



RAKUL'S PHILOSOPHY

Actor Rakul Preet Singh says that one needs to love as long as one lives

LEISURE P2



'KILL THE BILL' PROTESTS

107 people were arrested after clashes between cops and demonstrators at a "Kill the Bill" protest in central London

INTERNATIONAL P10



SHINING STAR

Odisha para-badminton player Pranav Prasad wins singles and doubles gold at Dubai tournament

SPORTS P12

22 jawans killed in anti-Naxal ops, 1 missing

VISUALS FROM THE SPOT SHOWED BODIES OF THE SLAIN JAWANS LYING IN THE FIELD AND ON THE VILLAGE STREETS

AGENCIES

Raipur, April 4: Police recovered bullet-riddled bodies of 20 jawans in the jungles of Chhattisgarh Sunday, raising to 22 the number of security personnel killed in a fierce gun battle with Naxals the previous day – the biggest massacre in more than a year that also left 31 injured.

Police also recovered the bodies of three jawans killed in the encounter, an official said, adding a search operation is on in the forest to trace a missing jawan.

"The dead include eight from the District Reserve Guard (DRG), seven from the CRPF's Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), six from the Special Task Force and one from the 'Bastariya' battalion of the CRPF," Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraaj P said.

The missing jawan belongs to the CoBRA unit, he said.

He said the anti-Naxal operation was launched based on the intelligence inputs about the presence of Maoists of PLGA (Peoples' Liberation Guerilla Army) Battalion No. 1 led by Hidma, a Naxal commander involved in many deadly attacks on security forces.

He rubbished reports of "a meticulously planned Naxal ambush", adding, "Security forces fought bravely and inflicted a heavy blow to the ultras during the face-off".

Another senior police official said the Naxals, around 400 in number, were strategically positioned on a hillock in front of Tekalguda village and around it.

The security personnel came under



CRPF personnel carry the coffin of a paramilitary soldier who lost his life in an encounter with Maoists in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, Sunday

BIJAPUR MAOIST ATTACK

The anti-Naxal operation was launched based on the intelligence inputs about the presence of Maoists of PLGA (Peoples' Liberation Guerilla Army) Battalion No. 1

The Naxals, around 400 in number, were strategically positioned on a hillock in front of Tekalguda village and around it

The security personnel came under heavy fire following which a few moved to the deserted village to take defensive positions where the Naxals lay in wait

places - Tarrem, Usoor and Pamed (in Bijapur), and Minpa and Narsapuram (in Sukma), the official said.

When the patrolling team dispatched from Tarrem was advancing through the forest near Jonaguda, around 500 km from the state capital Raipur, it was ambushed by cadres of PLGA battalion of Maoists and a gun battle ensued, he said. The attack comes after the March 23 incident when five DRG personnel were killed as the Maoists blew up a bus carrying the security personnel with an IED in the Narayanpur district of the state.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday spoke to Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and took stock of the situation following the incident, officials said.

Shah also directed CRPF's Director General Kuldip Singh to visit Chhattisgarh to assess the situation.

heavy fire following which a few moved to the deserted village to take defensive positions where the Naxals lay in wait, the official said.

Visuals from the spot showed bodies of the slain jawans lying in the field and on the village streets.

An eyewitness said the bodies of the security personnel had bullet wounds and also had wounds inflicted by sharp weapons.

Eighteen jawans were missing after five security personnel were killed Saturday in the fierce gun battle with Naxals in a forest along the border

between Bijapur and Sukma districts in Chhattisgarh, police said.

"On Sunday, bodies of 17 missing personnel were recovered during a search operation," the official said. Some weapons of the security forces were missing, he added.

In a major joint offensive, separate joint teams of security forces, comprising over 2,000 personnel, launched an anti-Naxal operation from Bijapur and Sukma districts in the South Bastar forests, considered as a Maoist stronghold, Friday night.

The operation was launched from five

WHO IS MAOIST LEADER HIDMA?



RAIPUR: Hidma, who is suspected to be around 40 years old, is a tribal from Puwari village of Sukma district. He joined hands with the rebels in the 90s. He heads the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army's (PLGA) battalion number 1 and known for his fierce and deadly ambushes. He leads around 180 to 250 Maoist fighters, including women. He is a member of the Maoists Dandakaranya Special Zonal (DKSZ) committee. He is also the youngest member of the CPI (Maoists) supreme 21-membered 'central committee'. Unconfirmed reports suggest he has been appointed as chief of the central military commission. There are no recent pictures of Hidma available. He carries a reward of ₹40 lakh. On Saturday, the Maoist PLGA battalion was led by its commander Hidma. With a total strength of nearly 250, this group of Naxals was aided by insurgents associated with the Maoist platoons of Pamed, Konta, Jagargunda, and Basaguda area committees.

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BJP warns impeachment motion against Speaker

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sunday threatened to move an impeachment motion against Speaker Surjya Narayan Patro alleging that he was sidelining Opposition parties.

Leader of Opposition Pradipta Naik and suspended BJP MLA Jaynarayan Mishra Sunday held a press conference and accused the Speaker of being biased while conducting the proceedings of the House.

Naik accused the Speaker of not giving adequate time to the Opposition leaders to raise the issues pertaining to their constituencies.

"As per rules of the Assembly, all MLAs are entitled to be heard in the House. The MLAs, irrespective of their parties, should be heard in the House and that is why such institutions exist. But the Speaker is not allowing Opposition

parties to speak and raise importance issues of public interest," Naik said.

Mishra, on the other hand, accused the Speaker of provoking BJP MLAs to lose their mind. He said that the actions of Speaker to allegedly ignore the BJP MLAs were a provocation for the BJP MLAs Saturday. Three BJP MLAs were suspended by the Speaker Saturday for hurling chappals, headphones and papers at the Speaker's podium.

Mishra claimed that the party has been mulling to move an impeachment motion against the Speaker for allegedly ignoring the Opposition parties in the Assembly. "However, we do not have the numbers. While the BJP has 22 MLAs in the 147-member Assembly, it requires at least 25 members to make such a move. However, if Congress members support the issue, there should be no hesitation in this regard," Mishra said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Chest pain is a thing of the past, Sir. Now, the excuse is corona!

State suffers revenue losses worth ₹528.58cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: Tax is the main source of revenue for the government exchequer. However, due to improper valuation and collection of Odisha Goods and Service Tax (OGST), Odisha Value Added Tax (OVAT), Central Sales Tax (CST) and Odisha Entry Tax (OET), Entertainment Tax (ET), Excise Tax and Professional Tax (PT) by some unscrupulous officials the state government has lost several crores as revenue.

Moreover, tax worth several crores instead of being collected is lying outstanding for last several years. Undervaluation of tax and manipulation has cost the state exchequer of several crores.

An examination of 261 cases regarding OGST, OVAT, CST, OET, ET and PT has revealed irregularities to the tune of ₹528.58 crore. This serious disclosure has been

made in the 2019 report on revenue and economic sector report of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) tabled in the state Assembly, Saturday. Moreover, industrial firms have illegally drawn up ground water without submitting license fee. The state government has also suffered revenue losses due to the irregularities in the farm loan delivery to the farmers.

The CAG has mentioned in its report that officials the state government has lost ₹13,683.71 crore towards payment from VAT, ET and mines were not realized by March 31, 2019. Out of this, ₹5,717.34 crore has not been collected and remained outstanding over last five years. Among them, ₹2,931.56 crore is outstanding towards VAT, ₹1,230.13 towards ET, ₹144.95 towards vehicle tax, ₹1,410.72 crore towards mines. Serious manipulations have been made in records in tax collection, the CAG report said.

CAG REPORT

Tribal woman allegedly dies of 'sun stroke'

AGENCIES

Jaleswar, April 4: Amid the rising mercury across the state, a woman allegedly died of "sun stroke" at Bardiha panchayat under Jaleswar block in Balasore Sunday. The deceased was identified as Jayanti Singh (54) of Kusumsahi. This is first "sun stroke" death in Odisha this year, though it is yet to be officially confirmed.

Jayanti had reportedly gone to a nearby forest to collect firewood. When she did not return home in the afternoon, her family members searched for her in the forest. They found Jayanti dead near a bundle of firewood collected by her. While Kusagad police have sent the body for post-mortem, locals claimed Jayanti died due to sun stroke.

The post-mortem of Jayanti's body will be done Monday, but it is believed that she is the first casualty of the severe heatwave prevailing across the state.

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	39.2°C	36.8°C
MIN	25.8°C	25.0°C
Humidity	59%	60%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Dry weather likely

Personal data of 533 million Facebook users leaked

SECURITY RESEARCHERS WARN THAT THE DATA COULD BE USED BY HACKERS TO IMPERSONATE PEOPLE AND COMMIT FRAUD

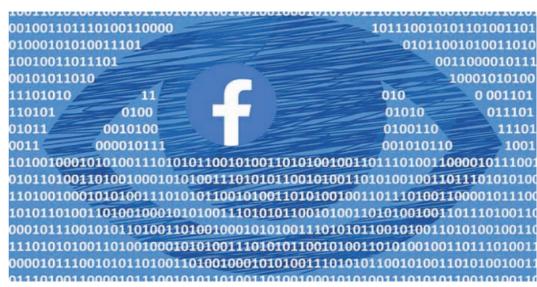
AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 4: Personal data of nearly 533 million (53.3 crore) Facebook users, including 61 lakh Indians, remerged online after a hacker posted the details on a digital forum.

The leaked data includes Facebook ID numbers, profile names, email addresses, location information, gender details, job data, and other details.

The easy availability of such data may make users more vulnerable to cybercrime, although Facebook has said that this is "old data".

"All 533,000,000 Facebook records were just leaked for free. This means that if you have a Facebook account, it is extremely likely the phone number used for the account was leaked," tweeted Alon Gal, CTO



The personal data, including those of 61 lakh Indians, remerged online after a hacker posted the details on a digital forum

of security firm Hudson Rock. "I have yet to see Facebook acknowledging this absolute negligence of your data," he added.

and fixed this issue in August 2019," a Facebook spokesperson was quoted as saying in the report late Saturday.

With the data now entering the public domain, there is a real danger that this information can be widely used by cybercriminals for email or SMS spam, robocalls, extortion attempts, threats and harassment, etc. The data is reportedly broken up into download packages by country.

As Cambridge Analytics still haunts nearly 87 million users, including over 5 lakh users from India, this has come as the biggest ever leak of a social media platform that has billions of users.

In January this year, reports first surfaced that the phone numbers of 533 million users were currently being sold via a bot on encrypted messaging platform Telegram, which came from a Facebook vul-

nerability that was patched by the social network in 2019.

According to a report in Motherboard, the person selling the database full of Facebook users' phone numbers (\$20 per number) lets customers lookup those numbers by using an automated Telegram bot.

Gal had then said: "It is very worrying to see a database of that size being sold in cybercrime communities; it harms our privacy severely and will certainly be used for smishing (the fraudulent practice of sending text messages) and other fraudulent activities by bad actors."

However, this time, the Facebook data leak has been published with more details.

In December last year, reports surfaced that a bug exposed the personal information like email addresses and birthdays of Facebook-owned Instagram users.

The weekend curfew would commence Fridays at 8 p.m. and end at 7 a.m. Mondays. While public transport in Mumbai including local trains would continue to run as usual, emphasis will be given to Work From Home (WFH) to minimise crowds.

The new rules and guidelines, which include a night curfew from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. and prohibitory orders during the day, will take effect from 8 p.m. Monday night. Detailed guidelines will be issued shortly, said Mumbai Guardian Minister Aslam Shaikh.

The situation would be reviewed again April 15 after which the future course would be decided.

Over the last two days, Thackeray held wide ranging consultations with a cross-section of society to get their views before toughening the norms. He also spoke with Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis and his estranged cousin and MNS President Raj Thackeray

Maharashtra opts for 'weekend lockdown'

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 4: With Maharashtra in the grip of the second wave of COVID-19, the Maha Vikas Aghadi Government Sunday announced a "week-end lockdown" across the state besides stringent weekdays norms to combat the sweeping pandemic.

The decision was taken at an emergency Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, after he held detailed discussions with all stakeholders over this weekend.

While public transport in Mumbai including local trains would continue to run as usual, emphasis will be given to Work From Home (WFH) to minimise crowds.

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Maharashtra is currently reporting 40,000-plus new COVID infections daily.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
There are chances that there will be some disappointing moments today, foretells Ganesh. Your own recklessness may well be the cause. Ganesh says it's good to take inspiration from seniors once in a while.

TAURUS
You will tackle your problems with a human touch as your inner self reigns supreme today, predicts Ganesh. Worries and troubles will chide you but let the barking dogs lie and focus on spending quality time with loved ones. Just be approachable and outgoing tonight and it will appear like never before to your lover, suggests Ganesh.

GEMINI
There are strong indications that you will find it easy to assume a leadership role and set the agenda at work today, says Ganesh. In the afternoon, you will be busy looking for an expensive gift for someone very important to you. You may not be able to find the right gift, but that is only because you want it to be really special.

CANCER
You are likely to be in good spirits throughout the day. With you brimming with confidence and positive energy, others around you will also feel upbeat. The entire day, you will be looking forward to the evening, so that you could spend some quality time with your loved ones.

LEO
With Lady Luck smiling down on you, today promises to be rather special, forecasts Ganesh. Expect to find favourable conditions and come out with flying colours in whatever task you undertake, especially if it happens to be something like an interview. Bask in the kudos and appreciation at work, as your performance far exceeds the expectations of the management. On the personal front, you will feel lucky to have found a soul mate who is very accommodating, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
There is an indication that you may assume a leadership role and dictate the agenda at work today, predicts Ganesh. You may spend your afternoon window-shopping, looking for a gift that you feel like giving to a loved one. You will spend the evening planning your long-term goals with a close friend or family.

LIBRA
Ganesh predicts that today you will receive that much-awaited good news from abroad. At the workplace, you will remain completely focused. You may devise and come up with some innovative method to speed up work, much to your relief.

SCORPIO
It is quite likely that you will have an outstanding field day today, predicts Ganesh. At the workplace, you will possibly feel that you are stuck in the rut doing regular activities day after day. In relationship matters, evening will be full of surprises and excitement for you, expects Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Work while you work and play while you play, says Ganesh. On the professional front, you will outclass your rivals with sheer brilliance, leaving them flabbergasted and intimidated. On the personal front, you may spend quality time with loved ones or spend your evening being chased by the spotlight of a party.

CAPRICORN
You will settle for nothing less than excellence in whatever work you choose to take up, says Ganesh. In fact, working extra hours may leave you a little exhausted in the afternoon. Here's the remedy: delegate work to those around you and see that they meet your high standards.

AQUARIUS
The explorer that you are, today your restlessness will get the better of you! Your plans will finally take off, whether it is a new entrepreneurial or educational course or a trip to your home town. It's a promising day, says Ganesh, and you never know what you may find!

PISCES
There is a lot of brainstorming in store for you today, as you try to conjure up ways to convert your extraordinary brilliance into exceptional performance. Keeping in mind that your family is the foundation of your success could provide some vital insights, says Ganesh.



LIFE'S A BEACH, SAYS KIM

Reality TV personality Kim Kardashian raised the temperature by posting a picture dressed in a stunning bikini. Kim posted the picture on Instagram, where she and her friend Stephanie Shepherd Suganami are seen flaunting their svelte figure dressed in tiny bikinis. "Life's a beach!" Kim wrote alongside the image.

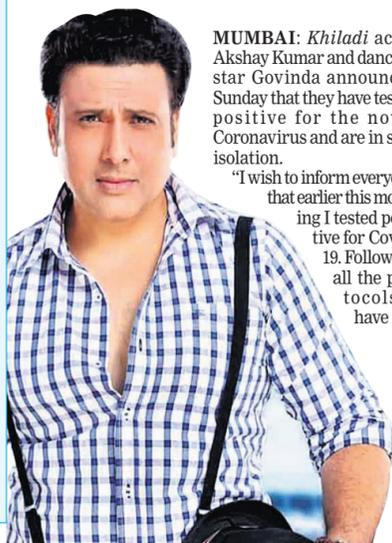
HOLLAND WAS 'SCARED' FOR CHERRY

Actor Tom Holland admits being scared while taking on his role in the new crime drama *Cherry*. The film casts him as a soldier-turned-bank robber who suffers from PTSD, and the *Spider-Man* star says he was not sure if he could do justice to the role.



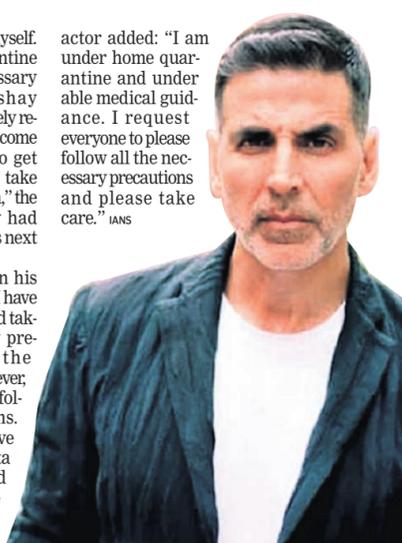
Love as long as you live: Rakul

MUMBAI: Actress Rakulpreet Singh has shared a candid picture and the mantra she follows. Rakul posted a picture on Instagram, where she is seen dressed in denim shorts and white vest. In the image, she is seen sitting on a yacht. "Laugh as much as you breathe and love as long as you live. #sundaymoodA #happyeaster #candidmoments," Rakul wrote. On the work front, Rakul features in the upcoming digital film *Sardar Ka Grandson* alongside Arjun Kapoor. She also shares the screen with Ayushmann Khurrana in Anubhuti Kashyap's *Doctor G*. The actress will also be seen alongside Amitabh Bachchan and Ajay Devgn in Devgn's upcoming directorial *MayDay*. IANS



Govinda, Akshay test Covid +ve

MUMBAI: *Khiladi* actor Akshay Kumar and dancing star Govinda announced Sunday that they have tested positive for the novel Coronavirus and are in self-isolation. "I wish to inform everyone that earlier this morning I tested positive for Covid-19. Following all the protocols, I have immediately isolated myself. I'm under home quarantine and have sought necessary medical care," Akshay tweeted. "I would sincerely request all those that have come in contact with me to get themselves tested and take care. Back in action soon," the actor added. Akshay had started shooting for his next titled *Ram Setu*. Giving an update on his health, Govinda said: "I have been testing myself and taking all the necessary precautions to keep the Coronavirus away. However, I tested positive today following mild symptoms. All others at home have tested negative. Sunita (wife) has just recovered from Covid-19 a couple of weeks back." The actor added: "I am under home quarantine and under able medical guidance. I request everyone to please follow all the necessary precautions and please take care." IANS



Veteran actress Shashikala passes away at 88

MUMBAI: Veteran actress Shashikala is no more. She was 88. The actress passed away in her Mumbai residence Sunday, although an official confirmation from her family is awaited. Mourning her demise, senior NCP leader Praful Patel tweeted: "Deeply saddened by the demise of veteran actress Shashikala ji. She made a noteworthy contribution to Indian cinema by portraying several pivotal roles. My heartfelt condolences to her family members. May her soul rest in peace. Folded hands. #Shashikala #RIP"

"Shashikala ji... RIP," tweeted actor Rohit Roy. Born August 1932, Shashikala made a mark with her performance in supporting roles and negative roles in Hindi films. She has appeared in over 100 films including *Nau Do Gyarah*, *Junglee*, *Aye Milan Ki Bela*, *Ghar Ghar Ki Kahani*, *Chhote Sarkar*, *Khubsoorat*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*, *Baadshah* and *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* among others. Shashikala was honoured with Padma Shri in 2007 for her contribution to Indian cinema. IANS



ZFT holds expo to support artisanship of special kids



BHUBANESWAR: After holding a superbikers' rally in the city to mark World Autism Awareness Day Friday, Zain Foundation Trust (ZFT) organised an exhibition of handicraft products made by the kids with special needs at its office here, Sunday. "The main objective of this exhibition is to offer a platform to the kids and the organisations that support them. We hope, it will give their confidence a boost and the children can lead a meaningful life in future," said ZFT's trustee member Gargi Bhattacharya. The items put up at the expo included candles, hand bags, envelopes, incense sticks, handicrafts, jewellery and several other items. The exhibition-cum-sale is part of the initiatives undertaken by the Foundation to observe World Autism Awareness Month. Speech therapist Lipsa Jena who works in a parent support group



Products put up for sale at the exhibition. CATCH (Centre for Autism Therapy Counselling and Help), said, "All the DIY products on display are non-toxic in nature. This is an attempt to integrate the autistic kids into the mainstream of society."

