.1 billion tranche of funding from the International Monetary Fund. The funding is part of a \$6.5 billion bailout agreement reached in 2019 with the global lender.

As food, beverage, and transportation prices surged by more than 45 per cent and the country is still in talks with the IMF to unlock its next tranche of funding, the common Pakistanis fear for their future.



of the day quote

We have seen multiple disruptions in the FMCG sector. In 2005-06 every one said that modern retail would take the sector by storm with private labels and FMCG players would find it very difficult to compete. After 17-18 years nothing has changed with modern retail play

SAMEER SHAH | CFO, GCPL

In the coming quarters, we shall see some large quality assets traded in office and select logistics assets

PIYUSH GUPTA | MD (CAPITAL MARKETS & INVESTMENT SERVICES), COLLIERIES INDIA

Post Covid FY23 has been a good year for Raymonds so far. It was good for everybody. Things have turned around. I am optimistically looking at the future

GAUTAM HARI SINGHANIA | CHAIRMAN AND MD, RAYMOND

SHORT TAKES

GAIL slashes CNG, PNG prices by ₹7

**New Delhi:** GAIL Gas Ltd, the city gas arm of the nation's largest gas firm GAIL (India) Ltd, Sunday announced a reduction of up to Rs 7 in the prices of CNG and piped cooking gas following a reduction in input gas price. GAIL Gas cut the price of the gas that households received through piped natural gas, or PNG, by Rs 7 per standard cubic metre in Bangalore and Dakshin Kannada and by Rs 6 per scm in other cities where the company operates. Similarly, CNG price has been cut by Rs 7 per kg in Karnataka and by Rs 6 in other areas, the company said in a statement.

NTPC coal output rises 65% in FY23

**New Delhi:** State-owned power giant NTPC on Sunday said its captive coal mines have registered 65 per cent year-on-year production growth to over 23 million tonne in FY23. NTPC Ltd has recorded a coal production of 23.2 million tonne in FY23, witnessing a 65 per cent growth against 14.02 million tonne a year ago from its four operational coal mines -- TPC Pakri-Barwadih (Jharkhand), NTPC Chhatti Bariatu (Jharkhand), NTPC Dulanga (Odisha) and NTPC Talaipalli (Chhattisgarh), a company statement said. NTPC has also achieved the highest-ever annual overburden removal of 73.0 million cubic metres, representing 129 per cent growth compared to 31.9 million cubic metres of overburden removal in the previous fiscal.

Unseasonal rains, high-interest rates fret automakers

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY WHICH HAS CLOCKED DOUBLE-DIGIT GROWTH IN FY23 IS CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE GROWTH PROSPECTS IN THE CURRENT FISCAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Unseasonal rains impacting rural demand, high-interest rates on auto loans and increased costs due to new regulatory norms are making the automotive industry cautious about the growth prospects in the current fiscal.

The industry -- which witnessed the first full year without any impact of Covid-19 in FY23 after a gap of two years with double-digit growth of 21 per cent in overall retail sales -- is now set to clock tapered growth in the low single-digit due to a high base, according to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA). Maruti Suzuki India Senior

RECORD HIGH

Russian oil imports now double of Iraq

Refiners continue to snap up plentiful Russian cargo available at a discount to other grades

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** India's imports of crude oil from Russia touched a new high of 1.64 million barrels per day in March and are now double of the purchases from Iraq - the nation's traditional top oil supplier. But the purchases appear to have plateaued as growth has slowed.

Russia continued to be the single largest supplier of crude oil, which is converted into petrol and diesel at refineries, for a sixth straight month by supplying more than one-third of all oil India imported, according to energy cargo tracker Vortexa.

From a market share of less than 1 per cent in India's import basket before the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022, Russia's share of India's imports rose to 1.64 million barrels per day in March, taking a 34 per cent share.

The purchases from Russia in March were double of 0.82 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil bought from Iraq, which has been India's top oil supplier since 2017-18.

