



IN NO HURRY

Actress Huma Qureshi doesn't feel pressure to get married but rather believes in waiting for the right one

LEISURE P2



EUROPE'S LARGEST N-REACTOR

Finland's much-delayed Olkiluoto 3 nuclear reactor, which is also the largest in Europe, begins regular output

INTERNATIONAL P10



IN DAD'S FOOTSTEPS

Arjun becomes first cricketer in IPL to play for the same team that father Sachin represented

SPORTS P12

PhD student from UP found hanging

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The body of a female student has been found hanging in her rental accommodation at Nandan Vihar area under Infocity police limits here. The deceased identified as Nikita Tiwari was a resident of Uttar Pradesh, police said. Tiwari was pursuing PhD in Chemical Engineering at a private engineering college in Infocity area.

Police sources claimed that when the deceased did not arrive at her college to attend the classes till afternoon Saturday, Tiwari's friends tried to contact her over telephone but got no response. They later rushed to her rented residence at Nandan Vihar.

They first tried to call her by knocking at the door but she gave no response. Later, when they broke into the room, Tiwari's friends were shell-shocked to find her hanging from the ceiling fan with her stole. Informed, police along with a scientific team reached the spot and sent the body to Capital Hospital for post mortem.

The autopsy will be carried out following the arrival of her family members who are on their way to Bhubaneswar. Tiwari's husband is reportedly pursuing some course in an educational institute in South Korea. She was reportedly under severe mental pressure over unknown reasons.

An unnatural death case (31/23) has been registered in this regard.

The deceased from UP was reportedly under severe mental pressure over unknown reasons



PROHIBITORY CURBS: Police and administrative officials patrol along with force post imposition of Section-144 after gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf Ahmed's murder in Prayagraj, in UP's Bulandshahr, Sunday

ATIQ AHMAD MURDER

Cong accuses Centre of 'headline manipulation'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The Congress Sunday accused the Central government of indulging in headline manipulation and diverting attention from former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satyapal Malik's allegations over the 2019 Pulwama attack.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged on Twitter that the Modi machine has quickly either suppressed the revelations or diverted attention from them by generating other headlines and debates, an apparent reference to the narrative around the killing of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf.

The BJP has cited Malik's past remarks, including the one that mocked former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi as a political juvenile, and slammed him as the disgraced governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Congress' media department head Pawan Khara also slammed the government Sunday, saying questions do not vanish by headline manipulation.

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said the revelations were on matters of national security which ought to be of concern to the nation. "There is no national security interest involved in suppressing the story, only the political interests of the ruling party. The media should press Govt for an honest ad-

3-member judicial commission set up

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Sunday issued a notification for setting up of a three-member judicial commission that will probe the murders of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf Ahmed in presence of the police and the media Saturday night. Set up under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952, the panel will be headed by retired high court judge Arvind Kumar Tripathi and comprise retired DGP Subesh Kumar Singh and retired district judge Brijesh Kumar Soni. The Commission will be submitting its report within two months.

mission of failure and corrective action. The 40 jawans won't come back to us but they and our nation deserves the truth," he said.

The Congress had Saturday demanded that the Centre reveal the outcome of the probe into the 2019 Pulwama incident in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed and asked why the paramilitary personnel were denied aircraft and made to commute by road despite the terror attack threat. There has been no reaction from the government since Malik's interview to a news portal was released, while the BJP has said that there were serious questions about his credibility.

Sambalpur limps back to normalcy

PRE-PLANNED VIOLENCE SUSPECTED AS 79 HELD; CURFEW STILL IN FORCE

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur, April 16: The situation in violence-hit Sambalpur town is limping back to normalcy with no report of any untoward incident being reported since Friday, officials said.

Various competitive examinations were held peacefully in the city Sunday, though the curfew is still imposed here and suspension of internet services is yet to be lifted.

The police have arrested 79 people for their alleged involvement in the violence in Sambalpur during Hanuman Jayanti celebrations, officials said Sunday.

The district administration decided to further relax the curfew as the situation has improved.

The restrictions due to curfew will be relaxed from 7.30am to 11.30am and 3.30pm to 6pm from Monday, providing more window period for people to go out of their homes for their daily activities.

Earlier, the relaxation period was from 8am to 11am and 3.30pm



to 5.30pm, the official said.

"We are optimistic that the curfew may be lifted in two to three days," DGP Sunil K Bansal said after reviewing the situation.

Meanwhile, after reviewing the situation in Sambalpur, Additional Chief Secretary, revenue and disaster management, Satyabrata Sahu, told reporters that no untoward incident reported since Friday night.

Sahu said around 3,000 candidates appeared for different examinations held at various centres in the city Sunday due to the efforts of the administration.

"The smooth and peaceful con-

It appears to be a pre-planned violence as per the indications received so far. More arrests will be made in future

B GANGADHAR | SAMBALPUR SP



duct of the examinations indicated normalcy of the situation," he said.

However, a report of looting of a fruit stall at Ainthapali Chhakh under Town Police Station jurisdiction was received in the evening. The police were verifying the authenticity of the incident, a district official said.

Contd...4

CBI grills Kejriwal as AAP leaders protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was questioned for nearly nine hours by the CBI Sunday as a witness in the excise policy case, amid protests by his party as the AAP chief claimed that the allegations of scam were false and the agency was acting at the BJP's behest.

"I was asked around 56 questions. I answered them all...As I said earlier we have nothing to hide. The alleged liquor scam is false, fabricated and motivated by dirty politics... We will die but not give up honesty," Kejriwal told reporters after leaving the CBI headquarters at around 8.30pm.

The agency had summoned Kejriwal Friday last seeking his appearance as a witness before the investigation team.

"The Chief Minister of Delhi was issued a notice under section 160 CrPC for his examination in this case April 16, 2023 and answering various questions related to the case. He joined the investigation today and his statement has been recorded under section 161 CrPC," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement after questioning was over.

Kejriwal's statement will be verified and collated with the avail-



able evidence, he said. Section 161 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) refers to recording the statement of a witness by a police officer.

In a video message this morning, the Aam Aadmi Party chief, who received solidarity messages from several opposition leaders after being summoned by the agency, claimed that the BJP might have ordered the CBI to arrest him.

The BJP, which has alleged that Kejriwal was the "kingpin", said it was not the time for rhetoric but accountability and demanded his resignation.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said Sunday that probe agencies such as CBI and ED work on the basis of facts, not emotions.

Contd...4

Dogs maul man to death in AMU

Aligarh (UP): A man was mauled to death by a pack of stray dogs in the premises of Aligarh Muslim University here Sunday morning, police said. Safdar Ali, a resident of a locality adjoining the campus, was out on a morning walk in a garden at Sir Syed Museum when the dogs attacked him, they said. SP City Kuldeep Singh Gunawat said that a police team rushed to the spot but by then the victim had died. The body has been sent for post-mortem and further action will follow, he said. The incident was recorded in a CCTV camera, a video clip of which surfaced on social media. There was no immediate response from the university regarding the incident.

Sunstroke kills 8 at award event

Mumbai: The 'Maharashtra Bhushan' award event in Navi Mumbai Sunday turned tragic with the death of at least 8 people apparently due to sunstroke as the function, attended by lakhs, was held in an open ground. At least 24 people are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Navi Mumbai, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said. Earlier in the day, Union Home Minister Amit Shah conferred the award on Appasaheb Dharmadhikari at the ceremony held in Kharghar area in Raigad district neighbouring Mumbai.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Instead of lodging my FIR, they have given me this

WEATHER	
	BHUB CTK
MAX	40.0°C 40.0°C
MIN	27.4°C 27.5°C
Humidity	61% 60%
Rainfall	Nil Nil
Forecast	Dry weather very likely

Russia frees dozens of POWs on Orthodox Easter

PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY'S CHIEF OF STAFF ANDRIY YERMAK SAID 130 UKRAINIAN PRISONERS OF WAR HAVE BEEN RELEASED AND RETURNED HOME IN A "GREAT EASTER EXCHANGE"

AGENCIES

Moscow, April 16: Russia's most powerful mercenary group, Wagner, sent at least 100 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) back to Ukrainian forces to mark Orthodox Easter, according to a video posted Sunday by the group's founder, Yevgeny Prigozhin.

"Prepare all of them, feed and water them, check the wounded," Prigozhin was shown saying in a video posted on Telegram by his press service.

A group of Ukrainian prisoners were then shown being told that they would be passed back to Ukrainian forces to mark Orthodox

Easter. "I hope you don't fall back into our hands," an armed Wagner soldier was told telling the men before they were ordered into a truck, some loading packs of water bottles.

More than 100 men, some limping and some being carried on stretchers by their comrades, were shown making their way in line along a muddy road as a man standing on a tank held a white flag.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said 130 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been released and returned home in a "great Easter exchange". It was not clear how many Russians were sent back the other way.

Russia's Wagner Group has been



gradually pushing out Ukrainian forces from Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine. Wagner now claims control of most of the city, though Ukraine has repeatedly disputed claims its forces have almost been

pushed out. Prigozhin was shown greeting refugees in the city, including a boy named Vladimir, before they were evacuated. The people appeared to be sleeping in a cramped underground cellar of

Russia's Wagner Group has been gradually pushing out Ukrainian forces from Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine

some kind. Prigozhin handed out chocolate bars to the children.

In his Easter address released Sunday morning, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the holiday as marking "the victory of good, the victory of truth, the victory of life," and he stressed what he said was Ukrainian unity in the face of Russian aggression.

Contd...4

Man who died of Cov and cremated, returns home

AGENCIES

Vadodara, April 16: Creating shock and astonishment among his family members and neighbours, a resident of Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, declared dead of Covid in a Gujarat hospital during the second wave of the pandemic in 2021 and his 'body' cremated, has returned home.

The incident was reported from Karodkala village in Dhar when Kamesh Patidar, 35, knocked on the door of his maternal aunt's house early Saturday morning.

According to his cousin Mukesh Patidar, Kamesh Patidar fell ill during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and was admitted to a hospital in Gujarat's Vadodara. Later, doctors declared

him dead and handed over his body to family members who then performed his last rites. However, Saturday, Patidar suddenly returned home, but did not reveal anything about his whereabouts during the last two years.

Kanwan police station in-charge, Ram Singh Rathore, said that as per the family members, Patidar had been suffering from the coronavirus infection and after the Vadodara hospital declared him dead, the family members performed his last rites there and returned to their village.

The incident has left the locals of the Karodkala village in shock and disbelief. Things would become clear only after recording of Patidar's statement, especially on where he was since his "death", Rathore added.

leisure



SHAWN, CAMILA SEEN KISSING POST BREAK-UP

Singers Shawn Mendes and Camila Cabello were captured spending time together a year after breaking up while attending Coachella in California Friday. In one of the videos shared online by a Mendes fan account, the duo can be seen watching a performance in the crowd together and kissing.

RAJASTHAN'S NANDINI GUPTA WINS FEMINA MISS INDIA WORLD 2023

Nandini Gupta, 19, who hails from Kota, Rajasthan, has been crowned Femina Miss India World 2023 and will represent the country at the Miss World contest. Delhi's Sherya Poonja and Manipur's Thounaojam Strela Luwang emerged as the 1st and 2nd runners-up, respectively.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you want to do something for the environment. Ganesh says plant a tree, clean up your neighbourhood, ask for a paper bag. You wish to lead the world into a better place? Do it by all means, but one step at a time.

TAURUS
You will not lose your cool today despite the overwhelming odds, feels Ganesh. Rationale and reason will be the rhyme of your attitude as you diagnose the problems and uproot them successfully. Success beckons and you are ready to reach out and grab it by hook or by crook. Guard your reputation as your ethics might come under the scanner, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will ponder over religious and cultural values and issues today. You will indulge in a fair amount of discussion with your family members over the issue and present your thoughts and feelings on the subject. These discussions could end up covering topics like law, education, societal concerns, manners and etiquette etc., says Ganesh.

CANCER
The day looks set to be an ordinary day, for both work and play, says Ganesh. Yet, if you are planning to participate in an event or a competition today, march ahead, by all means. There will, practically, be no one who'll be able to compete with you.

LEO
A mixed bag of fortunes, a bittersweet pill, call it what you will, but today brings with it a lot of things packed within its 24-hour period. Ganesh foresees a hectic morning, and an even more frantic afternoon. So, respite will be a luxury for you today. If this was the bitter end of the pill, then its sweet results will be like a balm on your frayed nerves, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Give attention to your deepest feelings. A small excursion may be on the cards. Ganesh says today you will easily get along with other people. You will shower your sincere love and affection on your near and dear ones. Use your magical skills to improve your relationships.

LIBRA
It is your friends who prove to be lucky and beneficial for you today, especially if they happen to be walking the corridors of power, says Ganesh. Do not hesitate to start that new joint venture today. See your popularity grow by leaps and bounds as you get due recognition for your abilities and efforts.

SCORPIO
It is high time you diverted all your energies towards your object of love, advises Ganesh. Research-oriented work could well be an option too. Ganesh says you are likely to find someone special to talk about those good old times and have a great time.

SAGITTARIUS
You will be your usual self today, frank and precise. You are all ears for what your life partner has to say. This will make them feel special! According to Ganesh, be patient and carry out your work gracefully.

CAPRICORN
Lack of proper planning is probably the reason for you not being able to get your work done in time. You'll realise this mistake and today, you will spend majority of time drawing a plan on paper, says Ganesh. You may hit a jackpot, but think twice before spending the money on anything unnecessary.

AQUARIUS
You may feel constrained by future plans. Ganesh says that plans are okay, but you must live in the present to avail the cosmic energy that ultimately manifests your dreams. At work, your generous spirit adds to the goodwill you have already accrued.

PISCES
You would do well to make a to-do list today, if only to gain a realistic perspective of how much you want done and how much you can achieve in the time you have available. Making unreasonable demands from yourself will only lead to further delays, says Ganesh.



Huma in no rush for marriage

Mumbai: Actress Huma Qureshi has been active in the industry for more than a decade. Evidently, as time goes on, well-wishers of her want to see her get married, as celebrity weddings are the talk of the town nowadays. But Huma says she is not in a hurry to get married and will wait for the right person. Qureshi also mentioned that she doesn't feel pressure to get married just because others in the industry are doing so.

Recently, during an AMA session on Instagram, Qureshi was questioned about her plans to get married, and she joked by asking if it was her mom. She responded, "I will get married when I meet the person, fall in love, and feel it is right for me. I am bombarded with the 'when am I going to get married' question all the time.' I don't feel the pressure to get married just because people in the industry are getting married or because I am being constantly asked about it."

She will be next seen in Pooja Meri Jaan opposite Mrunal Thakur. Huma also has a biography of one of India's most celebrated chefs, Tarla Dalal, titled Tarla.

AGENCIES



Diljit takes the stage by storm at Coachella

Los Angeles: Actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh has been reaching great lengths in his career, both nationally and internationally. In a historic moment for Indian artists, the actor became the first Punjabi singer to perform at the popular US

Punjabis have reached Coachella. And those who don't understand my songs, catch the vibe."

Dosanjh performed his hit tracks such as Jatt Da Pyaar, Patiala Peg, and others. Numerous celebrities from B-town lauded the singer. Dosanjh's Udda Punjab co-star Kareena Kapoor Khan shared a glimpse of his performance and called him the 'OG'.

AGENCIES

'I chose a non-monotonous life'

Mumbai: Versatile actress Taapsee Pannu completed ten glorious years in the Hindi film industry. She made her debut with the film Chashme Baddoor (2013). In a recent interview, Taapsee spoke about her journey in the film industry.

The actress acknowledged that she aspired to establish a distinct personality through her art and that her self-critical attitude assisted her in doing so. She said, "A lot of people (actors) who come into this industry don't have a recall value. But I have been lucky to get back-to-back good opportunities that helped me create a unique identity and leave a strong impression on the audience's mind."

When asked to identify the lowest point in these ten years, the actress replied, "Being an actor, I've kept myself vulnerable to situations in life... to make sure I stay as real as possible. This obviously makes you experience a lot of lows as well. But I'll just say that I have had as many lows as highs. And I'm sure there'll be many more to come. All I know is that I chose a non-monotonous life. And that's what I got."

She will be next seen opposite Shah Rukh Khan in Rajkumar Hirani's Dunki. AGENCIES



The Bhonsor Carnival brings platform for entrepreneurs

Bhubaneswar: With an initiative to bring every genre of entrepreneurs under one umbrella, The Bhonsor Carnival was organised here in the city Sunday. It's going to be a series of events to encourage cofounder culture in Odisha, as the organisers stated.

Avishek Jagdev, one of the cofounders, described the vision of the festival and said, "We can see the rise of self-made entrepreneurs and creators in domains such as content creation, culinary, handicrafts and handlooms and others throughout Odisha. The limitation, however, is finding a common platform where they can showcase their talent or business to make themselves visible to the mass. So, we are here to address that issue and cater to the enthusiasts needs for assistance in portfolio growth so



Partha Sarathi Ray, Dipanwit Dash Mohapatra, Subhendu Biswal and Debarchan Mishra speaking on the panel discussion 'Odia cinema - The Road Ahead'

Many of the content creators, entrepreneurs, brands, film celebrities and business personalities from Odisha graced the event. A panel discussion on the topic of future scope of Odia cinema named, 'Odia cinema - The road ahead' was conducted among the presence of Partha Sarathi Ray, Dipanwit Das Mohapatra and Subhendu Biswal and Debarchan Mishra. Satyabrata Mohapatra bemused the audience with a live stand-up comedy performance. Rapper Pheonix and Subhajit Dash kept the live audience hooked with their rap and dance performances.

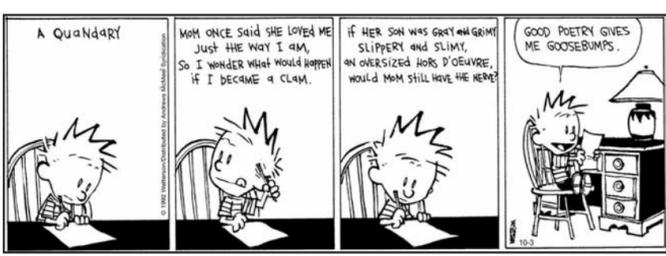
A book discussion and an author interview of Ankita Sahoo on her debut book A Potpourri of Poems concluded the event.

