



## CRYPTIC SAMANTHA

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu leaves fans guessing as she shared a couple of cryptic tweets

LEISURE P2



## MOSCOW'S NEXT TARGET

A Russian general says that Moscow wants to seize all of southern and eastern Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL P10



## AUBAMEYANG LIFTS BARCA

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's first-half header helps Barcelona secure a hard-fought win over Real Sociedad

SPORTS P12



## Hijab girls turned away from exam centre

**Bangalore:** Two Muslim students Resham and Alia whose petition challenging the government order banning Hijab was dismissed by the High Court returned home from the exam centre in Udipi after they were denied entry for insisting to write the exam. The authorities cited last month's High Court verdict upholding the government order, which banned any cloth that could disturb peace, harmony and public order. The second-year pre-university examinations started in Karnataka Friday amid tight security and in the shadow of the hijab row. As there is a ban on hijab or any cloth linked to religious identity, the authorities made arrangements at exam centres for the Muslim girls to remove their head scarves before entering the exam halls. Muslim girls who turned up at the examination centre wearing hijab said they will remove it inside the separate enclosure and will wear it again after the exam is over.



## Govt may cut LIC IPO size by half

**New Delhi:** New Delhi is halving its fundraising goal for Life Insurance Corporation of India's IPO to 300 billion rupees (\$3.9 billion), having had to cut its valuation estimates after feedback from investors, a government source said. The drastic lowering of ambitions for the IPO - which would still be India's largest to date - is a setback for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration which had positioned the sale as the first and biggest of a wave of privatisations aimed at replenishing state coffers. The state-owned insurance behemoth, also India's largest domestic financial investor, is now valued at around 6 trillion rupees, according to the source, who declined to be identified as the IPO discussions were confidential. Earlier government estimates had called for the insurer to be valued at around 17 trillion rupees.

**JSW Cement**  
The Leaders' Choice  
1800 266 266 1 (toll free)

## 2 killed, 1 critical in clash during fest in Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jeypore, April 22:** In a horrific incident, two youths were beaten to death while another suffered grievous injuries following a clash during 'Chaitra Parba' celebrations at Sindhpar village under Damanjodi police limits in Koraput district early Friday morning. The deceased were identified as Purna Chandra Nayak and Debendra Kumar Jani and the injured as Somnath Dami, all from Jhadiguda village. According to sources, a few youths from Jhadiguda village had been to Sindhpar to witness a cultural programme organised Thursday night as part of the festival. For reasons yet to be known, youths of the two villages engaged in an altercation during the programme. Things took an ugly turn when the youths from Sindhpar attacked the other group with sharp-edged weapons.



According to an eyewitness, Purna and Debendra suffered grievous injuries and were rushed to a nearby government-run health facility. Later, they were shifted to the district headquarters hospital (DHH) in Koraput. However, the two succumbed to injuries while undergoing treatment. Meanwhile, another injured Somnath has been shifted to a hospital in Visakhapatnam. Palpable tension still prevails in Sindhpar with two platoons of police being deployed in the village.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, not an electric two-wheeler. It's my petrol scooter and I only set it on fire!

## ANTI-INSURGENCY OPERATION



Security personnel at the site of encounter between security forces and militants at Sunjawan in Jammu district, Friday. Two terrorists and a jawan were killed in the gunfight

## SUICIDE ATTACK FOILED

## 2 terrorists, cop killed ahead of PM's J&K visit

An alert has been sounded along the border and a high degree of vigilance is being maintained at vital installations in the UT

AGENCIES

**Jammu, April 22:** An attempt by banned terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) to carry out a suicide attack ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit was foiled after two suspected Pakistani terrorists were killed here in an encounter Friday in which a CISF officer also died, officials said. Nine security personnel were injured in the pre-dawn gunfight near an Army camp in Sunjawan area on the outskirts of Jammu. DGP Dilbag Singh, who visited

the encounter site, said the two terrorists were part of a suicide squad of Pakistan-based JeM and their infiltration could be a 'big conspiracy' to sabotage the PM's visit to J&K Sunday. According to initial investigation, the two terrorists entered the outskirts of Jammu city Thursday after infiltrating from the international border in RS Pura sector and were staying in a locality close to the Sunjawan Army camp. "Last night, police and other forces were involved in an operation which culminated... As per reports, the two terrorists were part of JeM's suicide squad, launched from Pakistan and tasked with targeting a camp of the security forces or engaging... To inflict a lot of casualties," the DGP told reporters near the scene of the encounter. **PAGE 9**

## Medico falls to death; family alleges ragging

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, April 22:** In a shocking incident, a first year medical student of the Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital died after falling off the roof of the 5-storied hostel here in Bolangir district, Friday.

The student has been identified as Nishant Kumar, 19, from Karnal in Haryana. He was a first year MBBS student. Kumar had taken admission in the medical college and had joined the hostel 10 days back. He was residing alone in Room-312 in the New Boys' Hostel of the institution.

While no exact cause for Kumar's death has been ascertained yet, rumours of him committing suicide by jumping off the building due to ragging has been doing the rounds. However, the police are yet to ascertain whether Kumar fell off the terrace or committed suicide due to ragging. Bolangir police have registered a case and began



The hostel building of the medical college; (R) deceased Nishant Kumar

a probe. Kumar's parents, who are yet to reach Bolangir, have levelled serious allegations of ragging. As there is a 4-ft high barricade in the terrace, it is not believable that he might have fallen accidentally.

According to sources, after having his lunch, Kumar had gone to the roof of the hostel. However, it is not clear what happened on the

roof and how he fell. He was immediately rescued from a pool of blood and rushed to the Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead upon arrival.

On the other hand, Sabita Mohapatra, the Dean of the Medical College, has refuted the allegations of ragging.

## NHRC notice to state over Dalit's humiliation

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Friday sought from the Odisha government a report of an incident in which a Dalit man in Kendrapara district was allegedly forced to rub nose in his own spit.

The man, a resident of Tikhiri village, around 90km northeast of Bhubaneswar, was allegedly made to go through the ordeal by the sarpanch, who had visited his home last Sunday to seek donation for a temple.

A complaint was filed by his wife at Marsaghai police station, alleging that the sarpanch abused them when they said that a certain amount had already been donated for the cause.

She claimed that her husband was made to rub his nose in his own spit as locals looked on.

Taking suo motu cognisance of a media report on the incident, the NHRC, in a statement, observed that the issue was of a very "serious nature" as the right to dignity of the victim had been



grossly violated.

A notice has been sent to the Chief Secretary in the wake of the incident recorded in Marsaghai police station area and a report sought within six weeks on the status of investigation into the case, the commission said.

The NHRC also directed that statutory relief be paid to the Dalit man.

PK Karungo, the Marsaghai police station inspector, said a case had been lodged under various sections of the IPC, and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

An investigation is underway but no arrest had been made yet, the officer added.

## 2 workers suffocate to death in illegal gemstone mine

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Titilagarh, April 22:** Two workers died of suffocation and two others were in a critical condition while working in an illegal gemstone mine inside a reserve forest near Kutraken under Titilagarh police limits in Bolangir district Friday.

The deceased were identified as Nabin Jani, son of Kakil Jani of Gulami and Ujjwal Bhoi, son of Dasrathi Bhoi of Nuapada under Muribahal block.

The injured duo Chinta Bag and Rajkishore Pradhan are currently under treatment at the Titilagarh government hospital.

Magistrate in-charge Premlal Hial, Titilagarh Additional SP Surendranath Satpathy, and Titilagarh IIC Ranjan Bariha reached the spot and launched a probe. The bodies were seized and sent for autopsy.

A man from Gulami has been illegally operating the mine and had engaged the workers for the last three years, family members alleged while lodging a police complaint. Many people have lost their lives while working in the illegal mine yet the administration is not taking any step, locals alleged.

## SC raps Delhi Police over hate speech affidavit

Posing searching questions, the court also directed the police to file a 'better affidavit'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 22:** The Supreme Court Friday expressed its displeasure over a Delhi Police affidavit which said "no hate speech was made" during an event held here by a right-wing outfit, and wondered whether the officer who filed the document had applied his mind or merely reproduced the inquiry report.

Posing searching questions, the court also directed the police to file a "better affidavit" after which Additional Solicitor General (ASG) KM Nataraj, appearing for the Delhi Police, said they will have a "re-look" of the matter and file a fresh affidavit.

The Delhi Police had told the top court that "no specific words against



any community were uttered" at the event organised by the 'Hindu Yuva Vahini' December 19 last.

"The affidavit has been filed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police. We hope he has understood the nuances. Has he merely reproduced the inquiry report or applied his mind? Is it your stand as well or the reproduction of inquiry report of sub-inspector level officer?" a bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Abhay S Oka asked.

The bench questioned can such a

stand be taken on an affidavit before the court and wanted to know who verified the affidavit and if Delhi Police was accepting it as a correct finding. "The ASG seeks time to get instructions from authorities to file a better affidavit... Two weeks time prayed for: List this matter on May 9. Better affidavit be filed on or before May 4," it said.

The top court was hearing a petition filed by journalist Qurban Ali and former Patna High Court judge and senior advocate Anjana Prakash, who has also sought a direction for

an 'independent, credible and impartial investigation' by an SIT into incidents of hate speeches against the Muslim community.

As the hearing commenced, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioners, drew the attention of the bench towards extracts of the speech and the enquiry report of the Sub Inspector (PS Okhla Industrial Area). "In the speech in question, they say, 'We are ready to kill! And the Delhi Police says it is to 'save the ethics of the community?' Your Lordships may fix it for hearing and decide what constitutionally the ethics are..." Sibal said. The court then asked the ASG if any senior officer has verified the affidavit.

"Some superior officer has seen it? Who has verified it? Has there been an application of mind as to if this stand can be taken on affidavit before the court? This affidavit is filed by the deputy commissioner of police? He accepts this position?"

MARKET WATCH	
INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	57197.15 ↓ 714.53
NIFTY	17172.00 ↓ 220.60
DOLLAR	76.71 ↑ ₹0.24
EURO	82.74 ↓ ₹0.22
GOLD	₹52,294 ↓ ₹119
SILVER	₹66,524 ↓ ₹601

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 40.8°C	38.8°C
	MIN 27.0°C	26.5°C
Humidity	74%	75%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
		Forecast: Partly Cloudy Sky

**Amul**  
The Taste of India  
**FRUIT 'N' NUT FANTASY**  
₹35\* / 125 ml  
Amul ICE CREAM

# leisure



## IDRIS ELBA TO STAR IN, PRODUCE HIJACK

Hollywood star Idris Elba is set to star in and executive produce thriller series *Hijack* for Apple TV+. The seven-part drama will be the debut project to emerge from Elba's first-look deal with Apple. His production company Green Door Pictures signed a deal with the streamer in 2020, reports *Variety*.

## MADONNA TO SELL HER LA MANSION FOR 26MN

Madonna is selling her Hidden Hills mansion in Los Angeles for \$26 million. *The Material Girl* hitmaker has put her property on the market after purchasing it from The Weeknd in April 2021 for \$19.1 million.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

#### ARIES

Today is just another busy day. You may remain hassled sorting out problems at office and then at home. Your bosses may allow you certain concessions and this will ease things to some extent. Ganesh says you will gain valuable guidance from elderly people.

#### TAURUS

Today might be a day of untying and getting out of the tangles, says Ganesh. You may take the blame for the actions of another. Things may get frustrating around the afternoon and your confidence levels may stoop. Work on your strength and work out your weaknesses, advises Ganesh.

#### GEMINI

You need to guard against hurting anyone's feelings because of your ill-temper or harsh language. You need to help others in their troubles. You ought to reflect on the toll that the troubles that have visited you have taken on you, and accordingly empathise with others, says Ganesh.

#### CANCER

Intimate friends will be impressed with your attitude. You will try to make them happy and spend a happy evening with them. Affection and cordial ties will linger for long and prove fruitful.

#### LEO

Your mind will be filled with conflicting emotions, says Ganesh. You will feel extreme happiness one moment, and then will be depressed the next. You need to guard against mood swings and find a balance to achieve success in your work today. Financial gains are indicated.

#### VIRGO

The remarkable manner in which you function at work will earn for you a lot of accolades and supporters. Your seniors will appreciate your dedication to work. There will be fun and entertainment in the evening. Ganesh says you can look forward to relaxing with some soft music.

#### LIBRA

Ganesh says governmental work will be beneficial today. Those of you who are officials in the government will be having a positive and good day ahead. Your family members will show their support for you and this is something that you will need from them. Children will progress in life. This is a good time to take important decisions.

#### SCORPIO

The stars are aligned in a way that they produce a constructively favourable day for you today, predicts Ganesh. You know the importance of a team and treat everyone - seniors & juniors as equals. This will make the work environment harmonious.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Your imagination knows no boundaries. Your kind heart is ready to forget and forgive the evil. As Ganesh puts it, this attitude will take you a long way! Charity and donation, too are on your mind today. You enjoy a benevolent time today.

#### CAPRICORN

Aren't you tired of doing the same thing again and again? Ganesh advises you to come out of your shell and breathe in some fresh air. Moving to a bigger and better house is on the cards for you, foretells Ganesh. It will take a major chunk out of your savings, but you are not complaining.

#### AQUARIUS

A romantic liaison is headed towards you. Quite naturally, you don't want to be caught dead in a ratty old tee. Today, you want to keep everyone happy and amused, both at home and at work. And you manage wonderfully, says Ganesh.

#### PISCES

You will have no idea how time flies by today, while you struggle to complete an unceasing flow of tasks. You might end up missing out on the smaller details owing to your work load. Hence you need to concentrate on your daily routine. The good news is that this is a conducive time to complete all your pending projects, says Ganesh.

## Samantha: Kindness has an expiry date

**Hyderabad:** Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu left her fans guessing as she shared a couple of cryptic tweets, talking about her kindness, calmness and silence. In another tweet, she mentioned that kindness comes with an expiry date.

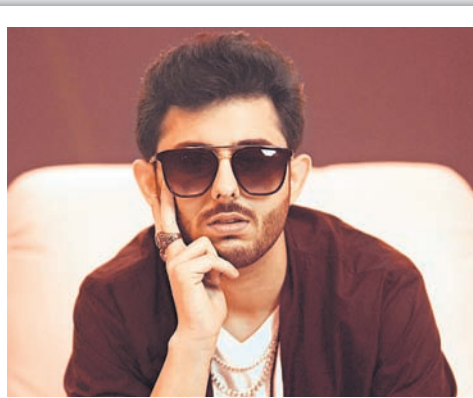
In her latest tweet, Samantha shared a famous quote of spiritual leader Dalai Lama. She wrote, "Don't ever mistake my silence for ignorance, my calmness for acceptance, my kindness for weakness."

She retweeted her tweet and added, "Kindness can have an expiry date. #JustSaying."

Twitter users started guessing the reason behind Samantha's tweet. One fan commented, "Whatsapp forward message max." Another one wrote, "Account hacked," while one said that it was an "indirect warning for someone." One asked,

"Why do people say these things about? Sounds childish to me." One internet user compared Samantha's tweet to filmmaker Ram Gopal Verma's and said, "These day @Samanthaprabhu2 is turning into @RGVzoomin. Not able to understand her tweets at all...from next time #samantha has to mention 'only for intellectuals'." Pointing at her ex-husband Naga Chaitanya, another one asked, "Is this because of Chay?"

Last month, Samantha unfollowed Naga on Instagram and shared a cryptic quote on her Instagram Stories. It read, "Sometimes, the strength within isn't a big fiery flame for all to see. Sometimes, it's just a tiny spark that whispers ever so softly 'keep going, you got this.'"



## CarryMinati coming up with new gaming show

**Mumbai:** Celebrated YouTuber and gaming star CarryMinati along with Triggered Insaan, Mortal and Scout are coming together in the first gaming entertainment show titled *Playground* by Rusk Media.

*Playground* is a unique eSport gaming championship, featuring multiple casual and pro games, between four teams, each owned and mentored by Asia's leading gaming superstars.

Expressing his excitement for *Playground*, CarryMinati said, "With *Playground*, our vision is to garner a more mainstream appeal for gaming in India. There's nothing really available today that combines gaming and entertainment so well for the masses. This show aspires to do that in the long run. *Playground* has all the elements that makes it engaging and powerful - from strategy to mind games to camaraderie to thrills to emotions and much more. The gaming community finally is getting its' own deserving platform and I can't wait for everyone to be a part of it."

Ahead of the launch of *Playground*, the four gaming stars were seen provoking and challenging each other on social media under the digital campaign #GameKyaHai and they have received a positive response to the campaign.

## Rakul Preet on playing a pilot

**Mumbai:** Actress Rakul Preet Singh, who is gearing up for the release of her up-

coming film *Runway 34*, shared her experience on playing a pilot for the first time. She said when stepping into a uniform there is a certain sense of dignity that automatically steps in. Speaking of her role in the film, she says: "It is one of the best scripts I heard in a long time and I jumped to bag this role."

She went through proper training and was always under the guidance of a real pilot to get into the mindset of the character and also showcase proper skills. Learning new things for her film is one of her favourite parts of the job. Talking about her prep for her character, Rakul shares: "My experience playing a pilot was amazing. And when you step into a uniform there is a certain sense of dignity that automatically steps in the way you walk, the way you talk, the way your language is, the way you react is very different from what a girl next door would. This is all that went into preparing for this role."

Produced and directed by Ajay Devgn, *Runway 34* releases April 29. IANS



## Shahid's knockout performance in Jersey

**G**owtam Tinnauri's *Jersey*, a remake of a popular Telugu film by the same name, is about the struggle of Arjun Talwar, a gifted cricketer from Chandigarh, Punjab. It is his journey from being a successful batsman who throws in the towel and how, a demand from his son, who hero-worships him, for the Indian jersey on his birthday, which he is unable to fulfil, makes him bounce into the cricket field, at the age of 36 with grit and determination, and earn one for his son, forms the crux of this narrative.

