



## PENCHANT FOR DIVERSITY

Actor Rashmika Mandana says she wouldn't want to watch herself do the same content twice

LEISURE P2



## 'VAX WILL LAST FOR 5 DAYS'

Punjab CM Amarinder Singh has urged the Centre to share the schedule for supply of vaccines

TWO STATES P7



## DC OVERPOWER CSK

Prithvi Shaw and Shikhar Dhawan help Delhi Capitals beat Chennai Super Kings by 7 wickets in campaign-opener

SPORTS P11

# Babus flout norms, benefit pvt firms

CAG AUDIT REPORT RELEASED RECENTLY FOUND SEVERAL IRREGULARITIES BY ODISHA OFFICIALS TO HELP UNDESERVING FIRMS

MANISH KUMAR, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Decisions taken by some bureaucrats such as the former Executive Director and CEO of Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) seem to have offered safe havens to several ineligible and tainted private firms who looted taxpayers' money allegedly in connivance with these babus.

The audit reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), which were released recently, revealed that several private firms gained undue benefits, thanks to ORMAS officials. In few cases, the Principal Secretary of the Panchayati Raj department too defied norms crafted by the Union government under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY).

Massive irregularities were reported in selecting the Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs), private agencies hired by the government for training, placement and other works. In the absence of verification of the background of the agencies, several tainted PIAs obtained lucrative contracts from ORMAS – the key agency involved in the project.

An audit of the contracts given to these PIAs indicated that many of them had fudged data and cheated the government in several ways, produced fake PF and ESI numbers and inflated their earnings to procure government contracts.

In many cases, the ORMAS ED and CEO personally interfered in awarding contracts to some private agencies in open defiance of the established norms. He even helped them get second or third contracts despite not performing as per the provisions and verification agencies like NABARD Consultancy Services Pvt Ltd (NABCOMS) and others submitting ad-



Pranabiyoti Nath, former MD-cum-CEO, Odisha Livelihoods Mission, and BN Das, former Executive Director, ORMAS, receiving the award for the best performing state for implementing the DDUGKY programme in 2018

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verse reports of fudging data by these PIAs. At times, ORMAS formed additional panels for verification sidelining NABCOMS and others to give clean chit to the erring PIAs against whom NABCOMS brought charges of irregularities.

ASD Education Private Limited, an Indian training arm of an Australian training company is a case in point. Two IAS officers – Principal Secretary of Panchayati Raj and Secretary of Skill Development & Technical Education, in addition to the ED of ORMAS, were invited by the firm to Australia in June 2017. In turn, these officials favoured the firm by placing its pro-

posal before the internal committee in July 2017, exempting them from furnishing the qualitative appraisal.

The Central government's norms make it mandatory for PIAs to get their 'qualitative approval' done prior to placing the proposal before a Project Approval Committee (PAC). While applications of many agencies were rejected on this basis, the application of ASD Education Pvt Ltd was approved by the PAC even without the qualitative appraisal, the CAG report said.

Many such private agencies also got contracts of higher amounts while as per norms they were allowed to be given contracts only up to four times

of their annual turnovers based on their categories. In one case, during verification of a PIA named Surya Wires Pvt Ltd in 2018 it was found to lack facilities to open a centre for training.

"Despite such reported deficiencies the ORMAS ED proposed that ₹2.90 crore be released to the PIA as first instalment of the project. The Principal Secretary of Panchayati Raj also gave his nod to the project," the CAG report said. Later, during inspections, ORMAS found that the centre was not functioning at all.

In another case of cheating, the PIA claimed that 40 out of the 112 candidates who were claimed to have been

placed post training had salary accounts opened in UCO Bank. When asked by CAG to substantiate the claim, the bank said that six bank accounts were non-existent and no such transaction had taken place in 33 accounts. It was claimed that these candidates were employed by three PIAs who received ₹27.89 crore from the government.

There are several such cases of gross negligence in scrutiny, compliance of the norms and interference by ORMAS babus in awarding government contracts to ineligible PIAs.

In response, the ORMAS either admitted those charges or claimed to have initiated recovery processes. The CAG in its report demanded fixing responsibility of the gross irregularities and proceedings against the erring officials. CAG report said that between 2014 and 2019 14 per cent of the trainings and 77 per cent of the placements under the scheme were false and fabricated, hinting at the large-scale irregularities and loss of taxpayers' money.

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## BMC still charging holding tax at hiked revised rates

AVIRAL MISHRA, OP

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Despite state government's order to refrain from collecting holding taxes on the basis of the revised rates, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) continues to charge the taxes as per the new rates on its online platforms making life difficult for denizens.

In view of rising COVID cases, the civic authority here had closed its office for the general public, allowing entry only to staff members. It requested the citizens to use its online platform, Bhubaneswar, to redress any grievances, license approvals or payment of dues.

However, much to surprise of the citizens, the online portal and the application which allows payment of holding taxes under BMC's citizen services, is still charging the inflated amounts. This despite the Odisha government order in March putting on hold the BMC's decision to collect holding tax at higher rates until the High Court gives it verdict on the issue.

"I used to pay about ₹780 as holding tax yearly before the BMC increased the rates. The new rates shot up my holding tax up to 45 times and I was asked pay about ₹35,000 annually. However, I was relieved after the government ordered the BMC to collect taxes on the old rates," complained Prafulla Panda, a senior citizen at Satya Nagar.



Holding Tax

It can be mentioned here that the BMC in October 2019 had revised the benchmark value of land cost of different mouzas and effected the new rates from April 2020. This resulted in unprecedented rise of holding taxes for the people. Meanwhile, responding to the non-compliance of the state government orders, BMC's Deputy Commissioner, Revenue, Srimate Mishra said, "We are following the orders but the non-revised rates only apply to physical mode of payment. Since the matter is sub-judice in the Odisha High Court we kept the rates unchanged."

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Certificates with PM's photo are in substantial numbers, sir. Only vaccine is out of stock!

## WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	35.2°C	34.4°C
MIN	23.5°C	19.8°C
Humidity	75%	90%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Partly cloudy sky	

## CM to review depts' work from May 15

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Ahead of the second anniversary of the fifth term of the BJD government on May 29, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik will review the performances of several departments in a phased manner between May 15 and May 25.

According to sources, the BJD supremo will review the performance of the departments on fulfilling the promises made by the ruling party in its election manifesto during 2019 general and Assembly elections.

The Chief Minister, in a letter to all the ministers, has informed them about the review meetings which will be held in the presence of the secretaries of the concerned departments. The ministers have been asked to apprise the Chief

Minister of five major achievements and successes of their respective departments.

The members of Council of Ministers will also brief the Chief Minister about the implementation of the 5T and Mo Sarkar programmes in their departments and how these programmes have improved the functioning of the departments.

Stating he believes in work not in words, the CM said "In a democracy, people are masters and accountability is most important."

"The four-and-a-half crore people of Odisha have given us the responsibility. Therefore, we should be accountable to them. It will enhance the dignity of democracy," he said. After the review meetings, Naveen will hold a special meeting of Council of Minister from May 29.

## 5 killed during Bengal polls



NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mamata Didi and her TMC goons have become jittery because of the groundswell of support for BJP. She is instigating people against the security forces**

**Kolkata/Cooch Behar, April 10:** Five people were killed, including four in the firing by CISF personnel, during the fourth phase of polling Saturday for 44 assembly seats of West Bengal, triggering a political firestorm.

Four people were killed as Central forces opened fire allegedly after coming under attack from locals, who "attempted to snatch their rifles", in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district, police said.

The Election Commission ordered stopping the voting exercise at polling station number 126 in Sitalkuchi where the incident hap-



MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

pened when polling was underway.

"According to preliminary reports, four persons were killed as CISF personnel opened fire after coming under attack in a village. A scuffle took place, and locals gheraoed them and attempted to snatch their rifles, following which the central forces opened fire. Further details are awaited," a police official said.

The EC has sought a detailed report on the incident.

According to official sources, the preliminary report submitted by EC's special police observer Vivek Dubey said a huge mob of around 350-400 people had gheraoed the central forces, following which they fired in "self-defence".

This is a lie...The CRPF opened fire on people standing in the line for voting, killing 4 in Sitalkuchi. I had been apprehending the forces would act in such a manner for long

The incident led to violence in the area where bombs were hurled, prompting Central forces to baton-charge to bring the situation under control.

In another incident, an 18-year-old voter, Ananda Barman, was gunned down outside booth number 85 in Pathantuli, also in Sitalkuchi, after clashes broke out between activists of the ruling TMC and the BJP.

Condoling the deaths in Cooch Behar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday requested the Election Commission to take stern action against those responsible for the incident and blamed the ruling TMC for perpetrating violence during the polls.

## INDIA RECORDS HIGHEST EVER SINGLE-DAY COVID CASELOAD



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 10:** With 1,45,384 fresh coronavirus infections, India has recorded the highest-ever single-day surge since the start of the pandemic, taking the tally to 1,32,05,0926, the government data this morning showed. In the last 24 hours, 794 people died; 1,68,436 people have died so far.

Active cases in the country - hit by the second COVID wave - have now passed the 10 lakh-mark as the spike in cases triggers fresh restrictions in different parts.

This is the fourth consecutive day that India has recorded more than 1 lakh cases in 24 hours.

Over 6.16 lakh infections have been reported just in the last five days. 3,335 people have died during this period. The fresh daily surge in more than double the number of cases recorded on March 31 - 53,480. The number of deaths recorded in the last 24 hours is also the highest since March 31. Across the country, fresh curbs are being imposed to contain the spread of infection. Weekend lockdown starts from today in Maharashtra, which recorded 58,993 COVID cases in the last 24 hours.

The state, worst-hit in India, is headed towards a lockdown if the situation does not change, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope had earlier told reporters.

# China slaps record \$2.7bn fine on Jack Ma's Alibaba

THE FINE, ABOUT 4% OF ALIBABA'S 2019 DOMESTIC REVENUES, INDICATES CHINA'S ANTITRUST ENFORCEMENT ON INTERNET PLATFORMS HAS ENTERED A NEW ERA

REUTERS

**Shanghai/Hong Kong, April 10:** China slapped a record 18 billion yuan (\$2.75 billion) fine on Alibaba Group Holding Ltd Saturday, after an anti-monopoly probe found the e-commerce giant had abused its dominant market position for several years.

The fine, about 4% of Alibaba's 2019 domestic revenues, comes amid a crackdown on technology conglomerates and indicates China's antitrust enforcement on Internet platforms has entered a new era after years of laissez-faire approach.

The Alibaba business empire has come under intense scrutiny in China since billionaire founder

Jack Ma's stinging public criticism of the country's regulatory system in October.

A month later, authorities scuttled a planned \$37 billion IPO by Ant Group, Alibaba's Internet finance arm, which was set to be the

## ANTI-MONOPOLY VIOLATIONS

world's biggest ever. The State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) announced its antitrust probe into the company in December.

While the fine brings Alibaba a step closer to resolving its antitrust woes, Ant still needs to agree to a regulatory-driven revamp that is expected to sharply cut its valuations and rein in some of its free-wheel-



The logo of Alibaba Group is seen at its office in Beijing, China

ing businesses. "This penalty will be viewed as a closure to the anti-monopoly case for now by the market. It's indeed the highest profile anti-monopoly case in China," said

Hong Hao, head of research BOCOM International in Hong Kong.

"The market has been anticipating some sort of penalty for some time... but people need to pay

attention to the measures beyond the anti-monopoly investigation."

The SAMR said it had determined that Alibaba, which is listed in New York and Hong Kong, had been "abusing market dominance" since 2015 by preventing its merchants from using other online e-commerce platforms.

The practice, which the SAMR has previously spelt out as illegal, violates China's antimonopoly law by hindering the free circulation of goods and infringing on the business interests of merchants, the regulator added.

Alibaba said in a statement that it accepts the penalty and "will ensure its compliance with determination". The company will hold a

conference call Monday to discuss the penalty.

"We will tackle it openly and work through it together," CEO Daniel Zhang said in a memo to staff seen by Reuters. "Let's improve ourselves and start again together as one."

The fine is more than double the \$975 million paid in China by Qualcomm, the world's biggest supplier of mobile phone chips, in 2015 for anticompetitive practices.

"There has been weakness in China's big tech stocks and I think this fine will be seen as a benchmark for any other penalties which could be applied to the other companies," said Louis Tse, managing director at Wealthy Securities in Hong Kong.



# leisure



## FELICITY JONES SAYS IT'S 'SCARY' TO HAVE A BABY IN PANDEMIC

Actress Felicity Jones said that it was an intense experience giving birth to a baby during the pandemic. "Having kids is intense anyway. To have a baby in an apocalyptic moment is pretty scary," she added.

## PERRY POSTS FRIENDS REUNION GREEN ROOM PIC, DELETES IT

Actor Matthew Perry, best known as Chandler Bing in the iconic sitcom *Friends*, posted a picture from his green room of the much-hyped upcoming reunion special of the show. However, he promptly took the post down within a few minutes Saturday.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You have your hands full today. There will be planning, meetings and a lot of work to do. You may feel tired and dejected due to insufficient inputs from others. However, Ganesh says things will become clear slowly as matters come to a conclusion.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesh is happy to say that you will acquire yourself well in whatever you do or undertake today. You will show outstanding caliber in handling the responsibilities given to you. If you are participating in a competition, you are likely to be way ahead of others.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you are likely to rack your brains to get things done. But your modesty will not do you any good. You will have to show that you are the boss, even if you are not. Your extraordinary brilliance will translate into exceptional performance and will save the day.

**CANCER**  
Today, you may focus your entire attention on your relationships – your ties with your parents, spouse, children, siblings and even neighbours. However, all that effort and energy may not get its due, and you may get a cold response from one or more of your relatives.

**LEO**  
Working hard, or hardly working – there is a vast difference between the two. You would be wiser to be working hard today, especially if it is success that you desire, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Today, your soul mate will both give and demand pleasant surprises, says Ganesh. Your business partners may bring in some good news. Take responsibility of your past mistakes and make plans for the days to come.

**LIBRA**  
Today, you will be in a mishmash of emotions and feelings. Also, there are chances of accumulated feelings finding an outlet. Your capacity for emotional display may take people by surprise. However, you will also enjoy the higher responsibilities reposed on you, predicts Ganesh.

**SCORPIO**  
It is very likely that the moment of victory is often preceded by a moment of peril; but that is not where the danger ends. In the heat of victory, arrogance and overconfidence can push you away from what you aimed for.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Today will be a day for introspection, says Ganesh. As you try and find the root causes of your problems. But the job is only half-done; the rest will depend on the initiatives you may take to implement possible solutions to your problems.

**CAPRICORN**  
You will find the day to be taxing, mostly because of the amount of work delegated to you, says Ganesh. But it will take trouble quite an effort to dampen your spirit. You will be in the fray in the latter part of the day, but will leave your rivals trailing behind in terms of business strategies.

**AQUARIUS**  
Ganesh says it's okay to cry on somebody's shoulders. In fact, sharing problems lightens the load, and if nothing else, your friends will think you're as human as them. You will feel much better by evening and will even smile a little, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
You are likely to be grinding yourself under at the workplace today. A turning point will arise in romantic liaisons, though if the evening awaiting you is anything to go by, it is something you should welcome wholeheartedly, says Ganesh.

## Taapsee shares her life mantra

**Mumbai:** Actress Taapsee Pannu Saturday shared a mantra in life that she follows.

"Suit up... smile up... show up," she wrote as caption on Instagram, with a picture where she is dressed in burnt orange pants paired with a white shirt and a blazer.

The *Pink* actress was recently involved in a cold war with Kangana Ranaut over latter's tweet on international songstress Rihanna. Taapsee slammed Kangana tweeting "we should not become 'propaganda teacher' for others."

The *Thappad* actress is currently busy shooting for Shabaash Mithu, based on the life of Indian women's ODI cricket team captain Mithali Dorai Raj.

She also has *Looop Lapeta* and *Rashmi Rocket* coming up. **IANS**

## Rashmika likes to surprise herself

**Hyderabad:** Actress Rashmika Mandanna, who has had a series of blockbusters in the Telugu industry, has signed her second Hindi film, *Goodbye*, with Amitabh Bachchan. Even before her debut *Mission Majnu*.

The actress says she is always curious to know how the audience reacts, and that is what drives her towards diversity.

"Since I am just a beginner in the field of acting, as a person I am curious how it is going to pan out when I do different things. For me, every film I choose, I do a different character because, for me, I wouldn't want to watch myself do the same content twice," says the actress.

She adds: "I like to keep surprising myself – 'am I really doing this?' It's wonderful when you can surprise yourself. I am grateful. People are seeing me in different characters and it is not easy but I am doing it," says the actress, who made her acting debut with Kannada film *Kirik Party* in 2016. **IANS**



## Punjab's 'Big B' Satish Kaul dies of Covid-19



**Mumbai:** Veteran actor Satish Kaul, who was best known for his role of Lord Indra in BR Chopra's *Mahabharat*, also known as the 'Amitabh Bachchan' of Punjabi cinema, passed away in Ludhiana Saturday. He died owing to Covid-19 complications.

Kaul, who worked in over 300 Punjabi and Hindi films along with several TV serials, shifted to Punjab from Mumbai in 2011 with plans to start an acting school in Ludhiana. However, things didn't work out and the project failed badly, bringing financial woes. The actor was living in financial dif-

iculties from last few years and had even sought help publicly from the film industry.