Entrepreneur Chumki Datta, founder of Vriddhi Training and Production Centre which trains people with intellectual disabilities to make bath soaps, incense stick etc, said that offering skill training to disabled persons is the best way to empower them. The bath soaps put up for sale were in great demand among those visited the exhibition. Besides, some other items like the jewellery works of Sourav Das and paintings by Aparajit Mishra also grabbed quite a few eyeballs. Needless to say, the parents of the children were very happy noticing the appreciations of crafts by the visitors.

PEANUTS



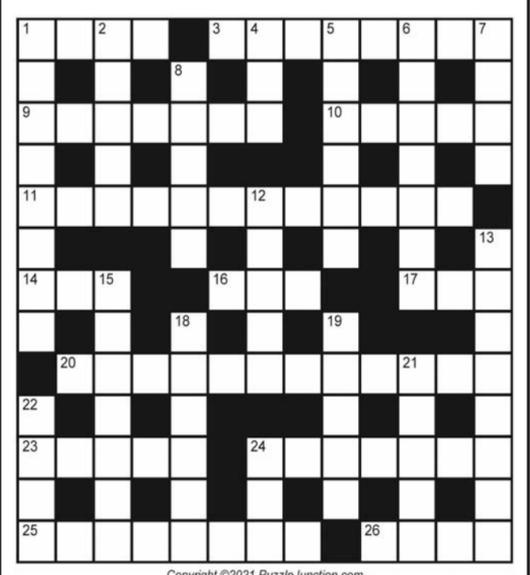
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Diamonds, e.g.
3 Identifiers (4,4)
9 Antediluvian
10 Turning point
11 Rapa Nui (6,6)
14 Raises
16 Tear
17 Outback runner
20 Sets (6,6)
23 Bush
- Down**
24 Crowded
25 Metal analysts
26 Rancher's concern
1 Appreciative
2 Makes fun of
4 Hill dweller
5 Kicks out
6 Move forward
- 7 Location**
8 Euripides drama
12 Cupcake topper
13 Ebbed
15 Beetles of Egypt
18 Unclean
19 Scarecrow stuffing
21 Saltpetre
22 Samoan port
24 Prevent

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.

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

SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

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

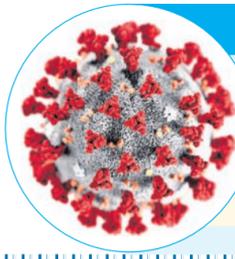
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



GODOWN BLAZE

Garments worth around Rs 1 lakh were destroyed when a godown in Puri caught fire, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	13,15,80,761	10,59,74,704	28,62,510
India	1,24,85,509	1,16,29,289	1,64,623
Odisha	3,42,695	3,37,935	1,922

BDA lost ₹2.62Cr through faulty project: CAG report

Bhubaneswar, April 4: The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) has incurred a loss of Rs 2.62 crore as it could neither develop the proposed citizen-centric services through IT-based platform, nor could it terminate the contract despite failure of the project, a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India said, Sunday.

As per the CAG report, the BDA had selected a private firm, VFS Global Services Limited (VFSGSL) through an open tender floated in September 2014 to undertake the job of streamlining the system of issuing building plan approval, occupancy certificates, procedures for allotment of assets and other citizen-centric services through IT-based platforms.

However, VFSGSL failed to develop the project. As per norms the BDA should have scrapped the contract, but it did not rescind the contract even when the state government had decided to hire another agency.

"As per the state government, any competent authority, before



Principal Accountant General Bibhudutta Basantia (R) releases the CAG report in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

proceeding to outsource services, should estimate the cost by consulting other organisations engaged in similar activities and also ensure that available budget provision is adequate for the purpose. However, the BDA did not estimate the cost of outsourcing before engaging VFSGSL. It entered into a formal contract in Nov 2014 and paid VFSGSL Rs 2.62 crore between 2014 to July 2017," the report said.

"The firm did not develop IT-based solution for processing the applications and continued with the manual mode of throughout the contract period (December 2014 to August 2017) despite contract mentioning use of physical mode for only a period of first three months.

BDA had the right to forfeit all outstanding payments and terminate the contract. However, it continued to make payments to VFSGSL.

IN A NUTSHELL

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Continuance of VFSGSL without development of IT solution did not fulfil the objective of outsourcing, as VFSGSL continued with the manual processes along with the existing officials of BDA

During June 2015 to August 2017, the BDA paid Rs 2.62 crore to the firm which should not have been paid as per the terms of the contract," it added.

The report also mentioned that the BDA accepted the fact that VFSGSL was supposed to develop IT solution by the end of February 2015. The Vice Chairman, BDA in June 2019 stated that since the state government had decided to engage another agency for developing IT solution for building plan approval process during the same period, automation work by the Process Manager was put on hold and manual process continued till August 2017.

"Thus, continuance of VFSGSL without development of IT solution did not fulfil the objective of outsourcing, as VFSGSL continued with the manual processes along with the existing officials of BDA. The entailed cost of Rs. 2.62 crore was thus infructuous," the CAG observed.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



DGP reviews Red scenario in 3 dists



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 4: Director General of Police (DGP) Abhay reviewed the crime as well as Left Wing Extremism (LWE) scenario in Malkangiri, Koraput and Kandhamal, Sunday.

While visiting the police headquarters along with other senior officials in the LWE-hit districts, the police top brass lauded the achievements of the officials in curbing the Red menace. Abhay inaugurated the newly-built SDPO office building at MV-2 in Malkangiri and reviewed the development projects in Koraput and Kandhamal.

The DGP appealed to the Maoists to shun the path of violence and join the mainstream so as to ensure

peaceful development of the areas through democratic means.

Abhay commended the Malkangiri police for its efforts to establish Jodambo police station and company operating bases (COBs) at Hantalguda, Jodambo, Andrahal and Gurasetu in the Swabhiman Anchal. The senior IPS officer also lauded the district police for its relentless efforts in creating a safe and secure environment to facilitate development works in the tribal-dominated district.

Director of Intelligence, ADGP (Headquarters), IGP (Operation), DIG (SIW), DIG (SWR), SPs of Malkangiri Koraput and Kandhamal as well as other senior officers were present during the visit.

Centre, state ignoring rights of SCs: Cong

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) President Niranjan Patnaik Sunday accused the BJP government at the Centre and the BJD government in the state of ignoring the rights of Scheduled Caste (SC) population.

He was speaking at the Executive Committee meeting of the Schedule Caste Cell. Patnaik also paid tribute to the photo of BR Ambedkar and discussed important issues with the party leaders from the SC Cell.



"Today the meeting of the SC Cell was conducted in the state. We have decided to boost the party base in the state with the active involvement of the SC community spread across the state. Neither the Centre nor the state government seems to be interested in their welfare," he said.

11 INCOMING FLYERS TEST COVID POSITIVE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Sunday conducted Covid tests on 313 incoming flyers from Mumbai and Pune out of whom 11 tested positive. Similarly, three were tested positive at city railway station Sunday. All the patients were shifted to SUM hospital. Continuing its enforcement drive, Sunday, the civic body collected Rs 13,000 over fines from individuals and organisations

The South East Zone of the civic body imposed a penalty of Rs 5,000 on Khadims at Master Canteen Square and an equal amount on Manmandir at Janpath. Individual fines were also collected from Forest Park and IG Park areas to the tune of Rs 3,000.

"The shops/organisations were found violating Covid norms as social distancing or lack of sanitizer, scan machines. Individuals were also found not wearing masks and thus were fined accordingly," a BMC official said.

Odia film producer booked for cheating

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: Nayapalli police, Sunday, registered a case against a local film producer on charges of duping a private hotel manager here of about Rs 47,000.

Gopabandhu Das, General Manager of Hotel Richi Regency, Nayapalli, stated in his FIR to the police that Rohini Nandan Mohapatra, a producer under Bhumi Putra banner of films, had cheated him of Rs 47,000 and was also threatening and intimidating him.

"I would like to inform you that Rohini had done a conference January 15, 2021 for more than three hours. As per the communication through email, he was supposed to pay an amount of Rs 47,000. However, he gave a cheque of Rs

Rohini Nandan Mohapatra, a producer under Bhumi Putra banner of films, had cheated the hotelier of ₹47,700

40,000 on the same which had bounced. He has been cheating me continuously and not clearing the bills. Moreover, he is issuing threats that he would never make the payment and has been using intimidating language," the FIR alleged.

Meanwhile, Nayapalli police registered a case against the accused under Section 420 of IPC of cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property. The cops are investigating the case.

HOMAGE TO MARTYRS



Information and Public Relations Minister Raghunandan Das inaugurates the state-level death anniversary celebration of Saheed Raghu-Dibakar at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Some respite as mercury dips

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday predicted light to moderate rain and thunderstorms in parts of the state but refrained from issuing warning of heavy rainfall in any part of the state.

While predicting the weather for Monday, the department said, "Light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Rayagada, Koraput, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bhadrak and Balasore and dry weather is very likely to prevail over the remaining districts of Odisha."

However, from Tuesday onwards the weather is likely to be dry for the next couple of days across the state with no forecasting of rains in any part of the state.

On the other hand, the maxi-



Light to moderate rain or thundershower is very likely to occur at one or two places of Rayagada, Koraput, Gajapati, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Bhadrak and Balasore, Monday

mum temperature in the state Sunday did not cross 40° Celsius

in any part of the state. The highest temperature was recorded at 39.9° Celsius at Bolangir while the minimum temperature was recorded at Koraput which saw 17° Celsius.

The department also said that there is no large change in maximum temperature (day temperature) during next 2-3 days over the districts of Odisha and thereafter it will rise gradually by 2-3° C.

The department, meanwhile, said that partly cloudy sky and thunderstorms might be witnessed in the state capital. "Partly cloudy sky with possibility of development of thunder or lightning may prevail in Bhubaneswar. Maximum and Minimum temperature is very likely to be around 39°C and 26°C respectively," the weather report said.

Meanwhile, light rain brought some relief to the residents of Capital city Sunday evening.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: Teachers and students of special schools across the state were familiarised with audio books on different subjects during a special orientation programme organised on the premises of Odisha Association of Blind here Sunday.

More than 1,500 visually-impaired students from 21 inclusive schools in the state would be benefitted from the program, said the organisers.

"Visually-challenged students have always been facing academic challenges. However, the pandemic has made the situation even worse, especially for senior students who are preparing for exams. These audio books will help resolve their problems to a great extent," said Sanyasi Behera, first blind OAS officer.

As many as 70 audio books on different subjects for Class-VIII to



THE STUDENTS WERE ALSO PROVIDED WITH A SPECIAL ORIENTATION ON PARIKSHA DARPAN- AN EXAMINATION GUIDE FOR CLASS-X STUDENTS

bachelor degree were distributed at the event organised by VIEWS with the support of Germany-based Deutsches Katholisches Blindenwerk.

National award winner teacher Tapas Mohanty- an expert in inclusive education and the resource

person of the orientation programme, explained the teachers about the procedures to access the audio books effectively.

The students were also provided with a special orientation on Pariksha Darpan- an examination guide for Class-X students.

HELPING HAND

More than 1,500 visually-impaired students from 21 inclusive schools in the state would be benefitted from the program

As many as 70 audio books on different subjects for Class-VIII to bachelor degree were distributed at the event organised by VIEWS with the support of Germany-based Deutsches Katholisches Blindenwerk

"It is wonderful to see how technology has come to the aid of these students during these uncertain times. These books will be a huge help for many of them to prepare for the upcoming board exams which is scheduled for May 3," informed Sasmita Swain, a teacher.

ECOR TO RUN FOUR MORE SPECIALS



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: East Coast Railway (ECOR) will run four more special trains under its jurisdiction from April 11. These trains are: Puri-Mumbai LTT, Puri-Gandhidham, Muzaffarpur-Yesvantpur and Jasidih-Tamaram.

The Mumbai LTT-Puri-Mumbai LTT Special from Mumbai LTT will leave at 20:30hrs every Sunday April 11 and leave Puri at 21:45hrs every Tuesday from April 13 till further notice.

The four trains the ECoR would run are:

- Puri-Mumbai LTT, Puri-Gandhidham, Muzaffarpur-Yesvantpur and Jasidih-Tamaram

Muzaffarpur at 7:25hrs every Monday between April 5 and June 28, 2021 and from will leave Yesvantpur at 23:55hrs every Wednesday between April 7 and June 30, 2021.

Jasidih-Tamaram-Jasidih Special from will leave Jasidih at 13:20hrs every Wednesday April 14, 2021 and depart from Tamaram at 12:55hrs every Saturday April 17, 2021 till further advice.

Earlier, the ECoR had decided to run special trains between Bhubaneswar and Junagarh Road, Bhubaneswar and Jagadalpur via Brahmapur and Vizianagaram and between Bhubaneswar and Nayagarh Town from April 10. It also decided to run Special Express Train between Puri and Gunupur from April 22.

Similarly, to clear the waiting list of passengers in special trains originating from its jurisdiction, the ECoR has decided to augment additional coaches, temporarily in 13 pairs of special trains in the month of April.

6 held for extortion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, April 4: At least six persons were arrested on charges of extorting people here, a senior Baseli Sahi police official said Sunday.

The accused were identified as Ramesh Behera of Jagannath Slum, Kuldeep Banerjee of Mishra Sahi, Mitu Behera of Nolia Sahi, Jitendra Sarangi of Markandeswar Sahi, Krushna Chandra Palai of Barabati area and Siba Narayan Biswal of Matitota area.

"A dummy pistol and cash were recovered from them. A case (54/2021) has been registered with the Baseli Sahi police in this regard," said the official.

WASSUP TODAY

BHUBANESWAR

- Protest by western Odisha Ashas, Lower PMG, 10am
Birth anniversary of comrade Banmali Jena, Patia Girls' School premises, 10.30am
Agitation by various farmer outfits, near FCI office, 11am

KHURDA

- Second day of Khurda Cup T-20, BJB High School Ground, 6.30pm

Programmes/announcements for wassup today may be sent to opwassup@gmail.com for record, it must also carry the sender's mobile number for our verification, but not for publication.

No daytime curfew now: SRC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 4: The office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) denied any plan of the government to impose daytime curfew in the state. In a statement issued by the office of the SRC, it said that the state government has only planned to impose night curfew in selected areas and there was no plan to impose daytime curfew as of now.

Earlier in the day, Assembly Speaker SN Patro hinted at a likely situation of imposition of daytime curfew in selected areas of the state

Speaking to reporters here Sunday, the Speaker said till now the state government has imposed only night curfews but daytime curfews may follow soon.

Patro said that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and the state Health department had been mulling to impose daytime curfews in high-burden districts where more number of Covid-19 cases are being reported.

This comes after the viral disease witnessed a resurgence with the state reporting above 400 cases every day. Districts like Nuapada, Khurda, Cuttack and Kalahandi are reporting more number of

State logs 471 fresh Covid cases, 1 more fatality



Odisha's Covid-19 tally mounted to 3,42,695 Sunday as 471 more people tested positive for the infection, while one more fatality pushed the death toll to 1,922, a Health department official said.

Of the new cases, 278 were reported from quarantine centres and 193 detected during contact tracing.

Sundargarh district reported the highest number of fresh cases at 85, followed by Kalahandi (50), Nuapada (42) and Khurda (40).

A 29-year-old female Covid pa-

tient from Khurda district died Sunday while undergoing treatment at a hospital.

Odisha now has 3,085 active cases, and 3,37,635 patients have so far recovered from the disease.

Khurda district comprising the state capital Bhubaneswar has so far accounted for the highest number of coronavirus deaths at 341, he said.

The state has so far conducted over 91.59 lakh sample tests for the novel coronavirus, including 29,281 Saturday, and the positivity rate stands at 3.74 per cent.

The government had announced that night curfew from 10pm to 5am will be imposed in 10 districts - Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Bolangir, Nuapada, Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Koraput and Malkangiri - from April 5.

Kalahandi district administration has declared Chilchila village in Dharmagarh block as a containment zone after six people were tested positive for the virus Saturday.

The Jharsuguda district administration has also declared eight places as micro containment zones.

SBI main branch sealed as seven test positive

Bhubaneswar: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Sunday, sealed the main branch of State Bank of India (SBI) at Unit I here for two days after seven of its employees tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

Detailing about the issue, BMC Commissioner Prem Chandra Chaudhary said seven employees of the branch have tested positive after the first phase of the testing. Movement within and outside the premises have been restricted barring authorised personnel of the BMC. The positive cases were directed into isolation at their respective residence.

"Those tested positive were checked under Phase I of the testing. Many other employees of the same branch have undergone tests in the second phase of testing, the result of which is awaited. Thus, we have decided to seal the branch for two days for necessary sanitisation and contact tracing of the patients. An RT-PCR test shall be conducted for all the staff of SBI branch," the BMC Commissioner said.

planned to impose night curfew in 10 districts from April 5 to scale up their vigilance and scrutiny to counter the spread of the disease. The state government had earlier

BJP leaders hit campaign trail ahead of Pipli bypoll

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pipli, April 4: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its campaign for the byelection to Pipli Assembly seat scheduled for April 17.