PNM

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

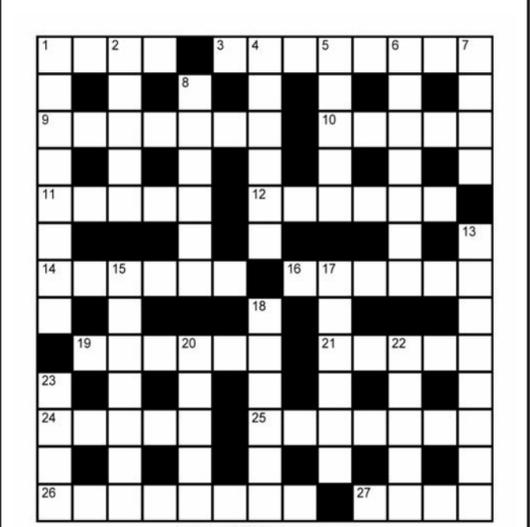


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



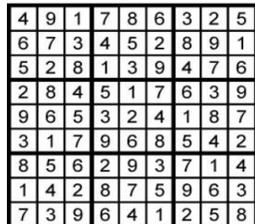
- Across**
- 1 Notability
 - 3 Hushed up
 - 9 Steering systems for vessels
 - 10 Desert sight
 - 11 Pale purple colour
 - 12 Conqueror of Gaul
 - 14 Food supplier
 - 16 Turn down
 - 19 Entrance
 - 21 Singing voice
 - 24 Cronus or Oceanus, e.g.
 - 25 Intense
 - 26 Leech
 - 27 Terrarium plant
 - Down**
 - 1 Industrial vehicle
 - 2 Runway walker
 - 4 Beetle
 - 5 Waste away
 - 6 Waterfall feature
 - 7 Short run
 - 8 Save
 - 13 Large roe source
 - 15 Nature's alarm clock
 - 17 Property
 - 18 Graceful
 - 20 Ice cube tool
 - 22 One of the family
 - 23 Quash

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

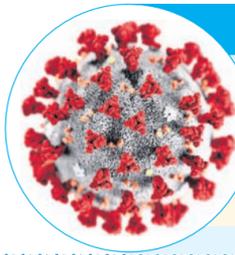


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



FROZEN IN MOTION

An artiste performs Odissi at the 45th Baisakhi Utsav organised by 'Chinta o Chetana' at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,56,29,422	65,83,55,637	68,42,462
India	4,48,18,115	4,42,29,459	5,31,114
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Excise revenue up 17.65%

POST NEWS NETWORK

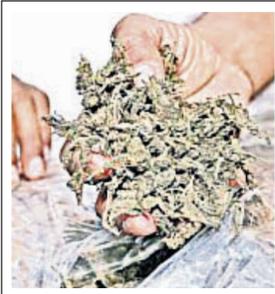
Bhubaneswar, April 16: The Excise department has collected ₹8,967.49 crore as revenue in 2022-23 against ₹7,622.41 crore in 2021-22, registering a 17.65 per cent growth.

According to the data shared during the annual review meeting held under the chairmanship of Excise commissioner Ashish Kumar Singh here, the department had collected ₹5,400.21 crore as revenue in 2020-21.

Singh said the department gave top priority to enforcement activities for which the detection of cases and arrest of bootleggers have increased substantially in the financial year 2022-23.

A record number of 61,377 cases have been detected in the financial year 2022-23 against that of 40,598 cases in 2021-22, showing an increase of 51 per cent. In 2020-21, only 25,065 cases were detected.

In 2022-23, a record number of 49,211 persons have been arrested against 33,551 persons in 2021-22, showing an increase of 47 per cent.



FIGURES SAY IT ALL

- 49,211 persons arrested in Excise cases in 2022-23 against 33,551 in 2021-22, a 47 per cent growth
- 1,949 NDPS cases detected in 2022-23 against 748 in 2021-22, an increase of 161 per cent
- 2,232 persons arrested under NDPS Act in 2022-23 against 849 in 2021-22, registering a 163 per cent rise
- 32,512 gram heroin seized in 2022-23 against 12,567 in 2021-22, an increase of 159 per cent

In 2020-21, only 19,239 persons were arrested, official sources said.

A record number of 1,949 cases have been detected under NDPS Act in 2022-23 against 748 cases in 2021-22, showing an increase of 161 per cent. In 2020-21, only 396 cases were detected under NDPS Act.

In 2022-23, a record number of 2,232 persons have been arrested under NDPS Act against 849 persons in 2021-22, showing an in-

crease of 163 per cent. In 2020-21, only 381 persons were arrested under the Act.

Similarly, in 2022-23, a record 32,512 gram of heroin was seized against 12,567 gram in 2021-22, showing an increase of 159 per cent. In 2020-21, only 3,654 gram of the contraband was seized.

In 2022-23, 41,330 kilogram of ganja was seized against 31,566 kilogram in 2021-22, showing an

increase of 30 per cent from that of 2021-22. In 2020-21, only 16,962 kilogram of ganja was seized.

The Excise commissioner also reviewed the data digitisation, implementation of IT, non-settlement of shops, arrears revenue collection, and compliance of petitions. He asked superintendents of Excise and EIB units to strengthen and enhance the enforcement measures for 2023-24 and to conduct frequent raids against the illegal manufacturing, distribution and sale of ID liquor/ duplicate IMFL/non-duty paid IMFL/NDPS items in the state.

Further, the superintendent of Excise was directed to conduct sustained raids in Jharsuguda and adjacent areas on account of the by-election in Jharsuguda Assembly constituency.

Sources said the department has switched over to the digital workplace 'eAbkari' with the technical support of NIC by developing and implementing about 50 online modules as on date bringing transparent, hassle-free, timely service delivery.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Puri stn revamp within 3 yrs: Jardosh

PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, April 16: The ongoing redevelopment work of the railway station here will be completed within 36 months, Union Minister of State (MoS) for Railways Darshana Jardosh said Sunday.

After reviewing the progress of execution of various central government schemes and achievement of targets in the district, the minister said the redevelopment work will be completed within 36 months without hampering the flow of passengers and pilgrims.

She also praised the design which has been inspired by the local architecture of temples. Since around one lakh passengers are commuting daily in 40 trains in addition to weekly and special trains, adequate infrastructure and facilities will be created in the station, she said.

During the discussions, she advised officials to focus on all types of passengers, especially, the poor and underprivileged, along with the redevelopment work.

She also advised officials to focus on development of circulating areas, concourse, platforms, light-



Union MoS for Railways Darshana Jardosh reviews progress of Puri railway station redevelopment work, Sunday

ings, waiting rooms, toilets, elevators, which are much needed for the comfort of passengers.

The Union minister said handicraft and handloom showrooms will be opened in the station.

A number of schemes are being implemented to involve self-help groups (SHGs) in handloom and handicraft sectors, she informed. She said the progress in the con-

struction of Sri Jagannath Medical College and Hospital is very slow and the town is yet to have adequate sewerage treatment plants.

She said tenders have been floated for creation of four mega water bodies under the Jal Nidhi Yojana. Four water bodies have been created to conserve rainwater under the Amrit Sarovar Yojana. Earlier in the day, she had a darshan of the Trinity.

Pay ₹5 lakh to bridge collapse victim: NHRC to Chief Secy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the Chief Secretary to pay ₹5 lakh as compensation to the next of kin of a man who died when an under construction bridge over Nagi river in Nabarangpur collapsed in January 2021.

While hearing a plea filed by rights activist Akhand, the NHRC also asked the state government to facilitate ₹1 lakh to each of those who suffered severe injuries in the mishap by June 2.

The rights activist had informed the commission that the under construction bridge near Talapadar village in Nabarangpur district collapsed January 10, 2021.

2021 Nabarangpur mishap

Mahendra Mali, who was working as a labourer there, died in the mishap. The accident also left around 11 persons injured.

Taking cognisance, the commission sought enquiry reports from the district Collector. In the report, the Nabarangpur Collector informed the NHRC that the incident took place due to the

negligence of government officials. "An executive engineer and three others were suspended following the mishap," the Collector's report said. On June 28, 2022, the commission served a notice on the state government asking why compensation of ₹5 lakh to the deceased kin and ₹1 lakh to the injured should not be given for the negligence.

However, the Chief Secretary did not revert within the stipulated time. It promoted the commission to send a reminder October 17, 2022. This time, too, the Chief Secretary did not reply to the notice.

Ailing leopard captured

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Forest officials Sunday captured an ailing leopard near Siliarihabara village under Dharamabandha section of Nuapada Sadar forest range.

Locals spotted the leopard on the outskirts of the village and informed the Forest officials following which it was captured.

The leopard was found to be in poor health and unable to walk properly. The leopard was caught using a huge net and then taken for medical examination in a cage. The veterinary doctors treating the leopard said it was not well due to extreme heat. The leopard is undergoing treatment and would be released into the forest on recovery. Panic struck the villages for the last one month after many domestic animals were killed allegedly by a leopard.

Morning classes at Anganwadi centres

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Keeping in view the heatwave situation in the state, the Odisha government Sunday directed all Anganwadi centres to hold morning classes from 7am to 10am from April 17.

Earlier, the state government had announced that all government and private schools will resume morning classes from April 17.

Through a notification Sunday, the state government authorised all the district collectors to change the timing by taking into account the temperature and heat conditions in their respective localities. If required, Collectors can declare holidays in Anganwadi centres coming under their jurisdiction. The Anganwadi centres have also been directed to arrange drinking water and other necessary facilities for the children in attendance.

The state government had announced holidays for schools and Anganwadis from April 12 to 16. The decision came in wake of the horrifying heat conditions prevailing in the state.



RESPIRE IN SIGHT: As heatwave sweeps state, two girls carry home a table fan hoping for some moments of relief, in Raj Mahal area of Bhubaneswar, Sunday

'Disturbed sleep linked with long Covid breathlessness'

Researchers say targeting sleep disruption by reducing anxiety and improving muscle strength in patients could alleviate breathlessness

If you are facing breathless episodes after Covid during the day, also check if you are not able to sleep properly as researchers have now discovered that the disturbed sleep patterns in patients hospitalised with Covid was likely to be a driver of breathlessness.

The study of patients in 38 institutions across the UK, led by University of Manchester and Leicester found that 62 per cent of Covid patients had sleep disruption, which was likely to persist for at least 12 months.

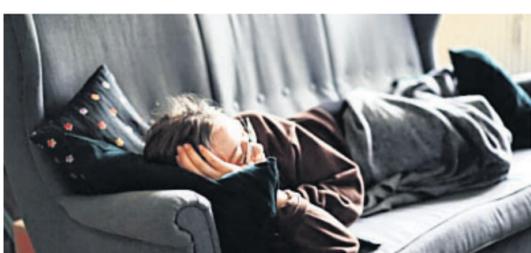
The study, published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine, has highlighted for the first time the association between two post-Covid condition symptoms: breathlessness and sleep disruption.

On average, participants who

had been hospitalised with Covid-19 slept for over an hour longer, but their sleep patterns were less regular (19 per cent decrease on the sleep regularity scale), than matched participants who were hospitalised due to any cause.

The researchers also found that participants with sleep disturbance were more likely to have anxiety and muscle weakness, common post-Covid-19 condition symptoms.

"The study has discovered that sleep disturbance could be an important driver of post-Covid breathlessness - or dyspnoea - because of its associations with reduced muscle function and anxiety," said John Blaikley, a clinical scientist from the University of Manchester and respiratory doctor. The sleep disruption was likely



On average, participants who had been hospitalised with Covid slept for over an hour longer, but their sleep patterns were less regular than matched participants who were hospitalised due to any cause

to drive breathlessness directly, but that reduced muscle function

The sleep disruption, the reduced muscle function and increased anxiety, both recognised causes of breathlessness, could partially mediate the association between sleep disturbance and breathlessness, the researchers believe

and increased anxiety; both recognised causes of breathlessness,

could partially mediate the association between sleep disturbance and breathlessness.

The authors speculate that targeting sleep disruption by reducing anxiety and improving muscle strength in these patients could alleviate breathlessness, but further investigation is needed. Understanding the causes of breathlessness is complex since it can arise from conditions that affect the respiratory, neurological, cardiovascular, and mental health systems.

"Our findings suggest that sleep disturbance is a common problem after hospitalisation for Covid-19 and is associated with breathlessness. We also show this is likely to persist for at least 12 months," said first study author Callum Jackson from University of Manchester.

CUO researchers find new freshwater fish in Koraput

■ The new species is a member of the proboscis species group and distinguished from other members of this group development of proboscis

■ The fishes, usually found under rocks and among stones, are edible, often consumed by local people



The finding confirms the biodiversity of the Koraput region and equally the biodiversity richness of the river Kolab (Saberi near Gupteswar)

PNN & AGENCIES

Koraput/Bhubaneswar, April 16: Researchers from the Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraput, along with the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered a novel rare freshwater edible fish species from the Kolab River at Ghatguda, Koraput.

Supriya Surachita, a Science and Technology department INSPIRE Fellow, during her research on the topic "Diversity, distribution of fishes and threats in the freshwater bodies of Koraput in Eastern Ghats of Odisha," under the supervision of Sharat Kumar Palita, School of Biodiversity and Conservation of Natural Resources dean at the CUO, found the new cyprinid fish species from the Kolab River; one of the tributaries of the Godavari River.

The new cyprinid fish species was named Garra laishrami, after Laishram Kosygin of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) to honour his remarkable contributions to understanding the taxonomy of Indian freshwater fishes.

The findings of the study were published recently in the internationally reputed taxonomy journal "Ichthyological Exploration of Freshwaters" published from Germany. These groups of fishes are dis-

tributed in the geographical regions from Borneo, southern China and southern Asia through Middle East Asia, Arabian Peninsula and East Africa to West Africa.

However, the new species Garra laishrami, as far as it's known, have only been found from Kolab River locality in the Eastern Ghats of Odisha, Godavari River drainage.

The new species is a member of the proboscis species group and distinguished from other mem-

bers of this group distributed in the Indian subcontinent by the development of proboscis, degree of tuberculation on the proboscis and transverse lobe on snout and nostrils, position of transverse groove and morph metric data of the body. The maximum length of the fish is from 76 mm to 95.5 mm. The species is edible, consumed by the local people. The fishes are usually found under rocks and among stones and boulders of torrential streams and rivers.

The finding confirms the biodiversity of the Koraput region and equally the biodiversity richness of the river Kolab (Saberi near Gupteswar).

Yellow warning for next 7 days



Meanwhile, the IMD has forecast light to moderate rain or thunderstorm at one or two places over Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Nawarangpur and Nuapada districts, while dry weather is likely to prevail over the remaining districts of Odisha Monday.

The weather office has also issued a yellow warning for thunderstorms with lightning very likely to occur at one or two in districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Keonjhar and Bhadrak districts.

The weather agency forecasted maximum temperature (day temperature) is likely to be slightly falling by 2-3 degrees Celsius during the next three days and no large change thereafter at many places over the districts of Odisha. Maximum temperature (day temperature) is very likely to be 40 degrees Celsius and more and above normal by 2-3 degrees Celsius at a few places over the districts of the state.

Bhubaneswar, April 16: The regional office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Bhubaneswar has issued a yellow warning for thunderstorms and lightning accompanied by gusty winds and light to moderate rain in several places in Odisha during the next seven days.

According to IMD bulletin, thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Kandhamal,

Ganjam, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Keonjhar and Bhadrak. Light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorm/lightning/gusty winds is likely over several places in the state in next two days. Thunderstorm with lightning & gusty wind (30-40 kmph) is likely at isolated places in Odisha for few days, the bulletin said.

"The rainfall activity will occur as the moisture incursion from the Bay of Bengal is expected to recommence," said Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre scientist Umasankar Das.



VENTING IRE: Members of Aam Aadmi Party protesting Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's questioning by CBI over alleged excise policy scam at Master Canteen in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Orissa High Court organises maiden law quiz competition

Cuttack, April 16: Celebrating the 75th year of its establishment, Orissa High Court organised the first ever 'State Level Law Quiz - 2023' competition for the law students of the state in collaboration with skilling platform Q Shala at Odisha Judicial Academy here Saturday.

Chief Justice S Muralidhar and other judges of the Orissa High Court attended the grand finale of the event which was witnessed by students and teachers of various law colleges and universities.

Speaking on the event, the Chief Justice said, "These events have been organised to mark the 75th year of the formation of the High Court of Orissa and to acknowledge the contribution of many in the society towards building of the institutions of the High Court and the District Courts. While the contribution of judges, lawyers and other stakeholders have been acknowledged it was felt equally important to acknowledge the contribution of law students."



The teams qualifying for the grand finale were from the PG Department of Law, Sambalpur University, Bargarh Law College, Bargarh, PG Department of Law, Berhampur University, Lingaraj Law College, Berhampur, PG Department of Law, Utkal University and National Law University, Cuttack.

The questions asked in the quiz were on the topics of law, politics and social studies from the lens of history, culture, music, movies, art and technology. While two different teams of National Law University bagged the winning spot and the 2nd runner-up spot, the team of PG Department of Law, Utkal University secured the 2nd position.

Earlier this month, four zonal rounds of the contest had been arranged in their respective zonal headquarters to ensure participation of law students from all the districts. Top scoring teams of each zone had qualified for the finals.

Interactive session on venture capital

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Bhubaneswar Startups, in collaboration with CTEF-Innovex - an Incubation centre of CIPEIT and Foundership organised recently an interactive session of the founders and the investors here. The objective of the event was to provide valuable insights on venture capital investing to startups based out of Odisha.

The event was a great opportunity for the startups based out of Odisha to interact with an industry expert and gain valuable insights. Ashish Pafadia, Managing Partner at Blume Ventures Fund, answered doubts raised by the entrepreneurs and gave them solid advice. The startups received guidance on how to approach VCs, pitch their business ideas, and prepare for due diligence.

The event witnessed a tremendous turnout, with over 82 startups participating in the program. The delegates present in the event appreciated the efforts of Bhubaneswar Start-ups, CTEF Innovex, and Foundership for organising such an informative event. The success of the event highlights the growing interest among entrepreneurs in Odisha to explore the potential of venture capital in scaling up their businesses.

CONTINUED FROM P1

Sambalpur limps...

Sambalpur Collector Ananya Das said that people have been cooperating with the district administration. Superintendent of Police B Gangadhar told reporters that 79 people were arrested so far in connection with the violence.

"While 26 people were arrested in connection with the stone pelting incident April 12 during a motorbike rally, 53 others have been taken into custody for violence and arson during the Hanuman Jayanti procession April 14," Gangadhar said. Replying to a question, the SP said, "It appears that the violence was pre-planned. More arrests will be made." The state government has suspended internet services in Sambalpur district till 10am April 17, the SP said. Meanwhile, senior BJP leader and Union minister Giriraj Singh accused the BJD government of adopting an "appeasement policy" while dealing with the case. "The government is shielding some people involved in the violence," he alleged. Countering him, BJD leader and MLA Amar Satpathy said the government has taken action as per the law.

MSME summit by ICAI in City



Bhubaneswar, April 16: Committee on Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and start up of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) organised an MSME summit at a City hotel Saturday.

In the summit, a MoU was signed and exchanged between committee on MSME & Startup of ICAI and the state MSME department.