India, the world's third-largest crude importer after China and the United States, has been snapping Russian oil that was available at a discount after some in the West shunned it as a means of punishing Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

Month-on-month, purchases from Russia rose marginally from 1.62 million bpd of oil imported from the country in February.

According to Vortexa, Saudi Arabia was India's second largest



The plateauing of India's imports of Russian Urals could indicate a soft limit on its ability to take in more sour crude, given its need to fulfill its term contracts with Mideast Gulf producers

SERENA HUANG | HEAD (ASIA-PACIFIC), VORTEXA

supplier of crude oil in March, selling 986,288 bpd. Iraq with 821,952 bpd sales was the third biggest supplier. UAE overtook the US to become the fourth largest supplier at 313,002 bpd. The US supplied 136,464 bpd, down from 248,430 bpd in February.

"While India continues to increase its imports of Russian crude month-on-month in March, the growth has slowed," said Vortexa's head of Asia-Pacific analysis, Serena Huang. "Refiners' purchases of medium-sour Russian Urals have remained steady in March, and the increase in imports are attributed to higher purchases of sweeter grades like Navy Port Light."

India's import of Russian oil could have plateaued. "But domestic refiners do have room to increase their purchases of sweeter grades like Sokol, ESPO blend and Navy Port Light, in the interest of maintaining

The trend would continue in the fourth quarter. It is fairly possible that PSBs would be earning around ₹30,000 crore in the fourth quarter and thus close the financial year 2022-23 with a profit of ₹1 lakh crore

SWARUP KUMAR SAHA | MD, PUNJAB & SIND BANK

Mcap of eight of top-10 valued cos climbs ₹82,169cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** Eight of the top 10 valued firms added Rs 82,169.3 crore in market valuation last week, with HDFC twins emerging as the biggest winners amid an overall positive trend in equities.

Last week, equity markets were closed Tuesday (April 4) for 'Mahavir Jayanti' and Friday (April 7) on account of 'Good Friday'.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 841.45 points or 1.42 per cent in the holiday-shortened week.

Of the top 10 valued firms, eight including Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), HDFC Bank, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, HDFC and ITC witnessed gains in their market valuation.

From the top-10 pack, the valuation of HDFC Bank jumped Rs 31,553.45 crore to Rs 9,29,752.54 crore. HDFC's market valuation surged Rs 18,877.55 crore to Rs 5,00,878.67 crore.

Bharti Airtel added Rs 9,533.48 crore taking its valuation to Rs 4,27,111.07 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries rallied Rs 6,731.76 crore to Rs 15,83,824.42 crore and that of TCS climbed Rs 5,817.89 crore to Rs 11,78,836.58 crore.

ITC's mcap went up by Rs 4,722.65 crore to Rs 4,81,274.99 crore and that of State Bank of India gained Rs 3,792.96 crore to Rs 4,71,174.89 crore. Hindustan Unilever added Rs 1,139.56 crore to take its market valuation to Rs 6,02,341.22 crore.

However, the mcap of Infosys declined by Rs 2,323.2 crore to Rs 5,89,966.72 crore and that of ICICI Bank fell by Rs 1,780.62 crore to Rs 6,10,751.98 crore.

Reliance Industries continued to remain the most valued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, HDFC, ITC, State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel.

Gold imports dip 30% in April-Feb



THE IMPORTS ARE IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE SINCE AUGUST 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the current account deficit, fell about 30 per cent to \$31.8 billion during April-February 2023 due to high customs duty and global economic uncertainties, according to data from the commerce ministry.

Imports of the yellow metal stood at \$45.2 billion in the corresponding period of 2021-22. Silver imports, however, rose by 66 per cent to \$5.3 billion during April-February 2023.

The imports are in the negative zone since August 2022. The significant fall in gold imports though has not helped in narrowing the country's trade deficit - the difference between imports and exports. The merchandise trade deficit for April-February 2022-23 was estimated at \$247.52 billion against \$172.53 Billion in the year-ago period.