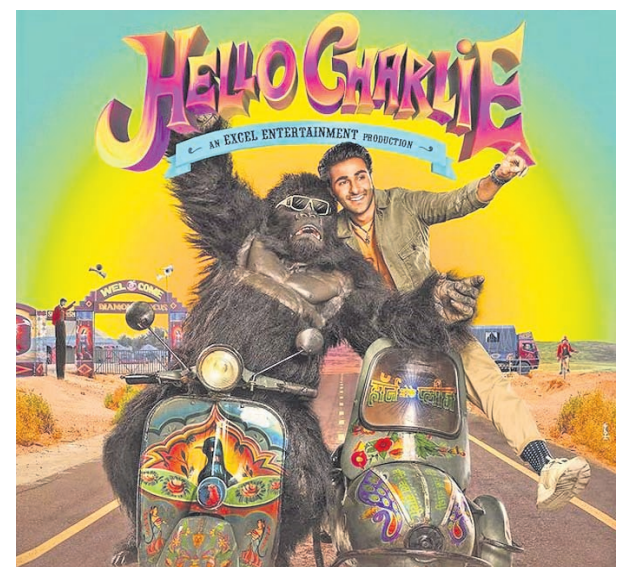
Giving an update on his situation the actor last year had said: "I don't stay in the old age home. I am staying in a rented place in Ludhiana. I shifted to this place from the old-age home two years ago. I am staying here with a woman, Satya, who takes care of me."

Kaul is survived by Satya Devi, his caretaker.

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh condoled the demise of the veteran actor. **IANS**

### Film Review

## Hello Charlie has neither laughs nor logic



**D**irector Pankaj Saraswat of *Hello Charlie* had once upon a time screened a delightful little comedy called *Main Meri Patni Aur Woh*. That was in 2005, over a decade and a half ago. All these years later, Saraswat has chosen mindless monkey mayhem for his feature film directorial debut – the sort that stopped being funny a while back.

The movie largely draws from stock formulae, banking mostly on not very witty but nonetheless funny gags to score. It takes a certain knack to pull off such a trick (random recall:

man in a gorilla suit. Charlie arrives in Mumbai looking for a job because there's his father's 15-lakh loan to repay, and lands at mamaji's (Darshan Jariwala) place. Twist in the tale sees him transporting a gorilla in his uncle's truck to Diu. Charlie, of course, has no clue that the gorilla is actually a fugitive on the run – industrialist MD Makwana

(Jackie Shroff), who is wanted for a 4000-crore bank fraud.

Assorted characters thrown into the brainless plot, as Charlie and his cargo hit the highway, include Makwana's girl-

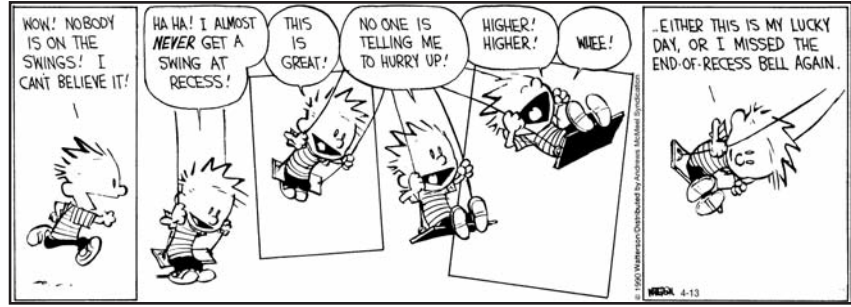
friend, model Mona (Elnaaz Norouzi), a dancer named Padma (Shlokka Pandit) who Charlie rescues along the way, a greedy circus owner Patel (Girish Kulkarni), a drunk vet (Bharat Ganeshpure), a forest ranger called Solee Topi (Rajpal Yadav), and a real gorilla that has escaped from the zoo and that seems smarter than most of the human cast.

The idea is to create comic chaos. The outcome is too forced to be comic, too lazy to be chaotic. **AGENCIES**

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

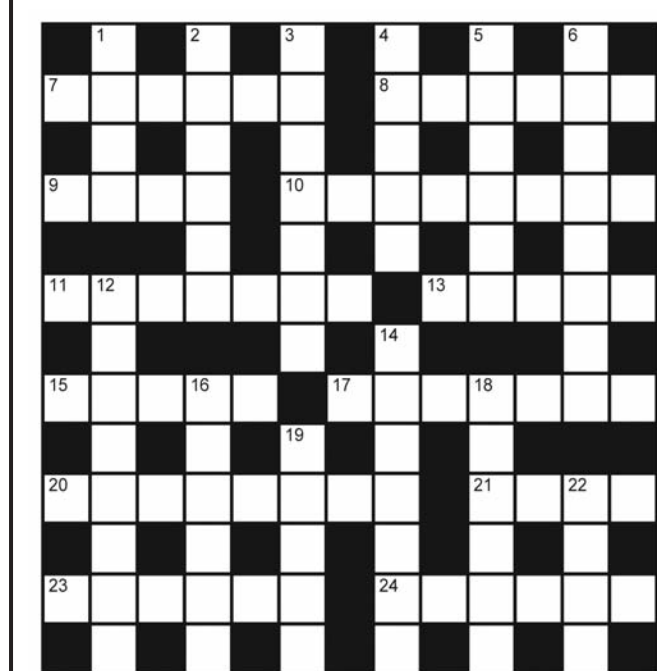


### BREVITY



### FUN post

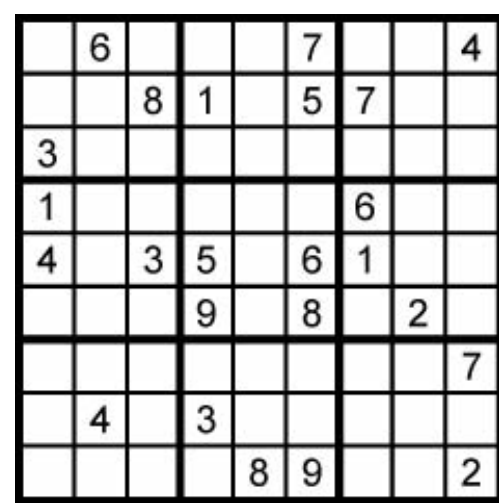
### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Telescope name
  - 8 Romeo and Juliet, e.g.
  - 9 Kon-Tiki Museum site
  - 10 Outstanding!
  - 11 Incoherent
  - 13 Break off
  - 15 Hard wood
  - 17 Drashti Dhami, for one
  - 20 Horror movie beast
  - 21 Shipshape
  - 23 Spotted wildcat
  - 24 Tree droppings
- Down**
- 1 Razorbills
  - 2 Soak up
  - 3 Liberate (3,4)
  - 4 Crystal ball
  - 5 Develop
  - 6 Riding breeches, e.g.
  - 12 Atmosphere
  - 14 Minor fight
  - 16 Tease
  - 18 Wicker material
  - 19 Adolescence
  - 22 Face-off, of sorts

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# downtown

## Extension of river tribunal sought

THE TRIBUNAL, THROUGH ITS 20 SITTINGS HELD SO FAR, HAS COMPLETED ONLY 20% OF THE WORK



Activists of Mahanadi Bachao Andolan hold a Jal Satyagraha near Jobra anicut in Cuttack, Saturday

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

**New Delhi, April 10:** Even as the process of resolution at Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal is running at snail's pace owing to Covid-19 pandemic, officials from both the states—Odisha and Chhattisgarh—opine that the Centre needs to grant extension of the tribunal for time lapse due to the pandemic. The tribunal, constituted in 2018, has completed three years March 12, 2021 and is now on the statutory extension of two years. The officials of both the states opined that the Union government should grant extension to the tribunal for the period lapsed due to Covid-19 pandemic as two-year extension is not enough. For, it is unpredictable as to how long the pandemic would last.

An Odisha government official said that the tribunal, through its 20 sittings held so far, has completed only 20 per cent of the work while 80 per cent is still pending. The tribunal had to cancel many hearings due to the pandemic in 2020 and it has again cancelled the April 10 hearing following a letter from Chhattisgarh government wherein the state has expressed its inability to appear in the tribunal as many areas were declared containment zones there.

"Both the states need to depose a number of witnesses before the tribunal. The witnesses are na-

### STORY SO FAR

- March 12, 2018:** Mahanadi tribunal was constituted for 3 years with two years of statutory extension
- April 17, 2018:** Union government refers Odisha's plea (Reference 1) to the tribunal for adjudication of the water dispute
- Oct 10, 2018:** Odisha files interlocutory application (IA) for interim relief
- Oct 13, 2018:** Tribunal holds its first sitting, parties asked to file statement of claims
- Dec 15, 2018:** Tribunal hears Odisha's IA for interim relief
- Feb 9, 2019:** Judgement in IA reserved, both states allowed to hold talks for amicable solution
- March 30, 2019:** Chhattisgarh files complaint against Odisha over Mahanadi issue (Reference 2)
- August 3, 2019:** Tribunal defers pronouncement of order in IA, more time given for amicable solutions.

tional-level experts in different fields like hydrological and others. But it appears to be a Herculean task to depose witnesses before the tribunal in the time of pandemic," an official said.

The tribunal has been holding virtual hearings and the lawyers and officials of both states have been appearing before it.

- Technical and legal teams of both states meet each other on several occasions for amicable solution in interim relief application
- Sept 29, 2019:** Pleadings in Odisha's complaint (Reference 1) completed
- July 11, 2020:** Tribunal hears the case on virtual mode
- August 6, 2020:** Odisha files IA for production of Documents by Central agencies
- August 8, 2020:** Tribunal directs states to prepare Common Format to provide necessary data
- Jan 1, 2021:** Tribunal asks Registry to issue notice to Central departments to provide documents sought by the 2 states
- March 13, 2021:** States agree to Common Format prepared by the Assessor
- April 10, 2021:** 21st hearing cancelled due to Covid-19

The tribunal had asked both the states to prepare a common format of data related to Mahanadi basin and water use. While state governments have collected the data for the same, the Union government had shown reluctance in sharing the data, an official said on the condition of anonymity. "Central departments like Central Water

## Outfit holds 'Jal Satyagraha' in Cuttack

**CUTTACK:** Activists of Mahanadi Bachao Andolan Saturday held a 'Jal Satyagraha' in Mahanadi river near Jobra barrage here to highlight their demands.

Activists of the outfit claimed that the Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal, which was scheduled to hear a case over sharing of Mahanadi water Saturday, has postponed the same to May 8 by accepting a plea from Chhattisgarh.

They urged the tribunal to pronounce an interim order and ask Chhattisgarh to open the gates of Kalma barrage and ensure uninterrupted water flow in Mahanadi.

The outfit also sought a whitepaper on Green Mahanadi Mission from the state government. The mission had been launched to plant at least 2 crore saplings along Mahanadi and its distributaries, outfit sources said.

The outfit also pleaded for construction of a few new barrages on Mahanadi in Odisha and concrete steps to conserve the river water.

"The state government should take immediate steps to remove encroachments from Mahanadi riverbank and check water pollution in the lifeline of Odisha," the outfit said.

Commission, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Jal Shakti took long time to share the documents even after the order of the tribunal. Still some documents are yet to be shared by the Central agencies," the official said.

Notably, Odisha had filed a petition before the Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal against Chhattisgarh over construction of several barrages on Mahanadi river resulting in obstruction of the river water to the state. Odisha also pleaded the tribunal to direct Chhattisgarh to maintain specific flow of water during the non-monsoon months and close the construction as well as operation of barrages in its territory.

## Hyder intoxicates guard, flees SCB



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** In a shocking incident, dreaded gangster Suleiman Hyder Saturday escaped from surgery ward of the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack by reportedly drugging the lone security guard in place.

The security guard is now undergoing treatment at SCB while the Commissionerate Police has launched a manhunt to arrest the gangster. According to sources, Hyder was recently shifted from VIMSAR in Burla to SCB for treatment and kept in Cabin No. 5 of the surgery ward.

Speaking to media persons, Cuttack DCP Prateek Singh said Hyder drugged the sentry and escaped from ward. He said that search on the notorious criminal and all the entry and exit points to the city have been sealed. A special team has been formed to nab Hyder: Kendrapara and Jajpur SPs along with DCP,

**Cuttack DCP Prateek Singh said Hyder drugged the security guard and escaped from ward**

Cuttack have jointly launched a manhunt. All the neighbouring SPs have been alerted about the incident. The whole episode put a huge question mark on the lackadaisical approach by the jail authorities towards the security arrangements for the notorious criminal.

Hyder was serving life imprisonment in the circle jail at Sambalpur after he was found guilty of killing Rashi Ranjan Mohapatra and Sk Chuna. He was shifted to Sambalpur circle jail following a gang war inside Jharpada jail in 2017. Hyder along with Tito was engaged in several wrongful activities in the coastal belt of state for several decades.

## UTP at Jharpada jail alleges torture

**Bhubaneswar:** An undertrial prisoner (UTP) lodged in Jharpada special jail has alleged severe torture by some staffers of the prison. The UTP has reportedly submitted a plea to the Chief Justice of Orissa High Court through one student leader Mahesh Prasad recently. Prasad Saturday revealed the whole episode before the media here. According to the letter, November 11, 2020, the UTP, Rakesh Behera, was waiting to make a phone call again to his advocate as the lawyer did not pick up the first call. But a warder, Jayaprakash Pradhan, snatched away the phone from him. Upon protest, Pradhan allegedly beat Behera in front of other inmates. Behera also alleged in the letter to the Chief Justice that Pradhan along with eight other staffers came to Behera's ward and started beating him up mercilessly. Behera sustained severe injuries and also broke one of his limbs.

## Jailor show-caused for dereliction of duty

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** The Director General of Prisons department has issued a show-cause notice against an ex-jailor of Malkangiri sub jail over dereliction of duty and indiscipline. The official, Chimmaya Patra, has been asked to send his reply by April 15.

According to sources, Patra who was the jailor of Malkangiri sub jail has been attached to the office of DIG prisons at Sambalpur following allegations of anti-administrative activities a few months back. However, he did not pay any heed to the disciplinary proceedings against him and instead engaged in various wrongful activities.

Patra was allegedly used to loiter before circle jail in Sambalpur without wearing uniform. He has also been charged with leaking secret information of the department. It was also alleged that Patra had been discouraging buyers by spreading false information about the products produced in the prisons.

The Prisons DG has directed Patra to explain why disciplinary action should not be taken against him for the wrongful activities by April 15. Sources also revealed that there are several allegations levelled against Patra in the past too.

## Congress's Pipli pick tests nCoV positive

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Congress candidate for Pipli bypoll Ajit Mangaraj was Saturday tested Covid positive, a few days after he fell sick.

Mangaraj, who was campaigning in the constituency, suddenly fell ill and was hospitalised. After diagnosis, he was found to be positive for the novel coronavirus.

Taking to Facebook, Mangaraj, after announcing that he is undergoing treatment for the viral disease, appealed to party activists to stay united and not pay heed to any rumour.

He also urged them to work hard and ensure the party's victory in the byelection, scheduled to be held April 17.

Former Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Jaydev Jena, senior leader Chiranjibi Biswal among others campaigned for Mangaraj in Pipli Saturday.

The bypoll was necessitated following the demise of BJD MLA Pradeep Maharathy in October 2020. He had won the seat by a margin of 15,787 votes in 2019.



The ruling BJD has fielded Rudra Pratap Maharathy from the seat, while the BJP has nominated Ashrit Pattanayak.

BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is set to virtually address the voters of the constituency April 12, while Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan will hit the campaign trail for BJP nominee Pattanayak April 13.

Sources said that the campaign of the Congress party is likely to be hit in the area with detection of the Covid positive case.

## ADDING GLOSS



Wooden horses and decorative pieces of a chariot being painted afresh, Saturday, for the upcoming Rukuna Rath Yatra of Lord Lingaraj in Bhubaneswar

## Emar's 45 silver ingots taken to treasury

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, April 10:** At least 45 silver ingots from Emar mutt here were taken to the district treasury Saturday.

The Endowment department had found these silver ingots in 2010 and left them in the possession of Emar mutt pontiff Ramanuja Das, sources said. "The silver bricks had been buried in a room of the mutt. Each ingot is weighing around 30 kg," said an official of the Endowment department.

Puri Collector Samarth Verma said the mutt authorities had asked the administration to keep the silver ingots in the district treasury.

Das, however, claimed that the administration forced him to part with the ingots. Notably, the officials of the Endowment department had found 522 silver ingots



The silver ingots being taken out from Emar mutt

weighing about 18 tonnes from Emar mutt in 2011.

The huge stock of ingots was

discovered from wooden containers placed inside a room that was closed from all sides by brick walls.

## MeT predicts light rainfall till April 15

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Saturday said light to moderate rainfall and thunderstorm will occur at many places of the state till April 15.

Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty surface wind speed reaching 30-40 kmph would occur at one or two places of Koraput, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Gajapati, Ganjam, Boudh, Sonepur, Bolangir, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts, Sunday.

Similar weather condition is likely to prevail at some places of Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati,

Ganjam, Nayagarh, Cuttack, Boudh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts April 12.

The Met department has issued thunderstorm warning for Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Rayagada and Gajapati districts for April 14.

Light to moderate rain will occur at some places of Sonepur, Boudh, Nuapada, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Koraput and Malkangiri in next 24 hours. Many other places are also likely to witness little shower till April 15 morning. After that the weather condition will change a little, it said. Meanwhile, all places of the state have recorded below 40 degrees Celsius Saturday.