The programme was inaugurated by MSME Minister Pratap Keshari Deb in the presence of MSME department principal secretary Saswat Mishra.

Addressing the gathering, Deb spoke about the growth trajectory of MSMEs in Odisha, while the principal secretary elaborated on capacity building of MSMEs with the aid of state government.

Speaking on the occasion, ICAI vice president Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal said "ICAI is responsive to the emerging challenges faced by the MSMEs and Startups. To address the issues faced by MSMEs and Startups, the ICAI will be taking a number of initiatives to

strengthen and develop their capacity in order to enhance their competence and improve their visibility amongst the business community. The Institute will develop and provide capacity building measures for the enhancement of the portfolio of MSMEs & Startups."

Committee on MSME & Start-up of ICAI chairman Dheeraj Kumar Khandelwal said, "The Committee on MSME & Startup is contributing to the growth of Indian economy and budding entrepreneurs. Various innovative and path breaking initiatives have been taken by the committee to reboot the Indian MSMEs."

The Summit was attended by more than 175 Chartered Accountants and more than 100 representatives from MSME department. Govt. of Odisha and witnessed a very knowledge intensive and interactive session on MSME.

The programme was coordinated by the managing committee members of Bhubaneswar, Brahmapur, Cuttack, Jharsuguda, Rourkela and Sambalpur branches.

CBI grills Kejriwal...

Officials said the CBI asked the chief minister about the (excise) policy formulation process, especially the "untraceable" file, which was earlier slated to be put before the Council of Ministers. They said the file containing opinions of the expert committee and public and legal opinions on it was not kept before the council and remains untraceable.

Russia frees dozens...

"Belief in victory unites all of us always, and especially today. At Easter, which from time immemorial has been a family holiday for Ukrainians, a day of warmth, hope and great unity. We are one big family - Ukrainians. We have one big home - Ukraine. We have one big goal - victory for all," Zelenskyy said. Ukraine's top soldier, Gen. Valery Zaluzhnyy, likewise drew parallels between the Christian message of resurrection and renewal and Ukraine's hopes for victory.



KIDS' CAUSE: Members attending the 16th Annual Conference of 'Parents Association of the Mentally Retarded Children' at Lohiya Academy in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

40% of supermarket meat may have 'superbugs'

In an alarming find, researchers have discovered multi drug-resistant E. coli in 40 per cent of supermarket meat samples.

The team analysed 100 meat products (25 each of chicken, turkey, beef and pork) chosen at random from supermarkets in Oviedo, Spain.

The majority (73 per cent) of the meat products contained levels of E. coli that were within food safety limits.

Despite this, almost half contained multi drug-resistant and/or potentially pathogenic E. coli.

The percentage of positive samples for E. coli per meat type was 68 per cent turkey, 56 per cent chicken, 16 per cent beef



- The percentage of positive samples for E. coli per meat type was 68% turkey, 56% chicken, 16% beef and 12% pork
- Multi drug-resistant bacteria can spread from animals to humans through the food chain but, due to commercial sensitivities, data on levels of antibiotic-resistant bugs in food is not made widely available
- Drug-resistant infections kill an estimated 700,000 people a year globally and the figure is projected to rise to 10 million by 2050 if no action is taken, according to the World Health Organization

ant bugs in food is not made widely available.

"Farm-to-fork interventions must be a priority to protect the consumer. For example, implementation of surveillance lab methods to allow further study of high-risk bacteria (in farm animals and meat) and their evolution due to the latest EU restriction programmes on antibiotic use in veterinary medicine," said Dr Azucena Mora Gutierrez of the University of Santiago de Compostela-Lugo, Lugo, Spain.

The study was set to be presented at European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases (ECCMID 2023) in Copenhagen, from April 15-18.

Antibiotic resistance is reaching dangerously high levels around the world.

Drug-resistant infections kill an estimated 700,000 people a year globally and the figure is projected to rise to 10 million by 2050 if no action is taken, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The researchers called for regular assessment of levels of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in meat products.

"Strategies at farm level, such as vaccines, to reduce the presence of specific multi drug-resistant and pathogenic bacteria in food-producing animals, would reduce the meat carriage and consumer risk," said Dr Mora Gutierrez.

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Man held for murder over political rivalry

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, April 16: Police arrested Sunday prime accused Rashmi Ranjan Roul for stabbing a fellow villager to death and critically injuring his brother-in-law due to political rivalry in Kendrapara district. SP Madkar Sandeep Sampat said Roul and two of his associates fatally stabbed Amit Kumar Patra and seriously injured SK Jena Saturday night while they were returning home from neighbouring Dahianta village after attending a religious function April 15 night.

The SP said there was political rivalry between the deceased and the accused since the last panchayat polls. While the accused Roul, a resident of Sahara village, was supporting the sitting sarpanch, the deceased had been backing the

rival candidate.

While Patra and Jena were returning home on the fateful night they were waylaid by Roul and his associates near Sahira Chowk. A heated argument followed between the accused and the deceased. Roul allegedly stabbed Patra a number of times. In an effort to save Patra, his brother-in-law also suffered injuries.

Jena was first rushed to Aul CHC and later shifted to the district headquarters hospital here. However, as his condition deteriorated, he was transferred to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack.

Police had registered a case April 15 itself after the uncle of the deceased lodged a complaint. They finally managed to nab Roul who was on the run, Sunday. Police are hopeful that his associates will be also be apprehended soon.



STRETCHING SINEWS: Kids hone their self-defence skills at Pencak Silat martial arts training camp which concluded at Jajpur Road, Sunday. Over 200 boys and girls from Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal participated in two-day camp

No let-up in Brahmani pollution

THE WATER OF GANGUA NULLAH, A WATER BODY IN BHUBANESWAR IS MAXIMUM POLLUTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 16: Pollution in Brahmani river continues unabated while Gangua nullah in Bhubaneswar is the most polluted water body, a report presented April 13 by state Water Resources secretary Devidutta Ramani Ranjan Patmaik, said.

According to the report, pollution has been continuing unabated in Brahmani and Serua rivers. The state pollution control board (SPCB) had declared the water flowing in 16 rivers and three nullahs in the state as polluted in 2017. This has happened due to discharge of toxic effluents by the industrial plants which have come up near the river banks and other water bodies.

It has been alleged that Brahmani river is getting polluted due to the apathetic attitude of the administration. It has been seven years since the Orissa High Court passed an order to install effluent treatment plants (ETPs) on river banks to treat the polluted water from industries. However, no effort has been made to follow the Orissa High Court's order.

In its report, the SPCB had measured the pollution level in these rivers and nullahs on a scale of one to five. Scale-1 means the highest level of pollution while scale-5 is the lowest level. Brahmani, Kathajodi and Serua rivers and the two nullahs Gangua and Guradiha have been put on scale-



4. On the other hand, the pollution level in Gangua nullah in Bhubaneswar has been marked at scale-3 while that of the Guradiha nullah in Rourkela is on scale-4, denoting a high level of pollution.

Similarly, water of Daya river which flows from Bhubaneswar to Bargarh, the water of Brahmani river from Rourkela to Biritola, water of Kathajodi river from Cuttack to Orali and the water of Serua river from Khandeita to Sankhatras have a high level of pollution. Sources said that in all these rivers vary between scale-3 and scale-5 respectively.

Earlier, pollution level in Gangua nullah was on scale-1 which has improved with time and come down to scale-3. However, Gangua continues to remain the highest polluted water body among the 19 rivers and three nullahs.

Expressing concern over rampant

pollution in some major river and water bodies, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had directed to conduct a probe into the matter and find out solutions through a five-member committee led by Principal Secretary of state Forest and Environment department.

The directors of Environment, Town Planning and Industries departments as well as the secretary of SPCB were the members of this committee. The committee was named as the River Rejuvenation Committee (RRC).

During the probe, the committee found out that the Brahmani and Kharasrota rivers which flow through the industry-based Jajpur district have become seriously toxic due to discharge of effluents by industrial plants in this district, Sundargarh and Angul. The waste water of various mines in Sukinda mining area of Jajpur

district is also discharged into Damsala nullah which then flows into Brahmani river and pollutes its water.

As a result, Brahmani river has been identified as a polluted river since 2017. In 2017, the bio-oxygen demand (BOD) in the river water was 6.0 mg/litre while it rose to 7.6 mg/litre in 2018. The BOD in 2019 was 5.3mg/litre, 6.3mg/litre in 2020, 5.6mg/litre in 2021, 5.7mg/litre in 2022 and 5.7 mg/litre in 2023. According to SPCB, the water of Brahmani river is on scale-5.

Similarly, the Gangua nullah in Bhubaneswar had a BOD of 39.0mg/litre in 2017 while its BOD was found at 18.0mg/litre by February, 2023. The BOD of Daya river from Bhubaneswar to Bargarh was 7.3mg/litre in 2017 and 4.8mg/litre by February, 2023.

The BOD of Guradiha nullah in Rourkela was 11.3 in 2017 and 8.0mg/litre by February, 2023.

The BOD of Kathajodi river was 11.2 in 2017 and it has come down to 3.8mg/litre by February, 2023 while that of Serua river from Khandeita to Sankhatras was 4.8 in 2017 and 3.6mg/litre in February, 2023. The SPCB has given priority to make these rivers and water bodies pollution-free.

The SPCB has also termed 12 rivers such as Mangala, Nagavali, Ratnachira, Nandirajor, Kuakhai, Mahanadi, Rushikulya, Bhdn, Kusumi, Nuara Sabulia and Budhabalanga as well as Banguru nullah as pollution free.

Woman killed by son, daughter-in-law



POST NEWS NETWORK

Daringbadi, April 16: A woman was killed by her son and daughter-in-law over domestic dispute at Pangli village under this police limits in Kandhamal district, Saturday evening. The deceased was identified as Pushpanjali Parichha, wife of Lakpati Parichha and a resident of Padanketa village. The matter came to the fore after her husband lodged a complaint at the Daringbadi police station, Sunday. Police registered a case and summoned the family members and others to the police station for interrogation. So far no arrests have been made.

According to the complaint, Lakpati and his wife and other family members had gone to Pangli village to attend the post death rituals of his mother-in-law. The incident occurred when Pushpanjali had an altercation with his son and daughter-in-law over some issues.

Enraged, her son, daughter-in-law and one of their associates dragged Pushpanjali by her hair and repeatedly kicked her on the stomach. They also banged her head against the wall. Pushpanjali collapsed in a heap on the floor. She was rushed to a local hospital where doctors pronounced her dead on arrival.

Ten injured, vehicles, shops set on fire over renaming Orali Square

SECTION 144 CLAMPED TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER IN THE LOCALITY

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak/Hatadihi, April 16: The district administration Sunday clamped prohibitory order Section-144 of CrPC at Orali Square on the Bhadrak-Anandapur state highway bordering this district. The restrictions were imposed after two groups of villagers in Bhadrak and Keonjhar districts clashed over boundary dispute and renaming of the square, Saturday night.

The development attracted attention after Sub Collector-cum-Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDJM)

sons in the case. Anandapur MLA Bhagirathi Sethi, Bhadrak Zilla Parishad chairperson Prafulla Jena, Bont block chairperson Manoranjan Ghadei and a delegation led by BJP leader Badrinarayan Dhal reached the spot and held talks with the police officials. The leaders also urged people to maintain peace.

As per reports, the dispute was between the residents of Orali and Apanda villages over renaming of the Orali Chowk. People of both the villages have been at loggerheads over the demand to change the name of 'Orali Square' to 'Apanda Square'.



Manoj Kumar Patra issued the prohibitory order. It will be in force within a 200-metre radius of Orali Square from 11.00am April 16 till 11.00am April 18.

A total of 10 persons were injured in the clash as hundreds of residents of Orali village under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district allegedly attacked the inhabitants of Apanda village under Bont block in Bhadrak district and set fire to over 10 shops and several vehicles. Properties worth lakhs of rupees were destroyed in the arson.

On being informed, Bhadrak city DSP Anshuman Dwivedi, Bont's additional tehsildar Binitarani Kisku and Bont IIC Aditya Prasad Jena reached the spot and took stock of the situation. Bont police also arrested six per-

Sources said that the disputed 'Orali Square' is on the fringes of Bont block of Bhadrak district and Hatadihi block of Keonjhar district. Few days back, the Apanda RI had demarcated the boundary in the area and found that the 'Orali Square' falls under Apanda village in Bhadrak district. On this assessment, residents of Apanda village have been demanding the square be named as 'Apanda'.

The clash took place the inhabitants of Apanda locality tried to install a signboard renaming the place as 'Apanda Square' which was opposed by the Orali villagers. Palpable tension still prevails in the area as two platoons of police forces have been deployed in the area Sunday to maintain the law and order situation.

Female jumbo calf carcass found in Narsinghpur forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Narsinghpur, April 16: There is no let up in elephant deaths in Odisha as Forest department officials recovered Sunday the carcass of a female elephant calf in a dense forested area of Nuagarh range in Cuttack district Sunday. It is suspected that the calf, approximately a little over two years old, may have died due to scarcity of water and the heatwave sweeping the district, Narsinghpur Eastern Circle ranger Subhash Chandra Rout said.



While reliable sources alleged that the calf died 10 to 15 days back, Forest officials contradicted them stating that the carcass is only two to three days old. The carcass when recovered was on the verge of decomposition. Forest department officials hurriedly conducted a post-mortem and buried the carcass.

The ranger said that there are three ponds inside the Brahmani beat jungle where sufficient water is available for wild animals. He said that the calf was moving with the herd, but may have failed to keep pace. As a result, the herd left the calf to die and moved away.

However, locals alleged that the elephant calf could not have died due to water scarcity as plenty of it is available. Many suspect that the pachyderm was killed by a poacher and the Forest department officials were allegedly trying to shield the guilty.

Forest dept providing water for blackbucks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 16: With most of the water sources drying up due to the scorching sun, the Forest department in Ganjam district is filling holes and saucer pits with water in blackbuck habitat areas to quench the thirst of animals. Ganjam is the only district in the state, where blackbucks, a 'Schedule 1' animal are sighted. Their numbers stood at 7,745 in the last census held in February.

The Forest department has erected a number of saucer pits in Aska, Buguda and Polasra forest ranges under Ghumusar south division so that the blackbucks have plentiful supply of water.



The animals often venture into the nearby villages in search of water and are targeted by stray dogs, said Amulya Upadhaya, pres-

ident, Ganjam district blackbuck protection committee. He said they have rescued a blackbuck recently from a stray dog in the Bhetanai area.

Officials said blackbuck herds roaming in Jagata Padia near Bhetanai have migrated to other places in search of water, as the water bodies in many forest ranges have dried up due to the scorching heat.

Prabhakar Nayak, assistant conservator of Forests (ACF) Ghumusar South said they have erected around 100 saucer pits of around two-feet deep and four-feet wide, in different areas of the division to provide water to the animals. "We have instructed all foresters to fill up the pits at least

twice a week by engaging labourers," Nayak said. "We have also renovated the ponds inside the blackbuck habitat areas," he added.

Nayak said that till now not a single blackbuck has died due to heatstroke or lack of water even though temperatures at several places have gone past the 40-degree Celsius mark.

Pramod Kumar Panda, range officer, Aska said they have kept strict watch on the movement of the blackbucks. "We are regularly filling the pits with water. Despite the scorching heat, there is no dearth of water for the animals," he said. "In addition, grass is being grown to provide fodder for herbivorous blackbucks," he added.

RARE 'PITTA' BIRDS FOUND IN KENDRAPARA FOREST

THE SPECIES HAS BEEN LISTED AS 'NEARLY THREATENED' BY IUCN DUE TO THE RAPIDLY DECREASING NUMBERS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, April 16: Forest officials have sighted 179 mangrove 'Pitta' birds (Pitta Megharencha) during a census conducted in Rajnagar Mangrove Forest (Wildlife) Division in Kendrapara district. The mangrove pitta is a small bird, measuring 18cm to 20 cm in length and weighing 90 to 120 grams. The species is mostly found in coastal mangrove forests of India. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has categorised and evaluated the species and has listed it as 'Nearly Threatened'.

This information was shared here by Rajnagar mangrove forest (Wildlife) division DFO Sudarshan Gopinath Yadav with mediapersons here Sunday. He said that the birds were sighted during a sur-



vey conducted April 14 at the Rajnagar mangrove forest division. This census was conducted under the guidance of the Chief

Conservator of Forests, Manoj Nair. The birds were spotted through the direct and indirect sighting methods in the day-long



census exercise, informed Yadav. The census mainly focused on the mangrove patches all along the coasts of Kendrapara and

Jagatsingpur Districts. The aim of the exercise was to collect information about the distribution, of habitat and breeding of 'Pitta'

along the coastal mangroves and set up a benchmark for subsequent population analysis, the DFO said. He said a total of 32 teams, consisting of three forest officials, were deployed in pre-identified segments for the census.

The DFO stated that the census was carried out by point count method either by walking in the forest or using country boats in the creeks. The highest concentration of 'Pitta' was found in the mangroves near the Mahipura river mouth inside the Bhitarkanika National Park (BNP) during the census. For this census a preparatory training programme for the forest staff was organised April 7. The DFO also stated that all efforts will be made to protect the endangered species and give it a chance to increase in numbers.

FOCUS CLIMATE ACTION

RESEARCHING GEOENGINEERING



In 2010, when Ken Caldeira and David Keith published "The Need for Climate Engineering Research," geoengineering had virtually no support. That is no longer the case

a manner that would be fair, inclusive, and effective.

In February, another open letter was published calling for "balanced research." The signatories, again scientists and academics, recognise that we must address the root cause of global warming by cutting our emissions and removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and accept that SRM carries its own environmental risks. Nevertheless, faced with a choice between a flat refusal to investigate SRM and "thorough and critical research," they prefer the latter.

Ten years ago, I would not have signed a call for research into geoengineering, but I signed the second letter. I changed my view because today we are in a more desperate situation than we were a decade ago. Climate change is occurring more rapidly than previously predicted, with temperature records broken, more severe droughts and floods, and more intense storms. Despite these strong warning signs, few countries are on track to make the emissions cuts needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C or even 2°C.

It is true, as the letter opposing any use of geoengineering states, that we may never achieve certainty about the risks of SRM. But we are also very far from certainty about the eventual impact of the greenhouse gases we have already put into the atmosphere, and of those we will continue to emit. There are risks either way. We currently have no idea whether the risks of attempting SRM outweigh the risks of not attempting it. We would be wise to try to find out.

The writer, Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the charity The Life You Can Save.

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As our planet's climate heats up, so, too, does the debate about the boldest response to it: geoengineering, or the deliberate modification of the atmosphere to combat global warming. In 2010, when Ken Caldeira and David Keith published "The Need for Climate Engineering Research," geoengineering had virtually no support. That is no longer the case.