According to industry experts, high import duty on gold and global economic uncertainties are the reason for the dip in the imports of the precious metal.

India imported about 600 tonne of gold during April-January 2023, and it is down because of high import duty. The government should take a view on the duty part to help domestic industry and push exports

COLIN SHAH | FORMER CHAIRMAN, GJEPC

Over the years, it has been observed that any surge in gold prices dampens gold demand coupled with the sale of old gold, and another factor is the higher duty that encourages unofficial routes of gold imports, Former GJEPC chairman and managing director of Kama Jewelry Colin Shah said.

India is the largest importer of gold, which mainly caters to the demand of the jewellery industry. In volume terms, the country imports 800-900 tonne of gold annually.

Gems and jewellery exports declined by 0.3 per cent to \$35.2 billion during the 11 months of the last fiscal. Last year, the Centre hiked gold import duty to 15 per cent from 10.75 per cent to check the current account deficit.

Coal imports surge 32% in April-Feb YoY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 9:** India's coal imports increased by 32 per cent to 148.58 million tonne (MT) in April-February FY23 against 112.38 MT in the year-ago period, according to a report.

The import of coking coal rose 7.69 per cent to 50.50 MT during April-February FY23 compared to 46.89 MT a year ago, mjunction said in its latest report.



In February 2023 alone, the non-coking coal import stood at 11.68 MT against 9.42 MT in the same month last year.

Coking coal imports were 4.40 MT against 4.03 MT imported in February 2022.

India is among the top five coal-producing countries in the world. However, some parts of its coal requirement are met through imports as the country is also among the major consumers of the dry fuel.

For coking coal - a key raw material used in steel making - the country remains heavily dependent on imports.

Mjunction MD Vinaya Varma said, "The softening of seaborne prices coupled with high domestic demand resulted in continued buying interest among Indian traders and consumers".

However, the increased domestic supply and the healthy stock position may restrict the volumes in the coming month, he added.

Kolkata-based mjunction is a business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce joint venture between Tata Steel and Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL).



repo rate has gone up from 4 per cent to 6.5 per cent.

He further said, "And what we have found is that the transmission of the repo rates into the auto loan rates has been almost complete. There are different banks which have increased between 180 basis points to 250 basis points".

With auto loans constituting 80

per cent of the total retail in the industry, Srivastava said, "Any increase in the auto loan rates obviously has a negative impact and that is the other factor which we are looking at".

For domestic passenger vehicle (PV) sales, Srivastava said the estimated sales would be "somewhere between 4.05 million to 4.1 million

The price increases in response to both the commodity price increases and the regulatory requirements could lead to adverse impact on the demand projections

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER (MARKETING AND SALES), MARUTI SUZUKI

As per data shared by the dealers' body, the total domestic vehicle retail sales stood at 2,21,50,222 units in FY23 against 18,3,27,326 units in FY22

in FY24" at a growth of 5-7 per cent over FY23.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd Managing Director Shailesh Chandra said the growth rate of the passenger vehicle industry may "moderate due to a strong base effect as well as macro factors, including hardening in-

terest rates, rising inflation and the cost impact from progressive regulatory norms".

PV prices have gone up due to increased costs to meet the real-time driving emission norms under BS-VI phase II. Also, the mandatory six airbags norms coming in from October this year will further increase costs.

FADA on its outlook for the low single-digit growth of vehicle sales said it is "due to a high base, inflationary pressures, routine price hikes and regulatory changes". Additionally, it said, there have been predictions of the possibility of El Nino's arrival later this year, "which could lead to poor monsoons, hampering rural India's growth potential".