\*MRP (incl. of all taxes), Conditions apply.



# Be ruthless, don't show mercy to Covid violators: CS

ALL COVID CARE CENTRES TO BE OPERATIONALISED AND DAILY TESTING RATES TO BE INCREASED IN NUAPADA & KALAHANDI

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Conveying Chief Minister's instruction to ensure everyone wears mask, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra Saturday told officials from Nuapada district to strictly enforce the mask rule. As per the direction of the CM, Mahapatra along with additional chief secretary (ACS) Health, PK Mohapatra Saturday visited Chhattisgarh bordering Nuapada & Kalahandi districts and reviewed the Covid management works in the two districts.

Two fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 1,926, a health official said. Two persons from Bolangir and Kendrapara succumbed to the infection. Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have also died due to comorbidities.

Discussing with the district administration in Nuapada, the Chief Secretary said, "Be ruthless, don't show any mercy after doing awareness on Covid norms." "There is no restriction on movement of vehicles and goods. The in-



fection spreads through one person to another. Therefore, it important to adhere to the safety protocols of wearing masks and maintaining social distancing," he said. The fine for not wearing a mask has been doubled now. ₹1,000 fine will be imposed for the first two violations and ₹5,000 for subsequent offences, Mahapatra warned. The Chief Minister has given a clear cut message that, "There will be no lockdown or shutdown if we wear mask. Therefore, it should be

implemented in letter and spirit," he added. Both the senior officers later visited Covid hospital and looked into the treatment facility, availability of medicines, beds, ICUs and other facilities in the districts. As the infection rate in Chhattisgarh has remained high in past few days, the district officials were asked to ensure RT-PCR test and 7-day home or institutional quarantine of all people coming from the neighbouring state.

The fine for not wearing a mask has been doubled now. ₹1,000 fine will be imposed for the first two violations and ₹5,000 for subsequent offences

As the infection rate in Chhattisgarh has remained high in past few days, the district officials were asked to ensure RT-PCR test and 7 day home or institutional quarantine of all people coming from the neighbouring state

The Chief Secretary further instructed to operationalise all Covid care centres in the districts and increase the daily testing rate. He further said that steps are being taken to identify people with symptoms, conduct tests and isolate the positive cases at the village level. An ambulance with advanced life support system will be deployed in Kalahandi. The number of beds and ICU facility will be increased in the Covid hospital in the district, he said, adding that appointed specialized doctors will join the duty soon. Night curfew is in force in these two districts since March 25. Till

## Violators in twin cities under lens

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** The Commissionerate Police has formed special teams to keep strict vigil on violators of Covid-19 protocols in the twin city.

Informing the media persons about this, deputy commissioner of police (DCP) Umashankar Dash revealed that 10 platoons of police force will conduct foot patrolling at important places in the city to check violations. The staff in PCR vans will also check whether the denizens are wearing masks or not.

Dash warned strict actions against violators. Police will keep watch on the violators through the CCTV cameras installed at various places across the city.

Saturday morning, Kalahandi and Nuapada had 538 and 445 active Covid-19 cases respectively.

# OHRC to investigate RTI activist's death

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has recently directed its investigating wing to probe the alleged murder of RTI activist Ranjan Kumar Das last year.

The commission, while hearing a plea filed by the state body of RTI activists, directed the ADG-cum-director, investigation wing of OHRC, to personally enquire into the suspicious death of Das. The ADG has been directed to submit its report within six weeks of the issuance of the order.

Earlier, Kendrapara district Superintendent of Police, in its report submitted before the OHRC, claimed that the deceased Das had died in a road mishap 30 January, 2020. However, the complainants objected to the conclusion by the SP. They also reportedly presented various evidences suggesting murder of the activist by unknown miscreants. Das had also allegedly received a number of threats for exposing corruption in the block and other nearby areas.

Notably, the body of Das was found near Beruan village in



Das had filed several RTI applications to unearth rampant corruption in implementation of various government schemes like MGNREGA in his locality

Marshaghai of Kendrapara district February 1, 2020. Das had filed several RTI applications to unearth rampant corruption in implementation of various government schemes like MGNREGA in his locality.

# Heightened surveillance at rly station, airport



Passengers undergo thermal screening at Bhubaneswar railway station, Saturday, in the wake of surge in Covid-19 cases in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** With Covid-19 cases across the state escalating, the airport authorities as well as the East Coast Railway (ECOR) have intensified their surveillance to counter the increase of cases in the state.

The Bhubaneswar railway station has now started thermal screening of the passengers and also placed a helpdesk to cater to the screening needs of the travelers.

In case of detection of symptomatic persons, the department is also felicitating antigen test of individuals.

The department officials and security personnel in the city railway station are now working towards compliance of social distancing and mask wearing.

An official from ECoR said that it has now been made mandatory for all the passengers coming from outside Odisha to carry a Covid-19 negative report done through

RT-PCR method to prevent the rise of the case in the state from Saturday. This was done after the state government requested the railways to undertake measures to prevent spread of the disease.

At the same time, the airport authorities have also escalated their drive to boost the screening facilities. With dedicated screening units, the airport officials are conducting thermal screening of passengers. The passengers are also checked for mandatorily wearing masks

The Bhubaneswar railway station has now started thermal screening of the passengers and also placed a helpdesk to cater to the screening needs of the travelers

In case of detection of symptomatic persons, the department is also felicitating antigen test of individuals

Mandatory arrangements and compliance of masks and face shields are also done by the airline operators during the time to prevent any spread of the disease from their campuses

during their stay in the airport while testing facility is also given to the passengers who are symptomatic.

Mandatory arrangements and compliance of masks and face shields are also done by the airline operators during the time to prevent any spread of the disease from their campuses.

The Odisha police have also tightened their belts to enforce Covid-19 safety norms. In the last one day, the department was able to collect a total of ₹27.18 lakh from erring citizens seen flouting the norms.

The police was also able to arrest 15 persons and seize 749 vehicles found flouting the norms in the last one day.

# 14-year-old rape survivor's pregnancy terminated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, April 10:** The pregnancy of a 14-year-old rape survivor was terminated at a hospital in Cuttack Saturday, following an order of the Orissa High Court, officials said. The girl was in the 23rd week of her pregnancy, they said.

The procedure was done at SCB Medical College and Hospital after approval by a medical board, they added.

The High Court, Friday, directed the medical superintendent of the hospital to constitute a board of three experts to examine the girl and go for the procedure "at the very earliest" as per its suggestion.

The direction was given by a division bench comprising Chief Justice S Muralidhar and Justice BP Routray on a writ petition filed by a native of Puri. In the petition, the father of the girl prayed for the medical termination of the pregnancy of his daughter as per the MTP (Amendment) Act of 2021.

The Puri district hospital had



The father of the girl had prayed for the medical termination of the pregnancy of his daughter as per the MTP (Amendment) Act of 2021

referred the girl for the hospital in Cuttack March 26, noting in the referral sheet that her pregnancy was 21 weeks old.

On March 30, the referral hospital wrote to the Director of Medical Education and Training (DMET), stating that since the pregnancy was more than 20 weeks old, the medical termination of pregnancy (MTP) could only be done with permission from the court.

Considering the recent amend-

ment in the MTP law, the HC directed the SCB authorities to form an opinion by Saturday noon and proceed to arrange for the termination procedure at the very earliest as the rape survivor is already in the 23rd week of pregnancy.

The new law has raised the upper limit for permitting abortions to 24 weeks for "special categories of women", including rape survivors, victims of incest, minors and the differently-abled.

## 4-day remand for arms smugglers

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Niali JMFC court Saturday allowed Special Task Force (STF) to take the arms smugglers duo on a 4-day remand from Sunday. The STF had sought permission from the court to take the duo on remand for five days. However, the court allowed the sleuths four days only.

## WASSUP TODAY

### BHUBANESWAR

- Inauguration of Covid-19 awareness vehicle by Rotary Club of Bhubaneswar Central, Buddha Mandir, 10.30 am
- Covid awareness, Railway Station, 11.30 am
- Death anniversary of freedom fighter Govind Chandra Mishra, Laxminrusingha temple, Unit-1 Adivasi Ground, 12 noon

### CUTTACK

- Get-together of Ama Odia, Barabati branch, 72 mutt, 6 pm

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

## NURSING STUDENTS' STIR



Students of Sriram Chandra Bhanja Sevika Mahavidyalaya stage a sit-in in front of their institute to protest against the notice to vacate the hostels amid Covid scare

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Experts from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), in a latest brainstorming session, claimed that the health care inequality has widened in the Covid-19 times.

The seminar was organized by AIIMS, Bhubaneswar virtually to discuss health care inequality issues. National Professional Officer, WHO India, Dr Chandrakant Lahariya said, "With the advent of Covid-19, the inequalities in health has only increased." He also said that more focus on healthcare can also lead to more outcome in the sector in days to come.

Sourav Bhattacharjee, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, Odisha said that India has been ranked 100 out of 119 countries in food security and there are around 40 per cent stunting cases, hinting at the inequality across the state.

Speaking on gender equality, Dr. Sonu H Subba, head of Community Medicine and Family Medicine at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar said that inequalities in the healthcare has been affecting the sector and is more evident when it comes to gender gap. She said that out of 156 countries, India was ranked 140 on global gender gap index.

# Three rare surgeries successful at Apollo

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Apollo Hospital in the state capital today claimed that it has conducted three rare surgeries with the intervention of endoscopy technique by ensuring minimal invasion to the human body.



The doctors claimed that such surgeries were done with least cuts and with minimal invasive techniques thanks to the use of latest technology

In one case, a perforation was noticed in the food pipe which was caused by a chicken bone being stuck, leading to infection in the chest area. In another case a denture of a lady was stuck in the food pipe. In the third case, a Covid-19 patient had witnessed damage to his food pipe and air way.

The doctors claimed that such surgeries were done with least cuts and with minimal invasive techniques thanks to the use of latest technology. They claimed that had they not been operated in time and

also implanted in some cases for successful outcome.

"This technique helps us in operating with least chances of blood loss and morbidity while it also ensures faster recovery and lesser cost for patient," said senior Consultant Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist Dr Sushant Kumar Sethi from the hospital. The surgeries were done with the assistance of vascular surgeon Dr Debasis Nayak and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) surgeon Dr Suryakant Pradhan.

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## Migrant labourer dies of Covid-19, family seeks assistance



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, April 10:** A migrant labourer from Bhadrak district Saturday died of Covid-19. According to a source, Arjun Bindhani (34) from Saya Mahadev Sahi under Tihidi block in Bhadrak district had gone to Surat to work as a migrant labourer before the outbreak of Covid-19. While working there, he contracted the virus and fell ill.

Arjun returned home and was admitted to GV Bhawani multi-specialty hospital in March. He spent whatever he had saved from his earnings.

Back in the village, his wife Sunita had to sell their homestead land to meet the hospital expenses which was close to Rs 2 lakh. But, he could not be saved and succumbed to the disease Saturday.

He is survived by his elderly mother, wife, a son, a daughter and two dependent younger brothers.

While the villagers urged the administration to provide financial assistance to the bereaved family, the grief-stricken family members are waiting for any government help to reach them.

## MAFIA CONTINUOUSLY DREDGING THE RIVERBED

# Subarnarekha water level sinks

WATER SCARCITY HITS FARMING AND GROUNDWATER LEVEL IN RIPARIAN AREAS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, April 10:** The Subarnarekha river is said to be the lifeline of north Balasore, but its usual water level has been down due to continuous lifting of sand from its riverbed. The riverbed is sinking every year with rampant mining of sand by the Bengal mafia, a report said.

The deepening of the riverbed has resulted in massive erosion of its banks at many places and change of its course.

The falling water level of the river has caused problems for irrigation of farmlands. River water is out of reach for farmers in the riparian pockets, locals alleged.

It has also impacted the groundwater level in the area. The groundwater has gone down by 100 ft this summer. Many tube wells have been defunct due to shortage of water in the river basin areas, it was alleged.

"Earlier, we used to get enough water from the river to irrigate our farmland during summer. People used its water for various purposes like drinking and bathing. Now, river water has been scarce. Water crisis has affected many areas," locals lamented.

Mahomedpatana sarpanch Damayanti Mohanty, social activist Radhashyam Sahu, Uttam Das, Arun Senapati, Hariyada Manna, Khakan Jena, Kuna Tudu and Suryakant Sahu have expressed concern over rampant sand mining in the river and its disastrous consequences over the river water. They had submitted a memo-



The deepening of the riverbed has resulted in massive erosion of its banks at many places and change of its course

The falling water level of the river has caused problems for irrigation of farmlands. River water is out of reach for farmers in the riparian pockets, locals alleged. It has also impacted the groundwater level in the area

The groundwater has gone down by 100 ft this summer. Many tube wells in riparian areas have been defunct due to shortage of water in the river basin areas

random to their MLA seeking to save the river.

Subarnarekha originated from Ranchi plateau of Jharkhand and flows through West Bengal and Balasore before falling into the Bay of Bengal at Talsari. A 79-km stretch of its riverbed passes through Jaleswar, Basta, Bhograi and Baliapal blocks.

Thousands of farmers living in the riparian village along its banks in West Bengal and Odisha have been growing tonnes of vegetables by using its water. Thousands of

fishermen also depend on the river.

As sand of Subarnarekha has a high demand for construction work, mafia of both the states has been plundering its sand over years. Hundreds of dumpers are deployed to supply sand from the river on a daily basis, thus causing a huge revenue loss for the state government.

Reports said, there are 22 illegal sand mines in the river under Jaleswar block. Sand is mined in large quantities almost every day but no action is being taken against the mafia, locals alleged.

## Covid infection spirals in Bargarh, Sundargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bargarh/ Sundargarh, April 10:** People and the administration are equally worried over an upward trend of Covid-19 infections in Bargarh and Sundargarh districts, reports said.

According a report, Bargarh district reported 59 cases Saturday while the number of infection had been 84 Friday. The rate of infections has touched two digits. Since March till Saturday the tally has mounted to 591 out of which two have died.

Locals and some outfits alleged that when the Covid infection cases have touched double digits over the last few weeks, there have been no efforts by the administration to revive the Covid care centres.

This has caused sharp resentment among people. Members of two outfits had staged protests Friday over their demand for revival of the Covid hospitals.

Bargarh MLA Debash Acharya has said the Covid hospital will restart from Monday.

The rise in Covid cases is attributed to contact of people in

fringe areas bordering Chhatishgarh. Police and officials have intensified checking on the border points in Ambabhona, Jharbandh, Mandisoli and Paikamal.

Police have intensified action against violators of Covid guidelines, apart from creating awareness on safety and preventive measures.

Reports from Sundargarh said, Covid situation is spiraling every day. The district recorded 355 cases, the highest single-day spike in the Covid Saturday.

The fringe areas of the district bordering Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have been witnessing an upsurge. Infection cases are on the rise in Banadega, Sagarbahal, Kartabahal, Lulakidiha, Murukia and Phalasa under Balishankara block.

As the second wave of Covid is gradually tightening its grip over the fringe areas, police and administrative officials are on their toes.

They are visiting market places and apprising people of the need to wear masks and maintaining social distance.



A policewoman asking a girl to wear mask in Bargarh, Saturday OP PHOTO

## RESTRICTED FERVOUR



Due to Covid-19 curbs, only 14 devotees prostrate as part of rituals at Chadankela of Chandaneswar temple in Balasore, Saturday OP PHOTO

## 16 JAIL INMATES TEST COVID +VE

**Rairangpur:** As many as 16 inmates of Rairangpur sub-jail in Mayurbhanj district have tested positive for coronavirus. The jail inmates testing positive for the virus has been a cause of concern for the district administration. A total of 26 swab samples were sent for test while 16 reports came out to be positive. As part of their exercises to check the further spread of the virus in the sub-jail, the authorities have taken several steps. First of all, the infected inmates have been kept in isolation. Sanitisation of the cells are learnt to be carried out. Other COVID-19 guidelines are being followed as usual.

## ADMIN SEALS 4 CINEMAS

**Paralakhemundi:** Four cinema halls were sealed in separate incidents here and in Rayagada town after the three theatres witnessed heavy rush of movie goers at the ticket counters in alleged violation of Covid norms, Saturday.

The two cinema halls in Paralakhemundi were identified as Jai Maa and Laxmi cinema halls while Ashoka and Udaya Plaza cinema halls in Rayagada were sealed, Friday. The two halls in Paralakhemundi and one in Rayagada have been sealed until further orders. Reports said despite awareness drives and strict enforcement, people in various parts of the

state continue to flout the Covid norms which are the key to keep the coronavirus at bay.

There was a rush of moviegoers at the ticket counters of the three cinemas screening the Pawan Kalyan starrer 'Vakeel Saab' that opened Friday. The state is now witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases which has forced the authorities to take stringent actions to curb the spread of the pandemic

The government has increased the penalty amount to Rs 2000 for the first and second offence for people not wearing masks. Rs 5,000 has been levied on people for subsequent violations.

## Junagarh skill training institute defunct

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Junagarh, April 10:** A skills training centre for various professional courses has been lying closed for decades in Junagarh area of Kalahandi district. There has been no effort to revive it, a report said.