Early critics like Clive Hamilton dismissed geoengineering as "playing god" – an objection that misfires when addressed to those who do not believe that a divine being is safeguarding the fate of the planet. A more secular version of the objection might state that we should leave nature alone, but that battle was lost decades ago. We humans have already overwhelmed nature, to such an extent that many scientists suggest that we are now in a new geological epoch: the Anthropocene.

Now geoengineering is back on the agenda. In 2020, the US Congress directed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to develop a multi-year research initiative to investigate both natural and human activities that might alter the reflectivity of the stratosphere and how those activities could affect our planet. In 2020, NOAA began offering funding for such projects. Meanwhile, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recommended spending \$200 million on a research programme to see whether there is a safe way to cool the planet.

When Caldeira and Keith wrote about engineering the climate, several approaches were mooted, such as adding soluble iron to the ocean to increase the growth of phytoplankton, which would absorb and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Research failed to validate that approach, however, and current research is focused on

solar radiation modification (SRM), also known as solar radiation management, which aims to reflect a small part of the solar radiation that warms the surface of the Earth.

The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991 put 15 million tonnes of sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere, where it mixed with water to form a layer of particles known as aerosols. This layer reduced the amount of solar radiation reaching the Earth's surface, reducing average global temperatures by 0.6°C for the next 15 months. That observation led some scientists to ask whether we could create a similar effect by deliberately releasing aerosols into the stratosphere – the tool most favoured by those who want to learn more about how we might reduce solar radiation.

No responsible person would claim that we are ready to try something like that now, so the real debate is about whether to take the prior step: carry out re-

search that might eventually make SRM feasible.

Two open letters give opposing answers. In January 2022, a group of scientists released a message directed at governments and the United Nations, calling for an International Non-Use Agreement on Solar Geoengineering. The letter, which has been signed by more than 400 academics from more than 60 countries, outlines three main concerns.

First, we are unable to understand fully the risks involved in geoengineering, given the complexities of both global and regional weather patterns. Second, giving credibility to the idea that geoengineering may save us from catastrophic global warming will weaken our resolve to address the root cause of climate change by achieving net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions. And, third, we lack any system of global governance with the authority to control the deployment of geoengineering in



Peter Singer

WE HUMANS HAVE ALREADY OVERWHELMED NATURE, TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT MANY SCIENTISTS SUGGEST THAT WE ARE NOW IN A NEW GEOLOGICAL EPOCH: THE ANTHROPOCENE

Myanmar Mayhem

The brutality of the military junta in Myanmar has assumed such proportions that even an international body like the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which does not interfere with the internal affairs of its member states, has voiced its condemnation. The latest instance of the savage repression by the regime is the killing last week of over 100 people in an airstrike by the Myanmar military. This is reported to be one of the deadliest so far in the civil war that is raging in the country since the military staged a coup preventing an elected government from assuming charge 1 February, 2021. The attack was directed at Pa Zi Gyi - a village in the north-eastern Sagaing region - where a ceremony was being held by the National Unity Government (NUG) in exile, a parallel administration, for an unit of its People's Defence Forces (PDFS) militia. The air strike killed both armed men and civilians. The barbarity was such that helicopter gunships kept shooting at survivors, hindering their efforts to recover mutilated bodies of victims and ferry the injured to hospital. This just goes to prove, once again, that people have, from ancient times, been massacred by their own people.

Communities in Sagaing have put up the strongest opposition to military rule. As many army convoys are being ambushed now on the roads, the junta is using air power more widely, targeting symbols of defiance of its rule. This includes schools and health clinics. This 'scorched earth' campaign of the military is intended to break the backbone of the resistance in the country.

ASEAN has in an unambiguous language condemned the airstrike and bombing. Its statement came within 24 hours after the Myanmar military confirmed the air attack. "All forms of violence must end immediately, particularly the use of force against civilians," the ASEAN said. The only way out of the turmoil, it stated categorically, is to create a congenial environment for an inclusive national dialogue. These are mere meaningless words against people in power anywhere in the world.

The ASEAN, a 10-member regional bloc that includes Myanmar, has a long-held principle of staying out of its members' internal affairs. But, it deviated from this policy considering the violence by the military junta on innocent civilians and prepared a five-point peace plan with Min Aung Hlaing, the military commander controlling the government. The peace plan calls for an end to hostilities and inclusive dialogue, but violence in the country has only escalated. After the killings in Pa Zi Gyi village, the ASEAN said it cannot pass off the mindless mayhem as an internal affair of Myanmar.

The attack came days after heavy fighting in southern Karen state sent thousands fleeing across the border into Thailand. The conflict has killed thousands and led to the displacement of about 1.2 million people across Myanmar. Two years after the coup, PDFS and ethnic armed groups opposed to the military continue to deny the regime control over vast swathes of the country. However, the military ruler, Min Aung Hlaing, has been refusing to engage with the NUG, calling his opponents "terrorists", out to destroy the country.

ASEAN has punished Myanmar for the lack of progress on the peace plan by barring it from the bloc's summits but some members have called for tougher action. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim has said ASEAN must prove its "relevance" by helping to resolve the crisis in Myanmar and called on the bloc to be more assertive.

But, both the ASEAN and the UN appear to be powerless to put an end to what is being stated as "crime against humanity" as China and Russia have been backing the regime. In fact, the military used Chinese aircraft for the deadly attack on Pa Zi Gyi. There were at least 600 air attacks by the military against its own people between February 2021 and January 2023.

The military has the legal obligations to protect civilians while dealing with hostilities. But there has been blatant disregard for international law. This has prompted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, to say that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the military and its affiliated militias are responsible for an extremely broad range of human rights violations and abuses since the coup.

Time is running out. The international community needs to rise to the occasion and take steps to end the systematic carnage being perpetrated by the military junta in some similar way the Russian invasion of Ukraine or China's attempt to take over Taiwan is being handled.

WISDOM CORNER

I will love the light for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness because it shows me the stars. OG MANDINO

Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children. KAHLIL GIBRAN

Your ordinary acts of love and hope point to the extraordinary promise that every human life is of inestimable value. DESMOND TUTU

WORDSWORTH

Haruspex

A haruspex in ancient Rome was a religious official who interpreted omens by inspecting the entrails of sacrificial animals. The haruspices were part of a group of seers or auguries whose official function was not so much to foretell the future as to work out whether the gods approved of some proposed course of political or military action. Nothing of importance was undertaken until the auguries had been consulted. Many omens were actively watched for, such as the flight of birds, the pecking behaviour of sacred chickens, or the sound of thunder. The Romans borrowed these techniques from their predecessors, the Etruscans. Edward Gibbon, in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, was disdainful of what he saw as the barbarous rites of the period: "Amidst the sacred but licentious crowd of priests, of inferior ministers, and of female dancers, who were dedicated to the service of the temple, it was the business of the emperor to bring the wood, to blow the fire, to handle the knife, to slaughter the victim, and, thrusting his bloody hands into the bowels of the expiring animal, to draw forth the heart or liver, and to read, with the consummate skill of an haruspex, imaginary signs of future events. The wisest of the Pagans censured this extravagant superstition, which affected to despise the restraints of prudence and decency." The second part of the word is clearly from Latin *specere*, to look at, but the first part is more mysterious; it may be related to Sanskrit *hir*, an artery. The technique is called haruspicy. Another word for it is extispicy, a word whose the first element we do know the origin of – it's from Latin *exta*, entrails.

LOL

Judge has some fun

A judge grew tired of seeing the same town drunk in front of his bench. One day the judge glared down at the man, who was still intoxicated, and thundered "It is the sentence of this court that you be taken from here to a place of execution and there hanged by the neck until DEAD." The drunk promptly fainted.



The court bailiff commenced to reviving the man, and looked up at the judge, at which time the judge shrugged and responded "I've always wanted to do that."

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

A winner in arena of science



Nikhilanand Panigrahy

WHAT ASIMOV ANTICIPATED SOME DECADES AGO ABOUT THE GROWING DEMAND FOR DRINKS HAS NOW INCREASED ALARMINGLY

Isaac Asimov was not merely a hard science fiction writer; he also held the prestigious position as Professor of Biochemistry at Boston University, Massachusetts. As is well known worldwide, 20 July 1969 was a historic day, when astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first man to set his feet on moon, uttered the words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Three days after this historic event, Asimov wrote a letter to his friend, who was a bitter critic of space expedition, in the following words: "I got a letter from a reader who wrote to berate me on the expense of space program and telling me I ought to be ashamed for not spending the money on the cities and the poor. I wrote back to say that the people of United States spend exactly as much money on booze alone as on space program. And if you add tobacco, drugs, cosmetics and worthless patent medicines, then we spend far more on these useless or harmful substances than on space exploration."

Incidentally, through this instance Asimov has covered two issues. One is emphasis on advance of space program through adequate funding. This will have far reaching consequences for preservation of the human race. It is well known that due to several factors, including global warm-

ing, there is a partial or full happening of doomsday, for which advanced steps should be taken to establish human colonies in some hospitable planet (Stephen Hawking).

The other message in this example is the abandoning or minimising booze, which is debilitating our health and well-being. It is true that day by day, the budget for space exploration goes on increasing, but so also our expenses for drinks. So, from a financial standpoint, Asimov's view holds good. Just like his future vision for a tech-savvy world cannot be disputed, so also his remark on expanding spending on booze. A scientist should not only be concerned with his field in science and research but also the society, which has provided him with facilities and environment to exist. What Asimov anticipated some decades ago about the growing demand for drinks has now increased alarmingly.

A report dated 3 January 2023 which has cited NFHS-5, shows that one in five Indian men above the age of 15 drinks alcohol. Rural India surprisingly marches ahead of urban India. Alcohol attributable deaths between 2011-50, would lead to loss of 258 million life years and 1.45% of GDP per year. Alcohol, as a group one carcinogen, causes about 45% of all liver cancers in Europe. It is the number one cause

of cirrhosis in India. It causes poorer sleep quality and increased risk of diabetes. The recent Lancet study on global disease burden prescribes zero or very close to zero level of alcohol consumption for minimal health loss.

Now let us look at physics Nobel Prize winner (1965), Richard Feynman (1918-1988), who was a maverick; so, to say, it is remarked that he was a teacher, a storyteller, a joker, a pencil artist, a bongo player, sang with music composers, adept in cosplay and an investigator. All these qualities are surprisingly packed in a man, even though his wrinkly face will give a negative perception to an on-looker at first sight. His mental makeup definitely is not orthodox. It is well known that a drunkard cannot resist his temptation if he finds a bottle of wine at hand, because he feels good due to the release of his neurotransmitter Dopamine. But Feynman is not confined to this experience only, he looked beyond.

In 1955, he composed a long free verse titled "An atom in the universe," where he established the entire universe in only a glass of wine. In his own words: "If we look at a glass of wine closely enough, we see the entire universe. There are the things of physics: the twisting liquid which evaporates depending on the wind and weather;

the reflections in the glass and our imagination adds the atoms... The glass is a distillation of the earth's rocks and in its composition, we see the secrets of universe's age and the evolution of stars... What strange arrays of chemicals are in the wine? How did they come to be? There are ferments, the enzymes, the substrates, and the products. There in wine is found the great generalization: all life is fermentation...no body can discover the chemistry of wine without discovering, as did Louis Pasteur, the cause of much disease. How vivid is the claret, pressing its existence into the consciousness that watched it! If our small minds, for some convenience, divide this glass of wine, this universe into parts: physics, geology, astronomy, psychology and so on... remember that nature does not know it! So let us put it all back together, not forgetting ultimately what it is for. Let it give us one more final pleasure: drink it and forget it all!"

Normally people condemn wine beyond measure for one reason or other. But as Feynman has shown, it is a winner in the arena of science.

The writer is an author and retired Director, Odisha Text Book Bureau. Views are personal.

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

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Sacred marijuana

Sir, Cannabis is a plant that finds mention in many ancient Indian medical discourses like the Sushruta Samhita where it is recommended as a treatment to clear excess mucus from nose or throat, and for treating phlegm; it is also considered a wonder drug for the treatment of diarrhoea. The ayurvedic discourses are replete with mention of cannabis as a refresher and a cure for headache and fatigue. Bhaang was revered as a sacred plant as it is one of the offerings to the Hindu God Shiva but now if one possesses bhaang he/she would be slapped with so many legal sanctions that it would be nearly impossible for them to come out of the legal hellhole. India was never against cannabis until 1985 when the then Rajiv Gandhi government labeled bhaang as synthetic and imposed a ban on the once sacred plant for the Hindus. It is interesting because India was not a signatory to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs but after 25 years suddenly India was against its sacred plant. It is certainly not a coincidence that the alcohol market started to boom in the country in the late 1980s. Alcohol kills more than two lakh Indians every year but there is not a single death related to marijuana consumption. We should not be blind to this fact.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)

Appalling crime

Sir, The cold-blooded shooting of the imprisoned gangster-turned politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf Ahmed in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, Saturday is appalling. Their murder follows the elimination of Atiq's son Asad by the Uttar Pradesh police in Jhansi. Asad was wanted in connection with the Umesh Pal murder case of February 2023. The fatal assault on Saturday transpired after Atiq and Ashraf showed up at the Prayagraj Hospital for a medical checkup in police custody. The duo exited the police van and were taking questions from reporters when an assailant put his weapon on Atiq's temple and pulled the trigger. Atiq slumped to the ground and was followed by Ashraf. There were two other assailants. All three assailants surrendered and were taken in custody. Is the massacre another case of security and intelligence malfunction in India's most populous state?

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

national

of the day quote

Narrow, casteist, capitalist and communal forces tried all kinds of heinous tactics to weaken the BSP, but in spite of such ups and downs, the those associated with the party stood their ground with all their might

The Jammu and Kashmir administration's decision to blacklist contractors for their alleged links to militants is arbitrary. I appeal to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to reconsider it

I will tell you certain things. In this 2024 Parliament elections, the next government is ours, ours, and ours. Some of our enemies may not be able to digest this. But one spark is enough to light

CBI arrests Jagan Reddy's uncle

Amaravati/New Delhi, April 16: Following the arrest of YS Bhaskar Reddy, uncle of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, in the wee hours of Sunday in connection with the murder of Y S Vivekananda Reddy, Kadapa Member of Parliament Y S Avinash Reddy declared he would fight to any extent to prove his father's innocence.

"Our righteousness will definitely stand. We will fight to any extent. We have complete faith and respect on the judiciary... We will fight and come out as innocent people. I still say justice should prevail," said Avinash Reddy. Following his arrest, the CBI drove Bhaskar Reddy to Hyderabad from Pulivendula in Kadapa district and presented him before a judge who remanded him in 14 days' custody.

Hooch tragedy: Toll rises to 22

Twenty-two people in Turkauliya, Harsiddhi, Sugauli and Paharpur villages of Motihari have so far died after allegedly consuming illicit liquor, the East Champaran district police said in a statement

Motihari/Patna, April 16: As the death toll in a suspected hooch tragedy in Bihar's East Champaran district rose to 22 on Sunday, the opposition BJP alleged that the incident was a "mass murder" by the Nitish Kumar government. Leader of Opposition in the Bihar assembly, Vijay Kumar Sinha, accused the state administration of "protecting liquor mafias who are associated with the ruling JD(U) and the RJD". The party will approach the National Human Rights Commission and other such central bodies to conduct a "probe into the hooch tragedy", former state BJP chief Sanjay Jaiswal said.

Days before killing, Atiq moved SC for protection

New Delhi, April 16: Two weeks before gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed was shot dead while under police escort in Prayagraj, the Supreme Court had dismissed his plea seeking protection during his custody with the Uttar Pradesh Police in the Umesh Pal murder case.

Ahmed (60) and his brother Ashraf were shot dead at point-blank range by three men posing as journalists in the middle of a media interaction on Saturday night while police personnel were escorting them to a medical college for a checkup. On March 28, the apex court had dismissed Ahmed's plea for protection and observed that the Uttar Pradesh state machinery would take care of his protection in case of a threat to his life. When Atiq's plea had come up for hearing before the top court, a bench of Justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi granted him liberty to approach the Allahabad High Court for protection after he had claimed that his life was under threat while being in the custody of the Uttar Pradesh Police.

"Since he is in judicial custody, the Uttar Pradesh state machinery will take care of his protection in case of threat to his life," the court had said, refusing to record the former Samajwadi Party MP's counsel's vehement requests that his life is under threat. "It is not a case where this court is going to interfere. Liberty granted to move appropriate application before the high court. Whatever is the process prescribed under law will be followed," the bench had said. Atiq had sought protection claiming that he and his family have been falsely "roped in" as accused in the Umesh Pal murder case in Prayagraj. In his plea, Ahmed, who was earlier lodged at the Ahmedabad central jail in Gujarat pursuant to the apex court's direction, had referred to the statement made by Yogi Adityanath on the floor of the assembly to "completely ruin and destroy" him and claimed there is a "genuine and perceptible threat" to his and his family members' lives.



Police personnel stand guard outside the office of Atiq Ahmed in Prayagraj



Journey of Atiq killers: Petty crimes to don's murder

Lucknow: A child whose brothers are priests and a boy who ran away from home -- this is how neighbours and families remember the men caught on tape Saturday as they pumped bullets into politician-gangster Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf. According to the FIR, the three shooters told police that they killed the Ahmed brothers to make a name for themselves in the world of crime. The assailants, Lavlesh Tiwari (22) of Banda, Mohit alias Sunny (23) of Hamirpur and Arun Maurya (18) of Kasganj, were arrested soon after the dramatic shootout outside the Prayagraj hospital where policemen were escorting the brothers for a medical check-up. Tiwari was injured in the cross-fire, which also hurt a policeman. The assailants posed as TV crew and fired at almost point-blank range. Police described Hamirpur's Sunny as a "history-sheeter" who had 14 cases registered against him. These include murder, attempt to murder, robbery, narcotics smuggling. Sunny's brother Pintu said he has no idea how he got into crime. "My brother used to do nothing, and roam here and there. He has some cases registered against him, but I don't know the details," he told reporters on Sunday. "We were three brothers, out of which one has died earlier. I don't know how Sunny got into crime. He ran away from home many years ago. I have no clue about what happened yesterday," he said. A neighbour said Sunny has not been living in the area for about 10 years. "He was a resident of Kurara, and was normal when he was young. He went to jail after a brawl, after which his mentality changed and he entered the world of crime. After a few inci-

Atiq admitted to having links with ISI, Lashkar, says FIR

Prayagraj (UP): Gangster-politician Atiq Ahmed, who was shot dead along with his brother at point-blank range, had admitted during questioning by police that he had links with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and militant outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba, according to an FIR. "The ISI, using drones, used to drop weapons in Punjab, and someone linked to the ISI used to collect these arms and send some of them to LeT, some to Khalistan separatist organisations, and some weapons like .45 bore pistol, AK-47 and RDX were made available to me, and I used to pay for the same. "People belonging to these organisations also used to come to my place. And, information gathered from their conversations suggested that they wanted to cause a major incident in the country," Ahmed told police. He also told police that he knew the whereabouts of some of these people associated with ISI and LeT, while his brother knew the details of others. The five-time MLA also said that the weapons taken from (LeT and ISI) were used in the murder of Umesh Pal and two policemen in February this year. "I know the places where the weapons have been kept. These places do not have house numbers. If you (police) take me and my brother together, we can identify these places," he said.