# RINKU RUINS RASHID PARTY

## Markande, Tripathi seal SRH win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ahmedabad, April 9:** The gargantuan Narendra Modi Stadium proved to be too small and an asking rate of 29 too less for Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh (48 n o, 21b, 1x4, 6x6), who hammered five consecutive sixes to seal a miraculous three-wicket win over Gujarat Titans in the IPL here Sunday.

Just when it seemed everything was lost for KKR after wily Afghanistan spinner and stand-in captain Rashid Khan (3/37) had taken a hat-trick in the 17th over to reduce KKR to 155/7, Rinku did the 'Houdini act' to eke out one of the most memorable wins in the history of the IPL.

KKR needed 29 runs in the final over to attain the winning target of 205. Umesh Yadav took a single to give the strike to Rinku, who looked like a genius with the bat.

It seemed like he was waving a magic wand, which could fetch him a maximum at his beck and call. With 28 needed off the last five balls, Rinku took the aerial route on all five deliveries to conjure up magic hardly ever seen before in an IPL game. Even as a wave of jubilation spread in the KKR camp, the Titans dugout went silent.

Venkatesh Iyer (83, 40b, 8x4, 5x6) was the other hero for KKR on the day. Before Rinku unleashed his full fury to silence the crowd and leave the Titans fielders looking skyward, the 28-year-old Madhya Pradesh batter made a real 'impact' and brought KKR to the doorstep of victory.

The left-handed batter's 100-run partnership with captain Nitish Rana (45, 29b, 4x4, 3x6) was the cornerstone of KKR's massive fight-back and came days after both the batters had failed in their match against Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Eden Gardens April 6.

Iyer came to the crease at fall of Afghanistan opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who was picked ahead of England opener Jason Roy, and he



Rinku Singh regaled the packed stadium with his lusty hitting.

Iyer's dismissal in the 16th over, following an Alzarri Joseph (2/27) yorker that cramped him for space and he ended up hitting it straight to Gill at long on, sent a wave of jubilation in the Titans camp.

Rashid, who was leading the team in the absence of an unwell Hardik Pandya, then weaved magic in the 17th over, dismissing the

dangerous West Indians Andre Russell and Sunil Narine before trapping Shardul Thakur in front off the first three deliveries of his last over to virtually seal the win. But he had no inkling about Rinku's plans. And when it unfolded, it spelt doom for the Titans.

Earlier, a captivating batting display from Gujarat Titans' Vijay Shankar (63 n o, 24b, 4x4, 5x6), a fine half century from young top-order batter Sai Sudharsan (53, 38b, 3x4, 2x6) saw the defending champions put on a formidable total on the board.

Young Gill too came to the party, scoring a feisty 39 and sharing a 67-run partnership with Sudharsan before he was dismissed by West Indian spinner Sunil Narine (3/33).

The maturity Gill and Sudharsan displayed after opener Wriddhiman Saha had departed early, helped the team overcome the early setback and take the total to 100 runs without losing any further wicket. The pair's half century stand laid the foundation. Later it was all Shankar show.

### BRIEF SCORES

**GT 204/4** (Vijay Shankar 63 n o, Sai Sudharsan 53, Shubman Gill 39; Sunil Narine 3/33) **lost to KKR 207/7** (Venkatesh Iyer 83, Rinku Singh 48 n o, Nitish Rana 45; Rashid Khan 3/37, Alzarri Joseph 2/27) **by 3 wickets.**



Rashid Khan reacts after completing his hat-trick

## Chukwueze nets two as Villarreal stun Real 3-2



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Barcelona, April 9:** Samuel Chukwueze upstaged Vinicius Junior by scoring twice in an outstanding performance by the Villarreal forward to lead their 3-2 comeback win at Real Madrid in the Spanish league.

The Nigeria international cancelled out a sixth-minute own goal by teammate Paul Torres when he juked past Nacho Fernandez to score his first goal in the 39th minute.

Vinicius put Madrid back in front shortly after halftime after he eluded a pack of defenders, but Chukwueze made a pass that led to Jose Morales' equaliser in the 70th. He then struck the 80th-minute winner from long range to stun the Santiago Bernabeu.