According to the report, the government had set up a Training-cum-production Centre (TCPC) at Junagarh in 1950 so as to impart training to unemployed youths on various trades like carpentry, ice engine, tile-making and sewing. About 50 youths could get training in a batch. Teachers and trainers had been appointed.

However, the old institute lost its relevance in 1961 after the government set up an ITI at Bhawanipatana. TCPC gradually became paralysed and finally shut down. In 1989-90, the teachers and

the staff of the institute, who were appointed by the SC/ST welfare department, lost their jobs. Costly machines and implements were shifted to the Hirakud ITI and Bhawanipatana ITI. Two acres of land used by the TCPC are lying unused.

In the old building of the TCPC, office of the government treasury was operating for a few years. After the treasury office was shifted to the tehsil office, the horticulture office functioned from the TCPC building for some years.

Now, the old building is lying abandoned while its premises play host to anti-social elements day and night, locals alleged. In 2018-19, the government had initiated steps for revival of the TCPC. Two of its building near Indravati Colony were restored at a cost of Rs 20 lakh. However, contractors botched up

the work and minted money.

These two buildings are in a dilapidated state. "Buildings and land are there. Thousands of youths are unemployed. But the government has not taken any steps to equip the institute with adequate resources to revive it. Many educated youths of the area could benefit from it, if they are imparted training," locals lamented.

They also pointed out that for lack of skill training, youths of the area migrate to other states in search of jobs.

The government is opening mini ITIs in each block, this TCPC can be made use for the purpose, they suggested.

Locals demanded that the government should consider revival of the institute, which has produced scores of successful people in the region.

## Jumbo calf rescued from redundant well

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, April 10:** A jumbo calf was rescued Saturday morning by forest officials after it fell into an unused well in Bisusola village under Deuli forest range in Mayurbhanj district.

According to sources, the baby pachyderm was a member of a herd of at least 20 jumbos. The elephant herd had strayed into a locality. The calf accidentally fell into the narrow well and could not come out of it. Later, the herd left



the jumbo calf alone.

Deuli forest range officials got information about the incident. They immediately rushed to the spot and rescued the calf after striving for a couple of hours.

The calf was part of a 20-member herd that had strayed into Deuli range some days ago

"A herd of jumbos had strayed into Bisusola area when the calf fell into the narrow well. We engaged an earthmover to rescue the calf. It is not known exactly when the baby pachyderm fell into the well, though it was discovered in the morning," an official said.

## Dolphin count in Bhitarkanika on rise

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 10:** For the last three years, the count of dolphins in Bhitarkanika National Park of Kendrapara district dropped. However, its population has gone up this year.

This was revealed in the dolphin count conducted by the forest department. The count found that there are 342 dolphins belonging to three subspecies inhabiting the coastal waters of Bhitarkanika.

In the current year, the forest department conducted a dolphin counting in January. However, it triggered a big controversy over the timing of the dolphin count.

Some environmentalists raised reliability of the counting data, pointing out that the timing and the prevalent weather condition were not favourable for enumerators to ensure proper sightings of the mammals. So, the census was conducted again in February.

The wildlife division of Rajnagar deployed nine teams for dolphin counting under the supervision of DFO Bikash Ranjan Das, dolphin ex-



pert Dr Mumtaz Khan and Shiba Prasad Parida.

In the counting held from Dhamra to Devi river mouth, the enumerators found 281 humpback dolphins, 22 bottle nose dolphins and 39 Irrawaddy dolphins.

In 2018, the census found 307 dolphins in the area. In 2019, their number plunged to 126 which further came down to 62 in 2020.

In the 2020 census, not single Irrawaddy dolphin was found. The number of humpback dolphins has

gone up unexpectedly, the forest department said.

Environmentalists like Hemanta Kumar Rout, Ashok Kumar Swain and Biraja Kumar Pati expressed happiness over the rise of dolphin population in the Bhitarkanika national park.

It was stated that due to Covid-induced lockdown and restrictions, transportation and illegal prawn farms/gherries and marine fishing activities were in doldrums last year. The undisturbed marine environ-

ment had ensured sufficient food for the mammals.

Toxic water being released from prawn farms though creeks and the river system is said to be a major repellent for the dolphins. Unabated fishing posed another danger to the dolphins.

Notably, Irrawaddy dolphins are known to prefer estuaries and brackish water systems. They can have a thriving habitat at Bhitarkanika, it was said.

## Not fish but bike caught in fishing net

**Bhadrak:** Instead of fish, a bike was caught in a fishing net, much to the astonishment of fishermen at Kanjiapal village under Dhamnagar block in Bhadrak district Friday. According to a source, some fishermen were catching fish near Ambanal in Kanjiapal village. They cast the net into the water. They found the net heavier than usual as they tried to pull it back to the surface. They thought it might be a huge catch. They sought the help of some youths to drag the net out. As they went on pulling up the net, they realized that it was not a big catch of fish but a bike. As the news spread, villagers rushed to the spot to have a look at the strange catch. The villagers suspected that the bike might have been used in a crime and dumped in water.

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER  
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II,  
GANJAM, BERTHAMPUR  
Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice**

**Bid Identification No. Online Tender/01/EERWD-II/2021-22**  
No. O-22- No. 1872/RWD-IIGB. Date 06.04.2021

1 Name of the work	: Road work
2 Estimated cost	: Rs. 37.17 lakh
3 Period of completion	: 2 (Two) calendar months as per Annexure
4 Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal	: From 15.04.2021 at 10.00 A.M. to 26.04.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.
5 Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal	: 26.04.2021 upto 3.00 P.M.
6 Name and address of the Officer inviting bid	: Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal website <https://www.tendersodisha.gov.in/nicgep/app>

**Executive Engineer, R.W. Division-II, Ganjam, Berhampur**

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FOCUS ECONOMY

# INDIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE BINGE



The National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development, a statutory institution having developmental and financial objectives, will be ready shortly

1998 the National Highway Development Project (NHDP) were set up to enhance connectivity. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was having the same effect on rural connectivity. Side by side Tariff Authority of Major Ports was set up and private sector was allowed. The period 1995-98, thus, saw a quantum jump in infrastructure policy development to push growth.

Power sector reforms were initiated in Odisha in mid-1990s based on policies first introduced with the help of the World Bank. The reform process involved 'unbundling' of vertically integrated public-sector power utilities into separate entities involved in generation, transmission and distribution of power. The Electricity Act, 2003 supports creation of a single national market for power with multiple buyers and sellers.

Tele-density in India has witnessed a quantum jump. In 1991, at the beginning of financial reforms, five million Indians had telephones. India's telecommunication network is the second largest in the world by number of telephone users (both fixed and mobile) with 1171.80 million subscribers as on 31 October 2020. As on 31 October 2020, India has the world's second-largest Internet user-base with 734.82 million broadband Internet subscribers.

Developing corporate bond market would go a long way in augmenting resources for infrastructure. So far the corporate bond market has not made any visible progress in India. Bond market finds it difficult to have a decent market share. SEBI is taking steps to develop the bond market. Foreign investments help deepening debt and derivative markets as they contribute to liquidity and price discovery.

The infrastructure development would expand international trade, make the exports cost competitive, enhance economic fortune of the country spur growth and create a new economic geography.

The writer is a former central banker.

**B**ridging the infrastructure deficit is a major challenge for India. In the past, between 1948 and 1964, three financial institutions were established to provide long-term finance — the Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI), the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) and the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI). Three decades down the line with policy changes the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) could not continue with the concessional funding it was providing in the form of longer-term operation funds. As a result, these institutions were subjected to market-based borrowing and lending rates which they could not sustain. Subsequently, the institutions were converted into banks. This policy change also left an institutional vacuum in infrastructure financing.

In the context of infrastructure development it is worth noting the observations of Raghuram Rajan, former RBI Governor, in his book "I do what I do" (2017). It precisely mentioned that the ambitious plan for building our infrastructure includes: ensuring the availability of inputs such as power, minerals and water at competitive prices; linking everyone electronically and financially; encouraging development of markets, warehouses, regulators, information aggregators and business correspondents. In certain areas our achievement is commendable and in some a lot has to be done.

Infrastructure financing would be a game changer in the economic management of the country. The concept of setting up of a national infrastructure bank at the apex level was suggested by this author in his article "National Infra Bank" published in *Orissa POST* on 24 April 2013. It's good to see that this concept has seen the light of the day in the Union Budget 2021-22.

In the Budget, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced that "Infrastructure needs long-term debt financing. A pro-

professionally managed Development Financial Institution (DFI) is necessary to act as a provider, enabler and catalyst for infrastructure financing. Accordingly, I shall introduce a Bill to set up DFI."

Taking the matter forward, the government on March 23, 2021 tabled in the Parliament and passed the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Bill 2021 that among other things, seeks to establish a statutory institution to support the development of long-term infrastructure financing in India and to carry on the business of financing infrastructure. The statutory institution called National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NABFID) would have developmental and financial objectives. As per the government pronouncements, NABFID will be a statutory body to be ready shortly. It will be set up with a corpus of ₹20,000 crore and the government will give an initial grant of ₹5,000 crore. The Centre expects the DFI to leverage the fund to raise upto ₹3 lakh crore in the next few years. This is a significant step in transforming India's manufacturing sector and a positive move towards \$5 trillion economy, which may take more than five years to realise.

In the past, the government had experimented in India's infrastructure financing. India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) was incorporated

as a wholly-owned Government of India company in January 2006 and commenced operations from April 2006 to provide long-term finance to viable infrastructure projects. The RBI invested \$5 billion from its foreign exchange reserve, in fully government guaranteed foreign currency bonds issued by an overseas SPV of the IIFCL. The funds thus raised were used by the company for on-lending to Indian companies for infrastructure. In response to an announcement in the Union Budget 2014, the RBI in July 2014, allowed banks to issue long-term bonds with minimum maturity of seven years to raise resources for lending (i) long-term projects in infrastructure and (ii) housing. The scheme was not very successful as banks may face ALM mismatch and the lurking NPA load.

It may be recalled that reforms in infrastructure sector started to gather momentum in the mid-1990s. In 1996, the Expert Group on Commercialisation of Infrastructure Projects (Chairman Dr Rakesh Mohan) gave a blueprint for reforming the sector as it addressed issues of both financing and regulation. In 1997-98, the Infrastructure Development Financial Corporation (IDFC) played a pivotal role in financing infrastructure projects. In the same period, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was set up. In 1995, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and in



Dasarathi Mishra

## INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING WOULD BE A GAME CHANGER IN THE ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRY



Aakar Patel

## Most of India's states have these laws criminalising what is supposed to be a Fundamental Right

It is the Divine Presence that gives value to life. This Presence is the source of all peace, all joy, all security. Find this Presence in yourself and all your difficulties will disappear.

THE MOTHER



## Curtailed freedom

This morning has brought the headline 'People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court'. The report was about a public interest litigation which sought to stop Indians from converting out of the faith they were born in. The judges were angry. They said: "What kind of writ petition is this? Why should a person above 18 not choose his religion?"

The petitioner was the BJP's Ashwini Upadhyaya. The Indian judiciary has had a long history with the freedom of religion. It might be appropriate to revisit it. First, let readers understand this. You have no freedom of religion. You have no right to convert out of the faith you were born into. I do not know if our judges know this or have actually read the law. But it is a fact.

Article 25 of our constitution reads: "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion".

This is apparently a Fundamental Right, meaning one which enjoys a high degree of protection from State encroachment. The Fundamental Right was drafted after a debate in which India's Christians had specifically asked for the right to propagate (to convert other people) because it was an article of their faith. In India Muslims do not do mass propagation; even the Tablighi Jamaat only seeks to make Muslims better Muslims. It is the Christians who believe their religion requires them to spread the good word of Christ and to invite people into their faith. They asked for this right and were given it specifically by our Constitution's makers including arch Hindu fundamentalists like KM Munshi who agreed with the Christians. Only one Hindu in the Assembly opposed the right to propagate and that was 26-year-old Brahmin man from Odisha, Loknath Misra, whose brother Rangnath Misra and nephew Dipak Misra would both become chief justices of India.

Misra said that by making India secular, Hindus had done a favour to other communities and that propagation should be allowed but not given as a Fundamental Right. He need not have worried because this right was taken away by subterfuge as has been the case for many rights in India under the approving eye of the Supreme Court. Let us see how by looking at just one state, my own.

In 2003, under Narendra Modi, Gujarat passed a law that essentially removed all freedom of religion for Gujaratis. It requires individuals changing their faith to take the permission of the government. They had to fill out a form explaining to the District Magistrate the reasons they were choosing to convert; their occupation and monthly income; how long they had been in the religion they were converting out of; to reveal whether they were Dalit or Adivasi; the date and time of their conversion; the names, addresses and ages of themselves and all in their family; the names and addresses of all guests attending the ceremony. If they did not do so within ten days of their conversion, they faced one year in jail.

The person who is converting them has to fill out another form with all of the details referred to above and must submit, one month before the conversion, an application to the District Magistrate seeking permission. The bureaucrat has one month in which to approve or deny permission. This denial of propagation obviously also affects the right of the person who wants to change their faith. One had to remain in the faith they were born in unless the government approved.

The District Magistrate must also maintain a register that has the number of applications received, approved, denied or pending which he must report every quarter. The coercion can be imagined.

Gujarat's Assembly was told in January 2020 that in the previous five years a total of 1,895 'applications' for conversion had been filed in the state. Gujarat had denied permission to convert to 889 individuals.

The government 'gave permission' to 1,006 applicants, almost all of whom were Dalits in Surat converting to Buddhism. The number of Dalit applicants to convert to Buddhism had swelled because in 2014, they had been denied permission to convert in a mass ceremony. The Modi government attempted to modify the law to exclude conversions from Buddhism and Jainism to Hinduism and vice versa from the State's regulation. Meaning that Jains and Buddhists would be seen legally as Hindus and therefore would not really be 'converting'. But this was objected to by Gujarat's Jains who resisted being clubbed with Hindus and the modification was withdrawn.

I have used the example of Gujarat but all most of India's states have these laws criminalising what is supposed to be a Fundamental Right. The Gujarat law's punishment for propagation is three years (four years if the convert was a woman, Dalit or Adivasi). But how the District Magistrate's denial of permission would work at the level of faith was unclear. One priest I spoke to said India's religion laws made no sense because of the nature of belief. He said: 'Suppose I stopped believing in Christ today. This would be a conversion from being a believer to a non-believer. I am supposed to take permission from the State for this change, but I have already stopped believing.'

In recent months, BJP run states like Uttarakhhand, UP, MP and others have passed the 'love jihad' laws which tighten the State's grip on religious freedoms further. It is totally and demonstrably false to say Indians have freedom of religion.

This is the background to which the morning newspapers have brought us the headline that 'People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court'.

SPECTRUM THE MIDDLE EAST

# What's behind Jordan's palace intrigue?



John Andrews

## GIVEN THE STAKES, THE US AND JORDAN'S OTHER WESTERN ALLIES MIGHT YET FIND THEMSELVES INVOLVED IN ANOTHER MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

"I am not the person responsible for the breakdown in governance, the corruption and for the incompetence that has been prevalent in our governing structure for the last 15 to 20 years and has been getting worse." So said Jordan's Prince Hamzah bin Hussein, apparently from house (or rather palace) arrest, in a video message shared by the BBC on April 4.

Was the 41-year-old son of the late King Hussein planning a coup against his 59-year-old half-brother, King Abdullah? If so, that would be a rude awakening for outsiders who saluted Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel, and who have since assumed the Hashemite Kingdom to be an oasis of stability in a turbulent region.

That assumption seemed sound. Jordan was barely scarred by the upheavals of the Arab Spring a decade ago. But if that stability turns out to be illusory, one must worry about Jordan following Syria and Iraq into a state of turmoil that could also drag in Israel and Saudi Arabia, as well as providing new terrain for extremist groups like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda. Given the stakes, the US and Jordan's other Western allies might yet find themselves involved in another Middle East conflict.

Of course, this scenario is not inevitable. Hamzah denies any role in machinations against the governing order, declaring in a signed statement on April 5: "In light of the developments of the past two days, I put myself at the disposal of His Majesty the King." Since King Abdullah had dismissed Hamzah as crown prince in 2004, replacing him with his own son, that declaration of loyalty (grudging or not) is valuable.

But there is surely more to all of this than palace intrigue. Ayman Safadi, Jordan's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, said that Jordanian security agencies "have been following activities and movements by His Royal Highness Prince Hamzah bin Al Hussein, Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, Bassem Ibrahim Awadallah and others, targeting the security and stability of the nation." Awadallah, a former finance minister, and bin Zaid, a minor royal who formerly served as King Abdullah's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, were also detained. The investigations, Safadi added, "have detected interferences and communications, including some with foreign entities, on the ideal timing for taking steps towards destabilising Jordan's security."

Those 'foreign entities' have not been officially identified, but the traditional (and always convenient) suspect is Israel. But while relations

between King Abdullah and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu are strained, a more intriguing suspect is Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

On the face of it, MBS might seem an unlikely culprit, given that most of the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, immediately pledged its support for King Abdullah. But as custodians of Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, the Hashemite dynasty stands in the way of MBS' grand ambitions for the House of Saud. It was MBS's own grandfather, after all, who wrested control of Mecca and Medina from the Hashemites back in 1924-25.

Notwithstanding the supposed solidarity among Arab monarchies, MBS might see normalisation of Saudi relations with Israel as a way to gain unchallenged control of al-Aqsa. This could be presented as the natural next step following the Abraham Accords between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco.