The film belongs to Shahid Kapoor, who delivers an outstanding performance as the frustrated and helpless Arjun Talwar, who has been written off by everybody. Shahid essays the character with the requisite maturity and

**Cast:** Shahid Kapoor, Mrunal Thakur, Pankaj Kapur, Ronit Kamra,  
**Director:** Gowtam Tinnauri

restraint, exhibiting his emotions with subtlety, suppressing the raging volcano within.

Pankaj Kapur as Arjun's coach, mentor, and well-wisher, who believes in his talent, delivers a realistic portrayal, as does the little Kittu (Ronit Kamra), who is expressive and plays Arjun's son. He is a natural, and the father-son bond is heart-warming.



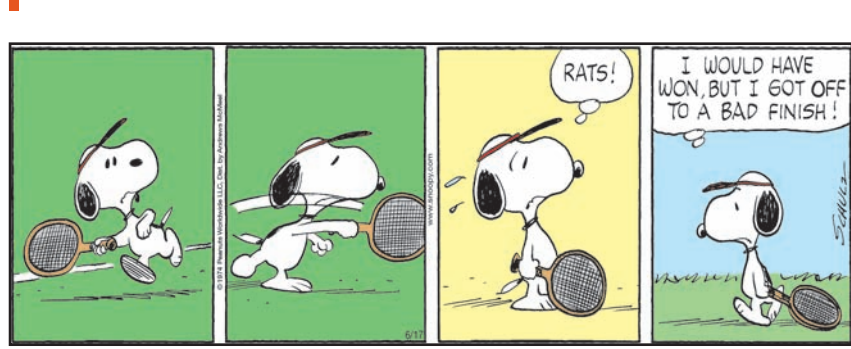
Mrunal Thakur, as his wife Vidya, delivers her part effectively. The music complements the film but does not really stand out

enough, to leave an impact. The film lacks drama, and except for an unexpected twist at the end it lacks the intrigue factor. There are poignant moments aplenty that tug at your heart-strings and make you empathize with Arjun, but high-octane drama and gripping moments, the plot is devoid of, making the graph of the film appear to be meandering on an even keel.

Director Gowtam Tinnanuri extracts natural performances from each actor and handles the subject astutely but lays undue emphasis on the cricket matches. With a runtime of 174 minutes, the narrative tests your patience, but you hold on.

Overall, *Jersey* is a poignant journey that touches your heart, irrespective of whether you are a cricket fan or not. IANS

### PEANUTS



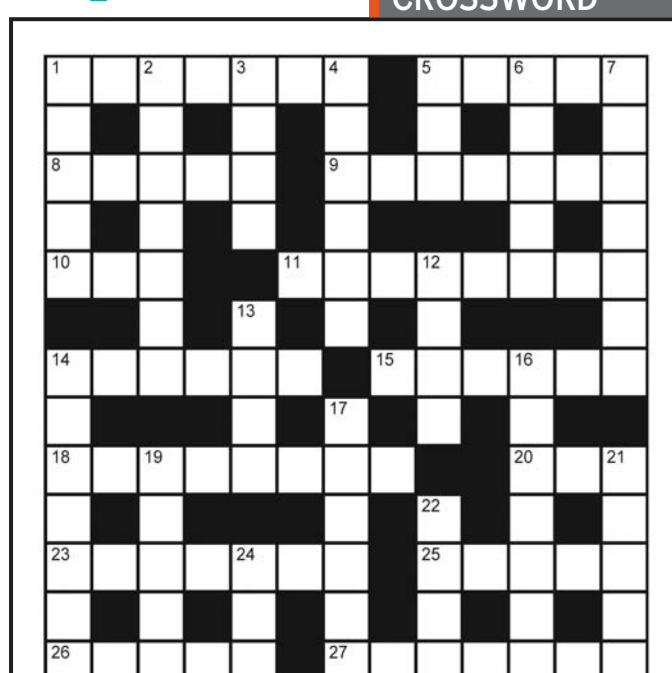
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



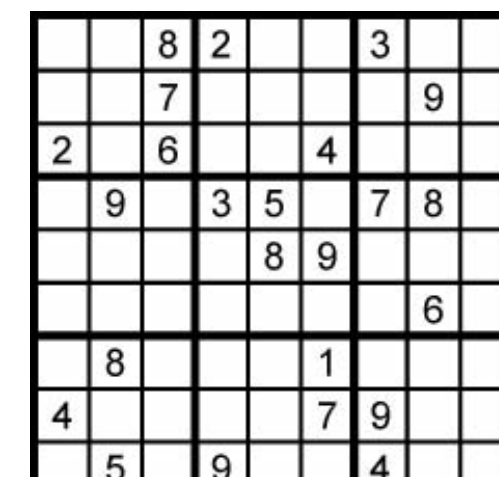
### FUN post CROSSWORD



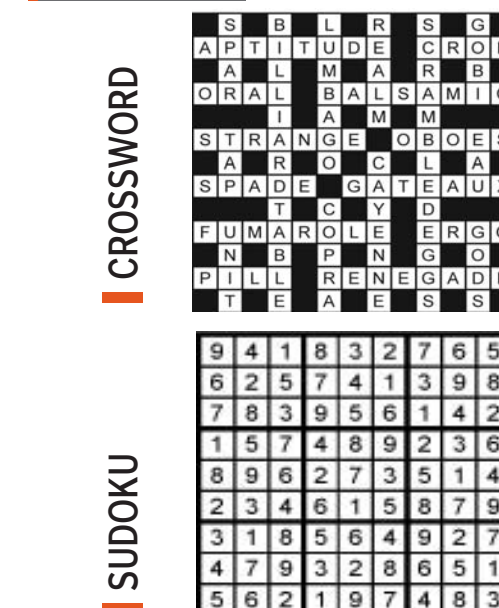
- Copyright ©2022 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Seaport
  - 5 Renaissance fiddle
  - 8 Eskimo boat
  - 9 Pimiento powder
  - 10 Apply gently
  - 11 Gulf of Venice neighbor
  - 14 Persian Gulf kingdom
  - 15 See eye to eye
  - 18 French pastry
  - 20 Captain's journal
  - 23 Contemptible
  - 25 Sufficient
  - 26 Poison ivy result (4-3)
  - 27 Game break
  - 7 *Canterbury Tales* author
  - 12 Links club
  - 13 Coffee grinder
  - 14 Heyerdahl's transport (3,4)
  - 16 Odysseus's detainer
- Down**
- 1 Harrier, e.g.
  - 2 Storm follower, at time
  - 3 Sturdy trees
  - 4 River feature
  - 5 Cemetery inits.
  - 6 Constructed
  - 17 Cloak-and-dagger word
  - 19 Go to pieces
  - 21 Belgian urban centre
  - 22 Raffia, e.g.
  - 24 True laurel

### 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



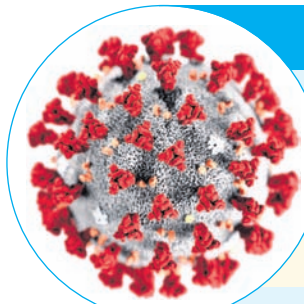
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## SCIENCE EXPO

Students visit a science exhibition organised at Biswambar Bidyapitha in Puri, Friday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	50,80,48,157	46,04,29,649	62,37,310
India	4,30,52,425	4,25,16,068	5,22,116
Odisha	12,87,979	12,78,701	9,124

## PANCHAYATI RAJ MINISTRY'S ANNUAL REPORT

# Borasingi GP praised for child-friendly strategy

A proper health monitoring chart and register are maintained by the Asha and Anganwadi workers about the immunization, height and weight of children in the gram panchayat



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

POST NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi, April 22:** The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj has cited the child-friendly strategy of Borasingi gram panchayat (GP) in Odisha as a case study for all other gram panchayats across the country for implementation of effective measures for child development.

The Borasingi gram panchayat of Ganjam district in Odisha has been felicitated with the 'Child-Friendly Gram Panchayat Award' under National Panchayat Award 2021 (Appraisal Year 2019-2020).

According to the ministry, Borasingi panchayat has implemented a remarkable strategy to ensure effective measures for child development in the locality.

There are two Anganwadi centres in the gram panchayat, both are neat and clean, well equipped with all essential pedagogical equipment for children. They have functional toilets separately for boys and girls. The children are well oriented for hand wash. A correct procedure for hand washing is printed on the wall near the water taps.

The Asha and Anganwadi workers work in coordination and take proper care of the children," said the ministry in its annual report. It was also noted that a proper health monitoring chart and register are maintained by the Asha and Anganwadi workers about the immunization, height and weight of children in the gram panchayat.

**There are two Anganwadi centres in the gram panchayat, both are neat and clean, well equipped with all essential pedagogical equipment for children. They have functional toilets separately for boys and girls. The children are well oriented for hand wash. A correct procedure for hand washing is printed on the wall near the water taps**

UNION MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ

None of the child at Borasingi is stunted or underweight.

"The Asha workers in the panchayat are providing free sanitary napkins to all adolescent girls and maintain proper record regarding the distribution of free napkins. They also distribute vitamin and iron tablets among the girls. The panchayat has a very active village level child protection committee," the report said.

Notably, there are 2.6 lakh panchayats across the country.

# Those sharing fake questions to face music: CS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra Friday asked the superintendents of police (SPs) to take stern action against those sharing fake question papers of Class X and XII board examinations on social media.

Mahapatra gave this direction while reviewing the preparedness for the Class X and XII examinations, scheduled to commence April 29 and April 28 respectively.

The Chief Secretary asked the SPs and district Collectors to extend full support for safe transportation and storage of question papers at nodal and exam centres. The SPs were also asked to depute a senior official for each cluster to supervise the management of the examinations.

Sources said adequate police personnel will be deployed at the nodal centres, where the question papers will be stored under 24-

## CLASS X AND XII EXAMS



Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra reviews the preparedness for Class X and XII examinations, Friday

hour CCTV surveillance. "Efforts will be made to restrict malpractices in the examinations. Stringent action will be taken against those found spreading rumours regarding the examinations," said an official at the meeting.

The Class X examination, conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, Odisha, will commence

April 29 and continue till May 7, while the Class XII examination, conducted by the Council of Higher Secondary Education, Odisha, will start April 28 and conclude May 31.

As many as 5, 85,730 students will appear for the Class X examinations. Out of them, 5,71,909 students will appear for the High School Certificate examination,

The Class X exam will commence April 29 and continue till May 7, while the Class XII test will start April 28 and conclude May 31

Adequate police personnel will be deployed at the nodal centres, where the question papers will be stored under 24-hour CCTV surveillance

4,443 for Madhyama exams and 9,378 for Odisha State Open School examination. Around 3,540 exam centres and 315 nodal centres have been set up for the smooth conduct of the matriculation examination.

On the other hand, 3,21,508 students will appear for the Class XII exams this year. Out of them, 2,13,432 students are from Arts stream, 78,077 from Science stream, 24,136 from Commerce and 5,863 students from vocational studies. The Class XII examinations will be conducted at 1,133 exam centres, sources said.

# Bhubaneswar sees season's hottest day at 40.8° Celsius

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** Western Odisha, scorched by the summer heat for the last few days, got its much needed respite as it received rain during the past 24 hours in some places which caused the mercury to drop by a few notches in the area Friday.

At 40.8 degree Celsius, Capital city Bhubaneswar, on the other hand, recorded the highest temperature of the season during the day the met office said. It has forecast thunderstorms with gusty winds of 30-40 kmph in many districts of the state over the next 24 hours due to strong southwesterly winds from Bay of Bengal to the northeastern states.

The maximum will fall by two to four degrees over the next 24 hours at many places in interior Odisha. But it will subsequently rise by three to five degrees across the state from Sunday, a bulletin of the weather office said. It said Tensa town in Sundargarh district received 50.4 mm of rain till 8.30 am. There were hailstorms in some areas of western Odisha during the period. The picture in the coastal area was a contrast.

The maximum temperature shot up to 37.8 degree Celsius at Gopalpur in Ganjam district. This was six notches above normal, it said.

Bhubaneswar settled three degrees above normal at 40.8 degree Celsius and neighbouring Cuttack was 38.8 degrees, it said.

Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district and Boudh was 41 degrees each, the weather office said.

# NHRC summons Keonjhar DM, SP over minor's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** Expressing displeasure over the dilly-dallying approach of Keonjhar district Collector and Superintendent of Police (SP) in submitting reports regarding the payment of compensation to the next of kin of a minor girl found murdered under the Town police limits in Keonjhar in October 2020 and the current status on the case, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Friday issued conditional summons to the two officials to appear before it June 27.



"However, in case the requisite reports are received by June 20, their personal appearance shall be dispensed with," said the commission.

According to the case details, the minor girl, who had been residing at one of her relatives' place in Fakirpada under Anandapur police limits in Keonjhar, had gone to attend coaching classes October 14, 2020, but she did not return. Later, her mutilated body was found stuffed in a gunny bag in Old Town area under Town police limits in the district October 20. Bont police in Bhadrak informed the family about the murder.

The incident created a hue and cry in the district with rights activist Himanshu Sekhar Nayak approaching the NHRC seeking

justice to the minor.

Taking cognisance of Nayak's plea December 3, 2020, the commission sought reports from the SPs of Bhadrak and Keonjhar in connection with the sensational murder. However, they did not revert.

Later, the NHRC sought action-taken reports (ATRs) from the two SPs within six weeks. This time, too, they did not file the reports.

Following the issuance of a conditional summons by the rights body, the Bhadrak SP June 3, 2021 informed the commission about registration of a case (286/2020) under Sections 302 r/w 201 of IPC by the Keonjhar Town police.

On August 9, 2021, the Keonjhar SP informed the commission that that two persons have been arrested and preliminary chargesheet has been submitted in this case.

The commission asked the Keonjhar SP to come up with a fresh status report on the case. The SP was further asked to submit a report on the payment of compensation to the next of kin of the victim. The NHRC also sought a report from the Keonjhar Collector regarding payment of compensation to the next of kin of the victim within eight weeks.

However, neither of the officials turned up. Subsequently, the commission issued reminders to the collector and the SP to submit the reports within six weeks, failing which the rights body would invoke its coercive powers under Section 13 of PHR Act, 1993. This time too, the officials did not pay a heed to the NHRC direction, sources said.

## INTERACTIVE SESSION



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik interacting with the elected PRI and ULB representatives from Hinjili and Shergarh in Ganjam at Naveen Niwas in Bhubaneswar, Friday

# Cops host marriage of 2 surrendered Maoists

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** In a heartwarming gesture, the Odisha police conducted the marriage ceremony of two surrendered Maoists in Kalahandi district.

The marriage was solemnised in a temple at the Reserve Police Ground in Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district Friday in the presence of Pandit Rajesh Uttamrao, DIG of police (south-west range) Koraput, Saravana Vivek M, SP Kalahandi and Biblab Sarkar, Commandant CRPF 64th Battalion.

The marriage was solemnised with full fanfare and a feast was also organised by the police in the temple premises in which the family members of the bride and the bridegroom participated along with police and mediapersons.



The marriage was solemnised in a temple at the Reserve Police Ground in Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi district Friday in the presence of senior police officials

According to the police, groom Ramdas, a native of Chhattisgarh, surrendered before the Kalahandi police in 2020 while bride Kalamdei is originally from Kalahandi and surrendered in 2016

According to the police, groom Ramdas, a native of Chhattisgarh state, surrendered before the Kalahandi police in 2020 while bride Kalamdei is originally from Kalahandi and surrendered in 2016. After the surrender, Ramdas was given Rs 3.98 lakh and Kalamdei was given Rs 2.98 lakh as per the government's rehabilitation policy. Both of them were also given vocational training as per their choices, the police officials said.

Ramdas was a member of the banned CPI (Maoist) Kalahandi-Kandhamal-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division for almost nine years before surrendering. He was from a poor family from Bijepur district of Chhattisgarh. He has two sisters and one brother whom he did not meet for more than ten

years till the Kalahandi police facilitated their meeting after his surrender.

Kalamdei was a member of the Bansadhara-Ghamsar-Nagabali (BGN) division of banned Maoists for almost a year before her surrender, they said.

Earlier, the Kalahandi police had arranged Ramdas father's cataract surgery and during his recovery, both Ramdas and Kalamdei's family met and decided to go ahead with their marriage.

The Kalahandi SP took the initiative to arrange their marriage in Bhawanipatna.

"It is a matter of happiness for us that two surrendered Maoists have tied the knot today," said the SP.

The newlywed couple thanked the police for their help and support due to which they returned to the mainstream of society.

## CURBING NOISE POLLUTION



Police personnel remove multi-tone horns from buses at OMP Square in Cuttack, Friday

# Longest known Covid infection lasted for 505 days

**A**n immunocompromised UK patient suffered the longest known days, 505, with Covid infections, claim researchers.

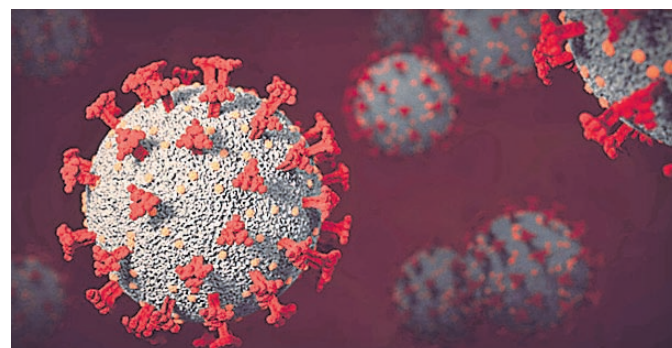
Previously the longest known PCR confirmed case is thought to be 335 days.

Researchers at the King's College London and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust studied nine immunocompromised patients, between March 2020 and December 2021, who tested positive for the virus for at least eight weeks.

Infections persisted for 73 days, on average, but two patients had persistent infections for more than a year.

The patients had weakened immune systems due to organ transplantation, HIV, cancer, or medical therapies for other illnesses.