The saffron party's Odisha unit president Samir Mohanty, its national spokesperson Sambit Patra, BJP co-in charge Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, Brahmagiri MLA Lalitendu Bidyadhar Mahapatra, BJP state vice president Pravati Parida, general secretary Prithiviraj Harichandan, senior party leaders Prakash Mishra and Kharavela Swain and BJP's Odisha youth wing president Irashis Acharya Sunday hit the campaign trail.

The saffron leaders urged the people of Pipli to vote for BJP candidate Ashrit Pattanayak in the bypoll. They claimed that the Narendra Modi government at the Centre is committed to ensure basic facilities like concrete house, drinking water and toilet to each and every poor family in the country.

"Even after 73 years of Independence, the people of Pipli constituency have been deprived of

basic facilities. The BJP is committed to bring all-round development to Pipli and make it free from shadow of trepidation and violence," Samir Mohanty said.

Tomar urged the BJP workers to create awareness regarding the welfare schemes of the Centre.

The saffron leaders alleged that the BJD government in Odisha has failed to develop Pipli even though the constituency is located close to state capital.

"The famous applique work of Pipli is yet to get due share in international market. Even, the people of the locality are yet to get a bus stand. The state government has failed to improve irrigation and other facilities in the constituency. Only the BJP can bring rapid development to Pipli, which is considered as the entry point to Puri Dham," Patra said.

Notably, Pipli Assembly segment will go for a bypoll April 17. The seat has fallen vacant after the death of BJD MLA Pradeep Maharathy. The regional party has fielded Maharathy's son Rudra Pratap Maharathy in the byelection while Congress party has nominated Ajit Mangaraj to take on the BJP and BJD candidates.

TALENT FETED



Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar felicitates Jadunath Prasad Das with prestigious Gangadhar Rath Memorial Award at Kala Vikas Kendra in Cuttack, Sunday

People switch off lights protesting tariff hike

Bhubaneswar: Majority of the people across Odisha switched off the lights at their homes for half an hour Sunday evening to protest against the hike in power tariff in the state. State Congress president Nairanjan Patnaik thanked the people for registering their protest, the call for which was given by his party. The people switched off their lights from 6:30pm to 7pm, opposing the power tariff hike.

Srimandir complex sanitised

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, April 4: Devotees to Srimandir had to satiate themselves with the darshan of 'Patitapabana' near the Lions' Gate of the 12th century shrine here as the Trinity remained out of the bounds owing to the disinfection of the temple complex, Sunday.

Rajesh Sethy, a devotee from Cuttack, reached the Lord's abode to realise about the darshan restriction Sundays.

"I had no idea regarding the restriction on darshan or closure of the shrine for devotees due to disinfection, Sundays. I realised it only upon reaching Puri this morning. Although I was a bit disappointed as I couldn't have a darshan of the Trinity, it's a welcome move for it's meant for public welfare," Sethy said, adding that he had sought blessings from the 'Patitapabana'.

Sources said Fire Services personnel have sanitised the temple complex. "Teams of the Fire Services personnel have disinfected the shrine complex and the areas adjoining it," said a source.

All rituals of the deities were conducted as per the schedule with participation of a minimum of servitors.

According to Srimandir chief administrator Krishan Kumar, the temple administration will go tough



on those violating Covid norms on the shrine premises. "The temple administration will ensure devotees have a smooth darshan of the deities while complying with the Covid norms," the senior IAS officer pointed out.

Kumar said that devotees must wear masks, sanitise hands and refrain from touching any idols or statues in the shrine. Social distancing has to be observed by devotees queuing up to enter the temple complex.

According to a revised standard operating procedure (SOP) issued by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Saturday, the temple will remain open on all days of the week except Sundays when sanitisation will be carried out.

Public darshan of deities will start by 6am, unless notified. This apart, the temple and its interiors will be sanitised twice a week after all rituals are over, the SOP said.

The 12th-century shrine reopened in December last year, after remaining out of bounds for devotees since March 2020. People with Covid-19 negative certificate were initially allowed to enter the temple, which was closed Sundays in January, for sanitisation.

MEET IN CITY



A meeting of Odisha Anganwadi Women's Association in progress at Prabhujee English Medium School in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

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TOURISM BOOST



A boat being taken for a trial run in a waterbody near Debjharan waterfall, an eco-tourism site in Sambalpur. Various facilities are being put in place at the project area which will be dedicated to the service of tourists soon

Mahendratanya dries up; water crisis hits Gajapati

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, April 4: Years ago, Mahendratanya river flowing through Gajapati district and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh was full to the brim with water almost throughout the year. However, this summer the riverbed has dried up, signaling severe drinking water crisis and problems for farming in most riparian pockets of this southern district.

Shortage of water in the river has resulted in acute crisis for the farming sector and people living in this town and its peripheral areas, a report said. According to the report, vegetables farmers doing cultivation on thousands of hectares of farmlands in Gosani and Rayagad blocks of the district are facing the brunt of water shortage in the river. Drinking water crisis is already pinching the people in the region, it was said.

Deficit rainfall in the region and poor flow of water from various hill streams are responsible for water shortage in the river this summer. The PHEO supplies drinking water to the town. The water of Mahendratanya is drawn through pipes near Brundaban palace. The water is treated and supplied to households in the town. As there is little water in the river, the PHEO had to dredge the river bed to channelise water to the mouth of the suction pipes.

To compound problems, the municipality has not taken any steps to conserve water of the river and



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Deficit rainfall in the region and poor flow of water from various hill streams are responsible for water shortage in the river this summer

The PHEO supplies drinking water to the town. The water of Mahendratanya is drawn through pipes near Brundaban palace which is treated and supplied to households in the town

rainwater for the summer, locals alleged. It is said that in the monsoon, the water flows into Andhra Pradesh. The Odisha government has not set up any barrage to conserve water for its use on its side.

On the other hand, the neighbouring state is making use of most of the water of Mahendratanya for various purposes by building some barrages. It has also started construction of Apsara project on Mahendratanya to use its water.

After the start of the Apsara project, the Odisha government was jolted into action. It then took a decision to set up barrages on the upper reaches of the river at

Dambapur and Champapur. However, the blueprint of the Champapur project has not been finalised while the Dambapur project has not been made operational in the last 13 years.

Many local residents and intellectuals observed that the Odisha government should take expeditious step for conservation projects in the upper region of the river so that it can be used in Gajapati district during summer and other seasons. As for water crisis, assistant engineer of the PHEO division, Swagat Kumar Nayak said that water will be supplied to people through tankers.

Couple assaulted by police, wife lodges complaint

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, April 4: A couple of Old Berhampur area was allegedly subjected to brutal physical torture at Bada Bazar police station in the Silk City.

The matter came to the fore after Dukhi Nayak, wife of Kabir Nayak of Pandav Nagar in Old Berhampur area, met Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Prabhat Chandra Routray at his office here and lodged a complaint over alleged torture in police station. The woman met the ASP with the help of local women self-help group. The ASP after hearing her complaint directed the Town SDPO Bishnu Prasad Pati to conduct a probe into the charges and submit a report to him. The truth will be ascertained after availability of the probe report, the ASP said. The woman said that she and her husband Kabir were sum-



moned by police for questioning over a family dispute over a complaint filed by her in-laws, Saturday.

The couple along with a minor daughter lives with their in-laws. She alleged that her in-laws always harass them and pick up fights over trivial issues. She said that her brother-in-law, who is working as a home guard also meddle in their affairs and create disturbances in their family. She said that when she and her husband reached the police station, they were beaten up severely.

"Two women police personnel slapped me and forcefully snatched my mobile phone. Later, they dragged me and my husband to a dark room and hammered us severely with lathis," Dukhi said. While police released her at night, her husband Kabir is still detained at the police station, she informed.

Dukhi has demanded action against the erring police personnel and requested the ASP to arrange for the release of her husband.

Vigil stepped up at 14 border points in Sambalpur district

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, April 4: With a spike in Covid-19 infections and possibility of the second wave, the district administration and police stepped up Sunday checking at 14 entry and exit points on the borders of Sambalpur district. Curfew has been enforced from 10.00pm till 5.00am. People have been warned that they will face penalties if they violated Covid-19 protocols.

Addressing a presser Sunday, SP Batula Gangadhar clarified that shops and business establishments, if found violating guidelines, will face forced closures along with fines. He also said that checking of vehicles has been stepped up at Bimbhoi Chhak, Laida, Bhusan Company Chhak, College Chhak, Burla Thana Chhak, Sindupanka Chhak and various points on national and state highways to effectively control the spread of Covid-19 in the district. Plying of inter-state goods vehicles and emergency services however, will not be restricted.

The district reported 27 new Covid-19 infections Sunday. For the last five days, the cases Covid-19 have been

Chhatishgarh borders under scanner

JHARSUGUDA: As the second wave of Covid-19 has resurfaced in the neighbouring state of Chhatishgarh, the administration of Jharsuguda district has stepped up its checking on entry of vehicles on the fringe areas. Violations of Covid-19 safety guidelines are being scrutinised in a tough manner and the offenders are paying hefty fines, a report said.

According to the report, the district administration apprehends spread of the Covid infection from the neighbouring state. This is because people living in border areas are more vulnerable to infection due to daily communication to various localities in Chhatishgarh. So naturally it is a cause of concern. Following a directive from District Collector Saroj Samal, officials accompanied by police have stepped up their vigil and checking on border entry points since Friday.

rising in the district. Contact tracing of the infected is being conducted in a proper manner. The SP said that police will be de-



Sub-collector Shiba Toppo, tehsildar Bisikesan Pandey, BDO Sanjib Patel and Rengali IIC Sarangdhara Panigrahi are personally checking vehicles. They are also pulling up people for violating COVID-19 protocols at Kanakpora, a border entry point.

RTO, Dinabandhu Sundhi, traffic inspector Anidita Maharath and sub-inspector Sabita Nayak checked use of seat belts, helmets and masks Saturday. Officials detected various violations by 79 vehicles and imposed a fine of Rs 12,000, Sunday. Two platoons of police have also been deployed at the border point, it was said.

ployed at the 14 border points. He urged people to cooperate in the with administrative officials to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Erosion-hit Satabhaya to become a 'ghost' village soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, April 4: Satabhaya, the village hit by sea erosion in Kendrapara district will soon become a deserted place with the district administration deciding to shift the remaining 118 families to Bagapatia rehabilitation colony, a report said.

The area faces erosion due to rising tides for which the residents have been demanding relocation elsewhere since the last five decades. The 17-km stretch of the beach at Satabhaya under Rajnagar block is claimed to be the fastest-eroding beach on the Odisha coast.

The district administration in a preparatory meeting decided to shift the rest of the 118 families. Bagapatia is about 12-km away from



Satbhaya. Earlier there were demands for creating a mangrove forest in Satabhaya to protect the area from erosion by the sea and build up nature camps to promote tourism. Jagabandhu Das of Satabhaya

welcoming decision said it has given him a new lease of life.

In the past 40 years, the sea has devoured more than 1,000 homes and large tracts of agricultural lands in the locality sparking seri-

ous concern among the residents of Satabhaya.

But, due to constant erosion only a small portion of it remains with Gobindapur, Mohanpur, Kanhpur, Chintamani, Badagahiramattha and Kharikula villages vanishing from the map. Now, the sea has come closer. It is almost at the footsteps of the Maa Panchubarahi's old temple. The administration has stopped all developmental works in Satabhaya after it was decided to relocate the residents to Bagapatia rehabilitation colony in 2017. The area now lacks basic needs like power, road and drinking water. The schools have been closed down in the area. Initially, the district administration rehabilitated 571 families in Bagapatia barring 148 families. The left out families submitted

applications several times and drew the attention of the administration for their shifting.

The district administration soon identified the 118 families for shifting which has relieved them of the fear of tidal waves devouring them and their houses, Das said.

However, all are not lucky like Das. Bijaya Levka a local woman said that the identification exercise of the administration is not free from error. She was married to Bijay of Kanhpur mouza but has got separated due to differences among them. Meanwhile, her estranged husband Bijay has been living at Bagapatia after being allotted a land. However, she is yet to get a land at Bagapatia due to lack of proper documents. She is entitled to 10 decimal of land and a house

building assistance. Many of the left out families have shifted on their own to nearby areas and living in houses built by them on the government land.

Sudarshan Das, another villager demanded a patch of farmland to earn their livelihood as it would be difficult for them to manage their families in the absence of a proper income.

Environmentalist Hemant Kumar Rout said that administration should plant mangrove forests in Satabhaya to check coastal erosion and use it for promoting eco-tourism.

When contacted, ADM Basant Kumar Rout said that 118 families will be provided with all help while a review has been undertaken to find out the actual reason behind rapid coastal erosion.

Kotia panchayat: Officials review projects on livelihood



POST NEWS NETWORK

Korapat, April 4: Since Andhra Pradesh forcibly held panchayat elections in some villages of the Kotia group in Korapat district, the Odisha government has been expediting various projects and welfare measures in the fringe region, a report said.

Officials have been routinely paying visits to these villages and

other localities to review progress of the projects. The Odisha government has taken up a host of projects to push income-generation and livelihood of the people.

A delegation from the Soil Conservation and Watershed department led by director Hemanta Kumar Panda visited Sunday villages under the Kotia panchayat.

The watershed mission is trying to enhance the livelihood of people

in Panjeipadar, Taupadar and Janiguda villages. It has dug up several ponds in the area and provided 1,200 Kadaknath fowls to farmers.

Panda interacted with many beneficiaries about effectiveness of the income-generating schemes. Farmers told him they are benefiting from poultry supported by the government.

The officials also visited an under-construction banana pond at Janiguda. They also inspected various plantations and fish farming on the land of a woman beneficiary.

Notably, there are about 21 villages in the Kotia group. People of these villages are being lured by the Andhra Pradesh government through sops. It is being done, so that the Andhra government can claim the villages to be in their state.

A case is pending in the Supreme Court over the dispute even though it is in the jurisdiction of Korapat district.

Youths rescue flying squirrel



POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, April 4: A flying squirrel considered an endangered species, was rescued Sunday by some youths at Bapanpalli in Malkangiri. The animal was later handed over to forest officials.

According to reports, the squirrel was lying exhausted on a roadside. It was clear that the heat had exhausted all its strength. Some youths took the animal home and provided water to it. On being informed, ranger Jagannath Prasad Bisoi along with other officials brought the squirrel to a veterinary doctor and got it treated.

The ranger said that the animal will be released in the forest only after its gets well.

SUMMER FRUIT



A trader unloading watermelons from a vehicle in Angul town Sunday. Demand for the juicy fruit has grown manifold due to sweltering heat prevailing across Odisha

OP PHOTO



There is a thirst for Love which no human relation can quench. It is only the Divine's love that can satisfy that thirst.

THE MOTHER

Fall & Degradation

The Election Commission's role in conducting free and fair polling during the ongoing elections to the four states of West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Pondicherry has unfortunately caused misgivings. Starting from the use of Aadhaar data to send bulk messages through phones by the BJP in Pondicherry, banning A Raja of DMK while relaxing a similar ban for a BJP campaigner in Assam to central forces getting involved in Bengal voting process highlights the EC's self-willed failures.

The EC's image of neutrality as an independent constitutional body has been seriously impaired. It seems to be going totally soft on the BJP and biased against non-BJP Opposition parties. This does not augur well for a healthy democracy or for a prime organization, built on tax payers' money, such as the EC. The latest instance of EC's partisan action is the reduction of its 48-hour campaign ban on Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to 24 hours announced on April 3 after the powerful BJP leader offered an 'unconditional regret' and requested the poll panel to reduce the ban period. One may wonder why the EC does not extend this same relaxation to leaders and campaigners of other parties. The EC's decision to accede to the request is unacceptable on two counts. First, withdrawal or relaxation of campaign bans is rare. Secondly, it greatly tarnishes the EC's image of impartiality as it overturns its own earlier decision, making it look as if it did not apply its mind when it slapped the ban initially.

Ironically, the only beneficiary of such decisions turns out to be the ruling BJP every time, which is more alarming for the independence of the commission. During the last Lok Sabha polls, the EC had lifted its ban on Amit Shah's electioneering in Uttar Pradesh after he assured the poll panel that he would not 'make any utterances violating' the model code of conduct. The EC did not cover itself with glory when it looked away at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's highly communal remark during the last UP Assembly election when he infamously spoke about "kabarastan" and "samshan" in a blatant attempt to polarize votes.

The Opposition Congress, which filed the complaint leading to the ban on the Assam Minister, slammed the EC's decision and accused it of failing to discharge its obligations to preserve the purity of the electoral process. For, Sarma, who is contesting from the Jalukbari seat in the third and final phase of Assam elections on April 6, can now attend rallies and meetings during the last 24 hours before campaigning ends in the state. Beginning 8 a.m. April 4 he is slated to appear at a series of rallies and road shows including one with Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The EC is under a cloud now. Its initial order on April 2 debarred Sarma for the rest of the campaign. The action followed a complaint against Sarma for his remark that Bodoland People's Front (BPF) chairperson Hagrama Mohilary would be sent to jail by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). BPF is a constituent of the Congress-led alliance. In fact, a strange and unheard-of thing has happened in the Assam polls when EVMs were found in the car of an Assam BJP candidate. The explanation offered that the EC officials' car broke down forcing them to take the help of the BJP leader is astounding. The EC's order suspending four officials can hardly extenuate the guilt since the incident is a reflection of the steady erosion of independence of the poll panel.

Such events prove, over and over again, that it is not the institutions that are at fault. Many may recollect a time when the Election Commission of India had risen to amazing heights and was viewed as one of the premier global organizations capable of handling immensely large elections over huge geographical areas. People had lately even suggested that the 2020 US Presidential election could have been better managed if the EC of India was given full control and charge over the American process. All such talk and impressions are created, over time, when the human element at the helm of such prestigious institutions is aware of the adage: With great power comes great responsibility.

Sadly, the people holding reins of the EC today are the ones who will go down in history as being responsible for the fall and degradation of such a great institution.