(L-R) Arun Maurya, Sunny Purane and Lavlesh Tiwari, who opened fire at gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf while they were being taken for a medical check-up in Prayagraj

4G services would be extended to the Spiti Valley. With the cooperation of all, Himachal Pradesh would be among the most prosperous states of the country in the next 10 years

SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKHU | HIMACHAL CM

IAF CHOPPER DEPLOYED

The forest fire, raging in the Madhukarai forest range of Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore district since April 11, continued to blaze as fire and rescue team could not climb the steep hills and an IAF chopper was pressed into service Sunday, officials said

Uttar Pradesh is caught in the grip of 'jungle raj'. There is no rule of law and the Constitution here. Crime has reached its peak, killings are happening openly on the streets. Criminals are fearless and have got the protection of the ruling party

Stringent action should be taken against those involved in the incident. Jungle Raj under BJP Yogi gov't in UP. Its USP: Encounter killings, Bulldozer politics & patronising criminals. Enforce rule of law; apprehend perpetrators & punish them stringently

There are courts to ensure that criminals get the harshest punishment, but playing with law and order only gives birth to anarchy. The Constitution of the country has been made by those people who fought for freedom and this Constitution and law is paramount



Chowk area market wears a deserted look after the imposition of Section 144 following the killing of Atiq Ahmed and his brother in Prayagraj

DMK hits back at BJP's Annamalai

Chennai, April 16: The ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu has slapped a legal notice on state BJP chief K Annamalai over his graft allegations against the party, its President and Chief Minister M K Stalin, demanding an apology and damages to the tune of Rs 500 crore. The 10-page notice issued by DMK Organisation Secretary R S Bharathi said Annamalai's allegations named 'DMK Files' and targeted at Stalin and other party leaders were "false, baseless, defamatory, imaginary and scandalous." The notice dated April 15 was issued by senior advocate and DMK Rajya Sabha MP, P Wilson, "under instructions" from Bharathi. Referring to Annamalai's "Rs 200 crore" graft charge against Stalin, the notice said "the DMK President has not received a single

Delhi LG, govt clash over one-day Assembly session

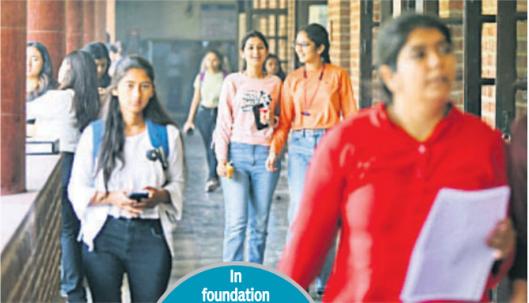
New Delhi, April 16: Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena has raised red flags over "procedural lapses" in summoning of the state Assembly's one-day session on Monday amid AAP convener and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's questioning by the CBI in the alleged liquor scam case. In a note to the Delhi government, Saxena has pointed out that the Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly has proposed to call the second part of the 4th session of the 7th Assembly, whereas the Delhi Cabinet has recommended for convening a one-day session of the Assembly, officials at LG office said on Sunday.

SOPs soon for scribes: MHA

New Delhi: On the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to prepare Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the safety of journalists in the wake of three assailants, posing as mediapersons, killing gangster Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf, sources said. The MHA, under the leadership of the prime minister and guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, will prepare the SOPs for the safety and security of journalists, they said. The step is being taken after the three attackers killed gangster-turned-politician Ahmed and his brother Ashraf in Prayagraj Saturday night while they were speaking to reporters, they said.

New UG, PG courses soon on Indian systems of knowledge

New Delhi, April 16: In line with the Education Ministry's push for Indian systems of knowledge, new undergraduate and postgraduate courses varying from Vastu to Indian musical instruments will be offered from academic session 2023-24. This new initiative has been taken under the provisions of the New Education Policy, and UGC has already prepared a draft for it. The new courses are -- foundation and optional which include Indian Language Science, Indian Vastu Shastra, Indian logic science, metallurgy science, sculpture science, algebra, Indian musical instruments, pre British era period water management. In foundation course, six vedangas, Indian civilisation and culture, Indian mathematics, Astrology, Indian Health Sciences and Indian Agriculture are included. Besides, Higher education institutes across the country will offer courses on idol worship, astrology instrument, vedanga philosophy, health philosophy, agriculture, among others. According to the UGC, Universities and higher educational institutes and states across the country have been sent the



This new initiative has been taken under the provisions of the New Education Policy, and UGC has already prepared a draft for it

In Kolar, Rahul targets PM over Adani issue

It was in Kolar in 2019, during Lok Sabha election campaigning, that Rahul made a remark on the Modi surname for which he was convicted of criminal defamation and stripped of his Parliament membership

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolar, April 16: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday launched a sharp attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi by bringing up the Adani 'corruption' issue in this Karnataka district headquarters town and reiterated that he was not scared of the BJP government at the Centre.

It was in Kolar in 2019, during Lok Sabha election campaigning, that he made a remark on the Modi surname for which he was convicted of criminal defamation and stripped of his Parliament membership last month.

In his first visit to Karnataka after Assembly polls were announced March 29, Gandhi emphasised on the Adani issue to target the Prime Minister and sought to know Modi's 'relation' with businessman Gautam Adani. "I was disqualified from Parliament. They (central government) think that they will scare me by removing me and threatening me. I am not the one to get scared," Gandhi told the crowd at the event called 'Jai Bharat'.

"Till the time I get the reply, I will keep asking this question. You



Congress supporters walk past giant cut-outs of senior party leaders installed at the venue of party leader Rahul Gandhi's public meeting ahead of Karnataka Assembly polls in Kolar, Sunday.

disqualify me, jail me or do whatever you want, I am not going to get scared," he added.

Alleging that there was no investigation happening against Adani Group's firms that operate in the defence infrastructure, Gandhi charged that the chairman of the beleaguered conglomerate has appointed a Chinese man in his 'shell company'.

"Adani is a symbol of corruption," Gandhi said.

"I want to ask Prime Minister Narendra Modi: what is your relation with Adani who is being given airports in India? Rules are

changed for him to award him contract. Why are the rules being changed?" Gandhi wondered.

The former Congress president said Adani Group has no expertise to run airports, which is a prerequisite for operating them but yet they were handed over to the business group.

In Australia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seen with his counterpart and Gautam Adani and a senior State Bank of India officer were seen next to them, he alleged, adding that the very next day, the SBI granted a loan to Adani.

In Sri Lanka, Gandhi claimed, the chairman of the airport authority there stated that the President of the island nation told him that Modi had asked officials to help out Adani.

"The Prime Minister goes to Bangladesh and the contract goes to Adani. The PM goes to Israel and Adani gets cement and airport contracts," Gandhi alleged.

Besides, the Congress leader added that he has already raised the issue of ₹20,000 crore belonging to Adani's 'shell companies' and wanted to know whose money it was.

Ticket distribution sparks rebellion in Karnataka BJP

THE DECISION OF FORMER CM JAGADISH SHETTAR AND FORMER DEPUTY CM LAXMAN SAVADI TO QUIT THE BJP AFTER THEY WERE DENIED TICKETS HAS GIVEN A JOLT TO THE SAFFRON PARTY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 16: The banner of revolt by disappointed ticket aspirants in a number of constituencies seems to be keeping the BJP leadership on tenterhooks, as it resorts to douse the fire with less than a month to go before the Assembly polls.

The decision of former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar and former deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi to quit the BJP after the party decided not to field them in the May 10 elections, has given a jolt to the party.

Party leaders in private acknowledged that the disgruntled after announcement of candidates is certainly a cause for worry.

The BJP has so far announced candidates in 212 constituencies out of the total 224 in two lists.

According to party sources, there seems to be revolt in about two dozen Assembly segments.

Karnataka BJP strongman BS Yediyurappa Sunday said no force can stop the party from coming back power with a clear majority.

The national party has pressed its leaders into action for damage control. Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan (poll in-charge), Pralhad Joshi, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Yediyurappa, state president Nalin



Kumar Kateel are engaged in trouble-shooting exercises. Also, some RSS leaders are said to have been roped in to pacify the dissidents.

Bommai and Yediyurappa have said that they are talking to all the disgruntled leaders personally to ensure that they don't leave the party, and the central leadership is personally in touch with some seniors who are upset.

Pradhan was even sent to Belagavi where the party has fielded seven new faces, and has replaced at least two sitting legislators.

The BJP in the first two lists has dropped at least 17 sitting MLAs and has fielded 67 new candidates.

While deciding tickets, the party has adopted the policy of trying to replace some seniors and those nearing 'retirement' (75 years), fielding new faces in segments

where it has not won, and asking leaders to withdraw from the fray if they want tickets for their children, a party functionary said.

According to reports, the leadership, during the Central Election Committee meeting had expressed reservations regarding the state BJP's recommendation list, which re-nominated most of the sitting legislators, and it contained the names of both father and children.

After the CEC meeting, Bommai himself had given an indication in this regard by stating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave some directions and the party is working on various inputs to finalise the list. He, however, did not elaborate on the nature of directions or inputs. Several rounds of deliberations were held in Delhi before announcing the first list.

Among the legislators who have resigned from the post and the primary membership of the party include - MLAs M P Kumaraswamy (Mudigeru), Goolihatti Shekhar (Hosadurga), and MLCs Laxman Savadi (Athani) and R Shankar (Ranebennur).

Several other leaders or legislators who have not got the ticket have openly expressed their angst and have said that they will decide on their next move in a couple of days, once they consult their supporters and voters in the constituency.

Maha Cong to protest against PM's silence on Malik's remarks

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 16: The Maharashtra Congress Sunday said it will hold state-wide protests Monday against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his silence on the revelations made by former Governor Satya Pal Malik.

State Congress President Nana Patole said the protests will be under the banner of 'Shame on Modi, Shame on you' for not commenting on Malik's statements that reek of a conspiracy behind the 2019 Pulwama terror strike that claimed the lives of 40 CRPF jawans. "Why was Malik asked to keep quiet about the matter... Why did the PM, Home Minister hide the truth from the people, and what is the government suppressing about such a big incident that shocked the nation," Patole demanded.

He reiterated the questions raised by the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Friday on Malik's contention that aircraft were not allowed to transport the CRPF forces convoys that could have averted the huge tragedy.

JD(S) manifesto focuses on women and farmers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 16: Ahead of the Karnataka Assembly elections, former Prime Minister and veteran JD(S) leader HD Deve Gowda released a 12-point manifesto Saturday, in which the party has laid emphasis on women empowerment and development of farmers.

In the manifesto, the party has promised to waive loans taken by Stree Shakti Groups, provide five LPG cylinders in a year for free, ₹6,000 allowance for pregnant women for six months, hike of widow pension from ₹900 to ₹2,500 and pension for persons who completed 15 years of service.

The party has also proposed to provide a ₹10,000 subsidy per acre to farmers, ₹2,000 monthly allowance for farm labourers; ₹2 lakh subsidy for women who marry youths who have taken up agriculture.

It has promised to exert pressure on the Central government to conduct exams in Kannada for various civil services and defence recruitments. The party also prom-



ised that, if voted to power, it would bring legislation to provide reservations for Kannadigas in the private sector.

The party proposed to distribute 6.8 lakh bicycles and EV mopeds to 60,000 girl students free of cost who are studying in government colleges. The manifesto assures government multi-speciality hospitals in every district.

The JD(S) is marching ahead with new vigour in the state as national parties Congress and BJP are busy "quelling dissidence". JD(S) has resolved family infighting over the matter of issuing the ticket to Bhavani Revanna, daughter-in-law of Deve Gowda.

NCP loses 'national' tag, but Pawar's stature intact

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 16: The Opposition space in the country underwent a churning after the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s order last week on the status accorded to various political parties, barely a year ahead of the Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Assembly elections.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) suffered the loss of its coveted tag of 'National Party' and is now downsized to a state party with influence in only two states - Maharashtra and Nagaland.

It will now be treated at par with other state entities like the Shiv Sena, Shiv Sena (UBT), Maharashtra Navnirman Sena as the 'National Party' recognition is lost, but its credentials remain strong as ever, with the universally accepted senior leader Sharad Pawar helming it almost single-handedly.

The ruling ally BJP and the Opposition Congress will be the main national parties in Maharashtra now, plus a couple of other smaller entities, with the likelihood of the AAP now vroom-



ing into Maharashtra in a big way to sweep clean with its 'broom' in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

However, senior NCP leaders claimed that the loss of 'National Party' tag may not significantly affect the party's popularity, its reach and influence in the state, as Pawar enjoys a reputation 'sans frontiers'.

"We have enjoyed this status

continuously from 2000-2023. In between in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, our support base got eroded due to the so-called BJP wave. Hence, the present ECI verdict has divested us of the privilege," said a senior leader, requesting anonymity.

A state office-bearer pointed out that NCP president Sharad Pawar has already made the party's stance clear that it must work 'very hard

to make up' and recover the status in the next elections.

"We are fully geared towards that aim now. Our cadres are being activated right away not only in Maharashtra but even certain other states to start preparations for the next elections to fulfill the ECI requirements for a 'national party' recognition," he explained.

Constitutional law expert, Barrister Vinod Tiwari feels that the 'National Party' status is not strictly a permanent feature and keeps coming and going, as has been witnessed several times in the past few decades.

"Rather than any setback, it's a golden opportunity for the NCP to reinvigorate itself, improve its performance in the next Assembly and Lok Sabha elections and become eligible to claim the title again," Tiwari said.

Despite its size and population, India now has only 6 recognised 'national parties' - the ruling BJP, the Opposition INC, BSP, CPM, AAP and the National People's Party (Nagaland) - though the NPP is considered a strictly regional force in the north-east.

170 yrs on: Mumbai-Thane train set in motion railway saga

The train operated on a small stretch of 34 km, which proved to be a giant leap for the progress and prosperity of the country over the next 17 decades

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 16: Marking the dawn of a new era in public transportation, the first passenger train in Asia was operated on a small stretch of 34 km between Mumbai and Thane April 16, 1853, which proved to be a giant leap for the progress and prosperity of the country over the next 17 decades.

The inaugural train was flagged from Boribunder station - where the imposing UNESCO World Heritage Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus now stands - with 14 new wooden carriages crammed with 400 excited and nervous guests on their first day out on the tracks.

The maiden passenger service was hauled by three engines, inexplicably named 'Sahib', 'Sindh' and 'Sultan', which blew off loud whistles, belched out thick smoke and steam and soon chugged into the historic journey at 3.35 p.m. that day, accompanied by a resounding 21-gun salute, thunderous cheers and claps of those who witnessed the British India's first rail history.

The gruelling spade-work for that epochal journey started some 30 years before, with an experimental railway line in Madras thrown in, followed by the first

passenger service on the Mumbai-Thane sector.

Unlike the old railways in many other countries, Indians quickly adapted to the quick, cheap and safe mode of rail travel.

The railways soon spread wings -- and tracks -- to other parts of India. The first passenger train started in the east on August 15, 1854, covering 39 km between Howrah and Hooghly, followed by Veyasarpandy and Walajah Road in the south (Madras Presidency) on July 1, 1856, and in the north between Hathras Road and Mathura Cantt., a 53 km stretch, on October 19, 1875, - and chugged along, never to look back.

With these humble beginnings, in around 27 years by 1880, India had a 9,000 km railway network spanning the length and breadth of the sub-continent, even as the country saw historic events such as the First War of Independence, which started on May 10, 1857, and spurred one of the biggest freedom movements in modern world history lasting 90 years.

Over the past 170 years, the Indian Railways, as it is known now, has mushroomed into a multi-gauge, second biggest in the world with over 108,000 km of running



lines, transporting passengers, animals and cargo to some of the remotest corners of the country, traversing plains, forests, deserts or snowy mountains, safely and surely. Starting with the heavy, highly-polluting steam locomotives, the Indian Railways started services on the first electrified 15 km track between Mumbai's Victoria Terminus (now, CSMT) and Kurla Harbour in

February 1925. At one point, it even shifted in August 1955 to diesel locos, but these were gradually discarded as oil prices became prohibitive over the decades.

However, electrification picked up pace and in the past 100 years, the Indian Railways has become 80 per cent electrified, offering a cheaper, environment-friendly and

faster alternative, as per the official data till 2022.

During the British rule, the railway network had multiple owners and 'fathers', but after Independence, the earliest visionary Railway Ministers - John Mathai, N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Lal Bahadur Shastri - initiated the process of unification into a single compact entity.

This started in 1951 with the formation of various divisions like Central Railway, Western Railway, Northern Railway, Southern Railway, divided into zones - which later multiplied as per the growth and local requirements.

Many of the railway networks originally owned by private individuals, by companies, royalty or princely states and other independent organisations in different territories, were merged/integrated into a single entity, Indian Railways, which practically runs the entire standardised network now.

Central Railway's chief spokesperson Shivaji Sutar said that from that humble beginning April 16, 1853, today, the Indian Railways has come a long distance with thousands of services daily.

They include some of the oldest services running for over a century, comprising long-distance trains like passengers/maills/expresses, Rajdhani, Shatabdi, Tejas, elite tourist specials (Palace on Wheels), unique toy trains or hill-trains, and the most recent addition of Vande Bharat trains, suburban trains, all-women trains and even women loco pilots.

In a few years, the first Bullet Train shall be zooming between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, catapulting the country's rail network into the next era of high-speed train journeys.

of the day quote

Christians should team up with the TDP to make use of their churches as platforms to help eliminate poverty in Andhra Pradesh

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | TDP CHIEF

While Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was given notice and disqualified from the Lok Sabha within 24 hours of his conviction in the 2019 defamation case, a BJP MP from Gujarat was not disqualified despite being convicted in a criminal case

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

What is happening in UP is the easy way out. The difficult way is when you follow law and ensure justice

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

SHORT TAKES

Man ends life

Kanpur (UP): A 40-year-old man allegedly killed his wife and two minor children because he suspected her of having an extra-marital affair. The man, identified as Indrapal Nishad, hanged himself after committing the murders. Nishad, who worked at a factory in Gujarat, was found hanging, and his wife and son and daughter were found lying dead with severe injuries on their bodies on Saturday night, a police official said. After getting information about the murders and the suicide, senior police officials, including Inspector General (Kanpur range) Prashant Kumar and Superintendent of Police (Kanpur Dehat) BBGTS Murthy, reached the spot.