Regular sampling and genetic analysis of the virus showed that five of the nine patients developed at least one mutation seen in variants of concern.



Some individuals developed multiple mutations associated with variants of concern, such as the Alpha, Delta and Omicron variants.

The virus from one individual contained 10 mutations that would arise separately in variants of concern, such as the Alpha, Gamma and Omicron variants.

"This provides evidence that mutations found in variants of concern do arise in immunocompromised patients and so supports

the idea that new variants of the viruses may develop in immunocompromised individuals," said first author Luke Blagdon Snell, of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

Five of the nine patients survived. Two of those five cleared SARS-CoV-2 infection without treatment, two cleared the infection after treatment with antibody therapies and antivirals, and one individual has ongoing infection.

Researchers at the King's College London and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust studied nine immunocompromised patients, between March 2020 and December 2021, who tested positive for the virus for at least eight weeks

Infections persisted for 73 days, on average, but two patients had persistent infections for more than a year. The patients had weakened immune systems due to organ transplantation, HIV, cancer, or medical therapies for other illnesses

At their last follow-up in early 2022, the patient with ongoing infection had been infected for more than one year (412 days).

The person has been treated with monoclonal antibodies to try to clear their infection. If this person remains positive at their next follow-up appointment, they will likely pass the previous longest

known infection of 505 days described in this report.

"Immunocompromised patients with persistent infection have poor outcomes, and new treatment strategies are urgently needed to clear their infection. This may also prevent the emergence of variants," said Gaia Nebbia from the Trust.

The researchers also report one of the first cases of an occult Covid-19 infection, who is thought to have cleared the virus, with negative tests, but is later found to have an ongoing infection.

"This has been described with other viruses such as those that cause Ebola or hepatitis B and is different to long Covid where the virus is generally thought to be cleared from the body but symptoms persist," the team explained.

The team will describe the cases at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, from April 23-26.

## 5 from looters' gang in City busted by CP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** The Commissionerate Police arrested five members of a looters' gang including a juvenile involved in a number of snatching cases in City for the last couple of days.

The accused were identified as Rajesh Samant, 27, of Mahavir slum in Baramunda area; Narayan Barik, 28, of Old Town area; Arbaz Khan alias Rocky, 22, of Tigiria area in Cuttack and Saumyanarjan Singh, 27, of Pattamundai in Kendrapara district.

Police sources claimed that the members of the Katuri Gang that mostly targets people during early morning hours in different parts of the City including Bharatpur, Khandagiri and Nayapalli. They would loot money, mobile phones and other valuables by threatening the victims with sharp weapons. They would also attack the victims if they tried to resist the looting bid.

Police have reportedly recovered four motorcycles, Rs 36,000 cash, 22 mobile phones and several watches from the possession of the accused. Sources revealed that the gang is involved in around 17 cases of snatching and loot between March 2 and April 14.

The accused were Friday produced before the court that sent them to judicial custody after rejecting their bail pleas. The juvenile member of the gang was sent to correctional home 'Bal Sudhar Gruha'.

## Skill development prog at CSIR-IMMT

**Bhubaneswar:** A two-day integrated skill initiative programme on "Electrochemical processing techniques and characterisation for industrial applications" (EPCIA-2022) was organised at CSIR-IMMT here. The programme was inaugurated in the presence of CSIR-IMMT Director Prof Suddhasatwa Basu, program organiser EPCIA 2022 Dr U Balaji, chief scientist & head of AMT Department Dr B Bhoi and CSIR integrated skill development initiative coordinator Dr SK Pradhan Thursday. Basu delivered the inaugural address and presided over the inaugural ceremony. He said that programmes in applied industrial electrochemistry are more valuable in terms of training because such courses are not in any academic curriculum. "This is a unique opportunity for the participants to get hands-on training," Basu added. The programme concluded Friday.

## 25 injured as bus falls off Kandhamal ghat

**Phulbani:** As many as 25 passengers including eight children were rendered critical after a bus ferrying them turned turtle at Gandamunda ghat under Baliguda police limits in Kandhamal district Friday. The injured have been admitted to Baliguda sub-divisional hospital. On being informed, cops reached the spot and launched a probe while the driver, helper and conductor of the vehicle are on the run. The incident occurred while the vehicle 'Om Bhabani' (OR12-1956) was en route to Budaguda with passengers from Baliguda. The vehicle fell 15 feet off the ghat after the driver lost balance. Local villagers rescued the injured and informed the fire personnel. A manhunt has been launched to nab the absconding driver, helper and conductor, police said.

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

**Change of Name-** I, No. 16020368M Hav Clk (SD) Prashanta Dang of 5th Battalion The Rajputana Rifles, residing at VPO-Sibatata, Teh- Tusra, Dist. Balangir (Odisha) do hereby solemnly affirm that my Son have changed name from Ayaan Kumar to Ayaan Kumar Dang vide affidavit No.1953 dated 18.04.2022. My Son name Ayaan Kumar erroneously mentioned in my service documents. Henceforth my son's correct name is Ayaan Kumar Dang mentioned in my service records.



The Srimandir Managing Committee meeting was held at the Puri Bhakta Niwas, Friday

OP PHOTO

## PANEL MEET

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** The survey work for the new Malkangiri-Bhadrachalam railway line project in Odisha is likely to be completed by June, officials said Friday.

During his visit to Malkangiri district Friday, Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw reviewed the progress made on the project with railway officials, and public representatives.

The 173.416 km long Malkangiri-Bhadrachalam rail line project was sanctioned by the Railway Board in September 2021 with an estimated cost of Rs 2,800 crore. This project will have 213 bridges including 48 major and 165 minor ones, the officials said.

This proposed project will have stations at Malkangiri, Badali, Kowasiguda, Rajanguda, Maharajpalli and Lunimanguda



Union Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw flagged off the Visakhapatnam-Koraput-Visakhapatnam Daily Passenger Special at Koraput railway station during his visit to Koraput and Malkangiri districts, Friday

OP PHOTO

in Odisha, and Kannapuram, Kutugata, Pallu, Nandigama, Bhadrachalam and Pandurangapuram in Telangana.

Estimated ₹307.64 lakh was sanctioned in January for conducting the survey, and the contract was awarded in February at a cost of ₹231 lakh.

After studying various aspects of this project, the alignment has been finalised. The survey works will be completed by June, 2022, they said.

"The Prime Minister is asking us (the ministers) to visit the remote and distant places, which are yet to

work will be completed soon and then after, land acquisition process will be started," he said.

During the visit, the minister inaugurated the Malkangiri district headquarters post office. He also inaugurated the Salapada sub post office in Keonjhar district, Manamunda sub post office in Boudh district and Gopalpur sub post office in Balasore district through video conferencing mode.

Previously, these post offices were functioning in rented buildings. Under the Central government short and long term schemes, departmental buildings are being built for post offices and made available to the public.

By ensuring the completion of construction of Malkangiri post office, the minister has fulfilled his promise as made earlier during his last visit to Odisha.

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION RAILWAYS MINISTER

Soon after reaching New Delhi, I have started working on the project and the survey work will be completed soon and then after, land acquisition process will be started

work will be completed soon and then after, land acquisition process will be started," he said.

During the visit, the minister inaugurated the Malkangiri district headquarters post office. He also inaugurated the Salapada sub post office in Keonjhar district, Manamunda sub post office in Boudh district and Gopalpur sub post office in Balasore district through video conferencing mode.

Previously, these post offices were functioning in rented buildings. Under the Central government short and long term schemes, departmental buildings are being built for post offices and made available to the public.

By ensuring the completion of construction of Malkangiri post office, the minister has fulfilled his promise as made earlier during his last visit to Odisha.

## Tamil Nadu invites bids to transport coal from Odisha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, April 22:** The Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Company (Tangedco) has floated tenders for the transportation of coal from Odisha to tide over the power shortage in the state.

The power company has called for bids to transport coal from Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd, which is a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd. The bidding will close April 27.

According to sources in Tangedco, the state is purchasing 2.6 lakh tonnes of coal from the Mahanadi Coal Fields Ltd (MCL) and requires transportation contractors for the same.

The coal will be transported from the mines to the ports by rail and then through sea routes to the discharge ports at Ennore, Karaikal and Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu. The coal will be moved from MCL mines at Hingula, Ananta,

Garjanbahal, Lakhanpur and Kulda in Odisha.

A senior Tangedco official told IANS, "The movement of coal will commence from May and will continue till June-end."

In the tender, Tangedco has made it clear that the bidder must have experience in moving a minimum of 65,000 tonnes of coal from the mines through road or rail on behalf of any power utilities in the public or private sector.

The transporting company should have transported coal in the years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 and should have an annual turnover of Rs 20 crore in any of the above financial years.

Tamil Nadu requires coal to the tune of 72,000 tonnes a day for producing power, but the supply now is only 48,000 to 50,000 tonnes.

On March 29, Tamil Nadu witnessed an all-time high power demand of 17,196 MW.

## Keeping close watch on Cov situation: Dash

Odisha logged 11 Covid cases Friday and there was no fatality due to the disease for the second straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** The state government is keeping a close watch on the Covid situation in view of the surge in the disease in the country, especially in the national capital region, state Mass Education Minister Samir Dash said.

Dash said the third wave of the disease did not have much effect in the state and despite the recent surge in the disease there is no threat of a fourth one now.

"The health department is maintaining a close watch and as there is no threat of a fourth one right now, holding of examinations of classes 10 and 12 will not be an issue," he said.

If a situation arises, a decision will be taken on the basis of the Health department's directives, he added. State Health Services Director Bijay Mohapatra stressed



on the need to be alert and take preventive steps.

He urged parents and school authorities to get the children tested for Covid if they develop flu-like symptoms and isolate them.

Meanwhile, Odisha recorded 11 coronavirus cases Friday and there was no fatality due to the disease

for the second straight day. There are 101 active Covid-19 cases and 14 more patients have recuperated, a Health department bulletin said.

The coastal state's daily test pos-

itivity rate (TPR) is 0.06 per cent and infections were detected out of 19,370 sample tests. Two children were among those who were afflicted with the disease, it said.

The state reported nine infections and no death Thursday.

The toll remained at 9,124 and these have been confirmed as Covid deaths after an audit. 53 other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far, according to the Health department data.

The state has logged total 12,87,979 cases, out of which 12,78,701 people have recovered so far, the data said.

The health department is maintaining a close watch and as there is no threat of a fourth one right now, holding of examinations of classes 10 and 12 will not be an issue. If a situation arises, a decision will be taken on the basis of the Health department's directives

SAMIR DASH | SCHOOL AND MASS EDUCATION MINISTER

## 'MAHISASURMARDINI' IDOL DISCOVERY

# MAKE GROUND SURVEY REPORT PUBLIC: HISTORIANS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** A day after an ASI team discovered an idol of 'Mahisasurmardini', believed to be 1,400 years old, while clearing the 'garbhagriha' (sanctum sanctorum) of a partially buried temple here, historians have called for making public last year's ground penetration radar survey report of the area for better understanding of the hidden artifacts.

Apart from the idol, several other inscriptions and sculptures have been found from the site near the Lingaraj Temple, ASI

Superintending Archaeologist (Bhubaneswar Circle) Arun Malik said. It is likely to be 1,400 years old or dating back to the 7th century BC, the ASI said.

This was the second such discovery in the state Capital after an ASI team in February stumbled upon an idol of Lord Vishnu while unearthing the ruins of another ancient temple in the Old Town area of Bhubaneswar.

Excavation work is being carried out between the Bhabani Shankar Temple and the Suka Sari Temple in the Old Town area.

Historian Anil Dhir, who has been at loggerheads with the state



government over the ongoing beautification project in City, said

the ground penetration radar survey report of the entire area, conducted by IIT-Gandhinagar last year, should be made public. He

Apart from the idol, several other inscriptions and sculptures have been found from the site near the Lingaraj Temple

IT IS LIKELY TO BE 1,400 YEARS OLD OR DATING BACK TO THE 7TH CENTURY BC, THE ASI SAID.

THIS WAS THE SECOND SUCH DISCOVERY IN THE STATE CAPITAL AFTER AN ASI TEAM IN FEBRUARY STUMBLED UPON AN IDOL OF LORD VISHNU WHILE UNEARTHING THE RUINS OF ANOTHER ANCIENT TEMPLE IN THE OLD TOWN

EXCAVATION WORK IS BEING CARRIED OUT BETWEEN THE BHABANI SHANKAR TEMPLE AND THE SUKA SARI TEMPLE IN THE OLD TOWN

also claimed that there are many more such buried structures in the area.

Heritage explorer and expert Deepak Nayak said the ASI should not declare the 'Mahisasurmardini' idol to be 1,400 years old as only the upper portion of it has been excavated.

"The age of any 'Mahisasurmardini' sculpture can be identified considering the iconography of the demon the goddess is slaying. To determine the age on the basis of the upper portion is wrong; only after it is fully excavated can the actual age be ascertained," he said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** This year, the summer vacations for schools and higher educational institutions in state will commence in the month of June. With the holidays already trimmed to 16 days for higher educational institutions and 11 days for schools, dissatisfaction is evident in people from all walks of life, particularly with the scorching month of May.

Parents have sought accountability in case of any health hazard to their children due to the expected heat in May. Parents and intellectuals alike have demanded pre-emption of the vacations to May.

"Things are so bad in April already. The day time temperature remains above 38°C almost every day. It will get worse in May with higher temperature and humidity," said Gopal Das, a parent.

Similarly intellectuals and legal experts like Basanta Das and Gyana Ranjan Das pointed out that May remains hotter than June as monsoon steps in during the latter. Therefore,



the vacations should be in May.

"From now on, the heat in unbearable. It is impossible to go out after 10am. Mercury is likely to go higher in May. It is not possible for children to attend classes under these challenging circumstances. Keeping in mind their health and safety, educational institutes should remain closed throughout May. Classes should resume when the heat subsides in June," said social activists Subhramanjan Das and Dasrathi Das.

Senior activist Prabhat Mishra and legal expert Ajit Patnayak pointed out when parents are hesitant to go out because of the heat, it is unwise to send children out to study. The summer vacations should be preponed to May instead of June.

## STF nabs fugitive drug peddler

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** The Special Task Force (STF) late Thursday night arrested an absconding drug peddler involved in several cases of drug seizure during the last couple of months.

The notorious peddler SK Jamsheer alias Jamal is a resident of Haladipadia Basti area under Laxmisagar police limits here.

Acting on a tip-off, the sleuths carried out a raid at Haladipadia slum and arrested Jamsheer. He used to supply drugs to smaller peddlers in the twin city and the adjoining districts and was wanted in a case of seizure of contraband brown sugar weighing 1,227 gram worth over ₹1 crore near Pahala on the outskirts of the City February 20.

As many as four cases are pending against Jamsheer at different police stations in the state.

## FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Doyal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemana-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

SHORT TAKES

Minor gangraped; three youths held

**Sonepur/Dunguripalli:** A 13-year-old girl was allegedly gangraped by three youths in Rampur area under Dunguripalli block of Subarnapur district. Police have arrested all the three accused after a complaint was lodged in this regard. The arrested were identified as Anil Naik, 26, Bibek Sahu, 20, and Krushnachandra Chirgun, 28, of the same locality. They were produced in court Friday. The accused trio abducted the victim, a Class VIII student of a local upper primary school, April 13 and sedated her before committing the heinous crime at a desolate place. After committing the crime, the youths had left the victim unconscious at the place. Later, her family members rescued her in a critical condition. Rampur police station IIC said they have started an investigation into the matter.

Man gets life for killing 3-year-old

**Keonjhar:** Adjudicating a case of murder of a child, district and sessions judge Chittaranjan Mohapatra found the accused guilty and sentenced him to life imprisonment, Friday. The court also imposed a penalty of ₹50,000 on the convict, Dukhabandhu Juanga. Dukhabandhu is a native of Purunapani area under Telkoi block. According to the case diary, three-year old Indumati Juanga, daughter of Kanak Juanga, of the same village was going somewhere April 8, 2016, when Dukhabandhu hit her head with a stick. She died instantly. Following an FIR, police registered a case of murder and arrested the accused four days later.

Woman, daughter die of snakebite

**Nuapada:** A woman and her 14-year-old daughter died after being bitten by a poisonous snake Thursday night. The incident occurred while they were fast asleep after dinner at Kendubahara village under Dharambandha locality of Nuapada district. As per sources, a venomous snake slithered into their house when they were asleep and bit them. Hearing their screams, other family members woke up and rushed them to district headquarters hospital in Nuapada. After preliminary treatment, they were shifted to Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Burla where the doctors pronounced them dead.

4 held for lynching firm employee

**Baripada:** Four persons were arrested for lynching a private firm employee after his car mowed down a villager in Mayurbhanj district three days ago, police said Friday. The four suspects were arrested Thursday, an officer said. A villager identified as Harihar Sethi, 55, was killed on the spot Tuesday after his motorcycle was hit by the car on NH 49 at Goshaniapala. Irate villagers attacked the two officials of the private firm. One of the officials Satyanarayan Nanda succumbed to the injuries on the way to a hospital.

CBI raids trader over loan fraud

**Sambalpur:** A five-member team of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Friday raided the residence of a local trader Natwarlal Agrawal at Kunjelpada under Sambalpur town police limits in connection with some loan fraud to the tune of ₹4 crore. Notably, Agrawal has allegedly got more than ₹4 crore loan from the main branch of Union Bank here. Loans were also taken in the name of his wife, son and relatives by submitting forged papers. A five-member team of the CBI examined bank document and other papers in his house. AGM of Union Bank, T Sahu had filed a complaint at the CBI office in Bhubaneswar April 6. Some bank officials are involved in this fraud. Despite repeated recovery notices, Agrawal did not repay the loans.

# Kanpur irrigation project by Dec '23

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, April 22:** The state government Friday set a fresh target for completion of the much-awaited Kanpur irrigation project in Keonjhar district. Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra and Secretary to CM (ST) VK Pandian Friday visited the project site and said the project will be completed by December 2023.