WISDOM CORNER

- There will be obstacles. There will be doubters. There will be mistakes. But with hard work, there are no limits. **MICHAEL PHELPS**
- The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart. **HELEN KELLER**
- The most authentic thing about us is our capacity to create, to overcome, to endure, to transform, to love and to be greater than our suffering. **BEN OKRI**

WORDSWORTH

By and large

It's a nautical expression, from sailing ship days. With by and large the modern landlubber means "in general; on the whole; everything considered; for the most part". When you start to read up on the origin, it's easy to get confused because dictionary editors and writers on word origins (this one included) have a lot of trouble understanding the terminology. With the help of books like William Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine of 1769, I think I've sorted matters out. Imagine a ship at sea travelling west. If the wind were blowing from exactly north or south, sideways on, it was said to be on the beam (the beam being the side of the ship at its widest point, usually by the mainmast). If the wind was blowing from any point in the half-circle eastward of the line from north to south, from nearer the stern, the ship was said to be sailing large. This comes from the idea of something being unrestricted, allowing considerable freedom (as in a fugitive being "at large"), because ships sailing large were able to maintain their direction of travel anywhere in a wide arc without needing to make continual changes to the set of the sails. To some extent sailing ships were able to make progress into the wind, that is, with it blowing from forward of the beam. Those with good handling capabilities could get within five or six points of the wind (there are 32 compass points in a complete circle). In such cases, the ship was said to be sailing by the wind, by here having the sense of "towards". If the ship were pointed closely into the wind, but with some margin for error in case the wind changed direction slightly, it was said to be full and by (sailing by the wind with her sails full of wind), or close-hauled, because the lower corners of the main sails were all drawn as close as possible down to her side to windward. If the helmsman by mistake turned the ship closer to the direction of the wind than it was capable of sailing, the wind would press the sails back against the masts, stopping the ship dead in the water and possibly breaking the masts off; in this case the ship was taken aback, the maritime source of another common metaphor.

LOL

Value of paintings

An artist asked the gallery owner if there had been any interest in his paintings on display at that time. "I have good news and bad news," the owner replied. "The good news is that a gentleman inquired about your work and wondered if it would appreciate



in value after your death. When I told him it would, he bought all 15 of your paintings." "That's wonderful," the artist exclaimed. "What's the bad news?" "The guy was your doctor..."

TREMORS OF MYANMAR'S COUP

FOCUS NEIGHBOURHOOD



Thitinan Pongsudhirak

MYANMAR'S CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, LED BY AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY, MAY NOT HAVE BEEN PERFECT, BUT IT HAD THE PEOPLE'S SUPPORT

Myanmar is leading Southeast Asia's race to the political bottom. Since overthrowing a civilian government on February 1, the military has killed more than 530 unarmed civilian protesters and arrested thousands more. Now, the country is confronting a deepening humanitarian crisis and the growing possibility of a civil war - developments that would have serious regional and even global consequences.

Myanmar's civilian government, led by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, may not have been perfect, but it had the people's support. In last November's election, the NLD won a strong majority against the military-backed opposition. Within weeks, the military, under orders issued by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, had arrested Suu Kyi and other NLD ministers and declared a one-year state of emergency.

Myanmar has been here before, having endured nearly a half-century of military dictatorship and international isolation following the 1962 putsch and a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in 1988. But there is something different about this coup: no matter how freely the military beats and shoots civilians, the protesters' movement - built on an exigent alliance between civilian authorities and armed ethnic groupings - will not submit.

That is not unambiguously good news, because the military junta also will not give up, no matter the cost, leaving little hope of salvaging Myanmar's political liberalization, economic reform, and development progress during a decade of civilian rule. Instead, the country faces the imminent threat of economic collapse, state implosion, and internal strife - perhaps even full-fledged civil war.

Given Myanmar's strategic location on the corridor linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans - sharing borders with China, Bangladesh, India, Laos, and Thailand - violent turmoil there could destabilize the entire region. Already, the crisis is shaking a pillar of regional order: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, whose members are di-



Given Myanmar's strategic location, violent turmoil there could destabilise the entire region. Already, the crisis caused by the military coup is shaking a key pillar of regional order, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations split over how to respond

vided over how to respond.

In line with the principles set out in the ASEAN Charter, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have called for the immediate cessation of violence by the military in Myanmar, the release of Suu Kyi and other political detainees, and the restoration of democratic governance based on the results of November's election. But other member states - particularly Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam - prefer to emphasize ASEAN's norm of non-interference in other members' internal affairs.

It is no coincidence that ASEAN's more democratic governments are calling for a response to Myanmar's putsch, while its more authoritarian governments back a hands-off approach. This highlights the limits of regional integration involving different regime types.

ASEAN has historically avoided the pitfalls of ideological differences by focusing on common interests and objectives. When Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand created the grouping in 1967, they sought a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation among countries that were united by ge-

ography, and by their eagerness for a geopolitical counterweight to their larger neighbors.

From 1984 to 1999, five members became ten, with the addition of Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia further raising ASEAN's profile as a means of empowering smaller states and supporting peace and prosperity. Today, ASEAN has a total population of 670 million (far exceeding the European Union) and a combined GDP of more than \$3 trillion.

Alongside this growth, ASEAN sought to establish itself as a force for wider multilateral cooperation. In the 2000s, it acted as an anchor for the newly created Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and South Korea). And it has played a central role in high-profile meetings, such as the East Asia Summit, seeking to advance strategic dialogue and confidence-building goals.

Such activities helped to safeguard Southeast Asia from outside interventions like those that ravaged the region during the Cold War: The ASEAN Charter, adopted in 2007, built upon this success by providing a legal status and an in-

stitutional framework for the grouping that established a vision for shared security, increased economic prosperity, and stronger socio-cultural connections.

But, as the Myanmar crisis shows, countries with vastly different governance models will always struggle to cooperate in some areas. The same can be said of the broader international response to the coup. The United States and the EU have imposed targeted sanctions on Myanmar's generals, though Asian democracies - such as India, Japan, and South Korea - are responding less assertively.

By contrast, China, Myanmar's largest trade partner, has blocked a United Nations Security Council statement condemning the coup - a decision that has contributed to perceptions that it supports the junta. Pro-democracy demonstrators have burned down Chinese factories in Myanmar in retaliation. And yet, eager to avoid an all-out backlash, China has been guarded in its response.

Russia, which joined China in blocking the UN Security Council statement - seems to have even fewer qualms, perhaps at least partly because it is unlikely to suffer any geopolitical consequences from mayhem in Myanmar. Though the Kremlin has expressed some concern about the civilian casualties, it is also a leading arms supplier to the junta. And, in a recent statement, it touted plans to deepen "military and military-technical cooperation in the spirit of strategic partnership."

Ultimately, Western sanctions are likely to have only indirect effects, especially as ASEAN dithers. The fight for Myanmar's future will have to be won at home. That is a chilling prospect, because it implies that unarmed protesters will need to face down a battle-ready army. In the short term, it is difficult to see how Myanmar will avoid much greater bloodshed.

The writer is Professor and Director of the Institute of Security and International Studies at Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Political Science in Bangkok.

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SPECTRUM JUDICIARY

When judicial system frustrates judges



Jayakrishna Sahu

AGGRAVATED BY THE RISING NUMBER OF PENDING CASES, SEVERAL JUDGES HAVE EXPRESSED DISMAY OVER THE MANNER IN WHICH THE JUDICIARY IN THE COUNTRY IS FUNCTIONING

"Indian justice system has been ramshackled. Who goes to the court? You go to court and then regret. Big corporates who can afford to take chance, approach the court." This is not any frustrated lamentation of any poor, helpless litigant who fails to get justice after years of making numerous rounds of the courts, but the cool observation of Justice Ranjan Gogoi, the person who served as the Chief Justice of India (CJ) for 13 months, Justice of the Supreme Court for 8 years and of High Courts for 11 years before that. A person holding judgeship of the higher judiciary for two decades talking so pessimistically and cynically about our justice system, is certainly a matter of grave concern.

Justice Gogoi is not the sole judge to lament on our precarious justice delivery system.

Recently the Orissa High Court while deciding on a 31-year-old case has questioned, "Why so much delay?". The answer to this question must be difficult, but the question itself seems to be hilarious. The High Court which was sitting over the case for the last 31 years is questioning about its reason!

The National Judicial Data Greed (NJDG) data reveals that 833 such old cases which are more than 30 years old are pending in Odisha High Court. Of them, 821 are Civil Appeals and 12 are Criminal Appeals. Similarly there are 4,421 cases pending in our High Court which are 20-30 years old, 27,887 cases which are 10-20 years old, 45,723 cases which are 5-10 years old, 27,145 cases which are 3-5 years old, 34,271 cases which are 1-3 years old and 32,663 cases which are pending for about a year. Thus, the total number cases pending in Odisha High Court is 1,72,943.

The scenario is same at the national level. According to the data available till December 2020 there were 3,62,30,318 cases pending, including 98,66,767 (civil cases) and 2,63,63,551 (criminal cases). Out of these 86,021 cases are pending for 30 years; 20 to 30 years (4,22,142 cases); 10 to 20 years (23,00,599 cases); 5 to 10 years (48,96,136 cases); 3 to 5 years (48,18,624 cases) and 1 to 3 years (92,30,888 cases). The entire nation suffers from the malaise of delayed justice. The wise old saying, "Justice delayed is justice denied" seems to have no taker

among the people at the helm of affairs of our justice system.

As the number of cases increase by leaps and bounds, the quality of the judgements is suffering a meteoric fall, notwithstanding the fact that there is no dearth of meritorious, talented and brilliant judges adorning our judiciary. The average falling standard has been admitted by none other than the judges of the higher judiciary themselves. Very recently a Supreme Court bench comprising Justices DY Chandrachud and MR Shah has expressed shock at incomprehensible language in which a judgment was drafted by a division bench of the Himachal Pradesh High Court. Justice Chandrachud commented very tersely, "I had to use Tiger Balm after reading the judgment!" Justice Shah added, "I didn't understand anything. There are long, long sentences. Then there is an odd comma showing up anywhere. I started doubting my intelligence!"

The same bench of the Supreme Court has set aside an order of a High Court remarking that there was no independent application of mind by the High Court and

that only the order of the Tribunal had been copied and pasted. Expressing his resentment on latest trend of judges copying and pasting previously passed judgments, Justice Chandrachud remarked, "One of the problems of computer age is copying and pasting of orders. I am fed up of such cut-copy-paste orders of High Courts."

Very recently the Chief Justice of India SA Bobde has suggested the appointment of ad-hoc judges in High Courts so that the pending cases can be decided faster.

The above suggestions by the top judges are surely valuable, but such solutions are mere patchworks and only temporary solutions to a permanent problem. It's just like treating cancer with painkillers and antibiotics. The stake holders have to think deeper and act with more seriousness. While the number of judges must be enhanced, the process of appointment of judges must be made more transparent and honest so that talent and merit prevail over relation and connection.

The writer is a Senior Advocate. 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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Enhanced GST collections

Sir, The GST revenues during March 2021 are the highest since the Goods and Service Tax was rolled out. In line with the trend of recovery in the GST revenues over the past five months, the revenues for the month of March 2021 are 27% higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year. GST revenues crossed above Rs1 lakh crore-mark at a stretch for the last six months and a steep increasing trend over this period are clear indicators of rapid economic recovery post pandemic. However, due to price rise of various raw materials as well finished goods it is showing higher collection. The increase may not be due to increased volumes. Is it due to real growth or due to massive jump in prices of almost everything? If prices of plastic granules jump from Rs120 to Rs 175 or 30-40% everywhere then GST collection will rise on the same volume. All said and done, GST has come to the rescue of many states, especially Maharashtra, and people blaming GST will have to eat their words.



CK Subramaniam, MUMBAI

Hydel project in doldrums

Sir, The first small hydel power project in Radho village under Udala block designed to generate 110KW power was established by Oreda in 2007 at a cost of Rs 50 lakh. Then it was felt that power generation in the locality from this small hydel project would improve the situation but after a month of its inauguration it remained unworkable. Now it was found that the valuable parts of the project, costing lakhs, were stolen by miscreants. It was envisaged that this electricity generating unit would produce at least 110 MW which would be sold to Nesco as per its feasibility document but it remains under the garbage now. The hydel project was meant to channelise canal water to induction generator to generate electricity but this project of half a crore is presently a big waste since its inception. Despite attempts the Oreda or Nesco authorities has no plausible explanation on this huge waste of public funds.

Janakiballav Dash, BARIPADA

Blaze at BTR doused, no lives lost: MP minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, April 4: Burning of leaves to collect Mahua flowers, lighting a fire to keep wild elephants away or a burning cigarette butt left by someone may have caused the recent blaze in Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, state Forest Minister Vijay Shah said on Sunday.

The fire has caused lot of damage in the Bandhavgarh forest and the State government would request Centre to acquire modern firefighting aircraft to tackle such incidents, he added.

"The wildfire was reported a few days back in parts of the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) located in Umaria district and was doused on Wednesday," forest officials earlier said.

The blaze reduced parts of one of the largest biosphere reserves in India to ashes.

A day after visiting the BTR, Shah said that no death of human



THE BANDHAVGARH TIGER RESERVE (BTR) IS SPREAD OVER AN AREA OF 1,536.93 SQ KM. THERE WERE 104 ADULT TIGERS IN THE BTR, AS PER THE ANIMAL COUNT

ACCORDING TO A FOREST OFFICIAL, THE FIRE HAD BROKEN OUT IN SOME RESERVE BUFFER ZONES AND ENGULFED PARTS OF THE BTR'S CORE AREA IN 15 TO 20 PLACES

THE BLAZE REDUCED PARTS OF ONE OF THE LARGEST BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN INDIA TO ASHES. HOWEVER, NO DEATH OF HUMAN OR WILD ANIMAL WAS REPORTED AND EVERYONE WORKED HARD TO PUT OUT THE BLAZE

or wild animal was reported and everyone worked hard to put out the blaze.

He said there may be three causes that led to the fire in the tiger reserve.

Firstly, people burn and clean up an area of leaves beneath Mahua

trees to easily collect flowers fallen from the trees, he said. "Secondly, it is possible that people living in the reserve and its buffer area might have lit a fire to keep away wild elephants that have entered the reserve from neighbouring Chhattisgarh."

Lastly, someone might have left a burning cigarette butt or a 'bidi' that led to the blaze, Shah said, adding that fire usually breaks out in forests during summers.

"The fire has caused quite a lot of damage to the Bandhavgarh forest and modern equipment are desperately needed to douse such a blaze. A meeting in this regard will take place on April 6 or 7," he notified.

He noted that firefighter aircrafts are used to douse big fires in the developed countries. "Our country has such big forests. We are going to request the central government to buy one such aircraft that costs about Rs 235 crore," Shah said.

He said such an aircraft has the capacity to store huge amount of water.

"In such incidents of fire, the aircraft can fly to Bandhavgarh and Kanha (another tiger reserve in MP) in two hours (from Delhi)," the minister said.

The Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) is spread over an area of 1,536.93 sq km. There were 104 adult tigers in the BTR, as per the animal count.

"It is one of the densely populated habitats of the striped animal in the country," BTR's field director Vincent Raheem said.

According to a forest official, the fire had broken out in some reserve buffer zones and engulfed parts of the BTR's core area in 15 to 20 places.

"A panel comprising the BTR's deputy director and assistant director is conducting a probe into the cause of the blaze and assessing the damage caused by it," Raheem said.

MP TO RESTRICT CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENT



They are our brothers and sisters, but we have to take such measures to control the spread of the coronavirus

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | CM, MADHYA PRADESH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, April 4: The Madhya Pradesh government will restrict the movement of people from neighbouring Chhattisgarh to curb the spread of Covid-19 and a lockdown will be enforced in isolated areas whenever needed, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said Sunday.

Talking to reporters here, Chouhan said they have already sealed Madhya Pradesh's areas bordering Maharashtra.

"There will now be restrictions on movement from Chhattisgarh. Those who need to come for necessary and unavoidable work will be allowed on humanitarian grounds and transportation of goods will continue," he said, citing the spread of Covid-19 in the neighbouring states.

Chouhan said patience is needed to control the pandemic. "I will go out with a loudspeaker on my vehicle at 6 pm Monday and appeal to people to maintain physical distance and wear masks," the Chief Minister said.

Maharashtra Saturday reported 49,447 new cases, the highest rise in a day so far, taking its tally to 29,53,523.

Besides, Chhattisgarh recorded 5,818 fresh cases Saturday, its highest single-day spike, taking the count of infections in the state to 3,63,796, as per official figures.

Chouhan said those coming to MP from these states for necessary and unavoidable work, are being screened.

If found necessary, they will be kept in isolation. But the general movement of people will not be allowed.

"They are our brothers and sisters, but we have to take such measures to control the spread of the coronavirus," he said.

The CM said that more than 3,000 fresh cases of coronavirus were reported in Madhya Pradesh Sunday. He also notified that there will be a limited lockdown in the affected areas whenever needed, but there will be 'no lockdown in the entire state'.

He urged social workers and religious leaders to run a public awareness campaign to check the spread of the viral infection.

The CM noted that a three-day lockdown is going on in Chhindwara and two-day restrictions are in place in Betul.

"I don't want such lockdowns because this affects businesses and employment. Our priority is to protect the people without a lockdown," he said, while adding that the BJP is likely to announce an awareness campaign Sunday under which its MLAs, MPs and other leaders will appeal to people to use masks and maintain social distancing to defeat the virus.

4 held for killing leopard in Indore in July last year



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, April 4: Four people have been arrested for allegedly killing a leopard last year in Nayapura forest in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district, an official said on Sunday.

"A CT (computerised tomography) scan of the big cat's carcass, which was found in July last year, had revealed 46 iron shrapnel and a criminal case was registered December 13," Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Alok Kumar said.

"A probe led to the arrests of poachers Ramcharan, Vishnu, Ramesh and Rajendra, all residents of Indore district, recently. The other members of their gang are on the run. We have seized two rifles, three swords, five live and two empty cartridges, six jaws of wild pigs, a rare tortoise, two knives and gun pellets," he informed. The accused have confessed they have been poaching wild animals for several years now, Kumar added.

Centre wants to destroy mandi system: Sidhu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 4: Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu attacked Union Food Minister Piyush Goyal Sunday over his letter regarding the issue of direct payment to farmers and alleged that the central government wanted to "destroy and disrupt" the state's tried and tested mandi system.

Goyal had written a letter to the Punjab government asking it to implement a system for direct payment to farmers for crop procurement. The state government was also asked to integrate land records available with the revenue department with the procurement portal.

Addressing the media in Patiala, the cricketer-turned-politician alleged that the motive of the letter was to "disrupt" the age-old, tried and tested, and successful mandi system that allows for the implementation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) in the state. It also intended to create a "division" between arhtiyas (commission agents) and farmers, he claimed.

This letter is part of a "larger conspiracy" to stall the procurement of wheat crops in Punjab and destroy the state's agricultural economy, he alleged.



Sidhu said that according to Goyal, the revenue department of the State government had all the information about the land records of the state's farmers.

But as per the data collected by the National Sample Survey for year 2012-13, it shows that more than 24 per cent of the land under cultivation in Punjab is under tenancy, he added.