### Baena 'assaulted'

**Madrid:** Villarreal player Alejandro Baena has denounced an "assault" amid Spanish media reports saying that the midfielder was allegedly hit by Real Madrid player Federico Valverde after Villarreal's win Saturday. Baena said on his Twitter account that he was "very happy for the incredible victory of my team at a stadium like the Santiago Bernabeu, but at the same time very sad for the assault I have suffered after the game." Spanish radio Cadena Ser and other media outlets reported late Saturday night that Valverde allegedly hit Baena while the Villarreal player was about to board the team bus. The reports said that Valverde was supposedly angry at Baena for his alleged insults during the match, including a comment about his son. In his message on Twitter, Baena denied having insulted Valverde's son: "I am surprised about what is being said about me. It is completely false that I said that."

Madrid's first home loss in the domestic league comes four days before they host Chelsea in the Champions League quarterfinals. Barcelona can move 15 points clear of second-placed Madrid if they beat Girona.

## Haaland lifts City, Arsenal drop points

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, April 9:** Erling Haaland backed away from his marker, set himself with his back to goal, and leapt high to deliver an acrobatic scissor-kick into the bottom corner: Haaland took his tally of Premier League goals in his first season with City to 30 with a double in a 4-1 victory at Southampton that kept the pressure on Arsenal, who dropped points Sunday after their 2-2 draw against Liverpool, in the title race Saturday.

His first goal, a close-range header, couldn't have been easier. His second simply took the breath away. After meeting Jack Grealish's cross with that stunning volley, Haaland sat on the ground and celebrated with a zen pose. Before long, he was laughing at the brilliance of his own goal — his 44th in all competitions for City this season.

City could still have 18 more matches to play if it goes all the way in the FA Cup and Champions League. Fifty goals looks inevitable



**SPECTACULAR:** Erling Haaland performs acrobatic scissor-kick for his 2nd goal

for Haaland. Grealish and Julian Alvarez scored City's other goals on the south coast.

Arsenal are six points ahead of second-placed City. The race for third and fourth place behind Arsenal and City is heating up, too, with Newcastle, Manchester United and Spurs all winning. Newcastle came from behind to beat Brentford 2-1, while Manchester United saw off Everton 2-0 at Old Trafford.

At the Anfield, Roberto Firmino's late equaliser saw Arsenal's lead at

**Bangalore, April 9:** Royal Challengers Bangalore will be expecting more runs from their batters and discipline in death overs bowling when they take on the high-flying Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL here Monday.

RCB came into the match after a demoralising 81-run defeat against Kolkata Knight Riders and would be eager to return to winning ways at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

It's early days in the tournament but RCB's death bowling has been a major concern for the team. RCB looked on course to register their second win of the season but the script went awry after the 12th over. They had the game in the palm of their hands, reducing the opposition to 89/5 before KKR went on to post 204/7.

Against Mumbai also they went for over 13 runs in the last five overs. Death overs specialist Harshal Patel and Mohammed Siraj, who had done well with the new ball, have struggled at the back end.

The absence of Wanindu Hasaranga, who is on national duty, and Josh Hazlewood, who is recovering from an Achilles heel injury, has only amplified RCB's death bowling woes.

Both bowlers are expected to link up with team this week. But

the top of the Premier League cut to six points.

The Gunners were in cruise control with a two-goal lead inside the first half-hour, courtesy Gabriel Martinelli and Gabriel Jesus. Mohamed Salah reduced the deficit just before the break to set up a thriller. In a dramatic second half, Salah missed his second successive penalty when he shot wide before Firmino rose at the far post to head home Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross with three minutes left.

## RCB look for improved show

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



until then, South African medium pacer Wayne Parnell who has come in a replacement for Reece Topley can help with the ball at the back end of the innings. RCB bat deep. Openers Virat Kohli and du Plessis did the job in the win against Mumbai but against KKR, the entire line up was done in by spin.