The project was conceived 40 years ago and three chief ministers have laid its foundation on different occasions. The project, once functional, will facilitate irrigation to around 30,000 hectare land spread over five blocks of the district. When completed, the irrigation project will also help in controlling floods in Anandapur area of Keonjhar and several other areas of Jajpur and Bhadrak districts.

The Chief Secretary and ST Secretary also reviewed the progress of drinking water supply projects in the district. The state government is giving utmost emphasis on providing piped water supply to every household in rural and urban areas. Accordingly, a target has been set to provide water supply to all households of Keonjhar district by March 2023, said Mahapatra.



Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra, ST Secretary VK Pandian and Water Resources dept additional chief secretary Anu Garg reviewed the project

THE PROJECT WAS CONCEIVED 40 YEARS AGO AND THREE CHIEF MINISTERS HAVE LAID ITS FOUNDATION ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS

THE PROJECT, ONCE FUNCTIONAL, WILL FACILITATE IRRIGATION TO AROUND 30,000 HECTARE LAND SPREAD OVER FIVE BLOCKS OF THE DISTRICT

THE CHIEF SECRETARY AND ST SECRETARY ALSO REVIEWED THE PROGRESS OF DRINKING WATER SUPPLY PROJECTS IN THE DISTRICT

The officers also visited the Government Girls' High School run by the Scheduled Caste (SC) & Scheduled Tribe (ST) Development department in Basudevpur and interacted with the students and teachers about facilities provided at the school. They inspected the quality of mid-day meal (MDM) provided to the students and sports infrastructure at the school.

The school was redeveloped under the High School Transformation programme of the state government.

Among others, Water Resources department additional chief secretary Anu Garg and Keonjhar Collector Ashish Thakare were present during the visit.

## FOLK DANCE TREAT



Students of Panchayat High School, Ullunda in Subarnapur performed a folk dance at 'Jharmali', a cultural programme organised by the School and Mass Education department, Friday

## Wildfires raging in Chhendipada range

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chhendipada, April 22:** Forest fires have been raging at different places under Chhendipada range of Angul district with the Debinagar hill, extending from Patrapada to Similipal, already in flames for the last few days. Though the exact reason of the blaze is not known, it is suspected to be man-made.

In the last few days, tress, bushes, valuable plants along with wild creatures living in several hectares of woodland have perished.

It is said that people collecting minor forest produce like mahua flowers and sal leaves often set the forests afire. Subsequently, fires acquire dangerous proportions. Acres of land have been burnt



to ashes in parts of Debinagar hill and at its foothill areas.

Locals say as the fires spread, wild animals stray into villages. They also attributed the cause of wildfires to lack of monitoring and patrolling by Forest department and Vana Surakhya Samitis (VSSes).

Bijay Kumar Pradhan, president of Jay Jagannath VSS, squarely blamed the Forest department's apathy for the raging fires in the forest. "There is no coordination between the VSSes and the Forest department in protecting forests from fires. Situation is going out of control," Pradhan rued.

Similipal sarpanch Girish Chandra Pradhan said that there is no pond inside the forest to draw water to douse the blaze. Though forest officials have been engaged to extinguish fires, their efforts have failed to yield results, he observed.

Asked about the raging forest fires, Chhendipada ranger Pratap Chandra Roul said, "Forest staffers have been engaged to contain raging inferno. But we are not getting any help from local VSSes.

As the forest is home to some elephants, it is not possible to enter deep into forest and douse fires. Keeping a close watch on elephant movements, forest staffers have been trying to contain fires," he added.

## Korabandi forest denuded of sal trees

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Ragadi, April 22:** An active timber mafia gang has cut down and carted away a large number of sal trees from Korabandi forest under Jajpur road forest range of Cuttack forest division, leaving the famous forest denuded of its valuable greenery.

Spread on 184 hectare, the sal forest has been on the target of the mafia who cart away the valuable trees even in broad daylight, thanks to the failure of the Forest department in acting against the plunderers.

Earlier, local villagers had taken a pledge to protect the trees. They had formed groups and guarded the forest. However, it was later handed over to the Jajpur road forest department.

Now, locals have alleged that the mafia groups are hand in gloves with some forest officials who help them loot the valuable trees for a petty sum.



THE FOREST HAS BEEN LOSING ITS VALUABLE TREES EVERY DAY. LOCALS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE FAST DEPLETION OF THE SAL FOREST AS MORE THAN 400 TREES WORTH LAKHS OF RUPEES HAVE BEEN SMUGGLED IN JUST ONE YEAR

THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL INSTANCES OF BEARS AND OTHER WILD ANIMALS STRAYING INTO NEARBY VILLAGES AS THE THICK FOREST COVER IS FAST DEPLETING

"From cutting down the trees to transporting and selling them for premium rates, the forest officials are in cahoots with the mafia," a local stated. The forest has been losing its valuable trees every day. Locals and environmentalists expressed concern over the fast depletion of the sal forest as more than 400 trees have been smuggled in just one year.

This has also led to increase in human-animal conflict as wild animals are straying into villages.

Moreover, many animals are killed due to accidents while crossing roads in bid to find a new habitat.

To make the matter worse, the forest officials have no provision to facilitate drinking water for the wild animals. A few days ago, a deer in search of water fell prey to stray dogs and was killed. Similarly, two mother bears and a cub were crushed to death under a speeding truck in 2020.

Locals alleged that timber mafia have been carrying out such loot in broad daylight at different places in the range, but the Forest department is clueless.

They alleged that inaction by the forest department has encouraged the mafia to go on looting trees.

The Forest department and the administration should take effective steps to rein in illegal timber smuggling, they noted, demanding formation of a special squad to catch the mafia and save forests.

## State's oldest civic body in dire straits

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, April 22:** Accorded the status of a civic body way back in 1869, Kendrapara Municipality, the oldest in the state, is still reeling from scores of basic problems due to the negligent attitude of the officials concerned.

Despite completing 153 years of its formation, the civic body areas are still in the grip of problems like encroachment, traffic snarls, electricity, drinking water supply, healthcare and waste management.

"More than 20 ponds have accumulated silt over the years. With mercury on the rise, unavailability of sufficient drinking water has added to the woes of the citizens. There is no provision for garbage collection and cleaning of the civic area on regular basis," some residents rued.

Drains and ponds filled with garbage are becoming the breeding ground for mosquitoes, thereby spreading vector-borne diseases.

"The Union as well as state government should give special focus on development and beautification of Kendrapara town," irate locals said.

Amarabar Biswal, a local intellectual, said, "Kendrapara district has the second largest waterway of Odisha. Previously, transportation through waterways was going on in nearby areas of the town. However, it is slowly decreasing by the day."



### KENDRAPARA MUNICIPALITY

Main and service roads in the town have become narrow over the years due to encroachments, creating traffic snarls

Drains and ponds filled with garbage are becoming the breeding ground for mosquitoes, thereby spreading vector-borne diseases

### GOVT LANDS ON GOBARI RIVER EMBANKMENT AND GOBARI CANAL HAVE BEEN ENCRUCHED UPON

"It is sad that in 21 wards of the civic body, only two ponds are in usable condition. A number of water bodies including 20 ancient ponds, canals and Gobari river have been encroached upon," he added. The ponds and creeks in Kendrapara town can be restored under Jai Shakti Abhiyan, but the civic authorities are in deep slumber, Biswal added.

In a similar vein, a social activist Sheikh Sabbir said, "Smooth management of drainage and garbage is the need of the hour. I along with other residents have drawn the at-

tentation of civic authorities in this regard, but to no avail. Ponds at Mahipal, Baniamal and new bus stand need urgent attention."

Main and service roads in the town have become narrow over the years due to encroachments, the activist claimed. Government lands on Gobari river embankment and Gobari canal are now under the ownership of encroachers.

On the other hand, utility poles are not removed during road expansion, thereby affecting vehicular movements. A second bypass road project in Kendrapara town,

which was proposed much earlier, is still on paper, the activist expressed.

Kendrapara and Jajpur Notified Area Councils (NACs) were accorded municipality status at the same time. However, areas under Jajpur municipality have undergone a sea change, activist Sheikh Amzan said.

On being contacted, the newly-elected chairperson of Kendrapara Municipality Sarita Sahu said, "The town has witnessed many developmental works in the last few years. New roads have been laid, parks established and electrifications carried out. Apart from above, local issues in different wards have come to the knowledge of the civic authority. The process to bring Kendrapara town at par with other developed towns of the state will begin very soon."

## LENSMAN MANAS SWAIN MURDER

### 8 including Sarmistha, Sethi produced in court

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, April 22:** Eight people including prime accused Sarmistha Rout and former director of Information and Public Relations (I&PR) department Niranjan Sethi were Friday produced in Chandbali court in Bhadrak district in connection with cameraman Manas Swain murder case.

The eight accused were brought from Bhadrak jail amid tight security. The next hearing is scheduled for May 2, reports said.

The court directed the Crime Branch to gather more evidence in the case. Earlier, Niranjan had confessed before the Crime Branch that he had helped Sarmistha Rout. He used to regularly visit Dayal Ashram and 'Sampoorna' office.

Worth mentioning, Manas, a resident of Godipokhari village in Ranpur area of Nayagarh dis-



trict, was allegedly kidnapped from Bhadrak district February 7. He was working as a cameraman with 'Sampoorna'.

It is said that Swain was asked to return a memory chip and was severely beaten up before his death at Dayal Ashram in Bhubaneswar, where the web channel was being operated.

His body was later dumped in his hometown.

On March 12, police exhumed his body from Badhipatna hills in Nayagarh district, a month after he went missing from Chandbali area.

**Government of Odisha**  
**Department Of Water Resources**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**JARAKA IRRIGATION DIVISION, JARAKA**  
E-Mail Id.- eejidjaraka@yahoo.com  
**No.A-90:**  
**"e" Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No.- JKID-02/2022-23**

- Name of the Work: Irrigation Project Works as per DTCN.
- Total No. of Works: 23 (Twenty three) nos. work.
- Estimated Cost: Varies of Rs. 8.28 Lakh to Rs.79.50 Lakh
- Period of Completion: Sl.No. (1) to Sl.No.(23) 120 Days.
- Date & Time of Availability of Bid Document in the Portal: 10.00 A.M. of Dt. 28.04.2022 up to 05.00 P.M. of Dt. 09.05.2022.
- Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids in the Portal: Up to 05.00 P.M. of Dt. 09.05.2022
- Date of Opening of Bids: Dt. 10.05.2022 at 10.00 A.M. onwards.
- Name and Address of the Officer inviting Tender: Superintending Engineer, Jaraká Irrigation Division, Jaraká.
- Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "https://tendersodisha.gov.in".

Sd./- Superintending Engineer  
Jaraká Irrigation Division, Jaraká  
OIPR-32098/11/0002/2223

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** E-mail: rw\_sundargarh@yahoo.co.in  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNDARGARH**  
**E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
No. O-114  
**BID IDENTIFICATION NO. ONLINE-SESN-05 OF 2022-23**

- Name of the Work : Road Works
- Total No. of Works : 03 Nos. Road
- Estimated Cost : Rs.67.67 lakhs to Rs.83.76 lakhs
- Class of Contractor : 'B' & 'A'
- Period of Completion : 09 Calendar Months
- Type of Tender : Double Cover
- Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding	
		From	To
1	2	3	4
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Sundargarh	Online-SESN-05 of 2022-23	25.04.2022 10.00 A.M.	12.05.2022 5.30 P.M.

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in).  
OIPR-25046/11/0005/2223  
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Sundargarh

FOCUS INDO-RUSSIA TIES

# THE RUSSIAN BEAR-HUG



Prime Minister Modi was expected to correct the historic fault lines created by Nehru. He and his party rightly point them out. But he is falling into the same trap and not being able to extricate from the Russian bear-hug

For the last 12 occasions in the UN on the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war, India has been abstaining from voting on the resolutions critical of Moscow's action. India's stance on the war has raised concerns about India's foreign policy, which continues to be driven by the principle of non-alignment or strategic autonomy, also by India's obligatory reciprocity to the Russia/Soviet Union support. Indian diplomats contend, "Russia has been our steady supporter on our national security concerns, particularly with regard to Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, it is important for us also to be similarly sensitive to Russian military concerns."

It is time we analyse India's current foreign policy positions and postures, as well as its long-standing friendship with Russia, the biggest part of the former Soviet Union. Analysts and observers suggest that India is drawing on the principle of non-alignment. But that concept is dead and buried fathomless deep since New Delhi signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in August 1971.

Even if we accept that non-alignment is still the guiding principle, how is New Delhi non-aligned in this war? The warring countries are Russia and Ukraine, the former being the aggressor. Is New Delhi non-aligned between the two countries at war? New Delhi has been supporting Russia. It has refused to name Russia in any of the statements made on the war. It has not joined others in sanctioning Russia. On the contrary, it has upped the trade with Russia; has bought more Russian oil at discount than it did in the entire year of 2021; and is increasing the coal import.

If we extend the warring parties in pragmatism, not just in technical terms, it is a war between Russia on the one side and the United States and its allies on the other. Ukraine has been, deliberately, or fortuitously, a victim and the theatre of the decades-old rivalry between these two countries. In such a scenario, India appears to be non-aligned, or to put it more accurately, India is engaging with both countries or blocks quite deftly 'in keeping with her national interest'. This is a clearer and fairer interpretation of India's

stand on the war. But such a position is deeply debatable which is what we should engage in.

Agree that Russia, rather its former self, the Soviet Union, has been a friend and ally of India. Its support in 1971 war with Pakistan on Bangladesh should be gratefully remembered. The Soviet Union's consistent support in the UN Security Council in the form of its veto on the question of Jammu and Kashmir has saved India from a good deal of embarrassment and practical difficulties. Even in current times, Russia has helped, in the background, not openly in India-China border disputes.

Russia has brought India into regional grouping with China -- BRICS, RIC and SCO. Some observers would argue that Russia did so to counter the Chinese dominance in the region. China has roped in Pakistan to counter India. So, Russia making India sleep with her enemies is no big deal. It is not reducing China's incredible and controversial claims on Indian territory and its questionable actions on the borders.

India perhaps calculates that Russia will be a greater support in its conflicts with China and Pakistan than the United States. And the US will have to ally with India in its hegemonic competition with China in the India-Pacific region. So why alienate Russia!

The point to consider and debate is whether India's dependence on Russia was inevitable and indispensable.

Also, if India's foreign policy, driven by non-alignment and security concerns alone has helped India's growth and development, has it not cost India heavily on defence purchases? Calculate the cost of lack of investment on various sectors of its economy and society. The Soviet Union and Russia have been military powers not economic powers.

Look at China, even being an authoritarian communist state, it did brisk business with all the big economies in the West, the US, its allies, the NATO countries, Japan, South Korea, using its strict labour laws and demographic strength. Today, with its huge economy, marginally less than that of the US alone, Beijing can stand up to any big power including the US. New Delhi, tied to its security compulsions, and the unworkable strategy of non-alignment, spent its scarce resources, meagre foreign currency reserves in buying weapons, the biggest bulk of it from one country, Soviet Union/Russia.

India thankfully made course correction after 1991 by opening up to the West, causing improvement in her economy. But this happened not because of India's strategic shift, but due to rethinking in the

West in regard to China. As Beijing became ambitious and began to challenge its benefactors, the West turned to India, biggest democracy, huge market and enormous (woman-power). As they began to court India, New Delhi in its 'strategic autonomy' and security trap, has not been responding to such overtures, inflicting heavy costs to her economy and even to polity.

Elaborating the costs, India is suffering from its muddled up non-alignment, let us scan three major sectors -- political, economy, and social.

India is known for her democracy, the only Asian country sustaining it despite several challenges. India is also known for its political principles of equality, liberty, harmony, co-existence, non-aggression, a culture of synthesis. Russia has been a communist, one-party, one-leader autocratic country. So, India does not inspire others by standing with such a regime.

In economic growth, the Soviet Union/Russia has drained India by all the defence deals, not helped her economy. Manohar Lal Sondhi, a diplomat and academic, brought it up long back in his book *Non-Appeasement: A News Direction in India's Foreign Policy*. There are several other studies to show the avoidable drain of India's resources through her defence purchases from the Soviet Union/Russia.

The third sector is social. Indian politics and society tend to relate to the West in terms of rationality, liberalism, progressivism, tolerance and respect for dissent. India has hardly anything in common with Russian social and political values which are largely feudal and anti-dissent.

Is it not the time for New Delhi to rethink, reset its foreign policy and redetermine its national interest? Prime Minister Modi was expected to correct the historic fault lines created by Nehru. He and his party rightly point them out. But he is falling into the same trap and not being able to extricate from the Russian bear-hug. Strange indeed for a strongman like him! He may just have to take out his hat of the path-breaker political innovator, like he did in Jammu and Kashmir and Israel-Palestine relations. He does it rather fast before it gets worse.

INFA



DK Giri

**THE SOVIET UNION'S CONSISTENT SUPPORT IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL IN THE FORM OF ITS VETO ON THE QUESTION OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR HAS SAVED INDIA FROM PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES**

Mountains and trees stood there like thoughts from God.  
SRI AUROBINDO



## Face-off on cards

To address the deficit of SP and DIG-level police officers in Central Armed Police Forces and Central Police Organizations, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has now proposed that IPS officers who do not come on Central deputation at the SP and DIG-level may be barred from a Central posting for the rest of their career!

Sounds pretty harsh but with more than a reported 50 per cent vacancies at both these levels at the Centre, it seems like a desperate move by the ministry. But coming close on the heels of another proposal to amend the civil service rules that would allow the Centre to summon any IAS, IPS and IFS officer on Central deputation with or without the state's consent, this move too is unlikely to win the Centre any kudos from the states.

That the move is bound to face stiff resistance from the states is obvious, given that they accuse the Centre of trying to weaken their powers. The MHA babus argue that under existing rules, most IPS officers come on Central deputation only at the IG level, which has led to the current shortage of SP and DIG-level officers at the Centre. But even senior IPS officers feel that the Centre is taking this step as a short-term measure but one that will harm the service in the longer run. There will surely be a fight back from the states on the proposal, but surely the MHA has worked out its plan for that eventuality.