"These tenancy contracts are oral or unwritten in nature," he said, adding that the land under tenancy might have increased and not decreased over the years.

If the sale of wheat crop is allowed with ownership rights, then about

118-YEAR-OLD WOMAN GETS COVID-19 DOSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sagar (MP), April 4: A woman, whose age according to her Aadhaar card is 118 years, has received her first dose of Covid-19 vaccine in Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh.

Tulsabai was born on January 1, 1903 and is a resident of Sadarpur area of Sagar, which is part of the Bundelkhand region

She was administered the dose at an inoculation facility in Khimlasi area near here on Saturday. After getting the jab, Tulsabai came out the centre with a broad smile on face. Flashing a victory sign she said in Bundelkhandi dialect, "Hamme lagwao teeka so ache hojen. So tum bhi lagwao so ache ho ja ho. Kuchhu dikkat nainuaan. (I took the vaccine so that I feel better. You also take it. No worries.)"

She is possibly the oldest woman in the country to get the vaccine jab.

According to her Aadhaar card 790309436468, Tulsabai was born on January 1, 1903 and is a resident of Sadarpur area of Sagar, which is part of the Bundelkhand region.

Centre spreading 'misinformation' on bonded labourers: Punjab CM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, April 4: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh hit out at the Central government Sunday for spreading 'misinformation' about the state's farmers with its "grave and incorrect allegations" of bonded labourers working in the fields.

Terming it "yet another conspiracy" to defame Punjab's farmers whom the Central government and the ruling BJP have been "persistently trying to malign by dubbing them terrorists, urban naxals, goons, etc. in a bid to derail their agitation against the farm laws", he said that the Union Home Ministry's March 17 letter in this regard was a "bundle of lies", aimed at "undermining" the farmers' protest and "denigrating" the state's Congress government.

"A careful analysis of the whole episode reveals that highly sensitive information pertaining to national security regarding the arrest of some suspicious persons, apprehended by the BSF from close to the volatile Indo-Pak border, has been unscrupulously twisted on baseless conjectures to malign and tarnish the farmer community," he claimed.

"This reality has been further substantiated by the fact that a selective leakage of the contents of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) letter to some leading newspapers and media houses has been done without waiting for an appropriate response from the state government", he added.

Asserting that his government and Punjab Police are totally competent and committed to safeguard the human rights of the poor and the downtrodden, Singh said that suitable action has already been



Amarinder Singh was reacting to the Home Minister's letter claiming that the Border Security Force (BSF) had apprehended 58 Indian nationals in 2019 and 2020 from border areas of Punjab, and the detainees had purportedly revealed that they were working with state's farmers as bonded labourers

initiated in each case and most of the persons are residing with their families. "If anything comes to notice at any stage, suitable legal action will be initiated against the culprits," he added.

"It has been further informed that illegal human trafficking syndicates exploit these gullible labourers and Punjabi farmers hook them to drugs to make them work for long hours in their fields," the MHA had said in the letter.

Rejecting the letter as totally "unwarranted and factually incorrect", the Chief Minister said neither the data nor the said reports submitted by the BSF authorities were in tune with the content of the letter. "The MHA letter talks of Abohar also while the fact is that there is no case of Abohar or Fazilka districts," he pointed out, adding that "none of the conclusions of the Centre were borne out by facts."

Further, it was not the job of the BSF to investigate such matters,

and they were only responsible for detaining any person found to be roaming along the border in suspicious circumstances, and handing them over to the local police, he added.

"Before shooting out such a letter and making it public through the media, the MHA should have checked the facts and verified the information from the state government instead of making false accusations against farmers, and charging them with indulging in bonded labour and converting the labourers into drug addicts," he added. "All the 58 cases alleged by the Centre have been investigated thoroughly and nothing of this kind has been found," said Singh.

Giving details, he said that of the 58 detainees, four belong to different areas of Punjab and they were found by the BSF roaming near the Indo-Pak border, while three were found to be mentally disabled.

SAD's protest theatrics to revive its fortunes: Punjab CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 4: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Sunday attacked the Shiromani Akali Dal, terming its plan to hold statewide protests against his government as "theatrics", aimed at reviving its fortunes following the loss of face due over the farm laws issue.

The opposition party has decided to hold protests across the state Monday over high power tariffs, taxes on fuel and the law and order situation.

Having lost its moral right to face people of the state due to their doublespeak on many vital issues, including the ongoing farmers' agitation, the SAD is now trying hard to get back into their good books

ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, said Singh in a statement.

Dubbing the planned protests as "theatrics by the Badals in their frustrated bid to revive the party's devastated fortunes", the CM said these desperate tactics would not work as the Akalis have completely lost face in the wake of their fiasco over the farm laws, which exposed their "shameless double standards."

The chief minister termed the

Alaki claims of rising power tariffs, higher taxes on fuel and law and order situation as ridiculous, maintaining that it was their party that had plunged Punjab into such a mess during their 10-year rule, in collusion with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

From the state's law and order to its fiscal situation, the past four years of the Congress rule have witnessed a massive improvement across key parameters, in sharp contrast to the chaos and destruction that had prevailed under the Akalis, said the chief minister.

"Far from the law and order collapse under the Badal rule, when gangsters and goons were freely roaming the streets of the state, Punjabis are now finally heaving a sigh of relief," he claimed.

Despite the Covid-19 crisis, things were looking up on the financial front, with zero pendency achieved by the state treasury for the first time in 15 years, he added.

Amarinder Singh said the propaganda that SAD is trying to spread through these political antics will not work with the people of Punjab, who had neither forgotten nor forgiven the Akali-BJP rulers for the sufferings to which they were subjected for 10 years. People here have seen through the double standards of these parties, he added.

Take Mukhtar's custody by April 8: Punjab to UP

Ansari was allegedly involved in various cases of attempt to murder, murder, cheating and conspiracy apart from offences under the Gangsters Act, lodged in Uttar Pradesh and 10 of these cases are at different stages of trial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, April 4: Punjab's home department has asked the Uttar Pradesh government to take custody of gangster-turned-politi-



cian Mukhtar Ansari from Rупnagar jail by April 8.

Ansari, who is wanted in various cases in Uttar Pradesh, has been lodged in Rупnagar district jail in connection with an alleged extor-

tion case since January 2019.

In a letter to the Uttar Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary (Home), the home department of Punjab asked for suitable arrangements to be made for the transfer of under-

trial prisoner Ansari.

"The said handover is to be made at district jail Rупnagar on/before April 8," the letter stated.

"Ansari suffers from certain medical conditions and the same may be kept in mind while making arrangements for his transport from Rупnagar jail to Banda jail in UP," it said.

The Punjab home department referred to the March 26 Supreme Court order that had directed the state government to transfer the MLA from Mau to Uttar Pradesh's Banda jail in two weeks.

Delivering the order, the apex court had also noted that Ansari was allegedly involved in various cases of attempt to murder, murder, cheating and conspiracy apart from offences under the Gangsters Act, lodged in Uttar Pradesh and 10 of these cases are at different stages of trial.

national

of the day quote

People (in Kerala) have started supporting BJP
JP NADDA | BJP PRESIDENT

I offer my humble tributes to Babu Jagjivan Ram on his birth anniversary. Babu Jagjivan Ram was an illustrious freedom fighter and a visionary leader. The contribution of Babu Jagjivan Ram to the nation's politics and development will always be remembered
K CHANDRASEKHAR RAO | TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER

All the farmers have been registered on the portal for bringing their wheat crop to the procurement centres. However, crops that have been harvested early would also be procured without a schedule
MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

7 killed in separate road mishaps

Jaipur: Seven people, including two children, were killed and two others injured Sunday in two separate accidents in Rajasthan's Jalore and Rajasamand districts, police said. In Parawa village in Jalore, five people, including two children, were killed when a car collided head-on with a truck. The passengers were on the way to Sanchor from Jodhpur, Chitalwana Station House Officer (SHO) Khamma Ram Bishnoi said.

Two child marriages foiled

Thane: Two child marriages were foiled at separate places in neighbouring Palghar district of Maharashtra Sunday, officials said. The first incident took place at Chendavane village in Wada tehsil, Shahapur tehsildar Nilima Suryavanshi said. "A teenage girl, who studies in Class 9, was about to be married off by her parents. The revenue officials in Shahapur received a tip-off about it. Just when the marriage was about to be solemnised, they reached the spot and stopped it," she said.

Two rhinos enter Assam village

Guwahati: Two one-horned wild rhinos strayed from Orang National Park and entered nearby villages in Assam's border Darrang district, officials said. While one was captured by forest officials Sunday, the other rhino remained in the village pond. Forest and Wildlife officials said one of the rhinos was tranquillised after a long effort, with the help of locals, and was taken to the Guwahati Zoo while the other rhino remained in the village pond and efforts are on to apprehend it or drive it back to the forest without any harm. Wildlife activists said that the habitats of wild animals have been shrinking over the decades due to encroachment and felling of forest resources by the people, leading to man-animal conflicts.

Man killed by father

Ballia: A man was allegedly killed by his father and two brothers following an altercation here, police said Sunday. Police said Saturday night, Santosh (45) had returned home in an inebriated state, after which he had an altercation with his father Lal Bhukhan and brothers Govind and Ashok.



Shutting schools up to class 9 in Kashmir for a couple of weeks is the right thing to do but the contrast with the hands-off approach to the crowds of visitors at the tulip garden is too stark to be ignored. A well considered uniform strategy is needed for the 2nd wave of COVID

OMAR ABDULLAH | FORMER CHIEF MINISTER OF J&K

GITA PRESS PRESIDENT PASSES AWAY

The president of Gita Press, Radheshyam Khemka, passed away in Varanasi following a brief illness, his family members said Sunday. He was 87.



PM reviews Covid situation

The PM stressed on the need for awareness of the community witnessing high surge to curb the spread. 'Public involvement is paramount and there is a "need to continue Jan Bhagidari and Jan Andolan for Covid-19 management", he said.



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday reviewed the COVID-19 situation and vaccination exercise in the country amid an "alarming rate of growth" in infections and deaths, with 10 states contributing to more than 91 per cent of them.

Modi directed that central teams consisting of public health specialists be sent to Maharashtra, Punjab and Chhattisgarh, where the situation was of serious concern, and said the five-fold strategy of testing, tracing, treatment, COVID-appropriate behaviour and vaccination if implemented with utmost seriousness and commitment would be effective in curbing the pandemic's spread, according to an official statement. The meeting came on a day India recorded 93,249 new coronavirus infections, the highest single-day rise so far this year that took the total COVID-19 cases to 1,24,85,509, according to Union health ministry data.

The reasons for the sharp rise in cases could be mainly attributed to the severe decline in compliance of

COVID-appropriate behaviour, especially in the use of masks and social distancing, pandemic fatigue and lack of effective implementation of containment measures at the field level, said the statement released after the prime minister's review meeting with senior officials. Prime Minister Modi called for avoiding mortality under all circumstances by ramping up healthcare infrastructure and other measures and exhorted that all states need to take required stringent measures with comprehensive restrictions in places witnessing high surge to curb the spread. "A detailed presentation was made which highlighted that there is an alarming rate of growth of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the country with 10 states contributing to more than 91 per cent of cases and deaths due to COVID," the statement said.

The meeting was also informed that vaccine manufacturers are ramping up their production capacity and are also in discussion with other domestic and offshore companies to augment the same.

Noting that the situation in Maharashtra, Punjab and Chhattisgarh is of serious concern, a presentation in the meeting high-

India reports highest daily rise in Covid cases

India Sunday recorded 93,249 new coronavirus infections, the highest single-day rise so far this year, which took the total COVID-19 cases to 1,24,85,509, according to Union health ministry data. This is the biggest daily rise in cases since September 19, when 93,337 fresh infections were recorded. The death toll climbed to 1,64,623 Sunday with 513 new fatalities, the ministry data updated at 8 am showed. Registering a steady increase for the 25th straight day, the number of active cases surged to 6,91,597, accounting for 5.54 per cent of the total infections.

lighted that the western state has contributed 57 per cent of the total cases and 47 per cent of deaths in the country in the last 14 days.

In Maharashtra, the total number of new cases per day has touched 47,913 which is more than double its earlier peak. Punjab has contributed 4.5 per cent of the total cases in the country in the same period but has accounted for 16.3 per cent of the total deaths, a matter of serious concern, the statement said.

Similarly, though Chhattisgarh has contributed 4.3 per cent of the total cases nationwide in the last 14 days, its contribution in total deaths has exceeded seven per cent during the same period.

The 10 high burden states and UTs are contributing 91.4 per cent of the total cases and 90.9 per cent of the total deaths in the country.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh September 5 and 50 lakh September 16. It went past 60 lakh September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, 80 lakh October 29, 90 lakh November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark December 19.

MATTER OF FAITH



Devotees taking holy dip in the Ganga river on the occasion of Shitala Ashtami festival in Prayagraj

Mamata takes swipe at Modi for predicting victory in Assembly polls

AGENCIES

Khanakul (WB), April 4: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday wondered whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "god or a superhuman" to have made claims of a BJP triumph in the assembly elections, six phases of which still remain.

The TMC boss, without naming the Indian Secular Front (ISF) or its founder Abbas Siddiqui, said the BJP is giving money "to a person" to eat into minority votes.

"What do you (Modi) think of yourself, are you god or superhuman?" Banerjee said, referring to remarks by the PM at public meetings that he will attend the oath-taking ceremony of the BJP government in Bengal and request it to implement the PM-Kisan Nidhi scheme as early as possible.

She claimed that the prime minister breached the model code of con-



duct by "asking officers of the state government to be ready to attend the oath-taking ceremony."

Addressing back-to-back rallies in Hooghly, Howrah and South 24 Parganas districts - where assembly constituencies are set to go to polls on April 6 - Banerjee further said, "We will not invite you (Modi) for the swearing-in." The TMC

supremo alleged that Modi's recent visit to Bangladesh to commemorate its first prime minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary had led to "rioting" in the neighbouring country.

Hitting out at Home Minister Amit Shah, she claimed that the Election Commission was transferring police officers in the state at the behest of the top BJP leader.

Contending that all BJP leaders, including chief ministers and central ministers, are camping in Bengal to help the party win elections, she described them as "Duryodhana, Dushyashana and Ravana" (antagonists in the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana). Meanwhile, days after Banerjee alleged discrepancies during voting at the Boyal polling booth in Nandigram, the Election Commission Sunday issued a point-by-point response refuting all the allegations.

'POLITICIAN IN DAY & WEAVER IN NIGHT'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, April 4: The CPI-ML candidate S Subramani from the Kumarapalayam Assembly constituency in Tamil Nadu campaigns during the day time and at night turns a weaver for his living and to fund his own election campaign.

Subramani after his day's campaign enters a weaving unit in the night shift and earns Rs 500 per day. This money is used for his living as well as campaign expenses for the next day.

The CPI-ML candidate is of the opinion that the AIADMK government at the state and the BJP government at the centre has not done anything for the weavers and workers. He is also the Namakkal district secretary of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions and he wants the government to provide free

homes to people in the handloom, construction and other unorganized sectors.

Subramani while speaking to IANS said, "Kumarapalayam is notorious for Kidney rackets and surrogacy scams, and I will put an end to all this once I am elected from here. The party has already appealed to the Central government to include Kumarapalayam in the Smart City project but nothing happened. If elected, I promise to include Kumarapalayam in the Smart City project".

The CPI-ML leader also appealed to the people of Kumarapalayam, a textile town to vote for him instead of big parties like the AIADMK and DMK. Subramani while speaking to IANS said, "I will be always with the people of Kumarapalayam and will be the people's voice of this constituency."

Rahul rides auto to campaign venue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 4: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday took an autorickshaw ride at two places in Kerala, on the last day of campaign for the April 6 Assembly polls, to highlight the rising fuel prices under the BJP-NDA rule.

Gandhi, who addressed a campaign meeting at Nemom, here in the evening, took an autorickshaw to the venue, catching everyone by surprise.

K Muralaeddharan, MP, is the Congress-led UDF candidate at Nemom, the lone seat won by the BJP in the 2016 assembly polls. The constituency is witnessing a fierce triangular fight between the LDF, UDF and the BJP.

Addressing party workers at Nemom, Gandhi, who also took a roadshow, said he came in an autorickshaw. The driver of the vehicle said he was not able to make a livelihood as all his earnings go to pay for fuel. "The BJP keeps raising the petrol and diesel prices and giving



their money to their friends. How dare they come here and ask you for votes?", an angry Gandhi asked.

The Gandhi scion also took an auto ride on his way to the heli-pad at Kalpettain his constituency Wayanad earlier in the day.

Pvt schools paying for vaccination of their 'Corona Warriors'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 4: Calling their teachers 'Corona Warriors' who kept the momentum of classes going despite the pandemic forcing school closures, several private schools are helping them get inoculated by booking slots at government vaccination centres, paying for their shots at private facilities and some even bearing their travel expenses for visiting the centres.

While the schools say the drive right now is for staff above the age of 45 years, in accordance with the government guidelines, they will cover their remaining staff too once the lower age bracket is eligible.

"In consideration to the sheer dedication and dexterity with which our teachers have supported us throughout the difficult year of 2020, the school considers them no less than frontline workers. In order to assure them complete safety and extend them support in terms of

healthcare, the school has been conducting the vaccination drive in the first 10 days of April for the staff members who stand eligible according to the government guidelines," said Rajat Goel, Director, MRG School, Rohini.

Alka Kapur, Principal, Modern Public School, Shalimar Bagh, said, "Besides doctors and professional frontline workers, the teaching fraternity is most vulnerable to the risk of contracting the virus. Their duty requires them to come into contact with people of all ages at their workplace".

Orchids-The International School, a chain of over 40 schools across the country, has announced to provide complete financial assistance to its 4,000 staff members for receiving the vaccination.



and close to 4,000 teaching and non-teaching staff members will be provided with 100 per cent financial assistance for getting the vaccination.

"While we are following all protocols mentioned by the government such as temperature checks and sanitisation, we believe vacci-

nation is the best safety measure against COVID-19. We have always put the safety of the staff members, students and their families at the heart of every decision, and hence recommend the vaccination strongly. Of course, prior consent will be taken from each staff mem-

ber to ensure that they have 100 per cent control over the decision," she said. Sangeeta Hajela, Principal, DPS Indrapuram, said, "We are all aware that COVID-19 has entered its second wave in India. At such a difficult time, ensuring the safety of our staff is of utmost importance. Therefore, the management is in process of discussion to conduct a vaccination drive for the teaching and non-teaching staff in a structured manner in just few days".

"Currently, we have initiated the process of taking feedback from our staff on how comfortable they are in getting vaccinated, post approval we will begin arranging the rest of framework for vaccination drive", she said.