In this scenario, sidelining the Hashemites would be a small price to pay. In weighing the risks, MBS knows that the Jordanian monarchy is utterly dependent on largesse — much of it from the Arab petrostates, the US, and agencies such

as the International Monetary Fund. As such, a Jordanian monarch's political survival ultimately depends on his political skill, efficient security agencies, and luck. Since ascending to the throne in 1999 following the death of his father, King Abdullah has benefited from all three. However, luck can run out, even for a dynasty that traces its lineage back to the Prophet Muhammad. Roughly half of Jordan's ten million people are Palestinian. And while Jordanian tribes' loyalty has traditionally been beyond question, Hamzah's popularity with them may have spurred suspicions of a coup.

Hashemite rule in Jordan has survived wars with Israel, waves of Arab nationalism, conflict with the PLO, and the lure of Islamist extremism. More challenges are bound to come, and, as King Abdullah well knows, survival is not guaranteed. "Sedition came from within and without our one house," the king said on April 7, "and nothing compares to my shock, pain, and anger as a brother and as the head of the Hashemite family, and as a leader of this proud people."

The writer is a former editor and foreign correspondent for *The Economist*.  
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WORDSWORTH

Mociology

This word has gained some public attention following its use in the title of a conference in London on 7 November 2005 organised by the Royal Society of Arts: Mobile technology and culture change: how mociology is changing the way we live. The introduction to the conference described it in some detail. It seems that mociology is the study of the innovative ways people use their mobile phones or wireless systems in daily life. Examples given including buying concert tickets by phone or having medical information about your diabetic condition sent to you the same way. It has been described as the sociology of the mobile lifestyle, which seems to be the genesis of the word (mobile + sociology), though the coinage is unpossessing (the blending suggests that the c is pronounced as an s). It is said to have been invented by Ralph Simon of the Mobilium Group of Los Angeles and London, whose fertile mind has also created the term mocio-economics, described as "the underlying economics that drives the fast emergence of mobile entertainment revenues and economics". The same text described mociology as a "new and emerging science", which seems to be a PR overstatement of a particularly egregious sort.

LOL

A smart dog

A man went to the cinema the other day and in the front row was an old man and with him was his dog. It was a sad funny kind of film, you know the type. In the sad part, the dog cried his eyes out, and in the funny part, the dog laughed its head off. This happened all the way



through the film. After the film had ended, the man decided to go and speak to the old man.

"That's the most amazing thing I've seen," the mantold the old man. "That dog really seemed to enjoy the film." The old man said, "Yeah, it is. He hated the book."

# 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, opinions and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgur Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Aadhaar issues

Sir, The Aadhaar card is easy to obtain but there are a lot of problems related to it. Those who need it are excluded due to biometric exceptions such as persons with eye disabilities cannot provide scans, and individuals with physical disabilities may not provide finger prints. Most people with physical disabilities are excluded from the Aadhaar card. On the other hand, there is high inclusion i.e. around 100 crore or more Aadhaar cards have been issued. Some illegal migrants have Aadhaar cards and fake Aadhaar cards are also illegally issued to many. With some changes in the Aadhaar Act, and building awareness among the people we can fix such issues.  
**Rajesh Sahoo, DHENKANAL**

EC 'notices'

Sir, We often hear the Election Commission issuing 'notices' to errant politicians and candidates for various election related misdemeanours. But we hardly get to hear about meaningful action taken by them in response. Even if a warning is issued or a candidate is temporarily barred from campaigning, such an order is rescinded in no time. Where are the Seshans and Lyngdohs today?  
**Bhaskar Roy, NEW DELHI**

Vax for all

Sir, The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggesting that vaccination be allowed for all people above the age of 18 years. The association stated that the pandemic's second wave surge is reaching record highs and added that vaccination against COVID-19 stands as a single evidence-based resource for us to restrict cases by raising the personal immune response and pave the way for herd immunity to decrease the severity of the disease. The association suggests that our vaccination strategy be geared up with immediate effect and on a war footing. The central government should initiate steps to ensure COVID-19 vaccination for all. This is the need of the hour.  
**Amit Singh Kushwaha, SATNA (MP)**

Unwarranted tiff

Sir, The slugfest between the Maharashtra government and the Centre over vaccines availability shows no sign of easing. A day after Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan lambasted the Maharashtra government for bogging down India's efforts in fighting the pandemic, the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government reiterated its demand for additional vaccine stocks and wanted the supply speeded up. It will behave both sides to get into a tiff when the nation is battling the pandemic.  
**NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE**



# Vax will last for five days only: Punjab CM

Hoping that the Centre would send fresh batches of vaccine supply soon, the Chief Minister said if the state is able to meet its target of 2 lakh vaccines a day, then its current supplies will last only five days

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, April 10:** With Punjab left with only five days of supply (5.7 lakh Covid vaccine doses) at the current levels of vaccinating 85,000-90,000 persons a day, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has urged the Centre to share the schedule for supply of vaccines with the states over the next quarter based on their confirmed supply orders.

Hoping that the Centre would send fresh batches of vaccine supply soon, the Chief Minister said if the state is able to meet its target of 2 lakh vaccines a day, then its current supplies will last only three days. He said he had written to the Prime Minister and the Union Health Minister to give confirmed supply schedules.

Despite being a slow-starter in vaccination, Punjab has vaccinated more than 16 lakh persons, at an average of around 85,000-90,000 per day, he said during a video conference convened by Congress President Sonia Gandhi to discuss the Covid

## RISING CONCERNS



situation. The meeting was attended by chief ministers of the Congress-ruled states, as well as senior party leaders, including Rahul Gandhi.

Captain Amarinder said people in Punjab were still not coming out in large numbers for the vaccination due to the massive anger prevailing against the government of India on the issue of farm laws.

Since Punjab has majority population among the agriculture community, even the common man is affected by the farmers' agitation, he said, adding "this anger is impacting the vaccination drive."

He said his government is undertaking an extensive media campaign to address the mis-information regarding Covid and

vaccination hesitancy.

Ranking 18th in the country at present in terms of cases reported, Punjab is showing around 8% positivity, with an average of around 3,000 cases per days for the past 15 days, the Chief Minister apprised Gandhi. The number of cases is slightly stable, he pointed out, adding that "this shows that the steps taken in the last three weeks are in the right direction".

Even in the graphs put up by Health Ministry in Prime Minister's review meeting, the "curve appears to be flattened over the past fortnight," he said, disclosing that the state currently has around 27,200 active cases with recovery rate of 87.1%.

Thanking Sonia Gandhi for giving the opportunity "to discuss and learn from each other on Covid management", the CM, however, said deaths are a concern for Punjab, with around 50-60 daily deaths with a little under 2% Case Fatality Rate (CFR) in the second surge. Overall, CFR is 2.77% for all reported cases since March 2020, he added.

## Kerala records 6,194 Covid-19 cases, toll crosses 4,700

AGENCIES

**Thiruvananthapuram, April 10:** Kerala continued to witness a steep surge in COVID-19 cases with 6,194 cases being reported Saturday as the active cases crossed 39,000 and the toll mounted to 4,767 with 17 more deaths. As many as 2,584 people have been cured of the infection, taking the total recoveries to 11,115,342.



The total caseload has soared to 11,60,204 and 39,778 are undergoing treatment for the infection, according to a government release. As many as 1,64,894 people are under observation in various districts, including 5,906 in hospitals.

In the last 24 hours ending 2 pm, 61,957 samples were tested and the test positivity rate rose to 10 per cent, the release said. So far, 1,37,03,838 samples have been sent for testing.

Ernakulam recorded the highest number of cases -977- today, followed by Kozhikode at 791 cases.

## Kerala min to move HC after Lokayukta asks him to quit

AGENCIES

**Thiruvananthapuram, April 10:** A day after the Kerala Lokayukta Friday said that the state's Higher Education Minister KT Jaleel has no moral right to continue in office as he has "misused" his powers and indulged in "nepotism", asking Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to take action against him, Jaleel Saturday decided to approach the Kerala High Court.

Soon after the verdict came, Jaleel, said once he gets the details of the verdict he will take appropriate legal advice.



He had written on his Facebook page that this very same case when it came before the High Court he was given a clean chit and when a petition was given to the then Kerala Governor P. Sathasivam - a retired Chief Justice of India, he too had exonerated him.

But, now with the fresh directive from the Lokayukta, he has decided to file a petition before the

The case pertains to an appointment made by Jaleel in 2018 when he had appointed his close relative KT Adeb as GM of KSMDFC

High Court Monday and the vacation bench of the court will look into the matter Tuesday.

The case pertains to an appointment made by Jaleel in 2018 when he had appointed his close relative KT Adeb as General Manager of the Kerala State Minorities Development Finance Corporation. Since then the youth wing of the Indian Union Muslim League, the second biggest ally of the Congress-led UDF, has been up in arms.

The Kerala Lokayukta is headed by retired Supreme Court Judge Cyriac Joseph.

The appointment made by Jaleel triggered huge protests inside and outside the Assembly even though he defended it saying that the appointment was in order. He also got the support of the CPI-M, but later Adeb had quit and returned to his bank job.

It was PK Mohammed Shafi, a resident of Jaleel's home district Malappuram, who approached the Lokayukta. His counsel George Poonthotem said the verdict is very clear and the Lokayukta has said Jaleel has no moral right to continue as a minister.

## FESTIVITIES AMID CHALLENGES



Sikh pilgrims, travelling to Pakistan to celebrate Baisakhi festival, wait to undergo Covid-19 tests at the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, Saturday. PTI PHOTO

## 'Amarinder compromised interests of Punjab'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, April 10:** Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Saturday said Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh should resign for compromising the interests of the state by being hand in glove with the BJP-led Centre in punishing the farmers protesting against the three agri-

cultural laws.

The SAD president, who was addressing the media here, said the Punjab and Haryana High Court order quashing the Special Investigating Team (SIT) formed by the Congress government in the Kotkapura police firing case had made it clear that the Chief Minister was not interested in finding the guilty but was using the case to im-

plicate the Badal family.

He said it was now clear that the SIT was formed to indulge in political vendetta.

"What we have been maintaining since day one that the entire investigation is being done with malicious intent has been proved. Amarinder took an oath to take action against those responsible for sacrilege of Guru Granth Sahib

but has played with the sentiments of the people by indulging in a political investigation and has wasted four years in this process."

Stating that the Chief Minister had sold off the interests of the state to the BJP, Badal said "forget fighting for the rights of the state, Amarinder does not even raise the issues affecting the people of the state with the central government."

## Punjab 'Arhtiyas' withdraw strike, wheat purchase begins

AGENCIES

**Chandigarh, April 10:** Wheat procurement kicked off in Punjab Saturday with the Arhtiyas calling off their proposed strike after Chief Minister Amarinder Singh ordered various steps to ensure their continued involvement in the process and immediate release of their pending payments of ₹131 crore without waiting for dues to come from the FCI.

On the Chief Minister's directives, the state Food Department has amended the procurement software so that the Arhtiyas or commission agents will continue to be involved in the process of release of payments to the farmers, albeit in a modified manner, while farmers get their payments in their bank accounts within 48 hours, as mandated by the state government.

Declaring his unequivocal commitment to safeguarding the interests of Punjab's Arhtiyas, Captain Amarinder said despite the government of India's directives to exclude them from MSP payments, "the Arhtiyas shall always be as-



sociated with procurement".

"Till I am there, you will part of the system, and your role will always remain," he asserted, adding that he will ensure that the Arhtiya's commission and other charges permitted under the APMC Act shall continue. Commenting on the government of India's adamant refusal to

accept the state's request for deferment of the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, the Chief Minister said, "We fought hard with the Centre on the issue, but they were adamant, and even went to the extent of threatening not to procure from Punjab if we do not implement the DBT". The Chief Minister also ordered the

Finance Department to immediately release ₹131 crore due to the Arhtiyas without waiting for it from the Food Corporation of India (FCI), which had withheld payments after some Arhtiyas had failed to upload details.

These Arhtiyas were probably misguided at that time by people who wanted

On CM Amarinder Singh's directives, the state Food Department has amended the procurement software so that the Arhtiyas or commission agents will continue to be involved in the process of release of payments to the farmers

to play politics, he said, adding that even though the money was yet to come from FCI, his government would release it immediately, without waiting for the same.

He also assured the Arhtiyas that his government will take up with the Centre the issue of 30 per cent deduction in labour payments made by the FCI.

CM Singh thanked Vijay Kalra, the president of the Federation of Arhtiya Association of Punjab, for heeding his government's plea to withdraw their proposed strike and lift the grain as the farmers would otherwise have suffered.

He appealed to the Arhtiyas to immediately start procurement and also take care of Covid norms. The government had to delay procurement this year till April 10 (from the previously scheduled April 1) on account of the second surge of Covid.

The Chief Minister said like last year, farmers will again be issued passes this year to reduce congestion at the grain markets in view of the pandemic situation.

## DOLLAR SMUGGLING CASE

### Customs records statement of Kerala Assembly speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, April 10:** The Customs, probing the dollar smuggling case, has recorded the statement of Kerala Assembly speaker P Sreeramakrishnan, at his official residence here. The Speaker's office has maintained that he was not questioned and only some explanations were sought and his statement was recorded.

Customs department sleuths reached Sreeramakrishnan's house Friday as he had informed them that he was unable to reach Kochi due to some health related issues.

"They sought explanation on certain matters with regard to the Dollar scam and spent less than two hours and were satisfied," the Speaker's office told PTI.

The central agency's action comes following the Speaker's refusal to appear before the probe team in Kochi despite being summoned thrice to record his statement in connection with the dollar smuggling case.

Citing various reasons, the speaker had not appeared before the officials.

The dollar case pertaining to the alleged smuggling of USD 1,90,000 (equivalent to ₹1.30 crore) by a former finance head of the UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram to Muscat in Oman, came to light during the probe into the Gold smuggling case.

Swarna Suresh, key accused in



the gold smuggling case, had allegedly made shocking revelations against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the Speaker and some ministers with regard to dollar "smuggling" involving UAE consulate officials.

Suresh and PS Sarith, another accused in the two cases, had claimed before the Enforcement Directorate, probing the money trail in the gold case, that the Assembly Speaker had made investment in a college in Oman.

They also said Sreeramakrishnan handed over currency bundles meant for a UAE consulate official at a flat here, as per their depositions submitted in the High Court by the central agency.

On January 8 this year, Customs recorded the statement of Sreeramakrishnan's assistant private secretary, K Ayyappan in connection with the investigation into the dollar case.

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Regardless of lockdowns, public health and social measures remain the key to stop virus transmission. Efforts to test, trace, isolate, and treat must be scaled up along with communities practising cough etiquette, hand hygiene and social distancing

**POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH** | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WHO SEA REGION

## 106-YEAR-OLD WOMAN JABBED

A woman, whose age according to her Aadhaar card is 106 years, received her first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh Saturday. According to Kamli Bai's Aadhaar card, she was born January 1, 1915



## of the day quote

Mass gatherings for elections and religious events have accelerated COVID for which all of us are responsible to some extent. We need to accept this responsibility and keep the interest of the nation above our own

**SONIA GANDHI** | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

I cannot recall in recent years any case of police firing on voting day during elections resulting in four deaths. It is a case of a failure of leadership and management of the deployment of security personnel. Who should bear responsibility?

**P CHIDAMBARAM** | CONGRESS LEADER

Now in the second wave of pandemic, the entire nation and the world is following COVID-19 protocols. Even protesting farmers should follow the protocols. Their life is important for us

**NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR** | UNION AGRICULTURE MIN

# Plea in SC seeks transfer of petition on 'Uniform Civil Code'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 10:** A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking transfer of a petition on Uniform Civil Code issue, pending in the Delhi High Court, to the apex court to avoid multiplicity of litigations.

The plea filed by advocate and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay noted that five PILs seeking uniform laws on minimum marriage age, divorce grounds, maintenance-alimony, adoption-guardianship and succession-in-

heritance are pending in the Supreme Court.

It said that implementing the Uniform Civil Code for all citizens on the lines of the Indian Penal Code will free the people of the country from hundreds of complex and outdated laws.

The petition filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey has also sought a direction to the Centre to constitute a Judicial Commission or Expert Committee to draft the Uniform Civil Code within three months while considering the best practices of all personal laws and



civil laws of the developed countries and international conventions. "A gender-neutral, religion-neutral law will apply to all Indians, whether Hindu or

The plea stated that the "Uniform Civil Code or Indian Civil Code" has always been seen as a "spectacle of religious appeasement"

Muslim, Zoroastrian or Christian, in relation to the will, charity, divinity, guardianship, sharing of custody, etc. The gender-based discrepancy in the religion caste

and sect will end."

"A comprehensive unified gender-neutral and religion-neutral law will be passed at the national level and will be equally applicable to all citizens," the plea said adding that it will not only promote fraternity and national integration but also secure gender justice and dignity of women.

The plea stated that the "Uniform Civil Code or Indian Civil Code" has always been seen as a "spectacle of religious appeasement".

The Supreme Court or high court cannot ask the government to im-

plement Article 44 of the Constitution but can direct the Centre to constitute a committee to prepare a draft of the Uniform Civil Code, the plea said.

"The Supreme Court and High Court may direct the Centre to constitute a Judicial Commission or Expert Committee to study the Uniform Civil Code of the developed countries and the laws applicable in India and make public a draft of the 'Indian Civil Code', combining the good of all, and public discussion could begin on this subject," it said.