### Kerala babu behind CM-Governor tussle back in old job

Senior Kerala IAS officer KR Jyothilal who was moved out as General Administration Department (GAD) Secretary in February has reportedly been brought back to the same post. The babu had been amid an unprecedented tussle between Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the state Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, as reported earlier in this column (DKB, Feb 22, 2022).



**BABUDOM BYTES**  
Dilip Cherian

Apparently a letter written by the babu for allegedly appointing a political person in the Raj Bhavan had angered Khan to the extent that he refused to sign the Governor's address to the state Assembly. The letter at the heart of the controversy and written by Jyothilal had been sent to the Raj Bhavan with the appointment order of Hari Kartha, a BJP leader, as an additional PA to the Governor. Sources informed DKB that while this letter mentioned that the government had approved the appointment of Kartha as per the Governor's wish, it also conveyed the displeasure of the Chief Minister stating that there was no precedent of appointing political leaders in Raj Bhavan. Khan took umbrage at this. At the time, Vijayan prudently removed Jyothilal from the post and defused a potentially ugly constitutional crisis.

But two months later, the babu is quietly back in his old post, his name tucked in the names of several IAS officers who were recently transferred. Does this mean that the 'truce' between Vijayan and Khan is over? Or will Jyothilal's second coming revive the tensions between the state government and the Governor?

While the Governor's office has not commented on this, future actions of the CM may hold the key to this key relationship, which has seen some rocky moments.

### Post-retirement job bonanza for senior babus

Several retired babus in Haryana have reason to be pleased with the state Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. After all, Khattar has re-employed more than a dozen IAS and IPS officers in important posts after their retirement. Most recently, two former IAS officers Vijai Vardhan and SS Phulia were appointed as Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioner respectively of the State Information Commission. Vardhan has retired as chief secretary in November last year. He has replaced former IPS officer Yashpal Singhal, a former DGP in the state. Earlier in January this year, former IAS officer Jyoti Arora who is also the wife of Home Secretary Rajiv Arora, was also made an information commissioner after her retirement.

But the list of such appointments is long, say sources, and goes back several years. Khattar is reportedly unwilling to let senior babus go off into retirement and keeps bringing them back to serve the government. Former chief secretary Keshni Anand Arora was similarly made chairperson of the Haryana Water Resources Authority. And so, it goes. While quite kosher, no doubt, it does seem to suggest that some babus do get a better deal than many of their cohorts!

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

## WISDOM CORNER

- The noblest pleasure is the joy of understanding  
LEONARDO DA VINCI
- Take risks in your life, if you win, you can lead! if you lose, you can guide  
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA
- One is never afraid of the unknown; one is afraid of the known coming to an end  
JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

## WORDSWORTH

### Aerotropolis

When this first appeared, from the mind of Professor John Kasarda of the University of North Carolina in 2000, it looked like one of those words whose life would be short and its death unannounced. But it shows signs of achieving some permanence in the vocabulary of aviation, economics, and urban planning. The idea behind the term is that major air transport hubs are now linked with levels of economic importance that were once the preserve of major seaports. The jobs directly generated by the airport itself are obviously significant; much more financially important, however, are the firms that relocate near the hub to take advantage of the speed with which passengers and high-value cargo can be flown all over the world. In several places, new airports are being created explicitly to exploit this, for example the new Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Thailand and the Dubai World Central airport. The term is a combination of aero-, in its aircraft sense, with metropolis. There's some doubt in writers' minds what the plural should be; both aerotropolises and aerotropoli have appeared; both are ugly, though the latter is to be deprecated because it puts a Latin plural ending on a word of Greek extraction.

## LOL

### Cow on train tracks

A passenger train is creeping along, slowly. Finally it creaks to a halt. A passenger sees a conductor walking by outside. "What's going on?" she yells out the window. "Cow on the track!" replies the conductor. Ten minutes later, the train resumes



its slow pace. Within five minutes, however, it stops again. The woman sees the same conductor walk again. She leans out the window and yells, "What happened? Did we catch up with the cow again?"

## SPECTRUM DEMOCRACY

# Judgement that transformed India



SN Misra

**THE EMERGENCY IMPOSED IN 1975 AND CAPITULATION OF JUDGES IN ADM JABALPUR CASE HAVE BEEN THE DARKEST YEARS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY AND OF INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE JUDICIARY**

Forty-six years ago, in the summer of 1976 and the height of Emergency, four judges of the Supreme Court had viewed that a person has no right to appeal against unlawful detention when the state was in emergency due to internal disturbances (Article 352). They were deciding on the appeal of SP Shukla against alleged illegal detention order of ADM Jabalpur on 30th April 1976. As per them, detention under MISA Act is open for challenge by detainees, as Article 359 suspends all fundamental rights, including right to life & liberty (Article 21) when internal emergency is clamped. Justice Beg said 'Liberty is the gift of law & may be law be forfeited or abridged.' The majority judgement in ADM Jabalpur VS SP Shukla case is viewed "as a stain on the legacy of the court for many years". The dissenting judge was Justice HR Khanna who had observed that 'detention without trial is an anathema to all those to love personal liberty'. In a splendid riposte to the majority verdict Justice Khanna had said that Article 21 is not the sole

repository of human right to life and liberty. Even in the absence of Article 21, the state cannot deprive a person of life or liberty without the authority of law. This is the basic assumption of rule of law in every civilized society. For Justice Khanna, life and personal liberty are alienable to human existence. Neither life nor liberty are bounties conferred by the state nor did the Constitution created these. The dissenting judgement was given at the height of Emergency when Mrs Indira Gandhi wanted judges and bureaucrats to be committed to the ideology of the ruling party rather than to the rule of law.

When the Emergency was lifted and the Janata Party came to power the government amended Article 352 by replacing internal disturbances with armed rebellion in the 44th Amendment to the Constitution (1978). More importantly it amended Article 359 where it took out Article 20 (protection against violation of law) and Article 21 (right to life and liberty) from the scope of abolition of fundamental rights during imposition of internal and external

emergency under Article 352. Justice Khanna quoted Justice Evan Hughes who wrote "dissent in a court of last resort is an appeal to the brooding spirit of law, to the intelligence of a future date, when a later decision may possibly correct the error into which the dissenting judge believes the court to have been betrayed."

As if to prove his prescience and foresight, the Supreme Court in the famous Putta Swamy case (2017) has formally overruled the majority judgement of ADM Jabalpur Vs SP Sukla. Justice DY Chandrachud, son of Justice YV Chandrachud, who was part of the majority verdict in 1976, has observed "constitutional democracy can survive only when citizens have an undiluted assurance that the rule of law will protect their lives and liberty against any invasion by the state. The view taken by justice Khanna is accepted in reverence for the strength of thoughts and courage of its conviction." It's a rare judgement by a son who has overruled his illustrious father who was CJI of India. We owe it to

HR Khanna to remind us all about the majesty of rule of law, constitutional democracy, independent vigil of institutions created to exercise check and balance and that right to life and liberty is not a gift of the Constitution. It existed before the Constitution of India came into effect.

The Emergency imposed in 1975 and capitulation of judges in ADM Jabalpur case have been the darkest years of Indian democracy and of independent institutions like the judiciary which is to act as an effective check and balance against legislative and executive tyranny. In the *Minerva Mills Case* (1980) the Supreme Court bounced back to reiterate that Parliament's power to amend the Constitution is limited. And that judicial power to redflag legislative excesses remains robust and inalienable. It requires both courage and supreme intellectual understanding of a judge like Justice Khanna to defend liberty and life from arbitrary emasculation.

The writer teaches *Constitution Law*

## Physicians at greater risk

Sir, It is disturbing to know that doctors with the noble purpose of serving people in rural India are attacked by the local goons. For instance, a doctor couple set up a hospital in a backward region of Rajasthan. Dr Archana Sharma of the hospital was hounded by the locals for the death of a patient. Depressed, she committed suicide. In another case Dr Nilesh Maske, who worked in a rural hospital at Tisgaon village (Maharashtra), too was brutally thrashed for a patient's death. Such cases always demoralise the doctors to work in rural areas. On the other hand, a World Bank report of 2019 suggests that 66% of our population lives in rural areas and 70% of work force living in rural pockets contribute 40% of the national income. At one level it is encouraging to note how rural India is playing a decisive role in nation building. But the other side reflects that innocence of people living in rural regions has become a thing of the past with a few exceptions. Government wants doctors to serve people in the rural areas. But unless some radical improvement in facilities along with widespread dissemination of information coupled with adequate police infrastructure are established, not many private medicine practitioners will come forward to set up hospitals in rural areas.

K Ravi, BHUBANESWAR

## Unforced error

Sir, Wimbledon, the tennis' most prestigious Major, strictly plays by its own rules. It has a dress code all its own and no play on the middle Sunday. Sometimes Wimbledon's self-rule works to its benefit, like it cancelled the 2020 edition, as it had the good sense to purchase pandemic insurance. But, by barring Russian and Belarusian players from taking part in this year's edition of the tournament because of the war in Ukraine, Wimbledon appears to have committed a huge unforced error. Most directly, the ban will impact some top-ranked players, like Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev, Aryna Sabalenka and Victoria Azarenka from these two countries. On current rankings, more than 20 players from both the countries (far more in doubles and juniors) cannot take part. On the second weekend in July, Wimbledon will crown its winners of 2022. But, before that the story of this event is already being told. The most foundational requirement for tennis is an even playing surface, literally. Wimbledon has just undone that. And instead, it has created a slippery slope.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

**OrissaPOST**

B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

# national



**The need of the hour is to integrate our own indigenous medical systems like Ayurveda and Yoga with modern medical practices**  
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

## MASKS MANDATORY IN TN

In an order issued Friday, the Tamil Nadu Health Department has made wearing of masks mandatory in the state and violators will have to pay ₹500 as fine. The Department said the decision was taken considering the rising cases of Covid-19 in the country, especially in Delhi



## of the day quote

Following the Jahangirpuri incident what is most important is that the NRC law should be enacted for the country. Every country across the world has its identity card for citizens, India should also have it

GIRIRAJ SINGH | UNION MINISTER

We have forgotten our ancient rich knowledge and glorious tradition. We have to make educational institutions world class to regain our old reputation. New research and innovation activities will have to be expedited

M VENKAIAH NAIDU | VICE PRESIDENT

The way efforts are going on to vitiate the atmosphere in the country is not proper for the unity of the country

SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA MP

# INDIA, UK AGREE TO DEEPEN DEFENCE TIES



During bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, Johnson discussed the ways to boost trade and security ties with India, which buys more than half of its military hardware from Russia

The two leaders discussed the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict

The two leaders had also detailed discussion on co-production and defence technology

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Boris Johnson Friday agreed on a new and expanded India-UK defence partnership, which will include support for new Indian-designed and built fighter jets, and signalled that an ambitious free trade pact to stimulate broad-based economic engagement could be wrapped up by October.

After his wide-ranging talks with Modi on the second and final day of his India visit, Johnson said the new defence and security partnership will enable India to strengthen its domestic defence industry as well as help the two countries protect vital shared interests in the Indo-Pacific.

The British prime minister also announced that the UK is creating an Open General Export Licence (OGEL) for India to "reduce bureaucracy and slashing delivery times" for defence procurement and that London will help New Delhi in the co-development of military hardware including indigenous production of fighter jets.

During their talks, the two prime ministers deliberated on the situation in Ukraine and expressed in

the strongest terms their concern about the ongoing conflict and humanitarian situation in that country.

A joint statement said Modi and Johnson "unequivocally condemned" the civilian deaths, and reiterated the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution of the conflict, which was having severe implications across the globe, in particular for developing countries.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary, Harsh Vardhan Shringla, said Johnson did not put pressure on India on its position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including adherence to the sanctions against Moscow.

The British prime minister said both sides agreed to work together to meet new threats across land, sea, air space and cyber domains and that the UK will help India develop its defence manufacturing as well as in the maritime sphere to detect and respond to threats in the oceans.

He said the threats of "autocratic coercion" have grown further and it is vital that India and the UK deepen their cooperation including protecting shared interest in keeping the Indo-Pacific open and free.

## ISRO chairman given VIP security

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: Maharashtra MP Navneet Rana and ISRO chairman S. Somanath have been provided a central armed VIP security cover by the Union government, officials said Friday.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) accorded the security cover last week to the two after accepting separate recommendations of central intelligence agencies that favoured armed security of paramilitary commandos to them in view of possible security threats to them.

Navneet Rana, a member of Lok Sabha from the Amravati seat of Maharashtra, has been accorded 'Y' category central cover that would entail about three to four armed commandos of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to move with her, they said.

Friday, the Mumbai police issued a notice to her and her MLA husband Ravi Rana, asking them not to disrupt the law and order situation as they plan to recite 'Hanuman Chalisa' outside Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's residence here on April 23.



The lawmaker couple is known to have an unofficial understanding with the BJP. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman S Somanath has also been accorded a 'Y+' category security cover. The rocket scientist will have about four to six armed commandos round-the-clock with him whenever he travels to any part of the country, officials said.

# 'Propagandist' newspaper on train: IRCTC begins probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: A "propagandist" newspaper distributed on board the Bangalore-Chennai Shatabdi Express has snowballed into a controversy, drawing political reactions and prompting the IRCTC to initiate an enquiry in the matter.

The IRCTC has admitted that the paper -- "The Aryavarth Express" -- was "unauthorised". The matter was raised by passenger Gopika Bakshi, a gender justice campaigner, on Twitter.

"This morning I boarded the Bangalore-Chennai Shatabdi Express only to be greeted by this blatantly propagandist publication on every other seat - The Aryavarth Express. Had never even heard of it. How is @IRCTCofficial allowing this?" Bakshi wrote on the microblogging site on Friday.

Congress MP B Manickam Tagore also questioned how such a newspaper found its way on board a train. "Will Hon'ble Rail minister order an inquiry into it? Whether it's the proved policy of the @RailMinIndia to allow prop-



The IRCTC has admitted that the paper -- "The Aryavarth Express" -- was 'unauthorised'

aganda material in the Shatabdi express? Will write and raise the issue in Loksabha.#IndiaAgainstHate," he tweeted.

Another Congress MP, Karti Chidambaram, also questioned how such a newspaper got into the list of the publications subscribed by the IRCTC. Sources said the IRCTC, the ticketing-and-catering arm of the railways, has approved Deccan Herald and one other local paper as the two publications to be distributed on board trains in the

region. These newspapers are distributed on board by IRCTC licensees.

"We have ordered an enquiry into this and action will be taken against those found responsible. This paper is not among the IRCTC-approved publications," IRCTC spokesperson Anand Jha said.

The divisional railway manager, Chennai said an enquiry in the matter is being conducted by the DRM Bangalore. "The latest update is that DRM Bangalore is investigating the issue on how an unauthorised newspaper found its way into the train. We like to inform everyone that the train belongs to Bengaluru division and the incident happened there. We are sure they would take appropriate action," he said in a tweet.

## SHORT TAKES

### Saudi greenlights Haj travel

New Delhi: Saudi Arabia has informed India that pilgrims will be able to travel to that country for Haj this year and the Indian quota has been fixed at 79,237 pilgrims due to Covid limitations, Ministry of Minority Affairs officials said Friday. The Saudi government has also told the Indian side that only those aged below 65 will be able to travel for Haj this year, they said. Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said all preparations are in order for the pilgrimage and interviews for those deputed for Haj duty have also been completed.

### Niti Aayog VC steps down

New Delhi: The government Friday appointed Suman K Bery as the vice chairman of Niti Aayog, following the sudden resignation of Rajiv Kumar. Bery will take charge from May 1, 2022, an official order said. Kumar's tenure will end April 30. Kumar, an eminent economist, took over as vice chairman of Niti Aayog in August 2017 after the then VC Arvind Panagariya exited the government think-tank to return to academics.

### Man beaten to death by son

Lakhimpur Kheri (UP): An elderly man was allegedly beaten to death by his son here following a heated argument over money, police said Friday. The incident took place in Chinni village under Lakhimpur Kotwali police station area Thursday night, they said.

### Cop found dead

Amethi: A woman police outpost in-charge allegedly hanged herself here on Friday, police said. The deceased, Rashmi Yadav, was posted at Mohanganj Police Station. According to police, Yadav, a Sub Inspector, had gone to her quarters on Friday afternoon, and when a constable was sent to her quarter, it was found locked, including the windows. Later on the instructions of the Superintendent of Police, the lock of the door was broken, and videography was done.

### 10 hurt in mishap

Ramgarh (Jharkhand): At least 10 tourists were injured in a head-on collision between a bus carrying tourists and a truck in Jharkhand's Deoghar district Friday, police said. The accident happened at Kenjhiha Valley on the Ormanjhi-Gola road, a state highway connecting NH-23 and NH-33 within the limits of Rajrapa police station of the district.

## UNITED FOR A CAUSE



Students with painted faces during a programme organised on the occasion of Earth Day, at a school in Moradabad

# Bulldozer brings down 300-year-old temple in Rajasthan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, April 22: A 300-year-old Lord Shiva temple in Alwar district's Rajgarh town was demolished Friday.

The video of the temple demolition is going viral on social media putting the Congress government of Rajasthan in the dock. However, the

ruling party has washed its hands off the demolition claiming that the Rajgarh municipality is being ruled by the BJP and the action has been taken by the saffron party workers.

Meanwhile, the local administration said that the action to remove the encroachment was taken as per the master plan. BJP state president Satish Poonia however ques-

tioned how can a 300-year-old temple be an encroachment? "The BJP is sending its team to the spot, which will give its report in three days," he added. Congress state president Govind Singh Dotasara said that the BJP is playing politics on the issue. "In 2018, the BJP Mandal President wrote a letter to the district collector recommending the re-

moval of this encroachment. As there is a BJP board in Rajgarh being headed by Satish Guharia, the resolution to remove this encroachment was passed in their board meeting. Thereafter, encroachment was removed. Temples are not tampered with in the Congress government, this has been the agenda of the BJP," he added.