The efforts for vaccination of school teachers come amid a surge in coronavirus cases which has prompted a few states to postpone reopening of schools in new academic session.

sured that he travels to all the constituencies where the Congress candidates are contesting.

However, in seats like Ponneri and Arthangi there were revolts in the DMK camp for allocating the party strongholds to the Congress, but Stalin directly intervened and settled the matter for the party and all the revolting party leaders were asked to fall in line.

The grand old party is expected to do well in Karaikudi, Kallikurichi, Virudachalam and Thiruvadanai and is eyeing to capitalise on the votes being split by the AMMK-DMDK combine.

The Congress is in a sticky wicket in four to five seats in the western part of the state, with the party leader Mayuara Jayakumar contesting against superstar-turned-politician Kamal Haasan of the MNM and Vanathi Srinivasan, the powerful national president of the BJP's women's unit.

of the day quote

Greetings on Easter! On this day, we remember the pious teachings of Jesus Christ. His emphasis on social empowerment inspires millions across the world

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

I will finish all my present assignments and quit films, if they become a hurdle to my political career

KAMAL HAASAN | ACTOR-TURNED-POLITICIAN

The BJP's communal politics will effect Assam for coming several decades. It needs to be defeated at any cost. If we cannot defeat such politics, then the balance and harmony of Assam will be distorted forever

SITARAM YECHURY | CPI(M) GENERAL SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

13 injured in thermal power plant blast

Sonhadra (Uttar Pradesh): Thirteen labourers were injured following an explosion in a boiler in the Lanco Anpara thermal power plant Sunday morning. Five of the injured labourers were in a serious condition and have been shifted to Varanasi for advanced treatment. Relief and rescue operations have begun to evacuate other labourers who are feared trapped in.

Sadhu found murdered

Ayodhya: The body of a sadhu, Mahant Kanhaiya Das of the Hanuman Garhi temple was found at Gausala of Charanpaduka temple Sunday. He had been apparently bludgeoned to death in his sleep by unidentified assailants. The Mahant was also the head of Gulchaman Baag of Basantia Patti.

Case filed against Kamal Haasan

Chennai: A case was filed against superstar-turned-politician and Makkal Needhi Maiam chief Kamal Haasan in Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore Sunday for violating the model code of conduct, officials said. Independent candidate Palanikumar, who is contesting from Coimbatore South constituency where Kamal Haasan is fighting, complained to the police that stage actors dressed as Lord Rama and goddesses performed in front of the Ramar temple at Ramapuram in Coimbatore and that this was a violation of the poll code.

Panchayat poll candidate shot

Baghat: A candidate in the upcoming panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh's Baghat district was shot by unidentified assailants. Shakeel, the gram panchayat candidate, was shot Saturday night in Osika village. The assailants fled the scene after the incident. Local residents rushed Shakeel to a government hospital in Badaut from where he was referred to Meerut for advanced treatment.

SP founder dies

Lucknow: Founder member of the Samajwadi Party and former UP minister Bhagwati Singh died here Sunday. The 89-year-old died at a degree college in Lucknow's Bakshi ka Talab area where he was staying, family sources said. The last rites of Singh will not be done as he had pledged to donate his body to the King George Medical University, the sources said.



Any person who is with this agitation is a patriot and the one who is against the farmers' agitation is a traitor

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CHIEF MINISTER

CASE AGAINST 1,011 FOR VIOLATING nCoV NORMS

Police have registered a case Against 1,011 people for allegedly violating COVID-19 prevention rules by attending a religious gathering in Maharashtra's Buldhana district, an official said Sunday



NAXAL ATTACK

Unverified intel input drove forces into deadly trap

AGENCIES

Bijapur (Chhattisgarh), April 4: Over 1,000 police personnel drawn from CRPF's elite CoBRA unit, and the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF) walked into a deadly trap of Maoists in deep jungle in a rebel-dominated patch in Chhattisgarh's restive Bastar, purely on an unverified intelligence input that top ultra leader Madvi Hidma was holed up at a hilly site along with his colleagues.

But the input was basically a well-planned trap of the Maoist guerrillas as they gunned down 22 security personnel and walked away with their weapons too. The casualty figure could further rise as at least 31 security personnel sustained multiple injuries and were airlifted to Raipur for better medical attention.

The lengthy gunfight between Maoists militants and security personnel broke out on Saturday at a remote hilly site in Bijapur district, close to Sukma district border in sprawling Bastar division where Maoists are attempting to run a de facto government in deep forests since late 1980s.

"Guerrillas armed with heavy weapons including rocket launchers were waiting for security personnel contingent... once a larger team of the search operation approached a hill, the militants who were positioned on top of the hill started spraying bullets in a flash from three sides," a local DRG policeman who was part of the search team told IANS.

The attack site is located roughly 500 km south of state capital Raipur. "The security personnel were stunned by Maoists' heavy gunfire... actually, it was an ambush designed in U-shape but the troop-



Names of personnel killed in the attack

- DRG**
1. Deepak Bhardwaj, Sub-Inspector.
 2. Ramesh Kumar Zurri, Head Constable
 3. Narayan Sodhi, Head Constable
 4. Ramesh Korsa, Constable.
 5. Subhash Naik, Constable.
 6. Kishor Andrik, Assistant Constable.
 7. Sankuram Sodhi, Assistant Constable.
 8. Bhosaram Kartami, Assistant Constable.

- STF**
9. Shrawan Kashyap, Head Constable.
 10. Ramdas Korram, Constable.
 11. Jagatram Kanwar, Constable
 12. Sukhsingh Faras, Constable
 13. Ramashankar Paikra, Constable
 14. Shankarnath, Constable.
- CoBRA (210 battalion)**
15. Dilip Kumar Das, Inspector
 16. Raj Kumar Yadav, Head Constable
 17. Shambhurai, Constable
 18. Dharmdev Kumar, Constable
 19. S M Krishna, Constable
 20. R Jagdish, Constable
 21. Bablu Rabha, Constable
- Bastariya Battalion**
22. Samaiyaa Maravi, Constable.

ers too retaliated hard." Reports say that Maoists brought 3-4 tractors on Saturday night to the attack site to ferry away dead bodies of their comrades. The local police officials are now claiming that intelligence inputs should have been verified from multiple credible sources before rushing a larger team to catch Hidma, one of the most wanted terror faces in the mineral-rich Bastar.

'Farmers not leaving protest sites near Delhi'

Tikait, who reached Gujarat to drum up support for the stir, began his two-day visit by praying at the Ambaji Temple in Banaskantha district and then addressing groups in Ambaji and Palanpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, April 4: Refuting claims that farmers have left protest sites along the Delhi border, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Sunday said they had gone to the fields to work and would return when the Central government was "free from West Bengal elections".

Farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, have been protesting at the Delhi border for



over 4 months now against the Centre's three agri marketing laws, and have demanded its repeal along with a legal guarantee on the minimum support price mechanism.

He told a gathering that the three laws were enacted to help businessmen and not farmers, and the latter had decided to not move from the protest sites till victory, that is acceptance of all their demands, was achieved.

"All reports that farmers have left the agitation sites are wrong. Farmers come and go. At present,

they have gone to work in their fields. We have told them to come back once the government is free from (West) Bengal elections. The entire government is camping in Bengal. Once the government returns, we will start negotiations with it," Tikait claimed.

He said farmers from Gujarat must also join the protest in large numbers so that the country feels confident that cultivators from the state from where some of the big leaders hail, a possible reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit

Shah, are also against the new laws.

Exhorting farmers from Gujarat to use tractors to protest, Tikait said these vehicles are the "tanks of farmers" and were put to good use in Delhi to remove police barricades. While former Gujarat chief minister Shankarsinh Vaghela accompanied Tikait in his rally from Ambaji to Palanpur, Congress MLA Geniben Thakor welcomed the BKU leader when he entered the state earlier in the day. Incidentally, Tikait had taken a swipe at the BJP government in Gujarat earlier in the day by showing his passport to reporters while entering the state after alighting from a train in Abu Road in neighbouring Rajasthan.

Asked about whether he was carrying a COVID-19 negative certificate, which is mandatory while travelling to Gujarat, Tikait showed his passport and said, "I have all the documents with me. This is my passport if it is required to enter Gujarat". Tikait will visit Sabarmati Ashram Monday and go to Bardoli on the second day of his Gujarat visit.

CHEERFUL MOOD



Tourists engaged in various activities at a snow-covered field at the north portal of the Atal Tunnel near Manali PTI PHOTO

50% SEATING IN K'TAKA CINEMA HALLS FROM APRIL 7

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 4: Relenting to the Kannada film industry's demand, the Karnataka government deferred enforcing 50 per cent seating in about 200 cinema theatres in eight districts to April 7 to contain the Covid pandemic, an official said on Sunday.

"The order restricting 50 per cent of seating capacity in cinema halls in eight districts, including Bengaluru where Covid cases have been rising will be applicable from Wednesday (April 7) up to April 20," a civic official told



IANS. The other seven districts across the southern state are Bengaluru Rural, Bidar, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwad, Kalaburagi, Mysuru and Udupi.

To reduce the surging cases, state Chief Secretary P Ravikumar on April 2 ordered theatres in the eight districts to restrict seating to 50 per cent of their capacity from Saturday to maintain social distancing and follow Covid appropriate behaviour.

"A revised order was issued on Saturday to apply the restriction from April 7, as hundreds of fans bought online tickets in advance for all shows till Tuesday (April 6) for films released on Friday and imposing the restriction would have disappointed them and caused loss to the film industry," said the official.

A Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) delegation, led by Sandalwood superstars Shivarajkumar, Puneet, Yash and Sudeep urged state Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa Saturday to defer the order by a few days, as the theatres were following the guidelines to contain the virus spread.

ASSAM POLLS

Only 7.8% women candidates in electoral battle

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 4: Only 7.8 per cent women candidates are among the total 946 contestants in fray for the 126-member Assam Assembly elections, leading to discontent among female activists and writers.

According to the state's Chief Electoral Officer Nitin Khade, of the total 946 candidates, 74 are women, while out of the overall 2,33,74,087 voters, 1,15,50,403 are females. He said out of the 33,530 polling stations set up for the three phases (March 27, April 1, and April 6) of the polls across the state, 1,351 are all managed by women. The third and the final phase of polling will be held in 40 seats on April 6. Despite the women being 49.41 per cent of the total numbers of voters, only 74 female (7.8 per cent) candidates, including 23 Independent, are in the



fray. In the 2016 Assam Assembly elections, 91 women candidates were in the fray, with eight of them being elected. In 2011, 85 women had tried their electoral fate and 14, the highest so far in the House, were successful. In the 2016 polls, the Congress had fielded 16 women candidates. The principal opposition party this time has fielded a total of 95 candidates allotting the remaining seats to its allies. The ruling BJP has nominated seven women candidates, one more than

that during the 2016 polls, while its alliance partner Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) like that of previous elections has put up two female nominees.

The BJP, which has fielded total 93 candidates, is contesting the elections in alliance with the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), besides its old ally AGP. The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), a newly formed party, has fielded seven women candidates while the other new party Rajior Dal has given ticket to one. The AJP and Rajior Dal nominees are contesting as Independent candidates. Besides, several female activists and women rights bodies, renowned Assamese writers Tapati Baruah Kashyap and Ratna Bharali Talukdar have expressed strong resentment over the number of candidates.



'Operation Lotus' in Maharashtra

The ground is ready and the stage is set for 'Operation Lotus' in Maharashtra. This will be BJP's second attempt to form the government in Maharashtra after the first one failed. The first attempt to form the government in Maharashtra with the help of NCP had ended in a fiasco in November 2019. When the Sushant Singh Rajput case erupted, BJP tried hard to create a fissure. It failed. When Wazegate erupted, the BJP smelt blood again. Former Maharashtra

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis rushed to Delhi and called on PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to apprise them of the situation emerging in the state. The BJP had lost even after winning the Assembly polls in alliance with Shiv Sena in 2019. Fadnavis returned to Mumbai with an impression that the entire BJP machinery is in the midst of Battle of Bengal. Until then, he should keep the powder dry. The NIA is moving slow, ED is waiting in the wings and the CBI is quietly scouting for a role in the murky Wazegate. But there is no question of missing the God-send opportunity and the BJP will go for the kill post May 2.

Delay in 449 projects costs ₹3L cr more

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched his monthly Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI) meetings with Chief Secretaries of the concerned states, secretaries

to the Central ministries and others to fast track delayed projects. When he took over as PM in 2014, he blamed the UPA for the mess in delaying project implementation and tardy progress resulting in huge cost overrun. But six years into power, as many as 1736 central sector infrastructure projects, each one costing ₹150 crores and above, are delayed. Of these, 449 projects are showing cost overruns while 547 projects are showing time overruns. There are 208 projects which are showing both time and cost overruns. In all, 1736 projects are either behind schedule or facing huge cost over-run. And what is the cost of the projects leading to these delays? Shockingly, 547 delayed projects are showing cost overruns of ₹291014.58 crore. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation compiles data and places them on the On-line Computerized Monitoring System (OCMS) which the PM monitors personally every month through video conferencing. Interestingly,

this detail was officially shared in Parliament by Rao Inderjit Singh, Minister for Statistics & Program Implementation and Planning. No doubt, the country has a robust policy and monitoring framework for execution of central sector infrastructure projects to ensure that these projects are completed within scheduled time and costs.

CVC blames influence peddling for delay

Strange it may sound, but true. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) whose boss Sanjay Kothari was hand-picked by none other than PM Narendra Modi has virtually blamed influence peddling for the delay in implementing its reports. The issue came to surface when the CVC appeared before the Standing Committee of Parliament relating to Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice. The Central Bureau of Direct Taxes (CBDT), CBIC, Railways, and

Ministries/Departments have found a special mention in the CVC revelations against government organizations. The CVC marked them for their sloppiness and retarded pursuit in pursuing vigilance cases. Appearing before the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the CVC reportedly said the reason for the delay in following up on its reports by central ministries/departments could be 'political and influence-peddling'. In view of the above, the Committee in a report, 106th on the Demands of Grants of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, Law & Justice, has asked the CVC to devise ways to fix accountability for inaction or delayed action.

Why Cabinet reshuffle delayed

Jyotiraditya Scindia, Varun Gandhi, Sushil Kumar Modi, Chirag Paswan and a host of others are waiting in the wings to be inducted into the Union Council of

Ministers. Prime Minister Modi wanted to reshuffle his pack before the onset of the Budget session of Parliament. It was delayed as Prime Minister Modi decided to focus on states going to polls during 2021. Once the results of these five state assembly polls are out and the election process is over in May, another seven states are going to polls in 2022. Of these seven states, six are BJP ruled states which are Gujarat, Goa, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, UP and Uttarakhand. Punjab will also go to polls which are ruled by the Congress. Modi wants that these states must be retained with a handsome margin so that BJP's strength in Rajya Sabha also goes up further. With regard to Punjab, the BJP has been unable to formulate its policy. May be, it will do so after the May 2 polls. Insiders say that Cabinet reshuffle will happen with a clear focus on winning all seven states going to polls in 2022 with a big margin. The challenge is bigger indeed.

international



Why wait for months to take action against the former President as he has been clearly held responsible for negligence when it comes to preventing the Easter Sunday attacks despite receiving prior warning
GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

NASA TO CONDUCT WATER-DROP TESTS

NASA will air live its series of impact tests on the crew capsule of its Orion spacecraft. The test is scheduled to take place at NASA's Langley Research Center April 6. The Orion will carry astronauts to the Moon and beyond as a part of the Artemis missions



of the day quote

It is important for Japan and the United States to cooperate and use deterrence to create an environment where Taiwan and China can find a peaceful solution
YOSHIIHIDE SUGA | PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN



Millions of Good Samaritans, each of them showing what loving thy neighbour as thyself really looks like in 21st century Britain and all that during the darkest days of the pandemic. It's really, very moving to see it
BORIS JOHNSON | PRIME MINISTER, UK



We have so far been protecting our people; we are not imposing a lockdown or closing our factories. We are only imposing minor restrictions so that this wave doesn't spread rapidly. But if this spreads, it will have a very negative impact and we will be forced to take steps
IMRAN KHAN | PRIME MINISTER, PAKISTAN



SHORT TAKES

Bus collision claims 11

Beijing: A truck collided with a passenger bus on an expressway in east China's Jiangsu Province early Sunday, killing at least 11 people and injuring several others. The accident took place when the truck crossed the divider and crashed into the passenger bus on the Shenyang-Haikou expressway. The bus then overturned and collided with two other trucks. The injured have been sent to a nearby hospital.

Libya gets 1st vax shipment

Tripoli: Libya has received its first shipment of vaccines against Covid-19, with 101,250 doses from Russia, the Health Ministry said Sunday. The Sputnik doses arrived in the capital Tripoli and will be stored in the Health Ministry's warehouses, according to official news agency LNA. No date has been given for when vaccinations will begin; dpa news agency quoted the LNA as saying.

Airstrikes kill 82 militants

Kabul: At least 82 militants have been confirmed dead as warplanes pounded Taliban hideouts and positions in Afghanistan's Kandahar province, the former stronghold of the militant group, a top police official said Sunday. The sorties began Saturday night in parts of the restive Arghandab district, Xinhua news agency quoted the provincial police spokesman as saying. Besides killing 82 armed insurgents including Taliban's key commander Sarhadi, two tanks and several vehicles of the insurgents have also been destroyed, the spokesman said.

3 dead in house party shooting

Washington: Three people were killed and four others injured during a house party shooting in the US state of North Carolina, police said. The incident took place Saturday in Wilmington city, reports Xinhua news agency. The injured victims were hospitalised in unknown conditions, according to the Wilmington Police Department. No one was in police custody, and at least one person suspected of firing shots was believed to have fled, local media reported.

EASTER EGGS A symbol of defiance in Myanmar protests

Yanong, April 4: Opponents of military rule in Myanmar inscribed messages of protest on Easter eggs Sunday while thousands of others were back on the streets, denouncing a Feb 1 coup and facing off with the security forces who shot and killed two men. A person shows a painted Easter egg with a sign reading "Spring Revolution" following the protests against the military coup, in Mandalay, Myanmar April 3, 2021 in this picture obtained by Reuters from social media.

In the latest in a series of impromptu shows of defiance, messages including "Spring Revolution", "We must win" and "Get out MAH" - referring to junta leader Min Aung Hlaing - were seen on eggs in photographs on social media. "Easter is all about the future and the people of Myanmar have a great future in a federal democracy," Dr Sasa, international envoy for the ousted civilian government, said in a statement. Sasa, who uses only one name, is a member of a



largely Christian ethnic minority in the predominantly Buddhist country.