# A year on, India's situation grimmer with more variants

April 10 last year, five days after millions responded to PM Narendra Modi's appeal to show the nation's "collective resolve and solidarity" in the fight against the coronavirus, the number of confirmed infections stood at 6,761, while the death toll was 206



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 10:** When millions of Indians switched off lights and lit candles and earthen lamps in the early days of the pandemic in solidarity with COVID warriors, many probably thought the fight will be over soon, but a year on, the situation has become grimmer.

April 10 last year, five days after millions responded to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to show the nation's "collective resolve and solidarity" in the fight against the coronavirus, the number of confirmed infections stood at 6,761, while the death toll was 206.

Cut to the present, India registered a record 1,45,384 fresh COVID-19 cases Saturday, pushing its infection tally to 1,32,05,926, while the death toll stood at 1,68,436.

Delhi alone recorded over 8,500

new cases Friday, while Maharashtra reported more than 58,000.

As per the health ministry, 10 states - Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan - are showing a steep rise in daily COVID-19 cases at present.

They accounted for 82.82 per cent of the new infections Saturday, it said. The number of active cases has breached the 10-lakh mark again after around six-and-a-half months, and the country recorded 794 more fatalities in a day, the highest since October 18 last year.

India crossed the grim milestone of one crore COVID-19 cases December 19 last year. The spread of the virus slowed down briefly and there was an improvement in the situation in January 2021.

## 'Tika Utsav' from Sunday

**New Delhi:** A 'Tika Utsav' or vaccine festival will be marked in the country from April 11-14 at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with an aim to inoculate maximum number of eligible people against the coronavirus amid a surge in cases. Several states such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are gearing up with appeals being made to eligible people to get themselves vaccinated during the duration of the 'Tika Utsav'. In his interaction with chief ministers to discuss the COVID-19 situation and the ongoing vaccination drive Thursday, Prime Minister Modi had urged them to focus on vaccinating all those who are above 45 years in age in high caseload districts.

The country's lowest daily spike of just 8,635 infections was reported February 2. But the ebbing did not last long, and the infections began surging again in March 2021.

A large number of healthcare workers have contracted the virus too, including those who have taken both doses of the vaccine.

Over 9.78 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the country so far to healthcare and front-line workers, and people above 45.

India is racing against time to contain the second wave of the coronavirus by again imposing restrictions like night curfews and vaccinating over 20 lakh people daily. Making matters worse, several more infectious variants of the coronavirus have surfaced, and many experts believe might be behind the surge of cases in the country.

## DESERTED DRIVE



Bandra Worli Sea Link wears a deserted look as Maharashtra Government announced weekend lockdown due to surge in COVID-19 cases in Mumbai

# 76.16% voter turnout amid violence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 10:** A voter turnout of 76.16 per cent was recorded till 5 pm in the fourth phase of West Bengal assembly polls Saturday, amid incidents of violence which prompted the Election Commission to suspend voting at a booth in Sitalkuchi constituency of Cooch Behar.

The Commission said polling was held at 15,940 polling stations spread across 44 assembly constituencies in this phase of polls.

"However, based on report received from Special Observers on the reported incident of violence at one polling station number 126

## WB POLLS



under Sitalkuchi assembly constituency, Cooch Behar, EC has adjourned the poll. Detailed report is awaited," an EC statement said.

A total of 15,940 ballot units (BUs) and as many control units (CUs) and VVPATs were used in

this phase. One CU, one VVPAT and at least one BU make one EVM unit.

"Non-functioning rate (of EVMs) during the poll is comparable to what was experienced in the last few polls," the statement said, without elaborating.

Amid allegations by the Trinamool Congress that central forces were forcing people to vote for a particular party, the statement said that according to the Commission's standing instruction, police officials including CAPF personnel cannot go inside a polling booth unless required by the presiding officer due to law and order problem.

# 3 rescued rhino calves to be released into wild

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Golaghat (Assam), April 10:** Three rhino calves, including two females, rescued during the 2019 Assam floods will soon be released into the wild.

The rhinos, rescued near the Kaziranga National Park, will be kept at a livestock enclosure for a stipulated period of habituation before their final release into the Manas Tiger Reserve in Barpeta district, a Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) statement said. They underwent

two-year-long rehabilitation at the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation, Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve Director P Sivakumar said.

"This is the right time to release the calves into the wild as they will soon be developing horns," he was quoted as saying. The calves will undergo a medical check-up and will be marked before they are released, he said. "We have augmented Manas with 19 rhinos since 2006, out of a total population of 44 in the tiger reserve," he added.

# India, China agree to resolve issues

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 10:** India and China have agreed to resolve the outstanding issues aimed at disengagement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, thereby paving the way for complete de-escalation, the Indian government said Saturday.

The two sides agreed on the need to resolve the outstanding issues in an expeditious manner in accordance with the existing agreements and protocols, a government statement said.

Talks between Indian and Chinese military delegates were held at

Chushul Friday to discuss the next phase of disengagement in Eastern Ladakh, which lasted for 13 hours.

The 11th round of Corps Commander-level talks at Chushul took place after a nearly two-month gap. The Indian military delegation was led by Lieutenant General P G K Menon, the Commander of 14 Corps based in Leh.

The two sides had a detailed exchange of views for the resolution of the remaining issues related to disengagement along the LAC.

It is also highlighted that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for the two sides to consider de-escalation of

## LAC DISENGAGEMENT



forces and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility and enable progress in bilateral relations, the statement said.

As the India-China military tussle completes almost a year, tensions remain along the borders, even after the successful disengagement process in Pangong Lake. Tanks and troops from both sides have pulled back and there is no eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, but the build up across Eastern Ladakh continues.

After the recent talks, the two sides agreed that it is important to take guidance from the consensus of their leaders, continue their communication and dialogue and work towards a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest.

## SHOPIAN ENCOUNTER

# How a mosque was saved and 5 terrorists killed

THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT TERRORISTS WERE CORNERED INSIDE THE MOSQUE IN SHOPIAN TOWN. THE LAST BIG ENCOUNTER IN SHOPIAN WAS IN THE LATE 1990S WHEN FOUR TERRORISTS WERE KILLED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, April 10:** The terrorists were inside the mosque and security forces, as well as a host of anxious locals, outside. The situation in Kashmir's Shopian town was volatile and the challenge was to flush out the five men while protecting the place of worship but it was "mission accomplished", officials said Saturday.

Enabling the successful effort, which culminated in what was the first time in more than 20 years that five terrorists were gunned down in the restive south Kashmir town, were the parents of the terrorists and prominent citizens of the area, the officials said, counting up to 17 appeals made to them to surrender peacefully.

As the tension built up over the hours between Thursday night and Friday afternoon, the loudspeaker rang out intermittently with appeals from the parents of the terrorists holed up inside the Jama Masjid, citizens and Army personnel. Groups of people were also sent inside to negotiate with the men to come out peacefully, officials recounted.

That didn't happen. Finally Friday afternoon, the last of the five men of the banned Ansar Ghazwatul Hind (AGuH), a shadow group of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, were gunned down and with minimal damage to the mosque. Narrating the events of the day, officials said the forces of the 44 Rashtriya Rifles and Jammu and Kashmir Police were undeterred by the terrorists' re-



fusal to surrender and moved closer to the mosque.

Against the established practice of maintaining safe distance from the target area, Army officers took

the decision to move towards the mosque. The intention was to engage in pinpoint and not random, distant firing.

Our main concern was to pre-

serve the sanctity of the masjid while neutralising the terrorists. This exposed our troops to high degree of risk while engaging with the terrorists, who were heavily armed, says Maj Gen Rashim Bali, General officer in Command of Victor Force that looks after militancy in South and central Kashmir. He said the message had to be firm that picking up weapons against the state is not an option and would be suitably responded to. The operation against the men started in the dead of night at 1 am on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday following an intelligence tip-off that five terrorists were hiding inside the mosque. Within no time, the area was sealed and many civilians evacuated to safer places, officials said. While three of the terrorists were

killed by dawn, the other two were gunned down at 2 pm Friday. The Army had deployed drones to keep a close watch on the movements of the terrorists. Officials said the parents of one of the terrorists, the brother of another and a prominent citizen were sent inside the mosque to ask them to give up arms but to no avail. At one point, a terrorist fired at a citizen who asked them to surrender in order to ensure the mosque is not damaged. The terrorists, officials said, also attempted to set ablaze a portion of the mosque in their attempt to flee.

After the operation, the troops cleared and cleaned the mosque and handed over all the religious books to the local administration to stem rumours about some books being desecrated.



# international



While your strength and stay, your Majesty, may now have passed, Jenny and I pray that you will find great comfort in your faith, in your family, at this time. Let us also now be your strength and stay as you continue to endure, as you continue to serve so loyally and so faithfully, as you have done over so many generations  
**SCOTT MORRISON** | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

## of the day quote

We need to ascertain the source of the incident. If we uncover the source of the attack on the ship, we will definitely respond. We will never be silent. Washington is undoubtedly involved in any attempt to undermine and harm the Islamic Republic



**ABOLFAZL SHEKARCHI** | SPOKESMAN, IRANIAN ARMED FORCES

An epidemiological evaluation has been made on the border with Brazil and we consider it necessary to extend the closure for another week. At the end of this period we will return to work on the situation in the border regions to take action



**BENJAMIN BLANCO** | DEPUTY FOREIGN TRADE AND INTEGRATION MINISTER

The decision here today is to keep operating, which is the same decision as the previous administration. The company gets to keep the benefits of operating the pipeline that was never properly authorized while the community has to bear the risks and the consequences



**JAN HASSELMAN** | EARTHJUSTICE ATTORNEY, US

## SHORT TAKES

### Wildfire destroys 12 homes

**Dudleyville**: A small community in south-central Arizona remained under an evacuation notice Friday after crews and air tankers stopped the growth of a wildfire that burned at least 12 homes, officials said. The fire burned through thick vegetation at the bottom of the Gila River in Dudleyville, a census-designated place with a population of about 1,000 located about 60 miles (97 kilometers) north of Tucson. The cause of the fire was under investigation.

### 12 injured inside B'desh mosque

**Dhaka**: Activists of a hardline Islamist group attacked devotees inside a mosque in northern Bangladesh, injuring at least 12 persons, according to a media report. The incident took place Friday at the mosque in the Gaibandha district when self-proclaimed Hefazat-e-Islam activists snatched the mic from the Imam and preached about the organisation, Dhaka Tribune reported.

### 3rd Covid wave in Germany

**Berlin**: Germany's largest university hospital, Berlin's Charite, has sounded the alarm over the country's worsening third wave of coronavirus infections. "If the numbers of seriously ill Covid-19 patients exceed those experienced during the second wave, we will be in a critical situation," said Martin Kreis, a board member at Charite, DPA news agency reported.

### 19 injured in N Ireland riot

**Belfast**: About 19 officers were injured in the latest riot in Northern Ireland, bringing the number of hurt police to 74 during a week of violence across the region, local media reported. According to the BBC, water cannon was used by police in Belfast for the first time in six years as they faced attacks by petrol bombs, fireworks and stones, reports Xinhua news agency. Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Assistant Chief Constable Jonathan Roberts said Friday that there was "sustained violence directed towards police officers on both sides of the interface over a period of hours" Thursday night.

## Pentagon defends US Navy actions inside India's EEZ

The US Navy announced that it conducted a freedom of navigation operation in Indian waters without prior consent to challenge India's "excessive maritime claims"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, April 10**: The Pentagon has defended its Navy asserting its navigational rights within India's exclusive economic zone without taking New Delhi's permission, calling the move "consistent with international law".

In an unusual move, the US Navy announced that it conducted a freedom of navigation operation in Indian waters without prior consent to challenge India's "excessive maritime claims", triggering a reaction from New Delhi, which Friday said it has conveyed concerns to Washington through diplomatic channels. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also contested the US Navy's 7th Fleet statement of April 7 that the freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) by the guided-missile destroyer USS John Paul Jones "upheld the rights, freedoms, and lawful uses" of the sea recognised in international law by challenging India's "excessive maritime claims".

When asked about India's reaction over the US Navy's move, Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby



on Friday said: "I can tell you is that the USS John Paul Jones, a Navy destroyer, asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the vicinity of the Republic of the Maldives by conducting innocent passage through its territorial sea in normal operations within its exclusive economic zone without requesting prior permission."

Earlier, announcing about the operation, the statement by the 7th Fleet said, "On April 7, 2021 (local time) USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53) asserted navigational rights and freedoms approximately 130 nautical miles west of the Lakshadweep Islands, inside India's exclusive economic zone, without requesting India's prior consent, consistent with international law."

Kirby in response to a question from reporters at a Pentagon news

conference said: "That's consistent with international law."

"Again, we continue to maintain the right, indeed the responsibility, to fly, sail, and operate in accordance with international law," he said. Kirby said that it is the responsibility of the US to uphold the freedom of navigation and the rights and freedom and lawful uses of the sea recognised in international law.

The MEA in its statement said: "India's stated position on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is that the Convention does not authorise other states to carry out in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and on the continental shelf, military exercises or maneuvers, in particular those involving the use of weapons or explosives, without the consent of the coastal state. The USS John Paul Jones was continuously monitored transiting from the Persian Gulf towards the Malacca Straits. We have conveyed our concerns regarding this passage through our EEZ to the government of the USA through diplomatic channels," the MEA added.

## UN chief applauds IMF, WB measures to address COVID-19 debt crisis

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**United Nations, April 10**: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the steps announced by the International Monetary and Finance Committee (IMFC) and the World Bank Group Development Committee to address debt crises and other financial distress to economies arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a statement issued via his spokesperson Friday, the UN chief said developing economies had struggled to secure enough financial resources to cope with the onset of the coronavirus crisis, "let alone to recover from it", Xinhua news agency reported.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the secretary-general has called for liquidity, the statement continued, through a large issuance of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) - an instrument created by the International Monetary Fund to help supplement cash reserves - for those most in need, and a reallocation of unused SDRs.

The secretary-general welcomed the IMF committee's "concrete calls" for a new allocation of SDRs, and voluntary reallocations to countries in need. He said he was encouraged by the



**THREE-PHASE APPROACH**  
A DEBT STANDSTILL

TARGETED DEBT RELIEF FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE	A REFORM OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEBT ARCHITECTURE
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support given for the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which has provided 5 billion U.S. dollars in temporary relief for vulnerable countries, and for the Common Framework for Debt Treatments, agreed by the G20 economies.

"Debt standstills and relief must be extended to countries that need it most - including middle income countries, which are home to more than 60 percent of the world's poor - without creating stigma or compromising their sovereign ratings," said the statement.

## Biden bringing responsible end to Afghan conflict

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, April 10**: US President Joe Biden is committed to bringing a responsible end to the conflict in Afghanistan and ensuring that the country can never again become a haven for terrorists and that would threaten the US or any of its allies, the White House said.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters at her daily news conference Friday, "The president's commitment to bringing a responsible end to the conflict, removing our troops from harm's way, and ensuring that Afghanistan can never again become a haven for terrorists and that would threaten the US or any of our allies."

Biden, she said, wants to make that decision in close consultation with partners around the

world, with the advice of his national security team, and do it in a way that ensures we are protecting our national interest and the safety and security of our troops, all at the same time where there's diplomatic negotiations with the Taliban.

"So, he has been clear publicly. I think, that it is operationally challenging to get troops out by May 1st, but I certainly expect you will hear from him on what his decision is in advance of that period of time," Psaki said.

Responding to a question, she said that Biden's approach is responsible and that he is taking the advice, the council, the consultations of members of his military leadership, members of his diplomatic leadership, and also partners and friends around the world into consideration as he's making his decision.

## ANTI-COUP PROTESTS FADING

### Junta sentences 19 to death

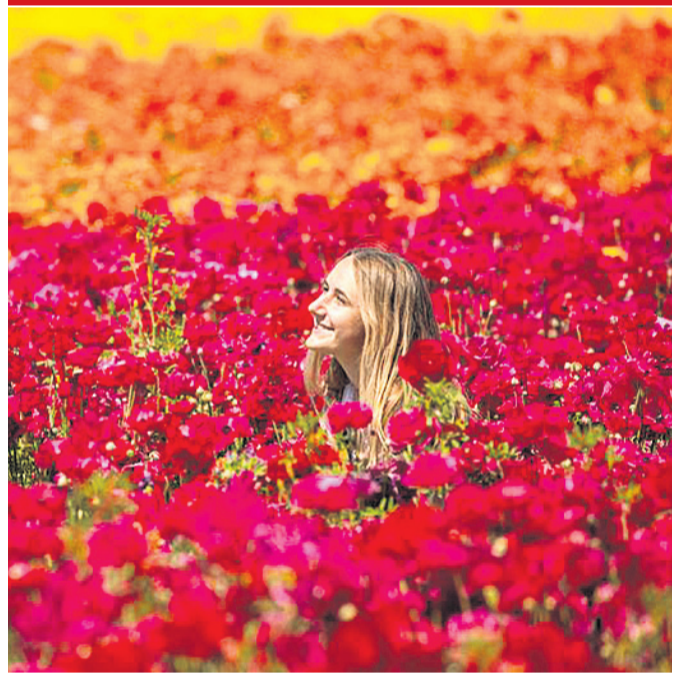
REUTERS

**Myanmar, April 10**: Nineteen people have been sentenced to death in Myanmar for killing an associate of an army captain, the military owned Myawaddy TV station said Friday, the first such sentences announced in public since Feb. 1 coup and crackdown on protesters.