# EC mulling postal ballots for overseas voters

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 22: The Election Commission of India has said that its contemplating postal ballots for overseas voters, an official statement said Friday.

During his recent visit to South Africa and interaction with the members of the Indian community there, Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra urged the community to register as overseas voters as the present num-

bers are abysmally low. He also shared with the members that extension of Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) facility to overseas voters is being contemplated.

The Election Commission delegation, led by the CEC, visited South Africa and Mauritius from April 9-19.

During this visit, a series of meetings were held with the Election Commissions of South Africa and Mauritius as well as



interactions with the large NRI community in the two countries. Both Election Management

Bodies are also MOU partners with ECI. The three countries share a relationship which is fundamental, unique and rooted in the collective experiences and cumulative strength of their people, the statement said.

As the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), which provides a unique platform for exchange of knowledge and information between its members, completes 10 years of its foundation and steps into a new decade, the meet-

ing was positioned at the right juncture wherein it was time to reflect on the way forward for A-WEB as an organisation, it said.

"During the meeting, it was acknowledged that this umbrella organisation had EMBs with a lot of experience and expertise which could assist and advise those EMBs who were looking for further development and upgradation of their systems. It was felt that the focus must now be on increasing membership and enhancing the

sense of belonging of the members. More avenues must be explored so that the members can interact and meet more often," the CEC said.

Sushil Chandra said that South Africa has made big strides in democracy and would be hosting the next General Assembly of AWEB in October 2022. India has a very intense and active association with AWEB and both it and South Africa are its founding members.

## PROTESTS AGAINST K-RAIL

## Kerala govt to hold panel discussion on SilverLine

For the second successive day, angry protesters in Kannur were seen engaging in a war of words with police and K-Rail officials, when they tried to lay the marking stone for the social impact assessment study of the project



and Technology), official sources here said. The programme is designed in the format of three experts speaking for the project and three experts speaking against it in the presence of 25-50 invited audience, they said. The media would reportedly be allowed to cover the debate.

Alok Kumar Verma, a retired Chief Bridge Engineer who was part of preparing the preliminary feasibility report of the SilverLine alias K-Rail project but later raised

stiff objection, R V G Menon, a prominent environmental scientist, and Joseph C Mathew, social observer, were included in the panel of those speaking against the project.

Verma, who was here Wednesday to meet Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and senior government officials to appraise the concerns regarding the mammoth infrastructure project, had told media that he did not get appointment for the meeting. Coming down heavily on the Kerala Rail

Development Corporation Limited (KRDC), he alleged that the people of the state were going to be burdened by a project which may eventually cost Rs two lakh crore. Subodh Jain, retired Member-Engineering, S N Raghuchandran Nair, president, Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Trivandrum) and Saji Gopinath, vice chancellor, Kerala Digital University, have been included as panelists to speak in favour of the semi-high speed railway.

Interestingly, no one from the Anti-Silver Line People's Forum, a platform which spearheads protests across the state against the multi-crore infrastructure initiative, has been invited to the discussion.

The Pinarayi Vijayan government is coming up with the panel discussion on the K-Rail project at a time when they are facing intense protests from opposition parties and a section of local people, who may be affected by the initiative, against its implementation.

One of the major criticisms by the opposition Congress and BJP is that the Left government is not listening to the concerns of common people and the views of those who oppose it.

Resumption of the survey stone laying work for the project after a gap of almost one month was marred by protests Thursday, with locals and anti-SilverLine activists clashing with the police in the state capital and northern Kannur, prompting authorities to halt the process temporarily.

Alleging police high-handedness against protesters, the opposition Congress came down heavily on the Vijayan government and urged it to stop action against common people and their party activists, who oppose the multi-crore project.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, V D Satheesan even drew a parallel between police action against the anti-Silver Line protesters in the state and the demolition drive in New Delhi and asked whether Left leader Brinda Karat was seeing this.

The SilverLine rail corridor, envisaged to cover a 530-kilometre stretch from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod, is estimated to cost around Rs 64,000 crore.

The project aims to make transportation easy along the entire north-south of Kerala and reduce travel time to less than four hours as against 12-14 hours.

## Tej Pratap invites Shah for Iftar party

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



## Tej Pratap Yadav posted an invitation card on his Twitter handle to invite Shah

Patna, April 22: Iftar parties have become an issue of politics these days in Bihar as leaders of different political parties are trying to score points over each other.

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) is organising an Iftar party Friday at 10, Circular Road residence of former Chief Minister Rabri Devi, where Tej Pratap Yadav has invited Union Home Minister Amit Shah also.

Tej Pratap Yadav posted an invitation card on his Twitter handle and invited Shah. "In the month of the precious Ramzan month, we welcome our Union Home Minister Janab Amit Shah on the soil of Patliputra for the celebration of Dawat-e-Iftar in the 10 circular road residence of Rabri Devi," Tej Pratap Yadav posted in Hindi on his Twitter wall. He also put up a couplet along with the invite.

Amit Shah is coming to Bihar to take part in Babu Veer Kunwar Singh Jayanti on April 23. He will go to Jagdishpur in Bhojpur district, 65 km away from the state capital, Patna. Such an event is organised to honour freedom fighters of the country under the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Amit Shah will also participate in other events also. Besides the

tweet, posters were put at several places in Patna, which have Lalu Prasad Yadav, Rabri Devi, Tejashwi Yadav, Misa Bharti and Tej Pratap Yadav seated in chairs and the pictures of party's other leaders -- Jagadanand Singh, Shivanand Tiwari, Abdul Bari Siddiqui, Shyam Rajak, Uday Narayan Chaudhary, Bhai Virendra, Sumil Kumar Singh and newly elected MLC Ajay Singh are also there. The poster has a caption of 'A to Z family'.

The RJD has also invited LJP (Ram Vilas) president Chirag Paswan and VIP president Mukesh Sahani to the Iftar party. These two leaders have had sour relations with the BJP. They were part of NDA and now are looking for other opportunities.

## Lalu gets bail in fodder scam



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ranchi/Patna, April 22: The Jharkhand High Court Friday granted bail to Rashtriya Janta Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad in connection with a fodder scam case relating to fraudulent withdrawal of Rs 139.5 crore from the Doranda treasury in undivided Bihar.

Ranchi High Court judge Apressh Kumar Singh granted the bail 42 weeks after Lalu's conviction in the Doranda case. The special CBI court had convicted the RJD chief February 21 and awarded five years jail term. Since then, four hearings have taken place in the court for his bail.

During the last hearing, the court had asked CBI to clear its objection on why should Lalu Prasad should not be given a bail. Though the CBI filed its reply in the court, the judge was not satisfied with the arguments. On the other hand, Justice Apressh Kumar Singh was more satisfied by the argument of Lalu's lawyer Prabhat Kumar. "Ranchi High Court has granted bail in Doranda case and the copy of the decision has been sent to the authority of Hotwar jail Ranchi. The jail authority will further communicate to AIIMS Delhi for the release of Lalu Prasad," Kumar said. Currently, Lalu Prasad is admitted in AIIMS Delhi due to his multiple health issues. He suffers from kidney disease, blood pressure, lung infection besides other ailments and is under the custody of jail in the AIIMS Delhi.

## KERALA NURSE CASE

## Possibility of reprieve in sight

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, April 22: For Kerala nurse Nimisha Priya, on a death row in Yemen for killing a Yemeni national, a flicker of hope has emerged with the deceased's family agreeing to talk about her future.

'Save Nimisha forum' working for her release, got retired Supreme Court judge Kurian Joseph to act as interlocutor to see how her life can be saved.

Joseph, along with a team of highly respected former and serving diplomatic officials, managed to establish a contact with authorities in Yemen.

According to a source in the know of things, talks have begun with the family members of the deceased and the month of Ramzan has also come as an added impetus.

The only possibility of any reprieve for Priya is if the family of Talal Mahdi pardons her for blood money -- compensation paid by an offender or his kin to the family of the victim -- in accordance with the Sharia law and diplomatic intervention, as per Yemeni rules.

According to rough estimates, a sum equivalent to Rs 1.50 crore might have to be paid in Yemeni currency and perhaps it could be even more as it includes fine and other charges.

Meanwhile, a team led by Joseph, including Priya's mother and her young daughter, are awaiting diplomatic clearance to travel to Yemen to have a direct dialogue with Mahdi's family.

Last month, a Yemeni court dismissed Priya's appeal in the murder case of Talal Mahdi, in which she, along with another person, are the prime accused.

The two have been sentenced to



death for the murder of Mahdi in 2017. Hailing from Palakkad, Priya, a nurse by profession, reached Yemen in 2012 with her husband. In 2015, with the help of Talal Mahdi, she set up a clinic. By this time her husband and their child had returned home.

Soon, differences cropped up between her and Mahdi and she accused him of torturing her and taking away her passport, making her trip back to her home state impossible.

On July 25, 2017, she injected Talal with sedatives to take back her passport and flee. But the man collapsed after being administered the sedative.

Realising that Mahdi had died, the nurse with another person's help, disposed of his body, which was cut into pieces in a water tank.

Four days later, the crime surfaced and both were arrested and while she was sentenced to death, the other person was sentenced to life. The incident came to light only when a Kerala gospel worker reached a jail in Yemen to preach. Priya handed over a letter to him describing the entire incident.

## Bihar to frame new policy for increasing peacock numbers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, April 22: The population of peacocks has recently dramatically plummeted in Madhopur Govind village, popularly known as the peacock village, in Bihar's East Champaran district.

Two decades ago, there were said to be about 300 peacocks in Madhopur village, but their number has now reduced to a dozen.

People believe that some peacocks died of old age, while most died due to the widespread use of pesticides in the vegetable fields in the village.

However, since the number of peacocks has skyrocketed in a village in Saharsa district, the Bihar government has now planned to conserve these birds in those areas where their population has declined. Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Neeraj

Kumar Singh that Aran village of Saharsa is the only place in Bihar, where even today there are 200 to 300 peacocks, and he has talked to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar about making institutional arrangements for the conservation of peacocks in Aran. He said that the Forest Department would work on the plan to preserve the peacocks in Madhopur Govind also and augment their numbers. He said that to increase the number of peacocks, the department would also talk to bird experts and make such arrangements after receiving their suggestions.

According to officials, special areas will be earmarked for peacocks, where pesticides or insecticides will not be used as most of the birds die from consuming these toxic substances.

The matter of declining peacock numbers had also come

TWO DECADES AGO, THERE WERE SAID TO BE ABOUT 300 PEACOCKS IN MADHOPUR VILLAGE, BUT THEIR NUMBER HAS NOW REDUCED TO A DOZEN

PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT SOME PEACOCKS DIED OF OLD AGE, WHILE MOST DIED DUE TO THE WIDESPREAD USE OF PESTICIDES IN THE VEGETABLE FIELDS IN THE VILLAGE

up in the state wildlife board meeting last Monday when Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expressed his concern and asked the Forest and Environment Department officials to focus on conservation of the peacocks.



RICHARD JANSON / GETTY

## 91 contractors blacklisted for delay in projects



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, April 22: The Bihar government has blacklisted 91 contractors and debarred 1,490 others, engaged in construction of rural roads under PMGSY and MMGSY, after they failed to complete the projects on time and in some cases for not following terms and conditions of the agreement, Rural Works Department (RWD) Minister Jayant Raj said.

"The blacklisted and debarred contractors not only violated the agreement but also ignored the government's repeated request to speed up works related to rural roads under the schemes like Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Mukhya Mantri Gram Sampark Yojana (MMGSY) and Gramin Tola Sampark Nischay Yojana (GTSNY)", the RWD minister told PTI.

These contractors (blacklisted 91 and debarred 1,490) were registered with the RWD of the state government, he said, adding that there are around 8,000 contractors who are listed with the RWD in the state. The minister further said, "Decision to debar and blacklist them was taken on the basis of their performance report pertaining to the projects which they handled in 2021-22. Not completing projects on time itself is a sort of corruption as it causes cost escalation and puts extra financial burden on the exchequer."

## Ker: Is there a spike in Cov cases again?

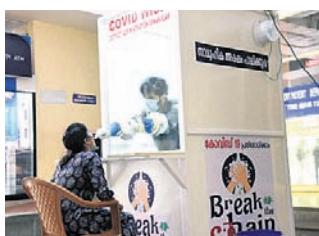
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, April 22: Even though Kerala Health Minister Veena George accused the Centre of propagating false news that the government has stopped updating daily Covid figures, the state Covid dashboard was last updated April 5 leading people to speculate whether there has been a spike in fresh infections.

George had said that they have been e-mailing the daily data on Covid to the Centre. But the practise of regular daily updates given to the media, which was a feature ever since the pandemic began, is not happening.

According to the dashboard April 5, there were 354 confirmed cases and 282 recoveries.

But a mobile laboratory technician in the state capital said on Friday that these days he tests



about 40 people daily, of which 15 to 17 turn positive.

Even though Covid protocols have been practically lifted, masks continue to be used by all.

The first major event that the state witnessed after Covid protocols were lifted was the 23rd CPI-M Party Congress that was held from April 6-10 in Kannur. Massive crowds had assembled to attend the event and its around this time that the official dashboard had discontinued updating the Covid figures.

## Cong has different yardsticks for different leaders?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, April 22: The Kerala unit of Congress is known for its factionalism and when it comes to discipline within the party, it appears there are different yardsticks for different people as is evident in the case of two veteran leaders.

Similarly, questions are being raised on party's silence over former Deputy Rajya Sabha Chairman and Congress leader PJ Kurien's slamming of Rahul Gandhi in an interview with a vernacular magazine in state capital Thiruvananthapuram Sunday.

Thomas is 75 years old and has had a very long innings in electoral politics both at the state and Centre, while 81-year-old Kurien has had an even longer political innings, but it was in Delhi only where he had served six terms in the Lok Sabha from 1980-99 and in the Upper House from 2005 till 2018, when in his last term he was the Deputy Chairman.

## KERALA POLITICS



Incidentally, both the top Congress leaders have some similarities: former college professors, belong to Christian community and are unhappy especially with the party high command.

While Thomas was not allowed to contest his sitting Lok Sabha constituency in 2019, Kurien wanted another term in the Upper House which was turned down by the Congress, and has led to both of them turning jittery. Another similarity between the two

Congressmen is due to their long innings in Delhi, both of them have very little grassroots support in Kerala and not much tears are being shed on account of their present grouse. But what has come as a shocker is that at the Congress's top committee meeting in Thiruvananthapuram held this week where both Thomas and Kurien need to be present but neither took part.

While Thomas was not invited to the party meet, Kurien expressed

## Recently, senior party leader KV Thomas made headlines after he attended the 23rd CPI-M party Congress at Kannur April 9 defying party President Sonia Gandhi's order

his inability to attend the meeting citing personal reasons.

According to a party source requesting anonymity, as soon as the party meeting began, Congress Lok Sabha member TN Prathapan demanded that Kurien be punished for his interview given to a vernacular magazine.

However, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala intervened and said there is nothing new in what Kurien said and is similar to the statements that the G23 (group of top Congress leaders in

Delhi who first expressed their displeasure against the way Rahul Gandhi is conducting himself) and can be ignored.

Soon, the Kerala Opposition leader VD Satheesan also intervened and voiced the same opinion as Chennithala and said the party committee need not waste its time on the same issue.

A media critic on condition of anonymity said it's strange how the Congress leaders in Kerala behave as the two of the biggest enemies of Kurien -- senior Congress leader Oommen Chandy and Chennithala took a soft political stand.

Kurien has been angry with Chandy and Chennithala as in 2018 when he was expecting a fresh Rajya Sabha term, the latter decided to placate the estranged Kerala Congress (M) leader KM Mani, who had temporarily quit the Congress-UDF alliance, offered the constituency to his son Jose K. Mani, who had a year left to complete his Lok Sabha term.



of the day quote

The country's airport sector is expected to see investments worth Rs 1.65 lakh crore, including from private players, in the coming years, and the government also aims to have 200 airports

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

The government is trying its best to tackle the power shortage

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

The Delhi government will study a system installed in Mumbai to capture methane from the rotting waste and replicate it in the capital to prevent fires at landfills

GOPAL RAI | MINISTER OF GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI

SHORT TAKES

2 cops suspended

Vijaywada: The Andhra Pradesh government Friday suspended two police officers for dereliction of duty after a mentally-challenged woman was gangraped by three contract employees of a government hospital in Vijaywada.

3 killed, 34 hurt

Lucknow: Three persons were killed and 34 injured after a balcony and a wall collapsed at a wedding venue in Bijnor area in Sarojini Nagar police circle, late on Thursday night.

Man shot dead

Gurugram: A 35-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by a bike-borne armed assailant in Gurugram's Bilaspur Khurd village, the police said Friday.

Two injured

New Delhi: Two persons sustained minor injuries after a security guard posted at Rohini Court fired a shot on the ground to stop a fight between three people outside the Court premises in the national capital on Friday morning.

Man booked

Bangalore: A man has been booked for crushing a street dog under his car wheels in Jnanabharathi police station limits in Bangalore, police said Friday.



India became a secular, socialist and democratic country with great difficulty. Equal civil rights were given to everyone in the Constitution. But BJP is trying to break this social fabric

AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

COVID SURGE

Eighteen more people, including students and staff, tested positive for Covid-19 at IIT Madras, Tamil Nadu Health Department officials said Friday.



PM's visit: Heavy security in Samba

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 22: A multi-tier security setup has been put in place for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Samba on Sunday, officials said, hours after two suspected Pakistani terrorists were killed during an encounter in Jammu.

An alert has also been sounded along the border and a high degree of vigilance is being maintained at vital installations in Jammu and Kashmir in view of the visit, they said.

Their remarks came after an attempt by banned terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) to carry out a suicide attack ahead of the PM's visit was foiled as two suspected Pakistani terrorists were killed in the encounter in Jammu.