Opponents of military rule have mounted a civil disobedience campaign since the military overthrew the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, that has included creative shows of defiance promoted on social media. Young people in the main city of Yangon handed out eggs bearing the messages of protest, pictures in posts showed. Crowds have returned to the streets day and night to reject the return of military rule after a

Messages including "Spring Revolution", "We must win" and "Get out MAH" - referring to junta leader Min Aung Hlaing - were seen on eggs in photographs on social media

decade of tentative steps towards democracy. Numerous candle-lit vigils took place overnight. The Assistance Association for

Political Prisoners (AAPP), an activist group monitoring casualties and arrests, said the toll of dead had risen to 557, as of late Saturday.

In the capital, Naypyitaw, two men were killed when police fired on protesters on motorbikes, the Irrawaddy news site reported. Police and a spokesman for the junta did not answer telephone calls seeking comment. Several thousand marched in the second city of Mandalay, according to images on social media, before police and soldiers moved in to disperse them.

Palace intrigue harms Jordan's stable image

Saturday, the military told King Abdullah's half brother Prince Hamza bin Hussein to halt actions targeting "security and stability" in the key US ally

Amman, April 4: Unprecedented public criticism of Jordan's monarchy by a senior royal who has been placed under house arrest has shaken the country's image as an island of stability in the Middle East.



Stripped of any power, Hamza was subsequently sidelined. King Abdullah consolidated his power by making his son Hussein the heir apparent and in the past year has appeared to be preparing him intensively for his future role as king. Meanwhile Hamza has been building ties with disgruntled tribal leaders at the head of loose anti-government protest movement called the Herak, which in recent weeks resumed its calls for protests against corruption. The COVID-19 pandemic has

dealt a severe blow to Jordan's economy, pushing unemployment to record levels and deepening poverty. "The king is a red line. We will confront firmly any trembling hand that seeks to tamper with the country's security," former Prime Minister Faisal al Fayez told parliament in an indirect reference to Hamza.

It is unclear why the kingdom decided to crack down on Prince Hamza at this moment, but political sources say he put himself at risk with frequent visits to tribal gatherings where people openly criticise the king. Hamza is not seen to have any real clout and those detained as part of what the military said was an ongoing security investigation mostly number his close aides. Any attempt to seize power would most probably have failed without the support of the United States and regional powers, who expressed support for King Abdullah and any measures needed to ensure Jordan's security. Nevertheless, Jordanians are trying to make sense of the palace intrigue.

SPARKLING SPRING



A man looks at cherry blossom trees at the Oriental Park of Maulevrier, France

'KILL THE BILL' PROTESTS

Protesters clash with police, 107 arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 4: A total 107 people have been arrested after clashes between officers and demonstrators at a "Kill the Bill" protest in central London Saturday, the Metropolitan Police has said.



Projectiles were thrown around as Met Police officers pushed protesters away in an effort to disperse crowds. Earlier, the police said that around 10 of its officers had received injuries during the operation. In an update Sunday, the Met Police said the arrests were made for a variety of offences including breach of the peace; violent disorder; assault on police and breaches of Covid legislation. In one instance, a woman was arrested on suspicion of possession of an offensive weapon after a knife was recovered. "While our advice to people remains not to attend large gatherings, the vast majority of people who attended central London yesterday, adhered to social distancing, and engaged and listened to my officers. However, as the afternoon wore on it became clear that a small number of people

Dozens dead in floods, landslide

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jakarta, April 4: Landslides and flash floods from torrential rains in eastern Indonesia killed at least 44 people and displaced thousands, a disaster relief agency said Sunday. Several others were still missing.

Mud tumbled down onto dozens of houses in Lamenele village from the surrounding hills shortly after midnight on Flores Island in East Nusa Tenggara province. Rescuers recovered 38 bodies and five injured, said Lenny Ola, who heads the local disaster agency. The bodies of three people were found after being swept away by flash floods in Oyang Bayang village as 40 houses were destroyed, she said. Hundreds of people fled submerged homes, some of which were carried off by the floodwaters.



Seasonal downpours cause frequent landslides and floods and kill dozens each year in Indonesia, a chain of 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile flood plains.

In another village, Waiburak, three people were killed and seven remained missing when overnight rains caused rivers to burst their banks, sending muddy water into large areas of East Flores district, Ola said. Four injured people were being treated at a local health clinic.

Hundreds of people were involved in rescue efforts, but distribution of aid and relief was hampered by power cuts, blocked roads and the remoteness of the area that's surrounded by choppy waters and high waves, said the National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson, Raditya Jati. Authorities were still collecting information about the full scale of casualties and damage in the affected areas, Jati said. Photos released by the agency showed rescuers and police and military personnel taking residents to shelters, bridges cut while roads were covered by thick mud and debris.

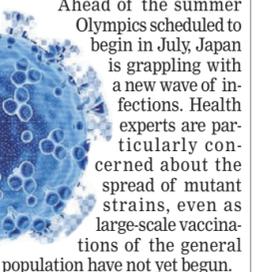
'Eek' variant found in most Covid cases of Tokyo hosps

REUTERS

Tokyo, April 4: Around 70% of coronavirus patients tested at a Tokyo hospital last month carried a mutation known for reducing vaccine protection, Japanese public broadcaster NHK said Sunday. The E484K mutation, nicknamed "Eek" by some scientists, was found in 10 of 14 people who tested positive for the virus at Tokyo Medical and Dental University Hospital in March, the report said. For the two months through March, 12 of 36 COVID patients carried the mutation, with none

of them having recently travelled abroad or reporting contact with people who had, it said. Hospital officials were not immediately available for comment.

Ahead of the summer Olympics scheduled to begin in July, Japan is grappling with a new wave of infections. Health experts are particularly concerned about the spread of mutant strains, even as large-scale vaccinations of the general population have not yet begun. Friday, 446 new infections were reported in Tokyo, although that is still well below the peak of over 2,500 in January.



PAK COURT JAILS HAFIZ SAEED'S AIDES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, April 4: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced five leaders of Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) to nine years of imprisonment each in a terror financing case.

Three of them - Umar Bahadar, Nasarullah and Samiullah - have been convicted for the first time since the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore pronounced its verdict some time ago in the terror financing cases registered by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police. The other two - JuD spokesperson Yahya Mujahid and senior leader Prof Zafar Iqbal - had already been convicted for many years in other terror financing cases. ATC Lahore Judge Ejaz Ahmad Buttar Saturday handed down nine-year imprisonment to each five of them.

Pharaonic mummies parade to new museum in Egypt

THE ROYAL MUMMIES BELONG TO 18 KINGS AND FOUR QUEENS FROM THE 17TH, 18TH, 19TH AND 20TH DYNASTIES THAT RULED ANCIENT EGYPT OVER 3,000 YEARS AGO

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Cairo, April 4: Authorities have moved 22 Pharaonic mummies from the Egyptian Museum on Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) in a festive parade known as "The Pharaoh's Golden Parade".



17th, 18th, 19th and 20th dynasties that ruled ancient Egypt over 3,000 years ago. They include mummies of famous ancient Egyptian King Ramses II and Queen Hatshepsut. About an hour before the parade set off, President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi inaugurated the main hall and the mummies' hall in the NMEC, accompanied by Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Khaled al-Anani, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Zurab Pololikashvili. The Minister explained that the

main hall of the NMEC contains 1,500 artefacts and it will be open for visitors the next day, while the mummies' hall will be opened April



18 to coincide with the International Day for Monuments and Sites, also known as World Heritage Day.

"It is a unique cultural, awareness, tourism event. It's unprecedented and it shows that Egypt puts our civilization and antiquities on the top of our priorities," Anani said in a statement before a ceremony started at the NMEC.

With joint efforts of the Unesco and the Egyptian government, the NMEC's foundation stone was laid in 2002 and its temporary exhibition hall was opened in 2017. The 22 royal mummies of the Pharaoh's Golden Parade were discovered in two caches, the first of which was unearthed in 1881 and the second in 1898, both in Upper Egypt's monument-rich province of Luxor.

business

of the day quote

It would be a win-win situation for both the countries if trade resumes. I want to say that essential commodities required for human consumption should be kept a



PRAFUL VITHALANI, CHAIRMAN | ALL INDIA SUGAR TRADE ASSN.

Copper storage levels at the London Metal Exchange have decreased giving a deficit on supply side due to which prices may rise when combined with heavy volumes, capping the downside move in the metal



KSHITIJ PUROHIT LEAD | INTERNATIONAL & COMMODITY, CAPITALVIA GLOBAL RESEARCH LIMITED

Particularly within SBI Card, now, more than 53% of the spends actually come from online payments which used to be around 44% earlier. Almost 9 percentage points improvement is there mainly in terms of the categories like for groceries, apparel, utility bill payment, insurance premium, online education



RAMA MOHAN RAO AMARA | MD AND CEO, SBI CARD

SHORT TAKES

Enigma looks to seal deal

Mumbai: Bhopal-based bootstrap EV start-up Enigma Automobiles is looking to seal a sales deal with a Bangalore-based B2B company to supply 2,000 vehicles. Besides, the firm is also looking at another deal for a supply of 400-1,000 vehicles to two major e-commerce players, Amazon and Flipkart, in the country, said its co-founder Anmol Bohre.

Soota announces non-profit entity

Bangalore: Happiest Minds Technologies chief Ashok Soota Sunday announced creation of a non-profit private entity exclusively for medical research called SKAN, claimed to be the first in the sector and committed ₹200 crore investment for it. He said projects for research under Scientific Knowledge of Ageing and Neurological Ailments (SKAN) would be done through reputed partners and directly in-house.

IL&FS receives settlement claims

Mumbai: IL&FS Transportation Networks Ltd (ITNL), a subsidiary of IL&FS, Sunday said it has received a settlement amount of ₹693 crore for Kiratpur Ner Chowk Expressway (KNCEL) and ₹20 crore towards claims for Chenani Nashri Tunnelway (CNTL), from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). The amount was received March 31, Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS) said in a statement.

Batilogistic buys 30 acre land

New Delhi: FM Logistic India's realty arm Batilogistic has purchased 30 acres of land in Mumbai region from Lodha Developers for ₹106 crore to develop a warehousing project. Batilogistic and Lodha group have signed a ₹106-crore deal to develop 30 acres land parcel at Palava Industrial and Logistics Park for FM Logistic India, with a total development potential of around 1 million sq ft of warehousing space. The park is located at Thane district in Mumbai Metropolitan Region.



“If you deal with entities not regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), remember: You won't be protected by the laws administered by MAS. Before making any investment, please ensure that it is genuine and legitimate, so that you will not fall prey to scams”

LEE HSIEN LOONG | PM, SINGAPORE

HERO ELECTRIC TO TRAIN MECHANICS

India's leading electric two-wheeler maker Hero Electric aims to train over 20,000 roadside mechanics across the country over the next three years to deal with any issue its customers might face as part of its plans to instill confidence in buyers who opt for the green mobility



RBI may maintain status quo on rates: Experts

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das headed six-member MPC is scheduled to meet from April 5 to 7. The policy meet outcome will be announced April 7

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 4: A sudden surge in Covid-19 cases and the government's recent mandate asking the central bank to keep retail inflation around 4% are likely to prompt the Reserve Bank (RBI) to maintain status quo on policy rates at its first bi-monthly monetary policy review for the current fiscal, according to experts.

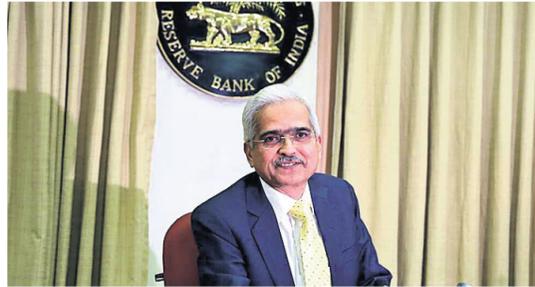
The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), RBI's rate-setting panel, is also likely to maintain the policy stance accommodative at the next policy review to be unveiled April 7, say experts.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das headed six-member MPC is scheduled to meet from April 5 to 7. The policy meet outcome will be announced April 7.

The RBI, experts feel, will wait for an opportune time to announce monetary action with a view to ensure the best possible outcome in terms of pushing growth without sacrificing the main objective of containing retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2% on either side.

The policy repo rate or the short-term lending rate is currently at 4%, and the reverse repo rate is 3.35%.

On the forthcoming monetary policy, Edelweiss Research said economic recovery is still uneven and the pace of improvement has slowed



of late after sharp rebound from lows. Further, the recent rebound in Covid cases poses a fresh challenge. It said the growth and inflation dynamic warrants continued policy support, especially with rising covid cases domestically.

"In all, we expect Mint Street to leave rates unchanged and maintain an accommodative stance. The key monitorable will be any guidance on open market purchases (OMOs) or on long-term rates more generally," it said.

Dhruv Agarwala, Group CEO, Housing.Com, Makaan.Com and Proptiger.Com said the RBI is walking a tight rope between COVID-19 cases once again rising across the country, which could potentially put brakes on the recovering economy, and the inflation rate that is trending upwards.

"The apex bank is likely to keep

the repo rate unchanged in the upcoming bi-monthly review of key rates," he said.

He said home loan rates are at historic lows with recent cuts by a number of commercial banks and a further cut in rates will help the industry and the overall economy.

Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer, Acuité Ratings & Research, said the MPC in its upcoming meeting will continue to reaffirm the accommodative monetary policy despite the global increase in bond yields amidst concerns of a quicker than expected normalisation in the markets of developed economies.

Last month, the government had asked the Reserve Bank to maintain retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2% on either side for another five-year period ending March 2026.

STAND-UP INDIA

Banks sanctions ₹25K cr to 1.14 lakh beneficiaries

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 4: The Finance Ministry Sunday said banks have sanctioned ₹25,586 crore to about 1,14,322 beneficiaries under the Stand Up India Scheme in the last five years for promoting entrepreneurship among women and SC & STs.

The objective of Stand-Up India is to promote entrepreneurship amongst women, Scheduled Castes (SC) & Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories, to help them in starting a greenfield enterprise in trading, manufacturing and services sector, by both ready and trainee



borrowers, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

Under the scheme, bank loans between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore are provided to at least one Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe borrower and at least one woman borrower per bank branch of Scheduled Commercial Banks.

Started in April 5, 2016, the scheme has benefited 93,094 women entrepreneurs with outstanding loan of ₹21,200 crore as of March 23. This scheme, which has been extended up to 2025, covers SC/ST and/or women entrepreneurs, above 18 years of age, it said.

Govt to slap recovery notice on Vedanta's Cairn after court order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 4: The oil ministry will seek tens of millions of dollars from Vedanta's Cairn Oil & Gas after the Delhi High Court held that the firm was liable to pay higher profit share to the government in lieu of its Rajasthan oil and gas block license being extended beyond initial term, a top official said.

In the interim, the firm's Barmer basin block licence, whose initial 25-year term ended May 15, 2020, has been given an eighth interim extension, the official, who wished not to be identified, said.

"Now that the Delhi High Court has upheld the government policy, we will issue recovery notices seeking higher profit petroleum since May 15, 2020," he said. "The exact amount is being calculated but it will be in tens of millions of dollars."

When contacted, a company spokesperson said, "We are in the process of reviewing the court's order, will assess any next course of action" after that.

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in March 2017 approved a policy for extension of production sharing contracts (PSCs) for oil and gas blocks beyond their initial term. This policy provided that the government's share of profit petroleum (earning from sale of oil and gas after deducting all expenses) would be 10% more during the extended period.



Vedanta's Cairn sought a 10-year extension of Rajasthan PSC, which the government approved. But the firm challenged in Delhi High Court the condition for additional profit petroleum. A single judge bench of the Delhi High Court in May 2018 upheld the company position that the extension has to be on same terms and conditions as the original licence.

The government challenged the order before a division bench, which March 26 this year ruled that "there cannot be extension of the Production Sharing Contract unconditionally, on the same terms and conditions which were prevailing 25 years ago i.e. 15th May, 1995, the effective date."

It set aside the May 2018 single judge order. "In effect what the Delhi High Court has said is that the company has to pay higher profit share after May 15, 2020. So the company is now liable to pay higher profit petroleum for the period they operate the block post May 15, 2020," the official said.

SC ORDER ON INTEREST WAIVER

PSBs may have to take ₹2,000cr hit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 4: Public sector banks (PSBs) may have to bear a burden of ₹1,800-2,000 crore arising due to a recent Supreme Court judgement on the waiver of compound interest on all loan accounts which opted for moratorium during March-August 2020, sources said.

The judgement covers loans above ₹2 crore as loans below this got blanket interest on interest waiver in November last year. Compound interest support scheme for loan moratorium cost the government ₹5,500 crore during 2020-21 and the scheme covered all borrowers including the prompt one who did not avail moratorium.

According to banking sources, initially 60% of borrowers availed moratorium and gradually the per-



centage came down to 40% and even less as collection improved with ease in lockdown. In case of corporate, this was as low as 25% as far as public sector banks were concerned. They further said, banks would provide compound interest waiver for the period a borrower had availed moratorium. For example, if a borrower availed moratorium of three months, the waiver would be for that period.

The RBI March 27 last year an-

nounced a loan moratorium on payment of installments of term loans falling due between March 1 and May 31, 2020, due to the pandemic, later the same was extended to August 31. The apex court order this time is only limited to those who availed moratorium so the liability of the public sector bank should be less than ₹2,000 crore as per rough calculations, sources added.

Besides, they said, the order does not specify a timeframe for the settlement of compound interest unlike last time so banks can devise a mechanism of adjusting or settling it in staggered manner.

Meanwhile, Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has written to the government to compensate lenders for interest on interest waiver. "The government would take a call depending on various considerations.

'Need to boost household consumption, biz investment'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 4: As economic activities improve, the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry has suggested that there is a need to boost household consumption and business investment for increased aggregate demand.

"Going forward, there is a need to further fuel the drivers of house-

hold consumption and business investment for increased aggregate demand, while moving towards a more inclusive economy and ensuring fiscal sustainability," Sanjay Aggarwal, President, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said.

The trend in PHDCCI Economy GPS Index shows that the economy is moving forward in the direction of fast economic momentum to

achieve a double-digit growth in FY 2021-22, the statement said. Aggarwal said that on the back of robust measures of policy stimulus undertaken by the government and the announcement of a demand creating, growth-oriented and investment stimulating Union Budget '22, the higher trend of PHDCCI Economy GPS Index in March reinforces business growth.

Metal stocks boom may continue after dream run in FY21

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 4: Metal stocks turned out to give the best returns in the pandemic-struck FY 2020-21. Analysts now feel the Bull Run is likely to continue with a pricing uptrend in the segment and increasing demand in the segment.