The military rulers who overthrew an elected government said Friday that a protest campaign against its rule was dwindling because people wanted peace, and that it would hold elections within two years, the first timeframe it has given for a return to democracy.

Troops fired rifle grenades at anti-coup protesters Friday in the town of Bago, near Yangon, witnesses and news reports said. At least 10 people were killed and their bodies piled up inside a pagoda, they said.

## FLOURISHING FLORA



A girl has her picture taken by her friend as they visit 50 acres of ranunculus flowers at "The Flower Fields" in Carlsbad, California

REUTERS

## Gun salutes for Prince Philip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, April 10**: Gun salutes in all capitals of the United Kingdom as well as aboard some Royal Navy ships Saturday honoured Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, who passed away aged 99 at Windsor Castle Friday.

The 41 rounds fired in London, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh at a rate of one shot per minute from midday local time Saturday mark the start of an eight-day national mourning period. "The tradition of Gun Salutes being fired throughout the country to mark significant national events dates back to at least the 18th century, and there are historical records

of salutes taking place as early as the 14th century when guns and ammunition began to be adopted more widely," a statement on the royal website read. "Similar gun salutes were fired to mark the death of Queen Victoria in 1901," it notes.

They also honour the Duke's strong military links, having served with the Royal Navy in World War II.

"His Royal Highness has been a great friend, inspiration and role model for the armed forces and he will be sorely missed," said General Sir Nick Carter, the UK's Chief of the Defence Staff.

"The Duke of Edinburgh served among us during the Second World War, and he remained devoted to the Royal Navy and the armed forces as a whole," he added.

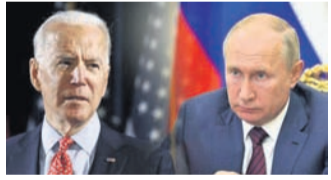


## US warns of consequences to Russian aggression in Ukraine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Washington, April 10**: The Biden administration is carrying out a review of its policies against Russia over its escalating aggression in eastern Ukraine and there will be "consequences", some seen and some unseen, to Kremlin, the White House has warned.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki during her daily briefing said the US is in close consultation and working with partners and allies in the region over Russia's troop movements on Ukraine's borders. "Of the actions that have already been taken, that we've had an ongoing review about we've been clear, there will be consequences, some unseen and some seen. We



will hope to have more about those soon," Psaki said Friday.

"As it relates to the escalating Russian aggression in eastern Ukraine, including Russia's troop movements on Ukraine's borders, we are, of course, in close consultation and working with partners and allies in the region to assess, to share intelligence, to determine what's happening, and what can be done about it," Psaki said.

Responding to a question, Psaki said there's ongoing diplomatic en-

agement between the US and a number of countries in the region, including Russia, including Ukraine, including European partners and allies who share a number of American concerns about the aggression of Russian movements on the border.

The long-running conflict in Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking east has claimed more than 13,000 lives since 2014. Fighting in the conflict, which erupted after Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, subsided in 2020 as a new ceasefire agreement took hold last July.

But clashes have picked up again since the start of the year. Ukrainian separatists are widely seen as having Russia's political and military backing, which Moscow denies.

## Radioactive water from Fukushima may be disposed into Pacific

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Tokyo, April 10**: The Japanese government may announce plans to dispose of radioactive wastewater from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, informed sources said.

The sources said Friday that the government will convene a meeting and announce the decision as early as April 13 to formalise plans to release radioactive water that has accumulated at the plant into the Pacific Ocean.

While treated, the radiation-tainted water, stored in tanks at the plant in Japan's northeast, is ex-



pected to reach capacity next year.

The plant had its key cooling functions knocked out after being battered by a massive earthquake-triggered tsunami in 2011, resulting in the world's worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl in 1986.

The plant had its key cooling functions knocked out after being battered by a massive earthquake-triggered tsunami in 2011, resulting in the world's worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl in 1986

in around two years according to the plant's operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc. (TEPCO), as the plan could cause further damage to the industry's reputation. Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Hiroshi Kajiyama

said Friday that while working on the concerns of the Fisheries Industry, the government hopes to seek cooperation of the International Atomic Energy Agency and other global organisations, while maintaining transparency over the matter. A number of countries and regions continue to impose restrictions on Japanese agricultural and fishery products as a result of the Fukushima crisis amid continued concerns about the safety of the produce. Meanwhile, some of Japan's neighbours have voiced their concerns about radioactive wastewater being discharged into the Pacific.

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Amul Lite  
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Amul Lite  
500 g | ₹ 195\*



Peanut Spread Creamy  
300 g | ₹ 140\*



Peanut Spread Crunchy  
300 g | ₹ 140\*



Amul Skimmed Milk Powder  
1 kg



Sagar Skimmed Milk Powder  
500 g



Slim 'n' Trim Non Fat Milk Powder  
500 g | ₹ 199\*



# business



**As long as work could be carried out in shifts, gem and jewellery manufacturing and ancillary activities would be exempted from emergency measures such as night curfew and restrictions on people's movement during the day among others.**

**ASEEM GUPTA** | PRINCIPAL SECY, RELIEF AND REHABILITATION DEPT, MAHARASHTRA

## EU PROPOSES TARIFF FREEZE

The European Union (EU) has suggested that it and the United States suspend tariffs imposed on billions of dollars of imports for six months, EU trade Chief Valdis Dombrovskis was quoted as telling Germany's Der Spiegel Saturday



## of the day quote

Employee health, safety and well-being are our top priority as the Covid-19 impact continues to be felt around the world. As a leading private sector player, we want to contribute to the Indian government's mammoth drive to vaccinate its citizens



**ASHWIN MUTHIAH** | FOUNDER-CHAIRMAN, AM INTERNATIONAL

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has sanctioned road development projects of 291 km worth ₹726 Cr for the state of Madhya Pradesh



**NITIN GADKARI** | ROAD TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND MSME MINISTER

Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) has the potential to decentralise, diversify, democratise and disentangle the justice delivery mechanism for the citizens in India



**CHANDRACHUD** | JUDGE, SUPREME COURT

## SHORT TAKES

### Apple to use ProMotion display

**San Francisco:** The next-gen iPhone 13 Pro line-up will reportedly come with 120Hz ProMotion display for the first time. According to AppleInsider, low-temperature polycrystalline oxide (LTPO) displays have been rumoured for the iPhone for about two years. However, the report claims that the displays will finally arrive on the iPhone, granting the device a 120Hz refresh rate for the first time. Citing "industry sources," supply chain monitor DigiTimes claims that Samsung and LG are converting iPhone-only production lines to LTPO tech production.

### 'Strong bounce back witnessed'

**New Delhi:** India's toll roads are likely to witness a 14-15% growth in collections in FY22, ratings agency ICRA said in a report. Accordingly, this growth will be achieved on a low base following an estimated de-growth of 5-7% in FY21. "Road traffic has witnessed a marked improvement in H2 FY2021 after subdued traffic witnessed in the initial months, post resumption of tolling from April 20, 2020, ICRA said."

### JioMart activity scaling up: Report

**New Delhi:** JioMart activity is scaling up as per a report by JP Morgan research which found brisk online activity across stores and formats it visited in Mumbai in the last week of March that could have been nudged further by rising Covid-19 cases. "We found the delivery infrastructure to be a mix of bike-based delivery executives, similar to e-commerce/food O2O, and van-based batched delivery that peers use (e.g., Bigbasket, Grofers), reflecting higher value with greater efficiency," JP Morgan said.

### No change in fuel prices

**New Delhi:** Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Saturday with oil marketing companies continuing on the pause mode and keeping petrol and diesel prices static for 11th consecutive day. Accordingly, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at previous days level of ₹90.56 and ₹80.87 a litre, respectively, in the capital.

# e-Comm to spur India's auto sector growth: Report

THE ANALYSIS SHOWS THAT E-COMMERCE PORTALS FOCUSED ON THE AUTOMOBILE MARKET, SUCH AS DROOM, CARDEKHO, AND OLX HAVE PUT CONSUMERS AND THE USER EXPERIENCE IN THE SPOTLIGHT HELPING THE MANUFACTURERS ATTRACT MORE USERS

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 10:** Strong acceptance of e-commerce and digitalisation is expected to accelerate the growth of India's auto sector, advisory firm Grant Thornton Bharat said. Accordingly, India's automobile market is estimated to grow more than '2.3X' from \$222 billion currently to \$512 billion by 2026.

Notably, the analysis by Allied Market Research, Market Line, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Grant Thornton Bharat showed

that e-commerce portals focused on the automobile market, such as Droom, Cardekho, and Olx have put consumers and the user experience in the spotlight helping the manufacturers attract more users. Besides, the growing base of internet and smartphone users will further boost the digital transformation, and lead to an increase in expanding the market size of the e-commerce portals.

"The strong emergence and acceptance of the online channel have provided an impetus to seamless solutions, price discovery,



transparency, digital real-time payments along with certification on the quality of the vehicle for the

consumers in the auto sector," said Rahul Kapur, Partner, Growth at Grant Thornton Bharat.

According to the analysis report, since last year, Maruti Suzuki saw a five-fold increase in sales through digital means which now stand at 20 per cent of their total sales.

"These changes in consumer's buying and research preferences signal a shift for the auto sector, as Covid19 played a big part in the online channel gaining traction."

"Technology-enabled innovations like secure digital payments, hyper-logical logistics, analytics-driven customer engagement, increasing consumer

awareness and digital advertisements are likely to support the growth going forward."

As per the report, other factors such as rising middle class and young population with increasing disposable incomes will contribute towards growing the sector.

Furthermore, ease of owning a vehicle through the availability of multiple financing options as well as reduction in vehicle ownership tenure due to regulatory rules in some states, cited the report as other growth inducing factors.

# Chinese firms to grab top 3 spots in TV panel shipments

AGENCIES

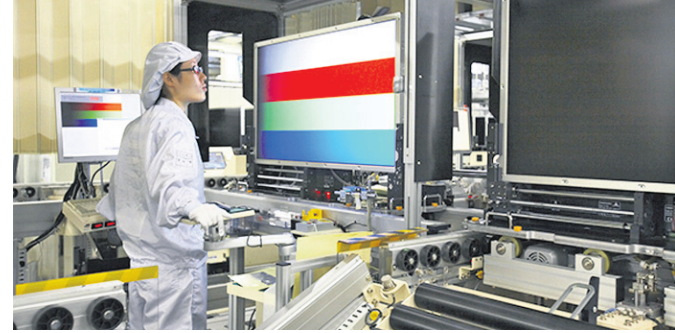
**Seoul, April 10:** Chinese companies are forecast to occupy the top three positions in the global TV panel market this year, with BOE leading with 65.2 million units, followed by CSOT with 42.2 million units and HKC with 41.9 million units.

Their combined market share is expected to top 50% of the total, a new report has said. LG Display, South Korea's major display panel maker, is expected to rank fifth, a report has showed, amid the growing dominance of Chinese brands.

LG Display's TV panel shipments are projected to reach 25 million units in 2021, up from 23.6 million units a year earlier, and represent 9.3 per cent of the global TV panel market, according to market researcher TrendForce.

"LGD will expand the OLED production capacity of its Guangzhou fab in the second quarter of 2021 as part of its effort to dominate the OLED market," TrendForce said.

Taiwan's Innolux, which was the No. 2 player in 2020, is expected to drop to the fourth spot with 38 million units of TV panel shipments,



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reports Yonhap news agency.

It predicted Samsung Display Co (SDC) to drop out of the top six in the TV panel shipment ranking

this year due to its lowered production capacity as the company pushes its migration to quantum-dot (QD) displays.

The affiliate of Samsung Electronics Co. ranked fifth in worldwide TV shipments last year.

"However, new TV sets featuring SDC's QD-OLED panels are expected to officially hit the market in the fourth quarter of 2021, in turn driving SDC's yearly TV panel shipment to 2 million units in 2022," TrendForce said.

The market researcher estimated that this year's global TV panel shipments will likely stay relatively unchanged from last year's 269 million units.

# Centre likely to revise recapitalisation roadmap for PSBs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 10:** The government may redraw the recapitalisation plan for public sector banks (PSB) in the current fiscal as the institutions face additional burden to meet interest on interest obligation for all its borrowers while changes in valuation norms AT1 bonds by Sebi will make the instrument less attractive for banks to raise their capital.

Sources said that the finance ministry has already started a preliminary exercise to determine the capital requirement of banks in wake of the changes in norms and rise in bad assets during the time of the pandemic. Based on the inputs received by banks, additional capital may be provided to them from budgetary resources.

The Budget allocated ₹20,000 crore towards recapitalisation of PSBs to help them consolidate their financial capacity. Some balance from previous year towards recapitalisation is also available for disbursement. Moreover, PSBs have proactively built buffers during financial year 2020-21 (FY21) to im-



prove their resilience in the face of the shock from the pandemic. But despite this, banks will need more capital infusion from the government for business growth and to meet regulatory norms.

The problem has been accentuated with the Reserve Bank of India now writing to bank to meet their obligation towards interest on interest for all borrowers where exposure is over ₹2 crore as well. This will put additional burden of close to ₹7,500 crore on banks.

Moreover, the SEBI, though has amended the valuation rule of perpetual bonds in line with objections raised by the finance ministry, it still has said that from April 2023 onwards, the residual maturity of AT-1 bonds will become 100 years from the date of issuance of the bond.

## CG POWER CASE

### SAT ASKS SEBI TO PASS FINAL ORDER IN SIX MONTHS

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 10:** The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has asked markets regulator Sebi to pass final order in six months in a case related to CG Power and Industrial Solutions, wherein the company's ex-chairman Gautam Thapar and three other former officials were banned from the securities market.

Besides Thapar, the other officials banned were CG Power former chief financial officer V R Venkatesh and former directors Madhav Acharya and B Hariharan.

The SAT ruling comes after Thapar, Hariharan and others moved to the tribunal against a Sebi confirmatory order passed in March 2020, whereby it had barred Thapar, Venkatesh, Acharya and Hariharan "from buying, selling or otherwise dealing in securities in any manner whatsoever, either directly or indirectly, till further orders".



However, they were allowed to liquidate up to 25 per cent of the value of the securities held by them.

The confirmatory order followed an interim order passed by Sebi in September 2019, which had restrained the officials from the capital markets for "serious" mis-statement of accounts as well as diversion of funds. Besides, it had ordered forensic audit of the company.

Noting that the restraint order is continuing since September 2019, SAT said it cannot be allowed to continue forever.

"Sufficient time is already passed, for the respondent to analyse the forensic report.

# TPCODL INAUGURATES 5TH CUSTOMER CARE CENTRE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 10:** Tata Power Central Odisha Distribution Ltd (TPCODL) recently inaugurated a new Customer Care Centre (CCC) at Nayagarh. With this recent addition, the number of TPCODL CCC chains, now stand at five Customer Care Centres (CCC) in Odisha.

The CCC was inaugurated by Poma Tudu, Collector and District Magistrate, Nayagarh District in the presence of TPCODL's Senior Management and employees.

It will be entirely managed by a team of officials who are trained

to handle a gamut of customer service offerings such as new power supply applications, monthly bill payments, addressing to customers' queries and concerns along with other customer related services at the centre thereby, strengthening their participation in offering excellent services.

Besides this, in order to provide better customer experience, the CCC is fully equipped with a Queue Management System for efficient management of customer footfall at the centre, a Self Help Kiosk as well as a Feedback Tabto capture customer's feedback on the services rendered at the centre.

## PNB Balasore circle donates water cooler

**Balasore:** On the eve of Chaitra Parva, Punjab National Bank, Balasore circle donated auto purified water cooler inside the temple premises of Maa TARINI at Ghatagaon for the devotees. The water cooler was inaugurated by Madhumita Das, first lady of Balasore pnb in presence of ch umakanta das, executive of temple trust, president temple trust and other PNB parivar members. This programme is under PNB's CSR initiative programmes.



## AMID GLOOM

# IPL to accelerate off-take of in-house consumables

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 10:** The mega sporting event 'IPL 2021' is expected to give an added support to the in-house consumable, advertisement as well as e-commerce segment this season. The BCCI-backed IPL draws its financial muscle from millions of fans and followers along with franchises who invest handsomely on players and branding.

It is counted as one of the most watched sporting events in the world. The IPL 2021 just got started April 9 and will be culminate May 30, with the final scheduled to be played in Ahmedabad.

Not surprisingly, mobile handset maker VIVO returned after a gap of one year to replace Dream11 as the title sponsor for IPL 14.

The company had signed a deal worth ₹2,199 crore with BCCI for IPL's title sponsorship.

Besides, this time around, the resurgence of Covid-19 infections, night curfews and localised lockdowns will add more significance to the sporting event for its fans



and business opportunities for the select segments.

Notably, Technopak Advisors' Chairman Arvind Singhal said the viewership of the IPL is expected to be much higher this year which will benefit franchisees and advertisers.