The venue of the public function has been made out of bounds for the general public and a three-tier security arrangement has been



An alert has also been sounded along the border and a high degree of vigilance is being maintained at vital installations in Jammu and Kashmir

THE OFFICIALS SAID CHECKPOINTS HAVE BEEN RAISED ON ALL THE ROADS LEADING TO THE VENUE, AND VEHICLES AND PEOPLE USING HIGHWAYS AND PERIPHERAL ROADS IN THE AREA ARE BEING THOROUGHLY CHECKED AND FRISKED

made after conducting a full-fledged anti-sabotage checking, officials said. The administration has been making arrangements for the participation of one lakh people in the programme.

The officials said checkpoints have been raised on all the roads leading to the venue, and vehi-

cles and people using highways and peripheral roads in the area are being thoroughly checked and frisked.

They said they have made elaborate deployments and carried out area-domination in view of the visit. Alertness in border areas has been raised and vigilance on

all the roads leading to the venue, and vehicles and people using highways and peripheral roads in the area are being thoroughly checked and frisked.

Some high-end surveillance equipment has been inducted into security setup to ensure fool proof security, they said. In Jammu and Kathua, security has been beefed up with frisking and checking of vehicles increased, they said.

Court can review govt's decision on remission, says SC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: Court has the power to review the decision of the government on the acceptance or rejection of remission and is also empowered to direct it to re-consider its decision, the Supreme Court said Friday.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Aniruddha Bose said while a discretion vest with the government to suspend or remit the sentence, the executive power cannot be exercised arbitrarily.

It said the prerogative of the executive is subject to the rule of law and fairness in state action embodied in Article 14 of the Constitution. "The Court has the power to review the decision of the government regarding the acceptance or rejection of an application for remission under Section 432 of the CrPC to determine whether the decision is arbitrary in nature," the bench said.

The observations of the top court came on a plea filed by a convict Ram Chander who is undergoing a sentence of imprisonment for life upon being convicted for the commission of offences punishable under Section 302 (murder) read with Section 149 (unlawful assembly) of the Indian Penal Code.

The convict sought the issuance of a writ directing the Chhattisgarh government to grant him pre-mature release.

The top court said though the court can review the decision of the government to determine whether it was arbitrary, it cannot usurp the power of the government and grant remission itself.

On the issue of the opinion of

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Aniruddha Bose said while a discretion vest with the government to suspend or remit the sentence, the executive power cannot be exercised arbitrarily

the presiding judge of the court for deciding remission, the apex court said that the appropriate government should not mechanically follow the opinion of the presiding judge.

"In the present case, there is nothing to indicate that the presiding judge took into account the factors which have been laid down...." These factors include assessing (i) whether the offence affects the society at large; (ii) the probability of the crime being repeated; (iii) the potential of the convict to commit crimes in the future; (iv) if any fruitful purpose is being served by keeping the convict in prison; and (v) the socio-economic condition of the convict's family," the bench said.

The apex court directed that the petitioner's application for remission should be re-considered. "We direct the Special Judge, Durg to provide an opinion on the application afresh accompanied by adequate reasoning," it said. The top court said that in this case the Special Judge, Durg must provide his opinion within a month of the date of the receipt of this order.

Five states extract almost 50% groundwater: Govt data



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 22: Five states - Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Kerala - account for 49 per cent of the overall extraction of groundwater in the entire country while the rest of the country accounts for 50 per cent, government data between 2004 and 2020 has shown.

"However, it was only in 2009, that Andhra Pradesh replaced Madhya Pradesh," said an official associated with Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), the flagship programme of the Jal Shakti Ministry.

Groundwater is of vital importance as it sustains ecosystems, maintains the base flow of rivers

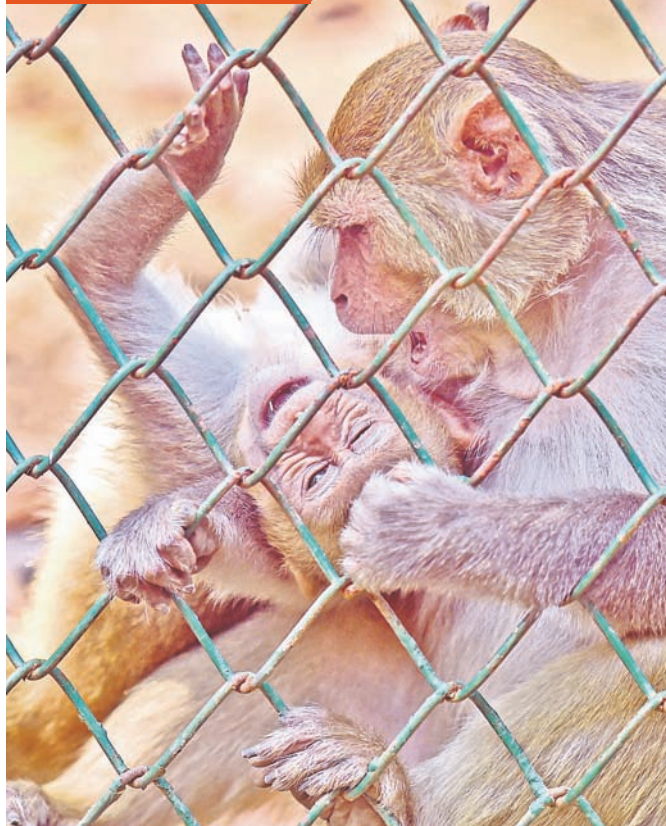
and prevents land subsidence and seawater intrusion, he said.

"These top five states withdraw about 24.37 billion cubic metres (BCM)," the data from the Ministry of Jal Shakti showed adding, between year 2004 and 2020, groundwater drawl has increased from 18.09 BCM to 27.31 BCM implying an average annual increase of 576 million cubic metres.

However, these are not the highest groundwater withdrawing states in terms of absolute volume. The stage of ground water extraction is very high in Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan, where it is more than 100 per cent, which implies that in these states, the annual ground water consumption is more than annual extractable ground water resources.

In the states of Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and UTs of Chandigarh and Puducherry, the stage of ground water extraction is between 70-100 per cent. In the rest of the states / UTs, the stage of ground water development is below 70 per cent.

SPECIAL BOND



A monkey with its baby at an enclosure at a mini zoo in East Burdwan PTI PHOTO

K'taka to implement law on Azaan

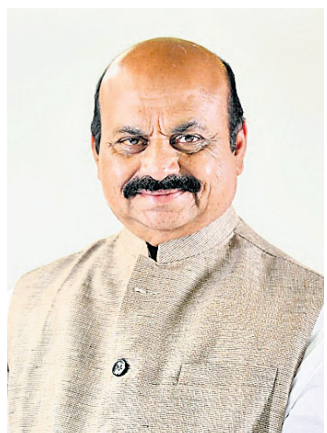
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 22: The Karnataka government is all set to strictly implement the law in connection with Azaan. The move is likely to add to the existing social unrest in the state.

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and the state DG and IGP Praveen Sood made it clear on Friday that everyone should follow the law in this regard. Meanwhile, Sri Ram Sena founder Pramod Muthalik has stated that he has launched a "Azaan se Azadi" campaign in the state.

He had demanded that the government should ensure implementation of the law on violation of rules while performing Azaan in mosques. Instructions have been issued for resolving the Azaan issue harmoniously through holding peace committee meetings at the police station level.

The process is going on.



Everyone should follow the law, Bommai said.

There is a High Court order on Azaan. A circular has already been issued in accordance with that. The rule also specifies the decibel level. The DG has already issued the circular, he stated.

IGP Praveen Sood had stated

IGP Praveen Sood had stated that as per the rule, notices have been issued to mosques and other places where speakers are used

that as per the rule, notices have been issued to mosques and other places where speakers are used. "We will not allow violation of the High Court rule at any cost. The police have issued notices across the state. We will not allow any violation," he stated.

"We will not let peace be disturbed in the state," he said. Sources in the police department, however, said that any action against a mosque or a temple for use of speakers would result in chaotic consequences for the state.

Umar bail plea: Delhi HC issues notice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: The Delhi High Court Friday issued notice to Delhi Police on the bail application of JNU scholar-activist Umar Khalid, who had approached the court following the dismissal of his bail plea from a trial court in the alleged "larger conspiracy" behind the Delhi riots.

While issuing notice in the matter, the division bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Rajnish Bhatnagar said the speech delivered by Umar Khalid at Amravati, was "offensive and obnoxious".

Seeking the stand of prosecution and to reply within three days, the bench slated the matter for further hearing on April 27. During the course of the hearing, the court asked Khalid's counsel about the speeches he delivered.

"Did Gandhiji ever employ this language? Did Shaheed Bhagat Singh ever employ such language? We have no qualms about permit-

ting free speech but what are you saying?", the bench asked.

Earlier in the trial court, Khalid's counsel, opposing the charges under the Indian Penal Code and UAPA, had termed the charge sheet a "work of fiction". He argued that the speech given by Khalid was about Gandhi, harmony, and the Constitution, and it was not a crime. After the submissions, the court had reserved the order.

Opposing the bail plea, Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Amit Prasad had argued on the relevance of the speech given by Umar Khalid in Amravati in February 2020. He said the bail application was rejected on February 11, 2022 pointing out that the announcement of Donald Trump visiting India came on the same day.

Last month, Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat had denied bail to Khalid, observing that there were reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against the accused are prima facie true.

SC REJECTS NAWAB MALIK'S BAIL PLEA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 22: The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a plea by Maharashtra Minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik to release him in a case of money laundering.

A bench comprising Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Surya Kant said: "We will not interfere. It is too nascent a stage to interfere... We can't interfere with the due process at this stage."

The bench asked senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing Malik, to move the competent court with the bail application. "The special court can consider the bail application," said the bench.

Sibal vehemently argued that there was no prima facie case and there was no predicate offence, no FIR on forgery, and added, "How does Prevention of Money Laundering Act be applied?"

Sibal said, "How do they arrest me in 2022 for something, which happened in 1993... where I am not in the picture at all?"

Sibal added that the special court is not going to grant his client bail with a 5000-page charge sheet filed in the matter. "The Arnab Goswami judgment is in my favour," Sibal submitted.

Refusing to entertain Malik's plea, the bench said: "We are not inclined to exercise jurisdiction under Article 136 when the investigation is at the nascent stage."

The bench clarified that the observation of the high court on merits should not come in the way of parties taking recourse to the rights available under the law.

Malik, moved the top court challenging the Bombay High Court, which declined his interim release in a habeas corpus petition. Malik has claimed that his arrest was completely illegal.

2-WHEELER EV FIRES SHAKE UP NATION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 22: The unabated deadly fires in the electric two-wheelers has shaken up the entire EV industry and its stakeholders, forcing the government to now press an emergency button and direct EV makers to immediately recall faulty batches that may trigger more such incidents.

After Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said in a tweet that companies may take advance action to recall all defective batches of vehicles immediately, Hyderabad-based Pure EV said it has initiated the recall of 2,000 e-scooters to check any faults in batteries



and chargers.

"In view of the recent fire incidents involving our vehicles in Nizamabad and Chennai, PURE EV has decided to recall 2,000 ve-

hicles from the models ETrance Plus and EPluto7G of the concerned batches," the company said in a statement late on Thursday.

An 80-year-old man was killed

and two others injured when the battery of a Pure EV electric two-wheeler exploded in their house in Telangana's Nizamabad district.

According to police, the incident occurred on the night of April 19 in a house where the battery was being charged.

This was the fifth incident of a fire in a PURE EV scooter.

Earlier, Gadkari warned EV makers that if any company is found negligent in their processes,

We will soon issue quality-centric guidelines for Electric Vehicles. NITIN GADKARI UNION ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MINISTER

# international

## of the day quote

IMF is an institution in which America has a lot of stakes as it is the largest shareholder. Imran Khan sold out our economic sovereignty to them as he handed over our central bank -- our bank of the last resort -- to the IMF

**KHAWAJA ASIF** | PAKISTAN DEFENCE MINISTER

The extraordinary fortitude and success of [Ukraine] President Zelensky in resisting Russian forces in Kyiv means I can announce that very shortly, next week, we will reopen our embassy in Ukraine's capital city

**BORIS JOHNSON** | BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

Every country in the world needs to prepare now for the possible complete severance of any relations with Russia

**VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY** | UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### France issues arrest warrant for Ghosn

**Paris:** French prosecutors have issued an international arrest warrant for disgraced auto tycoon Carlos Ghosn, who fled Japan in 2019 for Lebanon in a gripping escape. Nanterre prosecutors' office in France said on Friday that the arrest warrant for the former head of Nissan and Renault is among five issued by them. The Ghosn warrant is based on an investigation opened in 2019 into money laundering and abuse of company assets reportedly over millions in alleged suspect payments made between the Renault-Nissan alliance and Suhail Bahwan Automobiles (SBA), a vehicle distributor company in Oman owned by billionaire Suhail Bahwan.

### Former Kenyan Prez Kibaki dies

**Nairobi:** Mwai Kibaki, the former Kenyan leader whose distinguished political career was tarnished when he won a second presidential term that was followed by deadly post-election violence, has died at the age of 90. Kibaki's death was announced Friday by President Uhuru Kenyatta, who said his passing was a sad day for the country and praised his predecessor as a great Kenyan and a statesman.

### Portugal removes mask mandates

**Lisbon:** Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa has issued a government decree removing the mandatory use of masks for almost all situations. According to the President's website, Rebelo "promulgated a governmental order" related to Covid-19 restrictions, which include reducing the mask-mandate, reports Xinhua news agency. The Council of Ministers agreed that conditions have been met for the non-compulsory use of masks, said Minister of Health Marta Temido at a press conference.

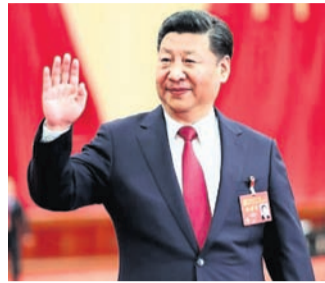
### Hernández to face charges in US court

**New York:** Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández was expected to make a virtual appearance in federal court in New York Friday to face drug trafficking and weapons charges after he was arrested in Honduras and extradited overnight to the US. Hernández boarded an airplane in Honduras with agents from the US Drug Enforcement Administration Thursday, just three months after leaving office. US Attorney General Merrick Garland accused Hernández of abusing his position as president of Honduras "to operate the country as a narco-state".

# Xi all set to get endorsement for 3rd term

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Beijing, April 22:** China's ruling Communist Party has set the ball rolling for a rare third term for President Xi Jinping as he was "unanimously elected" as a delegate for the once-in-five-year party Congress to be held in the next few months which was widely expected to put a seal of approval for his continuation. Xi, 68, was elected delegate to



the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC)

at the party's Guangxi regional Congress by a unanimous vote Friday, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Xi was nominated by the CPC Central Committee as a candidate for delegate to the 20th CPC National Congress, scheduled to be held in the second half of 2022, the report said. The CPC Congress of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region was held Thursday and Friday in the re-

gional capital of Nanning.

The Congress, which is due to be held in November, has been pre-poned apparently as the leadership get-on with it early in view of complex and fluid national and international situation starting from relapse of Covid-19 virus in the country paralysing Shanghai and the deepening Russia-Ukraine war in which Beijing was caught in the middle with mounting US pressure to

break off from close ally Moscow.

Ever since his first election in a similar CPC Congress towards the end of the 2012, Xi heading the party, the powerful military and the presidency has consolidated his hold on power, highlighting the need for strong leadership to strengthen stability of the party and the country in the face of international adversity building against the country on a host of issues.

## RUSSIA BANS TECH HONCHOS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Moscow, April 22:** Amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, the Russian Foreign Ministry has issued a list of US figures, including tech honchos, who are now prohibited from entering the country for an indefinite period.

According to TechCrunch, the list includes high-profile US politicians such as Vice President Kamala Harris, tech leaders, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and LinkedIn chief Ryan Roslansky, as well as journalists and others who it says are promoting a 'Russophobic' agenda.

The announcement is also an extension of Russia acting to shut down or restrict access to several Western platforms that are not complying with its regulations on information dissemination, specifically for trying to limit pro-Russian messaging.

These shutdowns have included snapping access to Facebook and Instagram, limiting access to Google News and issuing warnings about YouTube. Meanwhile, Apple, Google, Microsoft and many other tech giants have shut down or paused operations in Russia.

The list also includes Brian Thomas Moynihan, Chairman and CEO of Bank of America, and George Stephanopoulos, host on the ABC television channel, among others.

## 'South Ukraine Moscow's next target'

AGENCIES

**Kyiv/Mariupol, April 22:** A Russian general said Friday that Moscow wants to seize all of southern and eastern Ukraine, far wider war aims than it had acknowledged as it presses on with a new offensive after its campaign to capture the capital Kyiv collapsed last month.

Rustam Minnekayev, deputy commander of Russia's central military district, was quoted by Russian state news agencies as saying Moscow aimed to seize the entire eastern Donbas region, link up with the Crimea peninsula, and capture Ukraine's entire south as far as a breakaway, Russian-occupied region of Moldova. That would



mean pushing hundreds of miles beyond current lines, past the major Ukrainian cities of Mykolaiv and Odesa. Ukraine said his comments had given the lie to Russia's previous assertions that it has no territorial ambitions.

"They stopped hiding it," Ukraine's defence ministry said on Twitter. Russia had "acknowledged that the goal of the 'second phase' of the war is not victory over the mythical Nazis, but simply the occupation of eastern and southern Ukraine. Imperialism as it is."