The metals and mining sector also saw a sharp increase in commodity prices and steel was one of

Copper storage levels at the London Metal Exchange have decreased giving a deficit on supply side due to which prices may rise when combined with heavy volumes, capping the downside move in the metal

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the best-performing commodities in the just-ended FY21. The S&P BSE Metal index has surged 176 per cent in the past one year.

Stock price of some of the major metal stocks Tata steel, JSW Steel and Hindalco Industries surged

240 per cent, 263 per cent and 294 per cent respectively.

An Axis Securities report noted that the earnings per share of metal stocks on the Nifty rose by 54 per cent after the third quarter of the last fiscal. Noting that metals will

report one of the best earnings trends, the report said that it is quickly getting factored into the prices.

"The metals and mining sector has seen a significant pricing uptrend as Chinese data has improved

BULL RUN CONTINUES

THE METALS AND MINING SECTOR ALSO SAW A SHARP INCREASE IN COMMODITY PRICES AND STEEL WAS ONE OF THE BEST PERFORMING COMMODITIES IN THE JUST-ENDED FY21

and dollar weakened. This trend is likely to persist in the medium term and metal stocks are likely to perform well," it said.

Metal futures which also were largely on a bull run in the last fiscal, are likely to stay in the up-

trend going ahead, analysts said. Steel prices rallied by 41 per cent in 2020, the Axis Securities report said. Copper futures increased 26 per cent in 2020 and 11 per cent in the past one month.

Kshitij Purohit Lead, International & Commodity at CapitalVia Global Research Limited in a recent report noted that copper storage levels at the London Metal Exchange have decreased giving a deficit on supply side due to which prices may rise when combined with heavy volumes, capping the downside move in the metal.

The April contract of copper on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) last closed at ₹669.25 per kg. On lead futures, he said that bullish momentum in the metal is expected to continue in the upcoming session. The April contract on Thursday ended at ₹162.85 per kg.

SHORT TAKES

Consistent show

San Antonio: Golfer Anirban Lahiri fired a second successive three-under 69 in the third round to jump three places to the fifth position at the Valero Texas Open tournament here Saturday. The 33-year-old Indian was on seven-under 209 which gives him a legitimate crack at the title. Jordan Spieth and Matt Wallace share the lead on 12-under following matching 67s. "I think this is the most solid I've played tee to green in a while. I kind of knew what I was doing and it's really nice," said Lahiri after the end of the day's play.

Rowers get jab

New Delhi: Thirty five Indian rowers, including those preparing for Tokyo Olympics qualification, have been given their second dose of COVID-19 vaccine, making them the first sports group in India to get fully vaccinated. Some coaches and other support staff have also been given their second dose at the Army Sports Institute in Pune. "A total of 35 rowers and some coaches and support staff at ASI Pune received their second dose Saturday," Rowing Federation of India president Rajlaxmi Singh Deo said Sunday. He hoped Indian rowers will make the cut for the Tokyo Olympics to be held from July 23 to August 8.

Coach dead

Mumbai: Noted shooting coach Sanjay Chakraverty, who has given India some of their finest shooters, including Olympic medalist Gagan Narang and Anjali Bhagwat, died here late Saturday night. He was 79. In a career spanning four decades, the Dronacharya Awardee helped many aspiring shooters, who went on to make it big in the sport. The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) condoned the demise. The news of his death was first conveyed by Olympian Joydeep Karmakar on Twitter.

IWL postponed

New Delhi: The upcoming play-off matches of the Indian Women's League (IWL) have been postponed owing to a surge in COVID-19 cases, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said Sunday. The matches were scheduled to be held in the national capital April 7 onwards. The AIFF said it arrived at the decision after an 'internal discussion and communication with the clubs and state associations'. "Keeping in mind the safety and security of players and officials in view of the rise in COVID-19 cases all over India, the play-offs for the Indian Women's League scheduled to be held in Delhi from April 7, 2021, has been postponed until further notice," the federation said in a statement.

SA level series

Johannesburg: South Africa held out to level the ODI series 1-1 with a 17-run win over Pakistan here Sunday. The hosts managed to snatch victory in spite of a brilliant innings from Fakhar Zaman (193, 155b, 18x4, 10x6). The visitors were reeling at 205 for seven chasing a victory target of 342. They finally finished on 324. When South Africa batted next skipper Temba Bavuma (92), Quinton de Kock (80), Rassie van der Dussen (60) and David Miller (50 n o) helped South Africa to score 341 for six.

COVID strikes RCB

New Delhi: Royal Challengers Bangalore's (RCB) young batsman Devdutt Padikkal is quarantining at his home since testing positive for COVID-19 March 22, his IPL franchise said Sunday. The 14th edition of the IPL starts April 9. In the opening game RCB face defending champions Mumbai Indians. "Devidutt Padikkal tested positive for COVID-19 March 22, 2021. He has been in mandatory quarantine at his residence in Bangalore since then. He will be fit to join the RCB bio-bubble once his RT-PCR tests are negative, as per IPL protocol," RCB said in a statement. Padikkal has been in very good form in domestic tournaments and has been scoring heavily.

LIVERPOOL CLOSE IN ON TOP-FOUR FINISH AFTER BEATING ARSENAL

City lights shine

AGENCIES

London, April 4: As Manchester City marched on towards their Premier League title bid in imperious fashion, last season's champions Liverpool brightened their hopes for a top four finish and qualification for the Champions League. Manchester City opened up a 17-point lead at the top of the points table with a 2-0 win over Leicester, rivals Liverpool blanked Arsenal 3-0 in games played Saturday. A rare goal from Benjamin Mendy and Gabriel Jesus's strike on his 24th birthday mean City just need 11 points from their remaining seven league games to be crowned champions. "It is a big step to winning the Premier League," said manager Pep Guardiola. "The Premier League is the nicest competition (to win), it is 11 months and it is so tough. We are close."

Winning the league title is not the limit of City's ambitions this season as they remain on course for the first ever quadruple of Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup in English football history. The Champions League has been Guardiola's one failing during his five years in Manchester City. The team have never progressed beyond the quarterfinals under him. They will have another chance at getting beyond the last eight when Borussia Dortmund travel to the Etihad for the first leg of their quarterfinal tie Tuesday. And Guardiola showed that competition remains the priority with his team selection and he rested players like John Stones, Joao Cancelo, Ilkay Gundogan and Raheem Sterling. Chelsea's shock 2-5 defeat at home to West Brom earlier Saturday opened the door for both Liverpool and Arsenal to close in on their target of a top-four finish. However, it was



PARTY TIME: Manchester City players celebrate their win Saturday over Leicester in the Premier League

only Liverpool who showed any ambition as Arsenal were thoroughly outplayed. The visitors pressed the Gunners high and quickly recovered possession, but lacked the killer edge up front to turn their dominance into goals until Jota was introduced on the hour mark. Klopp expressed shock Friday that Trent Alexander-Arnold had been dropped from the England squad by Gareth Southgate. The right-back showed his international manager what he is missing by creating the opener on 64 minutes. Jota had only been on the field three minutes when he met Alexander-Arnold's cross with a powerful header at the back post. Four minutes later, Salah wrapped up the three points as the Egyptian outmuscled Gabriel Magalhaes before coolly slotting underneath the advancing Bernd Leno. Jota then finished off a miserable night for the Gunners by adding the third eight minutes from the end.

Real cruise past Eibar

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, April 4: Marco Asensio and Karim Benzema scored in a 2-0 win over Eibar as Real Madrid tightened their Spanish league title race here Saturday. Asensio had already hit the woodwork before he opened the scoring in the 41st minute. Benzema added a second goal with a header in the 73rd. The victory took Real within three points of city rivals and current La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid. The opener came off a combined move. Casemiro intercepted a pass and immediately sent the ball forward for Asensio, who used superb control to go past defender Anaïtz Arbilla before curling a shot over Marko Dmitrovic. Then Benzema put the result beyond doubt when substitute Vinicius Junior crossed for him to score

his 18th league goal of the season. Real host Liverpool in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals Tuesday. Four days later they will play Barcelona in a key match in the Spanish league, followed by their second leg April 14 at Liverpool. "We are facing an important week, and the first thing was to win today (Saturday)," said Asensio. "Now we have the first leg against Liverpool and then Barcelona. They will be very demanding matches and we have to be up to the challenge," he added. With Sergio Ramos out with a left-leg injury, Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane rested his other first-choice centre-back, Raphael Varane, for the matches ahead. Back-ups Nacho Fernández and Éder Militão started in a three-man back-line and played well.

Neymar red-carded as PSG go down to Lille

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, April 4: Neymar was sent off late and then tried to confront a player after the game as defending champion Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) lost 0-1 at home to Lille, falling three points behind the new French league leader in a tense title race. PSG are only one point ahead of Monaco, who earlier beat Metz 4-0 to take third place in Ligue 1. Neymar was shown a second yellow card in the 90th minute for kicking Lille right-back Tiago Djalo off the ball. He had been booked in the first half for shoving midfielder Benjamin Andre in the face. Djalo was also sent off and remonstrated angrily with the referee. Both players argued as they walked back to the locker rooms. Footage from broadcaster 'Canal Plus' captured Neymar pushing Djalo on the shoulder and then trying to get past some security officials to confront him. An angry Djalo also reacted, trying to reach Neymar, causing one security official to fall over, while another intervened swiftly to block Neymar and lead him away. The actions may earn both players further penalty. Canada forward Jonathan David

scored Lille's goal in the 20th minute with a slightly deflected strike, as PSG slipped to a fifth home defeat and eighth overall, with a tough trip Wednesday to Bayern Munich in the Champions League. "Each time we lose we say the same thing, that we lacked commitment. We shouldn't find any excuses," PSG captain Marquinhos said after the game. "We need to be stronger than that at home. A lot of teams have come here and won, which we're not used to. We're at an important point of the season and must improve," he added. PSG have been poor against the other sides in the top four, twice losing to Monaco, once to Lyon and drawing their other game against Lille 0-0. Frustration got to Neymar, who now faces another suspension after getting red-carded against Marseille at the start of the campaign. Shortly after shoving Andre in the face, he fell to the ground in a failed bid to win a penalty. He came close to scoring on two other occasions. However, his shot was blocked by Lille goalkeeper Mike Maignan in the first half. Then in the 70th minute, Neymar's diving header went wide.

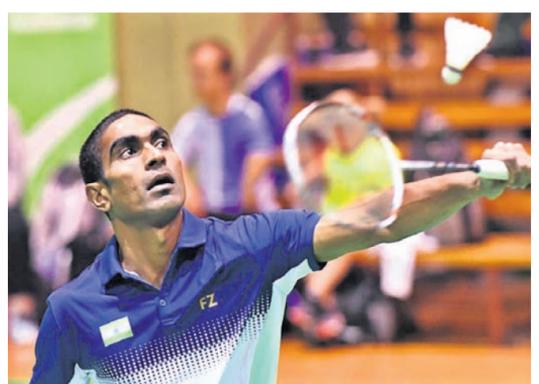


A frustrated Neymar after being red-carded in the game against Lille

Double crown for Odisha's Bhagat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, April 4: World No.1 Pramod Bhagat achieved a double crown at the Dubai Para Badminton tournament here, Sunday. Bhagat won the men's singles gold in the SL4 category after defeating compatriot Nitesh Kumar. Bhagat beat Kumar 21-17, 21-18 in the final. Even though there were some good rallies between the two Indians, Bhagat showcased his class to win the match and the gold under pressure. In the closing stages of both games, the Odisha shuttler increased his attacking tempo to win the title. Bhagat has been consistently winning titles at the international scene and he has also been a dominating force in domestic tournaments. SL4 players could have impairment in one or both legs and a minimal impairment in walking/running balance. Bhagat then paired up with Manoj Sarkar to clinch the men's doubles gold in SL4-SL3 category by beating Indian counterparts Sukant Kadam and Kumar 21-18, 21-16. Bhagat also won a bronze in mixed doubles, pairing with Palak Kohli. He won a medal in every



At a glance

Pramod Bhagat bt Nitesh Kumar
21-17, 21-18

Pramod & Manoj bt Kadam & Kumar
21-18, 21-16

category that he took part. "After such a long gap, this is a very good return. Winning two gold

medals will help me a lot in the build up to the Paralympics. I hope to continue this performance in the Paralympics," Bhagat said. "During COVID time, SAI and TOPS helped me a lot, they provided me a mini-gym which helped me maintain my fitness, the result of which was visible today. I was fit that's why I was able to perform well," he added. World No. 5 Kadam, however, could not deliver his best. He lost in the SL3 men's singles final against Lucas Mazur of France 15-21, 6-21.

12TH DOMESTIC ODI TITLE Railways hammer hapless Jharkhand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, April 4: The formidable Indian Railways once again annexed the National One Day Championships title with a crushing seven-wicket victory over Jharkhand in the final here Sunday. This is the 12th time that the Railways women have won the title out of the 14 editions of the event played so far. Railways controlled the proceedings from the start. They chased down the paltry target of 168 in only 37 overs and without needing their best batswoman and skipper Mithali Raj to even come out from the cooler confines of the dressing room. India international Punam Raut (59, 94b, 11x4) laid the platform for all-rounder Sneha Rana (34 n o, 5x4, 1x6) to finish the game in a jiffy.

Raut was involved in a second-wicket partnership of 107 runs with Shabbhineni Meghana (53, 67b, 6x4). After the dismissal of Raut and Meghana in quick succession, Mona Meshram (19 n o) and Rana added 45 runs in less than seven overs to seal the deal. Apart from her breezy knock, Rana (3/34) was also the most successful Railways bowler with her handy off-breaks. It was a thoroughly professional performance in all departments from Railways after Jharkhand opted to bat. Six Jharkhand batters could not get double digit scores and three failed to trouble the scorers. Indrani Roy (49, 77b, 3x4), skipper Mani Niharika (39 n o, 59b, 4x4) and Durga Murmu (31, 74b 3x4) were the only three batswomen to offer some resistance.

Brief Scores

Jharkhand 167 in 50 overs (Indrani Roy 49, Sneha Rana 3/34) lost to Railways 169/3 in 37 overs (Punam Raut 59, Shabbhineni Meghana 53) by seven wickets.

Barty retains title at Miami

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, April 4: Ash Barty retained her title at the Miami Open tennis tournament here Saturday after her opponent Bianca Andreescu withdrew in the second set due to an injury. Barty was leading 6-3, 4-0 when Andreescu lying on her back on the court, called it quits. She limped off court crying. World No.1 Barty was already in control of the match when Andreescu turned her right foot while hitting a forehand and sprawled to the hard court. Barty hit one more shot to win the point, and play continued. But during the ensuing changeover, a trainer taped Andreescu's foot, and after another game the injury-plagued Canadian reluctantly called it quits. "I really do feel for Bianca," Barty said after the match. "She has had such a rough time with injuries in the past," added the Australian. Even if Andreescu was not forced to quit, she probably wouldn't have managed to create problems for the power-hitting Barty.

JAPANESE SWIMMER RIKAKO IKEE AN INSPIRATION STORY TO MANY

Beating leukemia to achieve Olympic goals

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, April 4: Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee qualified Sunday for the Tokyo Olympics just two years after she was diagnosed with leukemia. It was indeed a great achievement as Ikee fought against all odds to achieve her dreams. She swam a time of 57.77 seconds in the 100 metres butterfly event at Japan's national championships held at the new swimming venue for the Tokyo Olympics. The time helped her qualify for the medley relay. Ikee was overcome with tears in the water after the race, and could barely speak out of the water. Sniffing and crying at the same time she slammed her left arm against the water when she realised she'd won. "I was not expecting to win the 100 metres at all, and I was feeling far less confident than during the Olympic qualifiers five years ago," Ikee said after coming out of the pool. "I thought I wouldn't be able to win for a long time. But I trained



OVERCOMING ALL ODDS: Japanese swimmer Rikako Ikee pumps her fist in delight after qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics

hard to win. And, in the end, I came into the race telling myself I'm back. And so I feel that, even if you go through suffering and pain, your hard work will always be rewarded," added the swimmer. The 20-year-old Ikee returned to the pool about a year ago but had said her goal was only to prepare for the 2024 Olympics in Paris. She had downplayed her chances for her

home Games. However, Ikee would have been among the favourites in several Olympic races if she had not fallen ill and faced setbacks. "I wanted to try to feel true happiness just being here," Ikee informed. My teammates cheered me on, sending me off (to the race). And so I am now filled with happiness. I have really worked hard," she finally said with a smile.

I feel that, even if you go through suffering and pain, your hard work will always be rewarded. For me it certainly has

RIKAKO IKEE

Ikee won six gold medals in 2018 at the Asian Games in Jakarta. Those were in the 50 and 100 metres freestyle and the 50 and 100 metres butterfly. She also won gold in two relays, and also two silvers. Her time in winning the 100-metre butterfly in Jakarta was 56.08 seconds, the fastest of the season. She was closing in on the world record held by Sarah Sjostrom of Sweden of 55.48. It remains the world-record time even now. In her first Olympics at Rio in 2016, she had finished sixth in the 100-metre butterfly. But then she was starting off as a kid in Rio.

Bhaker to compete in 3 Oly categories

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 4: World No.1 Elavenil Valarivan was Sunday included in the 15-member Indian shooting contingent for the Tokyo Olympics where the highly accomplished Manu Bhaker will represent India in three events. However, Olympic quota winner Chinki Yadav could not make the main team despite winning a gold medal in the Delhi World Cup last month. It was decided by the national selection committee that the quota won by Chinki in the women's 25m pistol would be swapped in favour

of Anjum Moudgil. This will enable the latter to compete in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event as India's second entry alongside former world champion Tejaswini Sawant. Elavenil, is the only member in the Olympic team to have not secured a quota for herself but performed consistently in the Olympic qualifying cycle, forcing the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to include her in the women's 10m air rifle team in place of Moudgil. To deal with the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the NRAI has named two reserves in each discipline where its shooters have won quota places.

THE TOTAL SQUAD

10m air rifle (Men) :	Divyansh Singh Panwar, Deepak Kumar
50m rifle 3 positin (Men) :	Sanjeev Rajput, Aishwry Pratap Singh Tomar
10m air pistol (Men) :	Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma
10m air rifle (Women) :	Apurvi Chandel, Elavenil Valarivan
50m rifle 3 position (Women) :	Anjum Moudgil, Tejaswini Sawant
10m air pistol (Women) :	Manu Bhaker, Yashaswini Singh Deswal
25m sports pistol (Women) :	Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker
Skeet (Men) :	Angadvir Singh Bajwa, Mairaj Ahmad Khan
10m air rifle (Mixed) :	Divyansh Singh Panwar, Elavenil Valarivan
10m air pistol (Mixed) :	Saurabh Chaudhary, Manu Bhaker