They would be wary against the Lucknow spinners, who come into

## India secure 3 medals at Asian Wrestling C'ships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Astana (Kazakhstan), April 9:** Young grappler Rupin secured a silver in 55kg Greco Roman, his first senior-level international medal, as India made a superb start to their campaign at the Asian Wrestling Championships here Sunday.

While the 19-year-old Rupin signed off with the second-best finish, Neeraj (63kg GR) and Sunil Kumar (87kg GR) claimed bronze medals.

Rupin lost 1-3 to Iranian Poya Soulat Dad Marz in the final after coming into the summit clash from the qualification round with the help of three successive wins.

Rupin, the 2019 World Cadet Championships bronze medalist, started his campaign with a 16-7 win by technical superiority over Kyrgyzstan's Sardarbek in the qualification round.

He then outwitted Kazakhstan's

Amangali Rahimbayev and China's Zhang Haifeng in the quarterfinals and semifinals respectively.

In 63 kg, Neeraj, 16, defeated South Korea's Jinseub Song 5-2 to win the bronze medal, while Sunil Kumar beat Japan's Masato Sumi 4-1 in the bronze medal bout in 87kg.

Neeraj edged out Kyrgyzstan's Dastan Kadyrov 7-6 in the qualification round. He lost to Iran's Imam Hossein Khoon Mohammadi 0-9 in the quarterfinal but got a second chance via repechage after Mohammadi made it to the final. The Indian grabbed the opportunity with both hands, beating Song in the bronze medal bout.

Sunil Kumar, a former Asian Championships gold medalist, began his campaign with a 9-1 technical superiority win over Tajikistan's Aslamov in the quarterfinals.



Rahul Tripathi goes inside out during his match-winning knock



Mayank Markande reacts after dismissing a PBKS batter, Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hyderabad, April 9:** Sunrisers Hyderabad produced a clinical performance to register a convincing eight-wicket victory over Punjab Kings and open their account in the ongoing Indian Premier League here Sunday.

With SRH chasing 144 after spinner Mayank Markande's (4/15) exploits with ball, Rahul Tripathi sizzled with an unbeaten 48-ball 74 (10x4, 3x6) to help his side complete the task in 17.1 overs.

Skipper Aiden Markram remained not out on 37 off 21 balls (6x4), and their efforts ensured that Shikhar Dhawan's 66-ball 99 not out (12x4, 5x6), which lifted Punjab Kings to 143/9, went in vain.

Markande did the star turn with figures of 4/15 to leave Punjab Kings reeling at 88/9 in the 15th over. When their turn to bat came, SRH were slow to start with and reached 34/1 at the end of the powerplay overs.

Having being hit for six by Tripathi, leg-spinner Rahul Chahar came back to grab the big wicket of Mayank Agarwal for a 20-ball 21, in the ninth over. Tripathi then struck two successive fours off Chahar to help SRH cross 50, before hitting left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar for three boundaries on the trot to keep his team in the contest.

On a pitch where almost all the batters struggled, with the exception of Dhawan, Tripathi managed to shine and brought up his half century in 35 balls with a six off Mohit Rathee.

That was followed by the duo of Tripathi and skipper Markram bringing up the fifty partnership at the start of the 14th over, with SRH requiring 49 runs in 42 balls. Tripathi and Markram then almost sealed the issue in their team's favour by striking Rathee for 21 runs, bringing the equation down to 26 runs in the last five overs.

Earlier, even as Punjab Kings lost

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Orleans, April 9:** India's Priyanshu Rajawat capped off an impressive week with a thrilling win in the final against Denmark's Magnus Johannesen to claim the men's singles title at the Orleans Masters here Sunday.