Inmate dies

Sitapur (Uttar Pradesh): An inmate of Sitapur district jail, facing charges of raping a minor, died during treatment at hospital here, the police said. The family members of the deceased, Bablu Singh, alleged delay in treatment and staged a protest. Some fellow inmates also sat on a hunger strike but called it off after senior officials assured action. Police said the victim had complained of stomach pain on Thursday following which he was shifted to the hospital on the advice of the jail doctor, where he died during treatment.

Guard killed

Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh): A parked SUV rolled and mowed down a 35-year-old security guard at the bungalow of a leading spices businessman in Mauni Ghat Azad Nagar area under the limits of Nawabganj police circle in Kanpur. The family members of the security guard reached the bungalow and created ruckus and alleged he had been murdered. Senior police officers, meanwhile, reached the spot and assured the agitated family members of a fair investigation manner and due action on the basis of evidence. The deceased has been identified as Aditya Mishra, a resident of Nawabganj.

Four dead

Amaravati: Four persons were killed and four others injured in a road accident in Andhra Pradesh's Annamayya district. The accident occurred when two cars collided head-on on Chittoor-Kadapa national highway near Kothapalli cross in Ramapuram mandal in the wee hours of Sunday. Four persons including two women died while four others were injured. Police shifted the injured to Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) at Kadapa.

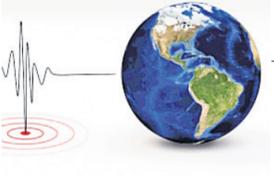


As a result of my letter to (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah, the Union Government has announced that it would conduct the CAPF exams in all state languages. I wholeheartedly welcome this decision and reiterate our demand to provide question papers in Tamil and other state languages in all Union government exams

M K STALIN | TN CM

MILD QUAKE FELT IN MANIPUR

A mild intensity earthquake measuring 3.6 on the Richter Scale hit parts of Manipur Sunday, the National Centre for Seismology said. The NCS said that the tremor was felt in southern Manipur's Bishnupur district and adjoining areas in the morning



Lack of literacy responsible for population spike: Experts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: As India is on the brink of surpassing China to become the most populous country in the world, experts cite lack of literacy, awareness regarding contraception and abortions and economic factors among reasons for the spike in the population.

According to data from the National Family Health Survey, more abortions take place in urban areas, which is 4 per cent, compared to 2.5 per cent in rural areas. The data stated that 1.9 per cent women with no schooling background went for abortions while 3.5 per cent women with 10-11 years of education opted for it.

The plans of making her daughter a doctor changed for Chaaya Devi after she had two more children. "Children are god's gift but what if you don't have money to raise them and it leaves your other children suffering too," said the 25-year-old, a mother of three children.

Devi, who is expecting her fourth child, works as a domestic help in Noida. She now worries about how to ensure a good life for her children. "I consulted a government hospital doctor but she scolded me for getting pregnant again but she does not understand my consent is never



According to data from the National Family Health Survey, more abortions take place in urban areas, which is 4 per cent, compared to 2.5 per cent in rural areas. The data stated that 1.9 per cent women with no schooling background went for abortions while 3.5% women with 10-11 years of education opted for it

taken," said Devi, who lives in a joint family with her in-laws.

Her situation is not unique, millions of women due to stigma, lack of say in family matters and acceptance of spouses towards contraceptives are forced to continue having children even as India is on the brink of surpassing China to become the most populous country

in the world.

India's population crossed the 140 crore mark in January and is soon expected to surpass China's population. Some estimates suggest that India's population might have already surpassed China but till the official census is conducted a definitive number cannot be given.

Poonam Muttreja, Executive

Director, Population Foundation of India, said for any nation, the goal of a lower population growth rate requires a high contraceptive prevalence, which can only be achieved by strengthening the provision of family planning and sexual and reproductive health services, including access to abortion services.

According to data from the

National Family Health Survey-5, 0.9 per cent of all pregnancies resulted in abortion in India. However, more abortions take place in urban areas - which is 4 per cent, compared to 2.5 per cent in rural areas, according to the latest NFHS data.

In terms of economic background, 1.7 per cent of women from the lowest wealth quintile used abortion services compared to 3.2 per cent in the middle wealth quintile and 4.1 per cent in the highest wealth quintile, the data stated. "What it means is that women who are less educated, or belong to poor and marginalised sections of society, are not able to use abortion services as well as their more affluent, more educated counterparts. This is partly due to the stigma that is associated with abortions and also the lack of access and availability of services to rural women," Muttreja said.

"Stigma forces women to seek services from quacks and untrained professionals which leads to maternal mortality and morbidity," she said. Even though India has very progressive abortion policies, according to a 2015 study published in the Lancet, 15.6 million abortions occur in India annually, 95 per cent of which are outside public health facilities.

Man drags traffic cop 19 kms on car bonnet

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Navi Mumbai, April 16: In a chilling incident, an alleged junkie who jumped a signal, dragged an on-duty traffic policeman on his car bonnet for nearly 19 kms in Vashi town before he was intercepted, officials said here Sunday.

The accused, identified as Aditya Bhende, 23, of Nerul town, has been arrested and charged for attempt to murder, and will be produced before a court. On Saturday, around 1.45 p.m., when a Traffic Policeman Siddheshwar Mali, 37, was posted at the busy Blue Diamond Squad, he noticed Bhende's vehicle shooting past a red signal, hit a car, but continued to drive.

Mali, along with his colleague,



Constable Shinde jumped on their motorcycle and gave a furious chase to the motorist and finally stopped him near the AMPC Market. When the two policemen ordered Bhende to step out, he simply vroomed the car, catching Mali, who was standing right in front of the vehicle, by surprise.

To save himself Mali jumped onto the bonnet of the youth's car and hung on as the accused continued to speed in the traffic near the Arenja Circle, Palm Beach Road and other areas covering around 19 kms.

Shinde called up the Navi Mumbai Police Control Room and informed them of the life-threatening development, a team was promptly rushed towards Bhende's car and finally managed to stop him.

An official said that he was apprehended and then taken for a medical test where he was detected to have consumed marijuana. Given the serious ramifications of his act, he was subsequently arrested and booked under charges of attempt to murder, assaulting or criminal forces to prevent a public servant from discharging his duty, rash driving and other sections of the narcotics act. The shaken Mali did not sustain any injuries and the police are investigating the matter further.

Shettar resigns as MLA in jolt to BJP

SHETTAR, AN INFLUENTIAL LINGAYAT LEADER FROM NORTH KARNATAKA, AND SITTING MLA FROM HUBLI-DHARWAD CENTRAL, SAID SOME PEOPLE WITH THEIR VESTED INTERESTS HAD HATCHED A CONSPIRACY TO NOT FIELD HIM THIS TIME

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 16: Disgruntled former Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar resigned as MLA Sunday after expressing anguish over denial of ticket to contest in the May 10 Karnataka Assembly elections, and launched an attack on the BJP, saying those who had built the party are being thrown out of their 'own house'.



Shortly after the 67-year-old six-time MLA, who had also said he would quit the party, tendered his resignation, Karnataka BJP strongman B S Yediyurappa, slammed him for deserting the J P Nadda-led outfit, and said people would not pardon him for his move.

Shettar, an influential Lingayat leader from north Karnataka, and sitting MLA from Hubli-Dharwad Central, said some people with

their vested interests had hatched a conspiracy to not field him this time. "Today those who are originally from the BJP are being thrown out from the party. Today I am going out from my own house. I have been driven out of my own house. This has hurt me deeply. Against this background, I have resigned from the legislature assembly," Shettar said.

He said the party's central leadership has not given any reason for not accommodating him. "Was age factor a reason? No. Were there any health issues? I am in good health. Did I run any club or indulged in unlawful activities or am I a rowdy sheeter? Nothing. There was no CD (sex scandal)," the veteran leader said.

Recalling his contribution to the party, Shettar said he had worked with utmost integrity to build it for the past 30 years and the BJP too rewarded him position and respect. "Because of my work there is a party's presence in the rural areas. Today the party has grown strong under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi".

Asked about Yediyurappa's statement that the party gave Shettar power and position but still he left the outfit. He sought to know why the former quit the BJP (more than a decade ago) and formed the Karnataka Janata Party. (Yediyurappa subsequently returned to BJP)

"Yediyurappa too was given a good position. Why did he quit the BJP?" Shettar asked. To a question whether he has made up his mind to join the Congress, he said, "I have not contacted or spoken personally to anyone yet."

He reiterated that he has not yet decided to join any party. "What injustice have we done to Shettar?" Yediyurappa asked, noting that Shettar had served as the party's state unit President, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly and Chief Minister.



A baker sells special 'tandoori' bread at Rajpora in Pulwama district of south Kashmir

PTI PHOTO

PM's degree: Court issues summons to Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 16: A court in Ahmedabad has issued summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh in a criminal defamation complaint for their alleged sarcastic and derogatory statements against the Gujarat University over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's academic degree.

The court of additional chief metropolitan magistrate Jayeshbhai Chovatiya Saturday summoned the two AAP leaders May 23, after observing that prima facie there appeared to be a case against them under Indian Penal Code Section 500 (defamation) on a complaint filed by the Gujarat University's registrar Piyush Patel.

The court also ordered to delete 'Chief Minister' from Kejriwal's name in the cause title of the case, saying the statements were made by him in his personal capacity. Kejriwal and Singh had made the



comments after the Gujarat High Court passed an order setting aside the Chief Information Commissioner's order asking the Gujarat University (GU) to provide information on PM Modi's degree.

As per the complainant, they made "defamatory" statements in press conferences and on Twitter handles targeting the university over Modi's degree. Their comments targeting the Gujarat

University were defamatory and hurt the prestige of the institution which has established its name among the public, he said.

The Gujarat University was established more than 70 years ago. It is reputed among the people and utterances by the accused will create mistrust about the university, the complainant's lawyer Amit Nair argued.

The complainant alleged the statements were defamatory to

wards the university because they were sarcastic and intended to intentionally hurt the prestige of the university. They were shared in the media and on Twitter handles with the same intention, he said.

The comments quoted by the complainant and attributed to Kejriwal are: "If there is a degree and it is genuine, then why is it not being given?" (a copy of it to Kejriwal under RTI), "They are not giving degree because it might be fake," and "If the Prime Minister studied at Delhi University and Gujarat University, then Gujarat University should celebrate that our student became the country's PM".

As per the complainant, Sanjay Singh had said "they are trying to prove the PM's fake degree as genuine." Four witnesses were examined and other evidence submitted during the court inquiry, and the complainant's lawyer argued their statements would make a person believe that GU issues fake and bogus degrees.



Aim of the Congress

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar got a shot in his arm when the Congress leadership handed him the task of evolving a workable formula to rope in regional parties who are not part of the UPA and do not want to talk to the Gandhis directly. Nitish Kumar will talk to parties like YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh, TMC in West Bengal, K Chandrashekar Rao in

Telangana and a couple of others. Almost all these parties are off-shoots of the Congress and parted company due to one reason or the other. While parties like the DMK, RJD, NCP and others are already part of the UPA, many others are singing their own tunes. Therefore, the Congress decided to entrust this task to Nitish Kumar. The move is seen as a big setback to NCP supremo Sharad Pawar who had been waiting for months together for this role. Though Pawar had been holding discussions with other like-minded parties in Parliament and outside, the Congress did not entrust him with this task. The RJD leader Lalu Prasad Yadav is reported to have played a key role in persuading the Gandhis to utilize the services of Nitish Kumar instead of Sharad Pawar. The Congress wants to evolve unity of all Opposition parties before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls on at least 450 Lok Sabha seats where a common candidate could be fielded.

When will police question Azad?

The Delhi police swung into action to question senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi when he was in Delhi last month. The Delhi police wanted to know from Rahul Gandhi who were the women who had complained about molestation during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. The Delhi police March 19 served a fresh notice to Rahul Gandhi after reaching his Tughlaq road residence in connection with an earlier notice issued to him over his women are still being sexually assaulted. This remark was made in Srinagar. Since J&K is a Union Territory, the Delhi police was deputed. What Rahul told Delhi police and whether the police was satisfied or not is still a mystery. Now, Ghulam Nabi Azad, a veteran leader and former Union Minister has alleged that he had information whom Rahul Gandhi meets during his foreign

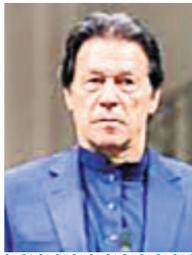
trips. Azad, who quit Congress over differences with Rahul Gandhi in August last year, said he could give ten examples (of) where he (Rahul) would go, even outside the country, to meet people who are undesirable businessmen. Obviously, Azad should disclose who these undesirable elements are. This is a very serious allegation and the issue calls for detailed investigation.

The price of being a dissident

Yashwant Sinha, a former Finance and Foreign Minister in the Vajpayee government until 2004, got a taste of becoming a dissident. He has been a senior leader of the BJP and had a cordial relationship with the current dispensation too. Prime Minister Modi gave his son, Jayant Sinha Lok Sabha seat from

Hazaribagh in 2014 and made him Minister of State for Finance as well. But something went wrong somewhere and Sinha became a dissident by quitting the party as well. However, he never realised that he will have to pay ₹4.25 lakhs after almost 20 years. He received a notice from the Directorate of Estates saying he had overstayed in the government Type-VIII bungalow in 2004 when he ceased to be a Union minister. The Directorate of Estates which is under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs discovered after digging old files that Sinha had overstayed at his 6 Kushak Road bungalow. Yashwant Sinha is shell shocked that the government chose to send him a notice for the recovery of this huge amount. Though he was a Lok Sabha MP until 2014, he was not entitled to the type-VIII bungalow. Yashwant Sinha has not been keeping well and living in a house in Noida. However, he is in no mood to pay and plans to contest the recovery notice.

international



The Army chief is the most powerful person in Pakistan's politics. All follow his decisions. The military establishment is siding with the corrupt mafia - Sharifs and Zardaris - only to ensure that I must not return to power
IMRAN KHAN | PM, PAKISTAN

CHINA LAUNCHES WEATHER SAT

China launched a weather satellite Sunday as civilian flights altered their routes to avoid a Chinese-imposed no-fly zone to the north of Taiwan which Beijing put in place because of the possibility of falling rocket debris



of the day quote

The attack on Indian High Commission in London is unacceptable. Vandalism of any mission in my country will not be tolerated
SANDIP VERMA | HOUSE OF LORDS MEMBER, UK

We have engaged with our allies and partners since these leaks came out, and we have done so at high levels, and we have made clear our commitment to safeguarding intelligence and our commitment to our security partnerships
ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

While many countries in the world are even expanding nuclear power, Germany is doing the opposite. We need every possible form of energy. Otherwise, we risk higher electricity prices and businesses moving away
MARKUS SOEDER | BAVARIA'S GOVERNOR, GERMANY

SHORT TAKES

Gunmen kill seven

Mexico City: Armed men Saturday killed a child and six others after storming a resort in the central Mexican state of Guanajuato, authorities said, in a region increasingly plagued by drug cartel violence. Footage widely shared on social media showed the aftermath of the attack in a palm-studded resort in the small town of Cortazar, about 65 km (40 miles) south of the Guanajuato city. It was not clear who was behind the shooting that killed the seven-year-old, three men and three women, Cortazar's local security department said.

Saud Nepal's new foreign minister

Kathmandu: Nepali Congress leader Narayan Prasad Saud was Sunday sworn in as Nepal's new foreign minister. President Ram Chandra Poudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly appointed foreign minister at the Rashtropati Bhavan here. Foreign Minister Saud's appointment comes ahead of Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's proposed visit to India next month and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has started preparation for the entourage to the southern neighbour. The date and itinerary of the visit are yet to be made public.

Kathmandu most polluted city

Kathmandu: Nepal's capital Kathmandu has continued to reign in the top 10 positions in the list of most polluted cities in the world as forest fire continues to rage across the nation affecting visibility. According to IQ Air, an organization measuring the real-time pollution of 101 cities in the world, Kathmandu on Sunday mid-day stood in the first position with the Air Quality Index crossing the mark of 190.

Birthday party shooting kills 4

Dadeville: Four people have been killed and multiple people injured during a shooting at a birthday party Saturday night in Dadeville, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said. The shooting happened at the birthday party around 10:30 p.m., Sgt Jeremy Burkett of the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency said. There was no initial confirmation about what led to the shooting. It was not immediately known if a suspect was in custody.

EUROPE'S LARGEST N-REACTOR KICKS OFF

OLKILUOTO 3 IS FINLAND'S FIRST NEW NUCLEAR PLANT IN OVER FOUR DECADES AND EUROPE'S FIRST IN 16 YEARS

REUTERS

Helsinki, April 16: Finland's much-delayed Olkiluoto 3 (OL3) nuclear reactor, Europe's largest, began regular output early Sunday, its operator said, boosting energy security in a region to which Russia

has cut gas and power supplies. Nuclear power remains controversial in Europe, primarily due to safety concerns, and news of OL3's start-up comes as Germany Saturday switches off its last three remaining reactors, while Sweden, France, Britain and others plan new developments. OL3's operator Teollisuuden Voima, which is owned by Finnish utility Fortum and a consortium of energy and industrial companies, has said the unit is expected to meet around 14% of Finland's electricity demand, reducing the need for imports from Sweden and Norway.



■ Construction of Finland's OL3 reactor began in 2005
■ Reactor is expected to produce for 60 years or more
The new reactor is expected to produce for at least 60 years, TVO said in a statement Sunday after

The production of Olkiluoto 3 stabilises the price of electricity and plays an important role in the Finnish green transition

JARMO TANHUA | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, TVO

completing the transition from testing to regular output. Construction of the 1.6 gigawatt (GW) reactor, Finland's first new nuclear plant in more than four decades and Europe's first in 16 years, began in 2005. The plant was originally due to open four years later, but was plagued by technical issues.

OL3 first supplied test production to Finland's national power grid in March last year and was expected at the time to begin regular output four months later, but instead suffered a string of breakdowns and outages that took months to fix. Russia's power exports to Finland ended last May when Russian utility Inter RAO said it had not been paid for the energy it sold, a consequence of the widening gulf between Moscow and Europe over the war in Ukraine. Russian state export monopoly Gazprom shortly after it ended shipments of natural gas to the Nordic nation.

4 Indians among 16 killed in Dubai apartment blaze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 16: Four Indians, including a couple from Kerala, were among 16 people killed after a massive fire broke out in a residential building in Dubai that also injured nine others, officials said Sunday. The fire broke out on the fourth floor of the five-storey apartment building in the Al-Ras area, one of the oldest parts of Dubai, and began spreading to other areas, they said.