"Because of penetration of smartphones, high-speed internet, that has

dramatically improved since the last IPL was held, we will see much better traction from the viewers," he said, adding that,

The BCCI-backed IPL draws its financial muscle from millions of fans and followers along with franchises who invest handsomely on players and branding

Besides, this time around, the resurgence of Covid-19 infections, night curfews and localised lockdowns will add more significance to the sporting event for its fans and business opportunities for the select segments

It will add to the revenue of BCCI and the franchisees. In terms of increase in consumer demand, he said that as food delivery demand has always been high during IPL, the uptick this time would be healthy as

people would not be able to watch matches sitting at bars and restaurants.

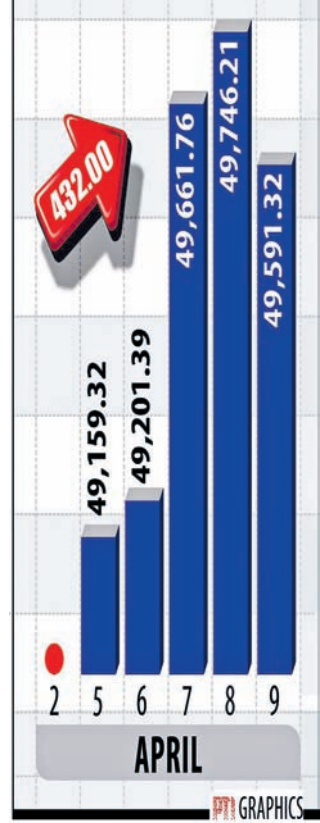
Talking of the restrictions and the night curfews across cities and states, Singhal said: "All the restrictions put together are indirectly going to benefit IPL."

According to Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer at Acuity Ratings and Research: "While the resurgence of Covid cases has increased the risks of disruption to IPL 2021, online viewership is likely to remain high and may continue to benefit the online food delivery platforms which have been permitted to make deliveries despite containment measures taken in some states.

Additionally, India and RCB Captain Virat Kohli expects a healthy IPL viewership this season due to the teams playing at neutral venues which will make the tournament more competitive like last year, when it was played in the UAE.

The IPL 2020 was the most watched sporting event last year in India.

## SENSEX in a Week





# Capitals mauled CSK

APPRENTICE'S SIDE BEAT MASTER'S TEAM AS PANT-LED DELHI OUTPLAY DHONI & CO COURTESY SHAW-DHAWAN MASTERCLASS

**MAKING A STATEMENT:** Shikhar Dhawan (L) gives Prithvi Shaw a fist-bump during their match-winning partnership against CSK in Mumbai, Saturday



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 10:** The apprentice came on top against his master's team as Rishabh Pant-led Delhi Capitals overpowered MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings in their Indian Premier League encounter here, Saturday.

And it was all thanks to the starts provided by their bowlers and opening batsmen. The new-ball bowlers - Chris Woakes and Avesh Khan - reduced CSK to 7/2 in 2.1 overs before a quality batting helped the three-time champions post 188/7.

However, DC openers - Prithvi Shaw (72, 38x4, 3x6) and Shikhar Dhawan (85, 54b, 10x4, 2x6) - put together 138 runs in just 13.2 overs before the departure of Shaw. That set the platform for a comprehensive victory, despite losing Dhawan and Marcus Stoinis (14). Pant (15 n

o) finished the game with a boundary having eight balls in hand.

Earlier, Suresh Raina announced his IPL comeback with a blazing 36-ball 54 (3x4, 4x6) and powered CSK to a solid 188/7. Sam Curran smashed away to 34 off only 15 balls (4x4, 2x6) to prop up the CSK innings towards the end. The last five overs yielded 52 runs for CSK, thanks to Curran's power-packed innings.

Asked to bat first by Pant, Ruturaj Gaikwad got CSK off the mark with a pleasing drive through the off side between point and cover; two deliveries after being beaten all ends up by a Woakes outswinger.

Last season's runners-up DC didn't have to wait long for their first breakthrough as Avesh (2/23 in 4 overs) had Faf du Plessis trapped in front of the wicket in the second over.

In the first ball of the third over, Woakes had Gaikwad caught in the

slip cordon as CSK slipped to seven for two. The English pacer drew Gaikwad into a push with a ball that moved a slightly on pitching.

In came Raina - he had missed the last IPL owing to personal reasons - and in the company of Moeen Ali, the seasoned campaigner revived CSK's innings and looked to put up a challenging total against a strong DC batting line-up at the Wankhede Stadium. During his 24-ball 36, Moeen struck four boundaries and two sixes, playing a fine helping hand to Raina.

Experienced off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin (1/47) cut short Moeen's innings when the all-rounder got himself into an uncomfortable position while going for a reverse sweep, the ensuing top-edge ending in a good catch by Shikhar Dhawan, who ran backwards from short third man to hold on to the ball.

Using his feet well, the veteran southpaw hooked leg-spinner Amit Mishra for two and also got a maximum against Ashwin.

It was no different with Stoinis as Raina pulled the Australian medium pacer for another six before being run-out following a mix-up with Ravindra Jadeja (26).

## Ishant injured again

**MUMBAI:** Senior India pacer Ishant Sharma, who had recently recovered from the injury he suffered in last year's IPL to return to India team and play his 100th Test over a month back, suffered an injury again to miss Delhi Capitals' (DC) first match of the IPL 2021 season. News came out of DC camp ahead of Saturday's game suggested that the lanky fast bowler is carrying a niggle and was forced to sit out. Ishant sustained a left internal oblique muscle tear in October, 2020, during the IPL. He also missed India's tour of Australia before returning for the home Test series against England.

Ambati Rayudu came in and straightaway got into the act, hitting a couple of sixes and a four to race away to 23 off 16 balls before Tom Curran ended his stay in the middle.

Meanwhile Raina went about his task in a manner that did not give the impression that he was coming back to top-flight after a long hiatus.

Raina got himself going with a four off Woakes and then worked Ashwin for two successive boundaries, not afraid to dance down the wicket against the wily spinner's flight.

Using his feet well, the veteran southpaw hooked leg-spinner Amit Mishra for two and also got a maximum against Ashwin.

It was no different with Stoinis as Raina pulled the Australian medium pacer for another six before being run-out following a mix-up with Ravindra Jadeja (26).

### BRIEF SCORES

**Chennai Super Kings 188/7** (Suresh Raina 54, Moeen Ali 36, Sam Curran 34, Ravindra Jadeja 26 n o; Chris Woakes 2/18, Avesh Khan 2/23)  
**lost to Delhi Capitals 190/3** (Shikhar Dhawan 85, Prithvi Shaw 72, Shardul Thakur 2/53) by 7 wickets.



### THE SQUADS

#### KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS

Eoin Morgan (C), Dinesh Karthik, Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert, Rinku Singh, Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Kuldeep Yadav, Shivam Mavi, Lockie Ferguson, Pat Cummins, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Rahul Tripathi, Varun Chakravarty, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Harbhajan Singh, Karun Nair, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer and Pawan Negi.

#### SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

David Warner (C), Kane Williamson, Virat Singh, Manish Pandey, Priyam Garg, Wriddhiman Saha, Jonny Bairstow, Jason Roy, Sreevats Goswami, Vijay Shankar, Mohammad Nabi, Kedar Jadhav, J Suckit, Jason Holder, Abhishek Sharma, Abdul Samad, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Rashid Khan, T Natarajan, Sandeep Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed, Siddharth Kaul, Basil Thampi, Shahbaz Nadeem and Mujeeb ur Rahman.



# KNIGHT RIDERS FACE SUNRISERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, April 10:** Former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to strike a perfect balance under the astute leadership of Eoin Morgan when they open their IPL campaign against a consistent Sunrisers Hyderabad here Sunday.

One of the best in business in the white-ball format, Morgan took charge of an ordinary-looking KKR under Dinesh Karthik midway into the last season held in the UAE.

Running against time, Morgan-led side finished on same points with SRH and RCB but the two teams advanced on better run-rate as KKR missed the playoffs for the second time in succession.

In his first stint as full time captain, all eyes would be on the ODI World Cup-winning English skipper who will look to transform the misfiring army of cricketers and bring back the glorious days of two-time IPL champions.

In Shubman Gill, they have a fantastic young top-order batsman who can easily shift gears, while the likes of Rahul Tripathi, Nitish Rana and veteran Karthik, who's free from the captaincy burden, can form the core of their Indian batting.

Then there is the skipper Morgan who will look to bat through the overs while hoping that 2019 MVP Andre Russell gets back his explosive touch after a quiet season.

**TODAY'S MATCH**  
KKR vs SRH  
TIME 7.30 PM  
Telecast: Star Sports channels

Russell had the worst season by his standards averaging 13 in nine innings without a single match-winning performance as the over-dependency on the Jamaican cost KKR dear last season.

Another West Indian who flopped big time in the UAE was Sunil Narine. Whether it was his suspect bowling action or his failing against the short ball, Narine, who was instrumental in their twin triumphs in 2012 and 2014, looked a pale shadow of his past. It's time that they think beyond the Trinidadian and try out Shikib Al Hasan, their buy in this year's auction.

On the slow Chepauk strip, all eyes would be on the new 'Knight' and 40-year-old Harbhajan Singh, who will aim to make maximum impact in what could be his last IPL.

They also have a mystery spinner in Varun Chakravarty who struck it rich in absence of Narine last year but his fitness remains a concern.

One of the more consistent sides

of IPL, Sunrisers Hyderabad lost before the final hurdle, going down to runners-up Delhi Capitals in the Qualifier 2 last year.

SRH will be bolstered by the return of senior India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar who played just four games in last year's IPL in the UAE due to a hip injury.

Fresh from his fine form during the white-ball leg of the England series at home, Bhuvneshwar will spearhead their attack with yorker specialist T Natarajan by his side.

Add Afghan star spinner Rashid Khan to the bowling lineup and the 'Orange Army' looks pretty balanced in their attack.

But the real strength of SRH will be their destructive top-order with the duo of David Warner and in-form Jonny Bairstow. They also have Kane Williamson and Manish Pandey, forming a solid top four.

Wriddhiman Saha also opened for SRH last year as the wicketkeeper-batsman and will look to prove a point after being sidelined because of Rishabh Pant's heroics in the national team.

But remains to be seen who will play the role of the finisher for the SRH as they seem to lack muscle power teams badly need in the last five overs.

KKR have a slight edge head-to-head as the Purple Brigade lead 12-7 against the Orange Army and last year they won both their matches against them.

# Knew my role for RCB: Patel



Harshal Patel exults after taking the five-wicket haul against Mumbai Indians, Friday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, April 10:** Harshal Patel was told well in advance that he will be death overs "pointsman" for Royal Challengers Bangalore, a role he played to perfection in the IPL opener against Mumbai Indians.

Harshal's career-best 5/27 was one of the two match-winning performances for RCB with the other coming from AB de Villiers.

"When I was traded from Delhi Capitals, I was told what role I will play for the franchise," the Haryana pacer said at the post-match press conference Friday.

He was brilliant at the death and just like skipper Virat Kohli said, Harshal also knew that he is expected to perform the tough job for which he had planned meticulously.

"There were clear instructions that I will be bowling in the last two overs (he bowled 18th and 20th). That gave me a lot of clarity. It helped me prepare certain plans against batters and kept my preparations concise."

Harshal said that change of pace and the slow yorkers have been his biggest strength. "The ball started

reversing at one stage. It was important to bowl the Yorkers and slower balls," he said.

According to Harshal, he has been bowling those slower yorkers that got rid of Ishan Kishan and Marco Jansen, for almost two seasons now. "Just that when you don't get wickets of slow yorkers, people don't tend to see that. I always had the yorker but earlier couldn't take it into the game."

He did a lot of simulation of bowling yorkers during training session to get it right during the match. "In the past 15-20 days, I was trying to put myself into situations."

Having played a lot of IPL cricket, he understands how situation can turn from good to bad. "You always want to start well. I am in my 10th season and I know that how a season can quickly go from good to bad."

Meanwhile, Mumbai Indians opener Chris Lynn feels that his team perhaps missed a trick by not having a sixth bowling option against RCB. "We missed a sixth bowler," said Lynn, who was the top scorer in the game

with 49 off 35 balls.

When asked why Hardik Pandya was not bowling, Lynn indicated that the all-rounder might be carrying a shoulder niggle apart from his workload management.

"I exactly don't know perhaps he is carrying a shoulder niggle. Obviously when he bowls, he brings in a different dimension to our side. But I think it was more of a precautionary measure," the Queenslander said.

A mix-up with Rohit Sharma led to the skipper's run-out and Lynn admittedly was a bit "nervous" after that. "These are part of the game. Yes, I was a bit of nervous," he laughed.

MI couldn't practice a couple of days after their wicketkeeping consultant Kiran More tested positive for COVID-19. "Yes, it's a tricky situation if a tall fast bowler is confined in his room for two days. But we can't give that as an excuse," Lynn said.

## ROHIT BATS FOR CONSERVATION OF INDIAN RHINOS



**CHENNAI:** Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma wore shoes highlighting the "Great One-Horned Rhinoceros" during the IPL opener against RCB to help build awareness for the need to conserve the endangered species. This IPL Rohit has taken a unique approach to speak about up a cause that he has long supported - the conservation of the Great One-Horned Rhinoceros or the Indian Rhino. The swashbuckling batsman sported a unique design of his IPL cricket shoes which showcased the endangered species on them. The Indian rhinoceros faces several threats, including poaching, habitat loss and mass mortality from inbreeding and disease.

# Kiren Rijiju inaugurates rowing centre in Srinagar



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, April 10:** Union sports minister Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the Khelo India Centre of Excellence in Rowing in Srinagar, Saturday.

The training centre, situated in Dal Lake, that comes under the Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council was upgraded with modern facilities and equipment including 16 new boats - four each in single sculls and double sculls.

Four coxless four boats too have been purchased for the centre that has 50 regular athletes under the scheme. "The region has huge po-

tential. The training centre will give a chance to youngsters of the region to excel through water sports," said the sports minister.

"The new set of equipment will give a further boost to water sports activities in the region," said a national level coach from Kashmir valley.

Earlier this year, the sports ministry had organised Khelo India Winter Games in Gulmarg in the Kashmir valley. "The sports ministry also plans to start a Khelo India Women's Football League and a marathon race in Pahalgam," the minister added.

The ministry will initially provide a one-time grant of Rs 145.16 lakh to the rowing centre and an annual recurring grant of Rs 96.17 lakh for the development of water sports in the region.

The central government had upgraded facilities for fencing at the Maulana Azad Stadium in Jammu. There are currently 24 Khelo India training centres across the country.

# 10-man Leeds stun Man City 2-1 in PL



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Manchester, April 10:** Manchester City conceded in second-half stoppage time to lose 1-2 to 10-man Leeds Saturday, halting its march to the Premier League title.

Stuart Dallas, who had put Leeds in front in the first half at the Etihad Stadium, strode through the middle on a rare foray forward by the visitors in the second half and

placed a low finish past goalkeeper Ederson to inflict only a fourth loss of the campaign on the runaway leaders.

Leeds had center back Liam Cooper sent off for a reckless lunge on Gabriel Jesus in first-half injury time and City dominated after the break, with their only reward coming when Ferran Torres equalized in the 76th. City are 14 points clear of second-place Manchester United.

# Anshu, Sonam qualify for 2022 Tokyo Games

AGENCIES

**Almaty (Kazakhstan), Apr 10:** India's young wrestlers Anshu Malik and Sonam Malik produced impressive performances in the Asian Olympic Qualifiers here Saturday to qualify for the Tokyo Games.

Anshu, 19, and Sonam, 18, making a steady transition from the junior to the senior circuit, joined senior pro Vinesh Phogat (53kg) in

### DOORS SHUT FOR SAKSHI

making the Olympics cut. India now have three women wrestlers, who will now fight for glory at the Summer Games. Vinesh had qualified through the 2019 World Championship.

Overall, India now have seven wrestlers who have qualified for the upcoming Games. Among men, Bajrang Punia (65kg), Ravi Dahiya (57kg) and Deepak Punia (86kg) have qualified in the men's free



Anshu Malik



Sonam Malik

style event.

While Anshu was dominant in 57kg competition, Sonam's resilience eventually helped her secure the quota and shut the door on Rio Olympic medallist Sakshi Malik. Sonam announced her arrival by defeating Sakshi four times in recent trials, making the 62kg category her own.

Such was Anshu's dominance

that she conceded only two points en route the final, winning all her three bouts by technical superiority. She began by beating Korean Jieun Um, then outsmarted Kazak wrestler Emma Tissina and in the semifinal she beat Uzbekistan's Shokhida Akhmedova.

Sonam edged China's Jia Long 5-2 before winning by technical superiority against Hsin Ping Pai of

Taipei. In the semifinal, she trailed 0-6 against Kazakhstan's Ayaulym Kassymova but reeled of nine points in a row to secure herself the quota.

"She has shown that she is ready for the senior circuit. Look what she has done. People had said that she is still at the cadet level but the consistent victories against Sakshi has boosted her confidence," Sonam's personal coach Ajmer Malik told this agency.

"She does not lose confidence or hope now even after conceding points. We are proud of her," Ajmer, who runs Netaji Subash Chander Sports Institute at Village Madina in Sonapat district, said.

Seema Bisla lost all her three bouts to go out of race in 50kg while Nisha came close to securing quota in 68kg but threw away a 3-1 lead to lose the semifinal by technical superiority against Kyrgyzstan's Meerim Zhumanazarova. Meerim outsmarted the Indian with her 'fitley' (leg lace) attack.





# Birthday! for all

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offers valid from 11<sup>th</sup> April - 17<sup>th</sup> April



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