The 21-year-old from Madhya Pradesh, who had played one match as part of the Indian team that registered an epic win at the 2022 Thomas Cup, saw off World No.49 Johannesen 21-15, 19-21, 21-16 in a 68-minute summit clash to grab the biggest title of his career.

The two shuttlers, making it to the final after coming through the qualifiers, dished out some superb badminton, but the Indian rode on his ability to produce winners to secure the world tour super 300 crown.

It was the first meeting between the two 21-year-olds, both looking for a breakthrough win but Rajawat, who didn't drop a game in the USD 240,000 tournament, showed his maturity as he dished out a controlled aggressive game to come up trumps.

The image of an airborne Rajawat unleashing a forehand crosscourt jump smash to trouble his opponent will be etched in the mind of the spectators, as he accumulated multiple points with this trademark shot.

A year ago, Rajawat had returned early from Orleans when it was a super 100 event, but the tournament was upgraded to super 300

wickets at regular intervals. Dhawan showed his teammates how to do it with his incredible knock.

Asked to bat first, Punjab Kings endured a disastrous start as they lost Prabhsimran Singh in the very first ball of the match, trapped in front of the wicket by veteran India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

The ball hit him above the knee roll but Prabhsimran decided to walk back without asking for a review, leaving Punjab at none for one. Skipper Dhawan played Bhuvneshwar towards the third man region for the innings first boundary.

However, Dhawan again watched from the non-striker's end as Matthew Short (1) was dismissed lbw by South African left-arm pacer Marco Jansen on the second delivery of the match's second over at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

The ball landed on a good length and swung in before hitting Short's pads. Unlike Prabhsimran, Short consulted his skipper before deciding to come back into the dugout, leaving Punjab Kings in a spot of bother at 10 for two in the second over.

Next ball, and another swinging delivery struck wicketkeeper-batter Jitesh Sharma (4) on the pads, and a Jansen's loud shout for an lbw was upheld by the umpire. DRS was promptly taken and the ball-tracking technology showed it was going well down the leg-side, leading to the decision being overturned and giving some relief to PBKS.

Dhawan found two fours off his Indian team colleague Bhuvneshwar, before Jansen returned to send back Jitesh Sharma, who failed to clear Markram at mid-off.

Sam Curran struck a six and a four off successive Jansen deliveries but, after having made 22 off 15 balls, the English all-rounder was done in by leg-spinner Markande. But Dhawan had other ideas as he smashed the SRH bowlers to take his team to a respectable total.

**BRIEF SCORES:** PBKS 143/9 (Shikhar Dhawan 99 n o, Sam Curran 22; Mayank Markande 4/15, Marco Jansen 2/16) lost to SRH 145/2 (Rahul Tripathi 74 n o, Aiden Markram 37 n o; Arshdeep Singh 1/20) by 8 wickets.

## Rajawat claims Orleans Masters badminton title

from this year; and the Indian made the most of the opportunity.

Rajawat, who picked up the sport as a six-year-old, made a positive start to the final but Johannesen kept a good length to not allow the Indian to play his attacking game initially. After winning the first set, the Indian committed error after error to concede the second game.

Rajawat zoomed to 5-0 and then 7-2 in the decider, but Johannesen's defence soon started to withstand the onslaught as he narrowed it down to 7-8 after winning an incredible 54-shot rally. The Dane drew parity at 9-9 but the Indian managed to gain a small two-point cushion after producing two winners.

After the final changeover, the Indian got a second wind as he extended his lead to four points after winning another superb rally. Rajawat kept the rallies in his firm grip and soon grabbed seven championship points with another cross-court smash. He hit wide thrice before pushing the shuttle at the back court on a return to serve, and lifted his hand in celebration.

"I grew up watching videos of Lin Dan and Gopi sir and then when I started training, there was Srikanth bhaiyya, Sameer bhaiyya, Prannoy bhaiyya, all of them had an influence on my game. The sessions I had with them helped me immensely and their success also motivated me a lot," Rajawat told PTI from Orleans after the match.