Sixteen people died and nine others were seriously injured, officials said. The Indian Consulate in Dubai confirmed that four Indians were among the dead. "The Indian victims include Rijesh Kalangadan (38) and his wife Jeshi Kandamangalath (32). The others include Gudu Saliyakoondu (49) and Imamkasim Abdul Khader (43)," Bijender Singh, Consul, Consular and Labour, at the Indian Consulate, told PTI.

"We have received their passport copies through (Naseer) Vatanappally (an Indian social worker). We would like to express our heartfelt condolences to the families and thank the social workers and others who have reached out with support. We are coordinating with the local authorities for the repatriation procedures," Singh added.

Quoting Naseer Vatanappally, who was at the Dubai Police mortuary, the Gulf News earlier reported that four Indians, including a couple from Kerala, have been identified among the victims.

Two men from Tamil Nadu who worked at the building, 3 Pakistani cousins and a Nigerian woman have also been identified.

Kalangadan worked as a business development manager with a travel and tourism company while Kandamangalath was a school teacher, the paper said.

Videos shared on social media show thick black smoke and flames leaping out of an apartment window, the report said. The Dubai Civil Defence has attributed the fire to the lack of compliance with building security and safety requirements.

Pakistan's minister dies in road mishap

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, April 16: Pakistan's Religious Affairs Minister Mufti Abdul Shakor was killed in a road accident when his car was hit by another vehicle in the national capital, police said.

The minister's car was hit while he was travelling from Marriott towards the Secretariat Chowk Saturday, the Islamabad Police said. The minister was rushed to the Polyclinic Hospital where he was declared dead. "Five persons present in the vehicle involved in the accident have been taken into custody and a probe is launched," it said.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has ordered a thorough investigation into the incident. Shakor was a senior member of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) of Maulana Fazlur Rehman whose party is part of the ruling coalition.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condoled his death and praised the late minister for his contributions to society as a practical scholar, ideological political activist, and a good human being.

Sudan's army blows paramilitary bases

The two rivals have been competing for power as political factions negotiate forming a transitional government after a 2021 military coup

REUTERS

Khartoum, April 16: Sudan's army appeared to gain the upper hand on Sunday in a bloody power struggle with rival paramilitary forces after blasting its bases with air strikes, witnesses said, and at least 59 civilians were killed including three UN workers.

The fighting erupted Saturday between army units loyal to General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of Sudan's transitional governing Sovereign Council, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, who is deputy head of the council.

It was the first such outbreak since both joined forces to oust veteran Islamist autocrat Omar Hassan al-Bashir in 2019 and was sparked by a disagreement over the integration of the RSF into the military as part of a transition to-



POWER STRUGGLE

59 civilians, scores of fighters killed in clashes; 595 hurt

UN food agency says 3 employees killed, halts operations

Sudan's army appears to gain upper hand, witnesses say

wards civilian rule. The United States, China, Russia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UN Security Council, European Union and African Union have appealed for an quick end to the hostilities that threaten to worsen instability in an already volatile wider region.

Efforts by neighbours and regional bodies to end the violence intensified Sunday. That included an offer by Egypt and South Sudan to mediate between the fighting

Indian national killed

An Indian national died in Khartoum after sustaining bullet injuries in the violence-hit Sudanese capital city. The Indian embassy in Khartoum said the deceased, Albert Augustine, was working in a Dal Group Company in Sudan. On Saturday, the Indian embassy advised Indian nationals in Sudan to take utmost precautions and stay indoors after Khartoum witnessed large-scale violence. According to the official data, the number of Indians in Sudan is around 4,000 including, 1,200 who have settled down in the country decades ago.

parties, according to a statement by the Egyptian presidency.

EU objects to Poland, Hungary ban on food imports from Ukraine

Poland and Hungary have decided to ban imports of grain and other food from neighbouring Ukraine to protect the local agricultural sector

REUTERS

Warsaw, April 16: Unilateral action on trade by European Union member states is unacceptable, a European Commission spokesperson said Sunday, after Poland and Hungary announced bans on grain and other food imports from Ukraine to protect the local agricultural sector.

After Russia's invasion blocked some Black Sea ports, large quantities of Ukrainian grain, which is cheaper than that produced in the European Union, ended up staying in Central European states due to logistical bottlenecks, hitting prices and sales for local farmers.

The issue has created a political problem for Poland's ruling nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party in an election year as it has angered people in rural areas where support for PiS is usually high.

"We are aware of Poland and Hungary's announcements regarding the ban on imports of grain and other agricultural products from Ukraine," the spokesperson said in an emailed statement. "In

this context, it is important to underline that trade policy is of EU exclusive competence and, therefore, unilateral actions are not acceptable."

Poland and Hungary have been embroiled in long-running conflicts with Brussels over issues including judicial independence, media freedoms and LGBT rights, and both have had funds withheld due to concerns over the rule of law.

The Polish ban, which came into effect Saturday evening, will also apply to the transit of these products through the country, the development and technology minister said Sunday.

Ukraine's ministry of agrarian policy and food said Saturday that the Polish ban contradicted existing bilateral agreements on exports, and called for talks to settle the issue.

Poland's Agriculture Minister Robert Telus was quoted as saying Sunday that the ban was necessary to "open the eyes of the EU to the fact that further decisions are needed that will allow products from Ukraine to go deep into Europe, and not stay in Poland."

Later Saturday nationalist Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government joined the ban, saying the status quo would cause severe damage to local farmers. Hungary did not give details on when its ban on grain and other food imports would go into effect, but said it will expire at the end of June.



In this time exposure photo, Orthodox worshippers trail candle lights around a church during Orthodox Easter midnight mass in St Petersburg, Russia, Sunday. Eastern Orthodox churches observe the ancient Julian calendar, and this year celebrate the Orthodox Easter April 16

Beijing subway drops mandatory mask mandate

Chinese cities have been scrapping mask mandates for several weeks, including Hong Kong, which ended mask requirements March 1

AGENCIES

Beijing, April 16: Beijing's subway has dropped mandatory mask requirements for travellers, local media reported Sunday, days after a Chinese health expert said the threat of Covid-19 to humans is no longer at a serious level.

The mask move is in line with broader measures by China, which said last week it was now no longer



mandatory to wear face masks when using public transport, according to state media.

"It's as if an era has passed," a user said on China's popular social e-commerce app Xiaohongshu, as social media was abuzz with news of the rules being eased.

Staff at a Beijing subway station tore down signs reminding people to wear masks.

The pandemic is nearing its end, based on World Health Organization data, said Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention,

according to the China Daily. China, which dismantled its strict Covid rules in December, said the latest official data indicated the Covid positivity rate went up slightly in early April, according to the Global Times. However, respiratory specialists said it was unlikely China would experience another big wave of infections nationwide.

China has declared victory over Covid several times, highlighting the government's response and handling of the pandemic.

Some people on social media voiced concerns over the relaxation of mask rules, saying the virus remains a threat. Masks are optional on public transport and in supermarkets, movie theatres and other indoor places with large gatherings, Xinhua news reported.

of the day quote

If we have to capture overseas markets for disposal of the future surplus of milk in the country then we must be export competitive. Being export competitive requires higher competitiveness than competing with imports

RAMESH CHAND | MEMBER, NITI AAYOG

ADB (Asian Development Bank) and World Bank have only modestly reduced the (growth) forecast for this year. Even after this reduction, India will still be the fastest-growing major economy in the world

SANJEEV SANYAL | MEMBER, EAC-PM

Now we are reaching the moment where it will make sense to invest in the passenger car capacity (in India)

FLORENT MENEGAUX | CEO, MICHELIN TYRES

SHORT TAKES

Cash-strapped Pak hikes petrol price

Islamabad: Cash-strapped Pakistan has hiked petrol price by Rs 10 per litre, amid the country's ongoing economic crisis and steep currency devaluation, further burdening citizens who are already hit by skyrocketing inflation. After the latest revision, petrol price has now risen to Rs 282 per litre. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced the hike in a late-night live address, during which he said the prices of diesel and light diesel oil would remain unchanged at Rs 293 and Rs 174.68 respectively. The price of kerosene was also hiked by Rs 5.78 to Rs 186.07.

Baskin Robbins on expansion spree

New Delhi: Baskin Robbins, an ice cream brand operating in the premium space, has plans to add around 100 parlours in the current fiscal expanding its network further, said a top company official. The company is looking for a double-digit growth in sales, helped by multiple growth drivers, including expansion of ice cream parlours and new offerings, said Mohit Khattar, CEO of Graviss Foods -- the Indian franchise partner of Baskin Robbins. "Last year, we have crossed 850 ice cream parlours and this year (FY24) the plan is to add another 100 parlours to our network," said Khattar.



Q4FY23 will be subdued for IT players but that extent and impact will depend on profile and strategy of individual companies.

TV MOHANDAS PAI | FORMER DIRECTOR, INFOSYS

COMCAST FORAYS INTO INDIA

Comcast Corp's \$200-million investment in Bodhi Tree Systems-owned entities through its media company, NBC Universal, signifies the US-based communications behemoth's debut in India's media and entertainment sector



MONUMENTAL MOMENT

US now India's top trading partner

INDIA HAS MARKED A HISTORIC MOMENT AS THE US EMERGES AS ITS BIGGEST TRADING PARTNER IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2022-23, LEAVING CHINA BEHIND

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The US has emerged as India's biggest trading partner in 2022-23 on account of increasing economic ties between the two countries.

According to the provisional data of the commerce ministry, the bilateral trade between India and the US has increased by 7.65 per cent to \$128.55 billion in 2022-23 as against \$119.5 billion in 2021-22. It was \$80.51 billion in 2020-21.

Exports to the US rose by 2.81 per cent to \$78.31 billion in 2022-23 as against \$76.18 billion in 2021-22, while imports grew by about 16 per cent to \$50.24 billion, the data showed.

On the other hand, during 2022-23, India's two-way commerce with China declined by about 1.5 per cent to \$113.83 billion as against \$115.42 billion in 2021-22.

Exports to China dipped by about 28 per cent to \$15.32 billion in 2022-23, while imports rose by 4.16 per cent to \$98.51 billion in the last fiscal. Trade gap widened to \$83.2 billion in the last fiscal as against



China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner. In 2022-23, the UAE with \$76.16bn, was the third largest trading partner of India. It was followed by Saudi Arabia (\$52.72bn), and Singapore (\$35.55bn)

\$72.91 billion in 2021-22. Experts believe that the trend of increasing bilateral trade with the

US will continue in the coming years also as New Delhi and Washington are engaged in further

The trend of increasing trade with the US will continue in the coming months also

KHALID KHAN | VP, FIEO

strengthening the economic ties. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said that increasing exports of goods such as pharmaceutical, engineering and gems and jewellery is helping India to push its shipments to America.

FIEO Vice President Khalid Khan said India is emerging as a trusted trading partner and global firms are reducing their dependence only on China for their supplies and are diversifying business into other countries like India. "The bilateral trade between India and the US will continue to grow as our exporters are getting good orders from that country," Khan said.

Rakesh Mohan Joshi, Director of the Indian Institute of Plantation Management (IIPM), Bangalore,

too said that India provides huge trade opportunities for the US as India is the world's third largest consumer market and the fastest growing market economy.

"Major export items from India to the US include petroleum, polished diamonds, pharmaceutical products, jewellery, light oils and petroleum, frozen shrimp, made ups etc. Whereas major imports from the US include petroleum, rough diamonds, liquefied natural gas, gold, coal, waste and scrap, almonds etc," Joshi said.

America is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus. In 2022-23, India had a trade surplus of \$28 billion with the US.

The data showed that China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner.

In 2022-23, the UAE with \$76.16 billion, was the third largest trading partner of India. It was followed by Saudi Arabia (\$52.72 billion), and Singapore (\$35.55 billion).

Mcap of seven of top-10 companies rises ₹67,859.7cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Seven of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 67,859.77 crore in market valuation in a holiday-shortened last week, with ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank emerging as the biggest gainers.

Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 598.03 points or 0.99 per cent. From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC, ITC, State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel were the winners, while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Hindustan Unilever and Infosys were the laggards.

The market valuation of ICICI Bank jumped Rs 17,188.25 crore to Rs 6,27,940.23 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation rallied Rs 15,065.31 crore to Rs 9,44,817.85 crore. Reliance Industries market capitalisation (mcap) surged Rs 9,911.59 crore to Rs 15,93,736.01 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, HDFC, ITC, State Bank of India and Bharti Airtel.

PSBs set target for selling flagship govt insurance schemes in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Public sector banks (PSBs) have set a target for the sale of flagship government insurance schemes Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) in FY24.

Besides, they have also set goals for other financial inclusion schemes like Mudra Yojana and StandUp India Scheme.

There are about 8.3 crore beneficiaries under PMJJBY and 23.9 crore under PMSBY, as of now. Since the launch of the schemes in 2015, 15.99 crore enrolment has taken place under PMJJBY, while 33.78 crore under PMSBY as of March 31, 2023.

Last year, the finance ministry revised rates from Rs 330 to Rs 436 under PMJJBY and from Rs 12 to Rs 20 for PMSBY, effective June 1, 2022. The revision was being undertaken because of the long-standing adverse claims experience by the schemes and to make them economically viable.

According to sources, the ministry has asked banks to encourage customers to buy these policies for multi-years rather than renewing every year.

PMJJBY offers life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh, in case of death due to any reason, to people in the age group of 18-50 years having a bank or post office account, who give consent to join or enable auto-debit of premium.

On the other hand, the PMSBY offers insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh for accidental death or total per-

manent disability and Rs 1 lakh for partial permanent disability to people in the age group of 18-70 years with a bank or post office account, who give consent to join or enable auto-debit of premium. Last week, the ministry held a meeting with heads of PSBs and financial institutions and urged them to push various financial inclusion schemes, including Jan Suraksha and Mudra Yojana.

Department of Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi exhorted the PSBs to achieve the targets allocated to them under the various schemes for financial inclusion in a time-bound manner.

To achieve saturation under PMJJBY and PMSBY, the finance ministry launched a three-month campaign, starting April 1. Banks were advised to leverage their Banking correspondent network for outreach and enrolling potential beneficiaries.

Under the campaign, camps are being organised at the Gram Panchayat level across all districts in the country by the banks, with the active participation of the state administration and other ministries of the central government to ensure that the benefits of the two Jan Suraksha schemes reach the masses.

MAJOR OVERHAUL IN CBIC ON ANVIL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The CBIC is likely to soon introduce a system of publishing daily currency exchange rates on the integrated customs portal, replacing the existing system of notifying rates fortnightly.

The move would help capture daily exchange rate fluctuations and help importers and exporters to precisely calculate customs duties based on daily exchange rate.

Currently, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) manually notifies exchange rates of 22 currencies every fortnight - 1st and 3rd Thursday of a month - based of rates obtained from the State Bank of India (SBI). The rate notified comes into effect from midnight of the following day.

An official said the entire process would be automated, beginning with forwarding of exchange rate data by SBI to ICEGATE.

The exchange rates received from SBI every day shall be adjusted to the nearest five paise and integrated with Indian Customs EDI System (ICES) and published on Indian Customs National Trade Portal (ICNGATE) by 6:00 pm.

The benefits of the proposed system for determining and publishing exchange rates on a daily basis, experts said, will enable importers and exporters to make more informed decisions about their transactions. The exchange rates will be more accurate and reflect the current market conditions and would be time efficient.

FPIs begin FY24 on a positive note

FOREIGN INVESTORS PUMP IN ₹8,767CR IN INDIAN EQUITIES IN APRIL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: After pulling out funds on a net basis in 2022-23, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) started the current financial year on a positive note and invested Rs 8,767 crore in the Indian equities so far this month on the reasonable stocks' valuation.

Going forward, FPIs flow is expected to remain volatile, given the tight monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve, Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

The US Fed minutes have indicated an interest rate hike by 25 basis points in the coming policy meeting while voicing confidence in the stability of the US financial system.

According to the data with the depositories, FPIs were buyers in all days of April so far, and pumped a net sum of Rs 8,767 crore in Indian equities during April 1-13.

This came after FPIs infused a net sum of Rs 7,936 crore in equities in March, mainly driven by bulk investment in the Adani Group companies by the US-based GQG Partners. However, if one adjusts for the investments of GQG in Adani Group, the net flow is negative.

In addition, the valuation of Indian equities has come to a reasonable level following its consolidation, which prompted FPIs to invest in Indian stocks, he added.

Naushil Shah - Investment Advisor, TrustPlus Wealth (India) Pvt Ltd, said valuations have be-



India has been one of the best investment destinations for FPIs among emerging markets in April so far

VK VIJAYAKUMAR | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

In the financial year 2022-23, most of the major central banks started hiking the interest rate, which resulted in the departure of hot money from emerging markets, including India. This resulted in an unprecedented rise in prices (inflation) in most economies.

Apart from global monetary tightening, volatile crude and rising commodity prices, along with Russia and Ukraine conflict, led to an exodus of foreign money in 2022-23.

On the other hand, FPIs have pulled out Rs 1,085 crore from the debt market during the period under review. In terms of sectors, FPIs were buyers in capital goods, construction, and FMCG; and sellers in IT and oil and gas during the period under review.

The IT sector is likely to witness more selling in the coming days since the growth prospects for the segment appear weak, as indicated by the fourth-quarter results of TCS and Infosys. However, capital goods, financials and construction-related segments are likely to witness more buying.

QUICKER PHASE-OUT OF FOSSIL FUELS

G7 sets massive new targets for solar, wind capacity

The G-7 nations account for 40% of the world's economic activity and a quarter of global carbon emissions. Their actions are critical, but so is their support for less wealthy nations often suffering the worst effects of climate change while having the fewest resources for mitigating such impacts

REUTERS

Sapporo, April 16: The Group of Seven rich nations Sunday set big new collective targets for solar power and offshore wind capacity, agreeing to speed up renewable energy development and move toward a quicker phase-out of fossil fuels. But they stopped short of endorsing a 2030 deadline for phasing out coal that Canada and other members had pushed for, and left



the door open for continued investment in gas, saying that sector could help address potential energy shortfalls.

"In the midst of an unprecedented energy crisis, it's important to come up with measures to tackle climate change and promote energy security at the same time," Japanese industry minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told a news conference.

"While acknowledging that there are diverse pathways to achieve carbon neutral, we agreed on the importance of aiming for a common goal toward 2050," he said.

G7 ministers finish two days of

meetings on climate, energy and environmental policy in the northern Japanese city of Sapporo Sunday. Renewable fuel sources and energy security have taken on a new urgency following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"Initially people thought that climate action and action on energy security potentially were in conflict. But discussions which we had and which are reflected in the communiqué are that they actually work together," said Jonathan Wilkinson, Canada's minister of natural resources.

In their communiqué, the members pledged to collectively in-

crease offshore wind capacity by 150 gigawatts by 2030 and solar capacity to more than 1 terawatt.

They agreed to accelerate "the phase-out of unabated fossil fuels" - the burning of fossil fuels without using technology to capture the resulting CO2 emissions - to achieve net zero in energy systems by 2050 at the latest.

On coal, the countries agreed to prioritise "concrete and timely steps" towards accelerating the phase-out of "domestic, unabated coal power generation", as a part of a commitment last year to achieve at least a "predominantly" decarbonised power sector by 2035.

Canada was clear that unabated coal-fired power should be phased out by 2030, and Ottawa, Britain and some other G7 members committed to that date, Canada's Wilkinson told Reuters. "Others are still trying to figure out how they could get there within their relevant timeframe,"

he said. "We are trying to find ways (for) some who are more coal-dependent than others to find technical pathways how to do that," he added.

"The solar and wind commitments are huge statements to the importance that they will rely on the energy superpowers of solar and wind in order to phase out fossil fuels," said Dave Jones, who is head of data insights at energy think tank Ember. "Hopefully this will provide a challenge to Japan, for which offshore wind is the missing part of the jigsaw that could see its power sector decarbonise much quicker than it thought possible."

Host country Japan, which depends on imports for nearly all its energy needs, wants to keep liquefied natural gas (LNG) as a transition fuel for at least 10 to 15 years.

The G7 members said investment in the gas sector "can be appropriate" to address potential market shortfalls provoked by the crisis in Ukraine, if implemented in a manner consistent with climate objectives. They targeted 2040 for reducing additional plastic pollution to zero, bringing the target forward by a decade.

Power consumption grows 9.5% in '22-23

Experts opined that power consumption could record double-digit growth in 2023-24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: Power consumption grew 9.5 per cent to 1,503.65 billion units year-on-year in 2022-23, mainly due to higher demand amid a rise in economic activities, showed government data.

Power consumption was 1,374.02 billion units (BU) in 2021-22, according to power supply data from the Central Electricity Authority (CEA).

Similarly, the peak power demand or highest supply in a day also rose to 207.23 GW in the last fiscal, higher than 200.53 GW in 2021-22. The power ministry has estimated peak power demand to touch 229 GW this summer. The ministry has already issued instructions to

import coal-based plants to run at full capacity.

It has also asked domestic coal-based plants to import coal for blending to meet the unprecedented demand for electricity this summer.

The experts said the rise in power consumption clearly shows improvement in the economic activities in the country, which pushed the demand for electricity.

They also stated that had there been no rains in March 2023, the power consumption growth would have been in double digits in 2022-23.

The power consumption was affected in March this year due to widespread rains in the country. Power consumption in March 2023 dipped to 126.21 BU from 128.47 BU in the year-ago period.

Power consumption from April 2022 to February 2023 surpassed the 2021-22 level. Power consumption from April 2022 to February 2023 stood at 1,377.43 BU, higher than the 1,374.02 BU recorded in the entire 2021-22 fiscal.

Kishan, Suryakumar script MI victory

IYER'S CENTURY GOES IN VAIN FOR KKR AS MUMBAI BATTERS DOMINATE SHOW WITH CLINICAL DISPLAY



Venkatesh Iyer after his century Sunday



Suryakumar Yadav played a vital knock for MI

PHOTOS BCCI TWITTER

Mumbai, April 16: Ishan Kishan (58, 25b, 5x4, 5x6) and Suryakumar Yadav (43, 25b, 4x4, 3x6) led the charge as Mumbai Indians (MI) handed Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) a five-wicket defeat in their IPL match here Sunday. The fastest century in this year's IPL for Venkatesh Iyer (104, 51b, 6x4, 9x6) went in vain for KKR, who suffered their ninth defeat in 10 matches here at the Wankhede Stadium, and an overall 23rd in 32 matches against MI.

The highlight of MI win was not just their sturdy response with the bat chasing 186, but their key middle-order batter Suryakumar finally finding some form with the bat. Suryakumar also stepped up to lead MI in the game in which regular captain Rohit Sharma (20) played as an impact substitute owing to a stomach bug as MI won with 14 balls to spare. Tim David struck an unbeaten 24 with two sixes and a four as MI recorded a second successive win while chasing.

The platform, however, was laid

early by Kishan and Rohit, who went hammer and tongs from the second over onwards to add 65 for the first wicket in 4.5 overs, attacking the KKR pacers Umesh Yadav and Shardul Thakur in particular. Kishan brought up his 50 in 21 balls, before falling to Varun Chakravarthy (1/28). Rookie leg-spinner Suyash Sharma (2/27) who had dismissed Rohit earlier got his second wicket by sending back Tilak Verma (30), to give some hope to KKR. However, Suryakumar saw to it that there were no heartbreaks for Mumbai.

BRIEF SCORES

KKR 185 for 6 (Venkatesh Iyer 104, Hritik Shokeen 2/34) lost to MI 186 for 5 in 17.4 overs (Ishan Kishan 58, Suryakumar yadav 43, Suyash Sharma 2/27) by five wickets.

Earlier in the afternoon, Iyer's maiden century powered KKR to 185/6 in 20 overs. The 28-year-old batting all-rounder, Iyer waged a lone battle with the bat against MI, recording his highest score in the IPL as well as this season among all batters.

BCCI hikes cash prize for domestic tourneys

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 16: The BCCI announced Sunday an increase in prize money for domestic tournaments with the Ranji Trophy winners set to receive a whopping cash reward of ₹5 crore this year. According to the new pay structure, Ranji Trophy winners, who currently get a cheque of ₹2 crore will be receiving ₹5 crore, while the runners-up and losing semifinalists will get ₹3 crore and ₹1 crore respectively.

"I'm pleased to announce an increase in prize money for all @BCCI Domestic Tournaments," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a tweet. "We will continue our efforts to invest in domestic cricket - which is the backbone of Indian Cricket. Ranji winners to get ₹5 crores (from 2 cr), Sr Women winners ₹50 lacs (from 6 lacs)."

The cash prize for Irani Cup too has been doubled with the winners getting 50 lakh instead of ₹25 lakh, and while the team finishing runners-up currently don't receive any cash reward, they will get 25 lakh from now on.

In Duleep Trophy, the champions will get ₹1 crore and runners-up team will be receiving ₹50 lakh, while winners of Vijay Hazare Trophy will now be getting a cheque of ₹1 crore and the team finishing second best ₹50 lakh. Deodhar Trophy winners are set to get richer by ₹40 lakh and the losing finalists will get ₹20 lakh. Similarly, Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy champions will be receiving ₹80 lakh and the losing team will get 40 lakh.

In a big boost to women's cricket in India, the winners of the senior women's ODI trophy will get a cheque of ₹50 lakh and the runners-up side will receive ₹25 lakh.

RANJI TROPHY WINNERS TO GET ₹5 CRORE INSTEAD OF ₹2 CRORE, WHILE RUNNERS-UP TO GET ₹3 CRORE

WOMEN'S ODI WINNERS' PRIZE MONEY HIKED TO ₹50 LAKH FROM ₹25 LAKH

PRIZE MONEY IN ALL OTHER DOMESTIC TOURNAMENTS INCLUDING IRANI TROPHY AND DULEEP TROPHY ALSO HIKED

The prize money of the senior women's T20 trophy has also been increased with the winners set to get ₹40 lakh, eight times more than what they get now. The losing team will get ₹20 lakh.

Indian cricket's 2023-24 domestic season will start with the Duleep Trophy starting June 28 while the flagship Ranji Trophy will commence from January 5 next year.

The Duleep Trophy, which will be played among six zonal teams, will be followed by Deodhar Trophy (List A) (July 24 to August 3), Irani Cup (October 1-5), Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Men's T20 national championships (October 16-November 6) and Vijay Hazare Trophy (November 23-December 15).

The move to increase the prize money has been welcomed by both the men and women cricketers. They said that this hike would provide security to those who want to take up cricket as a career. Former India captain Mithal Raj stated that BCCI's latest hike in prize money will attract many more young girls to the game and it will help the country as a whole.

SHORT TAKES

Bhagat on cusp of double crown

New Delhi: Ace shuttler Pramod Bhagat stormed into the singles and doubles finals of the ongoing Brazil Para-Badminton International 2023 tournament Saturday. Bhagat defeated Japan's Daisuke Fujihira 19-21, 21-19, 21-12 to book his spot in the men's singles final. The match between Bhagat and Fujihira lasted for 86 minutes. Then in the doubles semifinal, Bhagat and his partner Sukant Kadam overcame compatriots Kumar Nitesh and Tarun quite comfortably in straight sets 21-17 and 21-16. In the singles final, Bhagat will face Kumar while in the title round of the doubles he and Kadam will take on the Korean pair of Joo Dongjae and Shin Kyung Hwan.

England's Kiwi coach under ECB scanner

London: England's head coach for the Test squad Brendon McCullum's association with a betting company is under scrutiny, the ECB said here Saturday. The former New Zealand captain appears in advertisements for '22Bet India', a Cyprus-registered online bookmaking company. The ECB's anti-corruption codes prohibit players, coaches and officials from participating in or encouraging betting on matches. "We are currently exploring the matter and in discussions with Brendon around his relationship with the Cypriot-based betting company, '22Bet', " an ECB spokesperson said in a statement.

Robert's dream

Warsaw: FC Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski says he wants Lionel Messi to return to the club next season. According to Spanish media, Barcelona are trying to resign their former player this summer, while the Argentine, who has played for Paris Saint-Germain since 2021, is also eager to return to Camp Nou. "If he comes back, it will be something amazing. Barcelona is his place. I'm not sure what will happen but I hope next season we play together," Lewandowski was quoted as saying by the Polish media here. Barcelona are on track to retake the La Liga title, as they have a 13-point advantage over Real Madrid after 28 matches and currently look unstoppable under manager Xavi. AGENCIES

Hetmyer blitz helps RR break jinx

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 16: West Indies batter Shimron Hetmyer (56 n.o., 26b, 2x4, 5x6) unleashed his full fury on Gujarat Titans (GT) as Rajasthan Royals (RR) defeated the reigning champions by three wickets with four balls remaining in an IPL match here Sunday. With the win, the Royals have broken the jinx of not having previously beaten the Hardik Pandya-led side in three outings and topped the table with eight points.

The victory will be all the more sweet considering the 2008 IPL champions were reduced to four for 2 at one stage, losing Yashasvi Jaiswal (4) and Jos Buttler (0), and were able to manage just 26 runs in the power play.

The 26-year-old Hetmyer turned the complexion of the game and came at a time when things looked uphill for the Sanju Samson-led side. Samson (60, 32b, 3x4, 6x6) had established the platform for Hetmyer to launch the assault.

Pacers Mohammed Shami (3/25) and Hardik Pandya (1/24) had bowled well as GT early inroads and pushed the Royals into a tight corner.

Long after Shubman Gill (45) and Pandya (28) had come together to pull the Titans out of trouble with their 59-run partnership, the skipper bowled tirelessly in tandem with Shami, whose searing



Shimron Hetmyer heaves one to the leg side during his match-winning knock Sunday against Gujarat Titans

PTI PHOTO

pace and swing flummoxed the RR top-order batters. Pandya induced Jaiswal to play an absurd short with the batter opening the face of the bat to a delivery outside the off stump to give Gill catching practice in slips.

It left the pair of Devdutt Padikkal (26) and Samson with the unenviable task of rebuilding the house from scratch. The two put on 43 runs for the third wicket to bring back their side into contention.

There were some anxious moments when both Dhruv Jurel (18) and Ravichandran Ashwin (10) fell in quick succession, but Hetmyer completed the task with another

massive six. Earlier, Gill's cool demeanour in the face of adversity and Pandya's quick understanding of the situation again came to the fore as their half century stand helped Gujarat Titans post a respectable total.

South African David Miller (46, 30b, 3x4, 2x6) and Abhinav Manohar provided the final flourish, with a 45-run partnership.

Brief scores: Gujarat Titans 177 for 7 (David Miller 46, Shubman Gill 45, Sandeep Sharma 2/25) lost to Rajasthan Royals 179 for 7 in 19.2 overs (Sanju Samson 60, Shimron Hetmyer 56 n.o., Mohammed Shami 3/25) by 3 wickets.

Rublev, Rune set up final showdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Monaco, April 16: Fifth-seeded Andrey Rublev reached the Monte Carlo Masters final for the second time after rallying to beat eighth-seeded American Taylor Fritz 5-7, 6-1, 6-3 in a rain-interrupted contest here Saturday. The Russian player, who lost in the final two years ago, goes for his 13th career title and first at the Masters level against sixth-seeded Dane Holger Rune.

Rune also fought back to win 1-6, 7-5, 7-5 against No. 7 Jannik Sinner of Italy in another rain-marred match, which finished under floodlights. The 21-year-old Sinner was competing in his third straight Masters semis this season and was cheered on by a large contingent of Italian fans.

Sinner broke the 19-year-old Rune's serve twice and served out the first set comfortably. The players went off for a rain delay with Rune leading 3-0 in the second set. Sinner fought back when they returned but Rune held firm to send the match into a deciding set under floodlights.

A tense match ended when Sinner sent a backhand into the net and Rune celebrated by pointing a

Rafa not yet ready

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal's preparation for a tilt at a record-extending 15th French Open title suffered a further blow when he announced his withdrawal from the ATP Barcelona tournament Saturday. The 36-year-old Spaniard said he had still not recovered full fitness from the hip flexor injury he sustained in the Australian Open. "I am still not ready and so I continue my preparation process for the return to competition," Nadal tweeted.

finger to his head as he set up a third career meeting with Rublev. They are tied 1-1 ahead of their first contest on clay.

Earlier, under cloudy skies, Rublev leveled the match on his fourth set point when Fritz, the French Open junior runner-up in 2015, double faulted for the fifth time. He broke Rublev to lead 2-1 in the deciding set but trailed 15-40 in the next game. Fritz won a 40-stroke rally to save one breakpoint, but Rublev let out a roar after a stinging backhand down the line won the next point as he broke straight back.

It was the turning point of the tie as Rublev started dominating the crucial points.

Tough challenge awaits Odisha FC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 16: Odisha FC will face a tough challenge Monday when they face Hyderabad FC in a match of the Super Cup at the Payyanad Stadium in Kerala's Malappuram. The winner of the game will seal their spot in the semifinal of the tournament. Odisha FC will be looking to build on their impressive form in the ISL, which saw them finish the season with a string of impressive performances. They will certainly be buoyed by their recent victory against Aizawl FC which they won 3-0.

On the other hand, Hyderabad FC will be eager to redeem themselves after their draw against East Bengal. However, they will certainly be careful against the Odisha team as they had lost to the latter in the ISL.

Both teams have some talented players in their ranks who can make a difference on their day. For Odisha FC, the likes of Isak Ralte, Diego Mauricio, Victor Rodriguez and Nandhakumar Sekar have been instrumental in their recent success.

Hyderabad will be banking on experienced campaigners Bart Ogebeche and Odel Onaibia along with young talents like Akash Mishra, Nikhil Poojary and Mohammad Yasir. Overall, this promises to be an enthralling game.

Braving war for the love of hockey

UKRAINIAN ICE HOCKEY TEAM TRAIN FOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS DESPITE RUSSIAN ATTACKS

AGENCIES

Miskolc (Hungary), April 16: Ukraine's national ice hockey players have been forced to train with air raid sirens interrupting practice, sending them underground for cover as they worry about their loved ones, but they have managed to keep their focus. The team visited Hungary this month as part of preparations for the World Championships in Estonia. Their training programme here included two friendly games against higher-ranked Hungary, both of which they won.

"It's kind of weird," said assistant coach Konstantin Simchuk. "Somebody in the war and somebody just playing hockey... We understand that we have to keep it moving, we have to play hockey and we have to show probably to the world that we are still alive," Simchuk added.

For player Igor Merezko, travelling to Hungary meant much more than two victories against the hosts. It meant a reunion with his best friend from the heavily shelled Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, now occupied by Russia.



The Ukrainian ice hockey team during a match against Hungary

Merezko, 24, was playing for the Russian club Rubin Tyumen when he woke up February 24 last year, the first day of the Russian invasion, to learn that Russia had bombed Mariupol where his friend Vadim Mazur played. "I didn't actually think about family first, I thought about my friend, Vadim... I texted him first," Merezko recalled.

Staying in Russia was no longer an option for Merezko. He played

a few more games for the Russian team as he could not end his contract right away. Then he broke his jaw on the ice, giving him the chance to leave. After rehabilitation, he signed up with Danish club Odense Bulldogs. Mazur on the other hand moved to play for the club Sokil Kyiv, which won the Ukrainian championship this year. The two, sharing a room in a hotel here, had a lot to catch up on.

We have to play as it is the only way to defy war and show the world about Ukraine's sports potential

KONSTANTIN SIMCHUK - ASSISTANT COACH

Simchuk said he had played in Russia for eight seasons and still had friends there but playing against that country was inconceivable now. "I can't even imagine how it's possible to be on the same ice," Simchuk said.

While spirits ran high for the 26 Ukrainian players here, thoughts about the war were never far away. "The best motivation for all of us is to represent our country (against) the best sides, especially (as) human beings, and then in hockey," said Simchuk who was born and raised in Kharkiv, heavily damaged by Russian missile strikes, where his parents still live. In January this year he went back to Kharkiv to see his parents. "This is where I was born; this is where I was living most of the time. This is the place I love the most," he said.

ARSENAL OPEN DOOR FOR MANCHESTER CITY

Norwegian Haaland equals PL goal-scoring record for 38 matches

AGENCIES

London, April 16: Arsenal's Premier League title jitters returned Sunday in a potentially costly 2-2 draw at West Ham United as for the second week in a row as they threw away a two-goal advantage. The leaders were 2-0 up and cruising towards restoring their six-point cushion over Manchester City with Gabriel Jesus tapping home in the seventh minute and Martin Odegaard doubling Arsenal's lead with a volley three minutes later. However, Said Benrahma (33rd) and Jared Bowen (54th) restored parity for the hosts.

Arsenal now have just one point cushion over defending Premier League champions Manchester City who Saturday thumped Leicester 3-1 with two goals by Erling Haaland. With eight games to go in the PL now, it is anybody's title.

Haaland equalled the PL record for goals in a 38-game season Saturday The Norway forward



Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring against Leicester

netted twice in the first half of City's win over relegation-threatened Leicester to reach 32 goals - the same as Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah's tally in 2017/18. John Stones opened the scoring at the Etihad Stadium before a goal from the penalty spot and a clever dinked finish from Haaland assured Man City of all three points. This incidentally was City's 10th successive win in all competitions.