Ukraine's general staff said Russian forces had increased attacks along the whole frontline in the east and were trying to mount an offensive in the Kharkiv region, north of Russia's main target, the Donbas. In Kharkiv city, Russian shellfire hit the main Barabashovo market. Ambulance services said there had been casualties but no details were available yet. A wedding hall and a residential building were also struck. In Geneva, the United Nations human rights office said there was growing evidence of Russian war crimes in Ukraine, including indiscriminate shelling

## POSSIBLE MASS GRAVES NEAR MARIUPOLE

**Kyiv:** Mounds of dirt seen in satellite imagery that Ukrainian officials say indicate new mass graves highlighted the savagery of a war that showed no signs of abating on Friday, as Russia pounded targets in eastern Ukraine in a new offensive to take the country's industrial heartland. Cities in the Donbas came under Russian fire overnight, and the attacks interfered with attempts to evacuate civilians in one area, according to a regional official. The region, home to coal mines, metal plants and heavy-equipment factories, is bracing for what could be a decisive campaign as Russian President Vladimir Putin attempts to salvage an 8-week-old war already widely seen as a blunder and a humanitarian disaster. On Thursday, the Russian leader claimed victory in the battle for Mariupol, even though an estimated 2,000 Ukrainian remain holed up at a giant steel mill in the strategic city. Putin ordered his troops not to storm the stronghold but to seal it off — in an apparent bid to free up troops for the broader campaign in the east.

## LIFE AMID COVID SCARE



Commuters wearing face masks ride across an intersection in Beijing. Officials in Shanghai promised Friday to ease anti-virus controls on truck drivers that are hampering food supplies and trade as they try to revive the local economy while millions of people are still confined to their homes

# Afghan: Bombing at mosque and religious school kills 33

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kabul, April 22:** A Taliban official says a bombing at a mosque and religious school in northern Afghanistan Friday killed at least 33 people, including students of a religious school.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban's deputy culture and information minister, said the bombing in the town of Imam Saheb, in Kunduz Province, also wounded another 43 people, many of them students.

No one immediately claimed responsibility, but Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate Friday claimed a series of bombings that happened a day earlier, the worst of which was an attack on a Shiite mosque in northern Mazar-e-Sharif that killed at least 12 Shiite Muslim worshippers and wounded scores more.

Earlier the Kunduz provincial police spokesman put the death toll at the Malawi Bashir Ahmad Mosque and madrasa compound in Imam Saheb at two dead and six injured. Mujahid later tweeted the higher casualty numbers tweeting "we condemn this crime... And express our deepest condolences to the victims".



IMAGE CREDIT: PAJHOK AFGHAN NEWS

Friday's bombing is the latest in a series of deadly attacks across Afghanistan. The United Nations called the attack "horrific". Deputy special representative to Afghanistan Ramiz Alakbarov said in a tweet that "killings must stop now and perpetrators brought to justice".

Since sweeping to power last August, the Taliban have been battling the upstart Islamic State affiliate known as Islamic State in Khorasan Province or IS-K which is proving to be an intractable security challenge for Afghanistan's religiously driven government.

Last October the IS-K claimed a brutal bombing also in northern Kunduz province at a Shiite mosque that killed at least 50 people and wounded more than 100. In

November the Taliban's intelligence unit carried out sweeping attacks on suspected IS-K hideouts in eastern Nangarhar province, where the deadly affiliate is headquartered. In a statement Friday, the IS-K said the explosive device that devastated Mazar-e-Sharif's Sai Doken mosque was hidden in a bag left inside among scores of worshippers. As they knelt in prayer, it exploded.

The IS-K had been relatively inactive in Afghanistan since last November, but in recent weeks have stepped up its attacks in Afghanistan and in neighbouring Pakistan, taking aim at Shiite Muslim communities reviled by Sunni radicals. Earlier this month two bombs exploded in Kabul's Shiite neighbourhood of Dasht-e-Barchi, killing at least seven students and wounding several others. The IS-K established its headquarters in eastern Afghanistan in 2014 and have been blamed for some of the worst attacks in Afghanistan, including a vicious assault on a maternity hospital and at a school that killed more than 80 girls in 2021, months before the Taliban took power.

## Israeli police storm Jerusalem holy site

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Jerusalem, April 22:** Israeli police in full riot gear stormed a sensitive Jerusalem holy site sacred to Jews and Muslims Friday after Palestinian youths hurled stones at a gate where they were stationed.

The renewed violence at the site, which is sacred to Jews and Muslims, came despite Israel tem-

porarily halting Jewish visits, which are seen by the Palestinians as a provocation.

Tens of thousands of Muslims took part in the main Friday prayers at midday, which were held as planned.

Palestinians and Israeli police have regularly clashed at the site over the last week at a time of heightened tensions following a string of deadly attacks inside Israel and arrest

raids in the occupied West Bank. Three rockets have been fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the Islamic militant group Hamas.

The string of events has raised fears of a repeat of last year, when protests and violence in Jerusalem eventually boiled over, helping to ignite an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas, and communal violence in Israel's mixed cities.

# France winds up poll campaign of fear and loathing

- MACRON LEADS BY 10-14 POINTS AS CAMPAIGNS END
- BUT ABSTENTION LEVELS CREATE UNCERTAINTY
- LE PEN DRAWS ON WIDESPREAD ANGER AT MACRON
- MACRON HOPES FOR ANTI FAR-RIGHT FRONT

REUTERS

**Auxerre, France, April 22:** French President Emmanuel Macron and far-right challenger Marine Le Pen made final appeals Friday to undecided voters weighing fears of what a Le Pen presidency could bring against their anger at Macron's record.

According to the latest surveys

for Sunday's run-off, fear may win the day over loathing: Macron the centrist, pro-European incumbent leads his anti-immigration, euro-sceptic challenger by between 10-14 points, well outside margins of error.

But the fact that nearly three in 10 voters say they will not vote or have not made up their minds means a surprise Le Pen win sim-



ilar to events such as Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as US president cannot entirely be ruled

out. In recent days, Macron has toned down his often abrasive style with acknowledgments that his at-

tempts at economic and social reform had left many French angry and dissatisfied.

"She (Le Pen) has managed to draw on some of what we did not manage to do, on some of the things I did not manage to do to pacify some of the anger," Macron told France Inter radio on Friday, citing the concerns of low- and middle-income voters about law and order or hits to their livelihoods.

Four separate surveys published on Thursday and Friday showed Macron's score nonetheless either stable or slightly rising to reach between 55.5% and 57.5%.

But they also put turnout at between 72% and 74%, which would

be the lowest for a presidential run-off since 1969.

In the central city of Auxerre, some voters were rallying, albeit without enthusiasm, to Macron.

That resonates for many on the streets of the former industrial north of France, a region which includes many Le Pen strongholds and where she has chosen to conclude her campaign.

Despite a welfare system more generous than most of the world, massive support for French households during the pandemic and fuel bill caps to offset rising energy prices, the cost of living emerged as the top campaign issue of the election.

## PUTIN'S 'LOVER' REAPPEARS

Russian President Vladimir Putin's rumoured lover has reappeared with a 'new look' in Moscow following rumours she was hiding in a private chalet in Switzerland or a Siberian nuclear bunker, media reports said



## 'CHINA TO HELP SRI LANKA'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo/Beijing, April 22:** Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa Friday said he had a "very productive" conversation with his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang and thanked him for assuring support to his government to address some of the crucial needs affecting peoples' livelihoods and well-being, amidst the worst economic crisis in the island nation.

The telephone conversation between Rajapaksa and Li, which took place at the Sri Lankan prime minister's request, comes as the Sri Lanka is grappling with its worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1948.

Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets across the country as the government ran out of money for vital imports which has seen the prices of essential commodities skyrocket and led to acute shortages of fuel, medicines and electricity.

"Had a very productive conversation with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. I reiterated #SriLanka's gratitude to #China for the long-standing friendship and for assuring support to address some of the crucial needs affecting peoples' livelihoods and well-being in these difficult times," Rajapaksa tweeted.

In Beijing, the official Xinhua news agency reported that Li told Rajapaksa that China empathises with Sri Lanka for the difficulties and challenges facing the South Asian country. Li said that China is "ready to provide much-needed livelihood assistance for Sri Lanka within its capacity."





**I truly don't believe that we are behind the curve in terms of (interest) rates. I believe that there would be rate hikes during the course of the year ... two or three rate hikes are very much possible. But I don't see it impacting the economy**  
KEKI MISTRY | VC & CEO, HDFC

## TCS AIMS TO BE ON TOP GLOBALLY

India's largest software exporter TCS said it aims to become the topmost IT services company in the world, asserting that it does not "fear" its large-scale operation is hindering the firm's ambitions. TCS CEO and MD Rajesh Gopinathan said there is no reason for the company not to aspire to double, triple or quadruple the revenues from the current levels



## of the day quote

**We want to be the market leader in the three-wheeler market, not just in India but in the world and our Megafactory with a capacity of 1 million units is the first step towards this goal**  
UDAY NARANG | FOUNDER-CHAIRMAN, OMEGA SEIKI MOBILITY

**Council is taking rigorous efforts towards promoting brand India at various global platforms showcasing its strength on sustainability, circularity, ethical sourcing and manufacturing, labour standards, women employment**  
NARENDRA GOENKA | CHAIRMAN, AEPIC

**Hindustan Zinc delivered best-ever annual mined metal production and touched the record one million tonne mark this year. Our production of refined metal was also the highest ever**  
ARUN MISRA | CEO, HZL

# MPC shifts focus to tame inflation

*Although it chose to keep its key lending rate at a record low, the Reserve Bank of India said after the meeting that it would shift away from its ultra-loose monetary policy stance to focus on inflation, which has surged due to the Ukraine war*

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, April 22:** Almost all members of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) argued in favour of action to curb inflationary pressures at their April 6-8 meeting despite continuing risks to economic growth, minutes released Friday showed.

In a surprise move, the central bank restored its liquidity adjustment facility corridor to pre-Covid-19 levels, which was seen as a first step in moving away from pandemic emergency measures.

While RBI decided to maintain status quo, it raised inflation fore-



**Circumstances warrant prioritising inflation and anchoring of inflation expectations in the sequence of objectives to safeguard macroeconomic and financial stability, while being mindful of the ongoing growth recovery**  
SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

REPO RATE AND REVERSE REPO - UNCHANGED AT 4% AND 3.35%, RESPECTIVELY

**FY23 GDP growth target cut to 7.2% vs 7.8% earlier**

FY23 CPI PROJECTION HIKED TO 5.7% VS 4.5% EARLIER

cast to 5.7 per cent for the current fiscal, up from its 4.5 per cent estimate in February. RBI also lowered the economic growth forecast to 7.2 per cent for 2022-23 from the previous outlook of 7.8 per cent. This compares to real GDP growth of 8.9 per cent in 2021-22.

The MPC voted unanimously to retain its accommodative monetary policy stance and added that it would shift focus to withdrawal of accommodation going ahead.

Several market participants and economists now expect the MPC to change its stance to 'neutral' in June and start raising the repo rate in August - and potentially even in June - if inflation continues to surprise on the upside.

India's retail inflation accelerated to near 7% year-on-year in March, its highest in 17 months and above the upper limit of the central bank's tolerance band for a third straight month.

## SHORT TAKES

### FM meets key biz heads of US

**New Delhi:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday met CEOs of large American firms like FedEx and Mastercard and discussed various opportunities for investment in India as the country is poised to be the fastest-growing large economy in the world. The Finance Minister is in the US to attend IMF-WB Spring Meetings 2022. FedEx President and CEO-elect Raj Subramanian, during the meeting with the Finance Minister, mentioned that he is positive about India and has significant expansion plans, including in skilling.

### ITC Infotech, PTC join hands

**New Delhi:** ITC Infotech Friday said it will acquire a portion of Nasdaq-listed PTC's product lifecycle management (PLM) implementation services business as part of a pact between the two firms to accelerate customer digital transformation initiatives. Announcing expansion of their 20-year-old alliance, the two partners inked an agreement to accelerate customer digital transformation initiatives, focused on the adoption of PTC's 'Windchill' PLM software as a service (SaaS), ITC Infotech.

### Govt tweaks coal utilisation norms

**New Delhi:** The Union power ministry Friday said that it has allowed private power generating stations to secure coal supplies for up to three years instead of current norm of one year, a move that comes against the backdrop of rising demand for electricity. The ministry has tweaked the methodology for the use of coal, allocated to states, by Independent Power Producers (IPPs) wherein the timeline for the bidding process has also been reduced to 37 days from current 67 days.

### BoB slashes home loan interest rate

**Mumbai:** State-owned Bank of Baroda Friday said it has reduced interest rate on home loans to 6.50 per cent per annum from 6.75 per cent for a limited period. The new rates, which are linked to the borrower's credit profile, are applicable till June 30, 2022, the bank said in a release. "We have seen a significant pick-up in home sales over the last many months and we are delighted to extend the good times for home buyers with the introduction of a special, limited period interest rate offer," its GM HT Solanki said.

## FRL lenders junk RIL's retail deal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 22:** A majority of secured creditors of Future Retail Ltd (FRL) have rejected the ₹24,713-crore deal between the Kishore Biyani-led retail major and billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Retail, according to a regulatory filing.

While more than 75 per cent of shareholders and unsecured creditors supported the deal, FRL did not get the requisite 75 per cent favourable voting from secured creditors.

A majority of 69.29 per cent of secured creditors of FRL voted against the resolution while 30.71 per cent voted in favour of it, FRL said in a regulatory filing.

While 85.94 per cent of shareholders have voted in favour of the deal with Reliance, 14.06 per cent of shareholders opposed it.

The company managed to get the requisite approval of 75 per cent from unsecured creditors with 78.22 per cent of them supporting the deal while 21.78 per cent voted against the resolution.

Secured creditors are granted security from a company through either a legal fixed or floating charge over the business' assets and get preference over unsecured creditors in payment of dues by a company.

Another group firm Future Lifestyle Fashion Ltd (FLFL) said that a majority of its secured creditors have voted against the deal. FLFL's 82.75 per cent secured creditors voted against the deal while 17.25 per cent supported it. Similarly, 81.91 per cent of shareholders supported the deal and 18.09 per cent opposed it.

## Adani buys marine services firm OSL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 22:** Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) through its subsidiary, The Adani Harbour Services Ltd (TAHSL), has entered into a definitive agreement for acquisition of 100 per cent stake in Ocean Sparkle Ltd (OSL), India's leading third-party marine services provider.

Commenting on the development, APSEZ CEO and Whole-time Director Karan Adani said given the synergies of OSL and TAHSL, the consolidated business is likely to double in five years with improved margins, thereby creating significant value for APSEZ's shareholders.

He further said this acquisition not only provides APSEZ a significant share of India's marine services market but also provides us

## GLOBAL MACRO RISKS WORSEN

# UBS cuts growth forecast to 7%

**UBS EXPECTS INDIA'S GDP GROWTH TO SETTLE AT A RATE OF 6% PER ANNUM BEYOND FISCAL 2023**

REUTERS

**Washington, April 22:** UBS cut India's 2022-23 economic growth forecast by 70 basis points to 7% Friday, citing slowing global growth due to high commodity prices, and weak local demand because of energy price hikes, inflationary pressures and a struggling labour market.



The downgrade comes a week after the World Bank lowered its economic growth forecast for India and the whole South Asia, citing worsening supply bottlenecks and rising inflation risks along with the Ukraine crisis. "We believe the pass-through of high global commodity prices

to the real economy will affect households' purchasing power and company margins, and constrain the fiscal space available for capex," UBS economist Tanvee Gupta Jain said in a note.

India meets nearly 80% of its oil needs through imports and rising crude prices push up the country's trade and current account deficit while also hurting the rupee and fuelling imported inflation.

The Reserve Bank of India earlier this month raised its inflation forecast for the current fiscal year to 5.7%, 120 basis points above its forecast in February, while cutting its economic growth estimate to 7.2% from 7.8%.

## BIZ BUZZ

### Tanshiq's Akshaya Tritiya celebrations

**Bhubaneswar:** Harping on the emerging trend with bangles and to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, Tanishq showroom at Caratlane Store here at Chandrasekharpur launched 'Kalai', comprising of extensive designs crafted in 18K to 22K gold. The wide spectrum of design inspiration is derived from various traditions including, gheeroo finish south style bangles, antique bangle with charm of traditional workmanship like stamp work and enamelling, moon shaped elements and flowers, heritage architectural domes, statement piece with pearl bunching and a fine mix of workmanship like textured sheets, enamel, piroi reflecting grandeur of Rajasthan. Observing the auspicious occasion, Tanishq has also come up with an exciting offer of giving up to ₹200 off per gram on any gold jewellery and also up to 20% off on diamond jewellery value. The limited period offer is valid from April 23 to May 4th.



# Reliance acquires at least 15mn barrels of Russian oil

REUTERS

**New Delhi, April 22:** Reliance Industries Ltd, operator of the world's biggest oil refining complex, has ordered at least 15 million barrels of Russian oil since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, trade sources said.

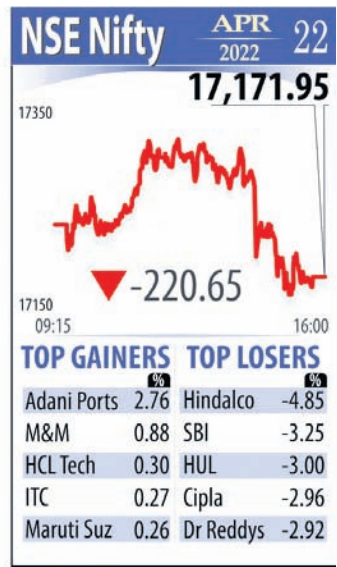
Before the Ukraine war, Indian refiners, including Reliance, rarely bought Russian oil owing to high freight costs.

But Western sanctions against Russia since its Ukraine invasion, which Moscow calls a "special operation", have prompted many oil importers to shun trade with Moscow, depressing its crude prices to record discount levels.

Indian refiners have snapped up the cheap barrels as India, the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer, is hit hard by high oil prices. India imports about 85% of its 5 million barrels per day oil needs.

While New Delhi has called for

# Bears return to D-Street after 2-day rally; Sensex tumbles over 714 points



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 22:** Equity markets buckled under selling pressure Friday after a two-session rally as selling emerged in IT, bank and energy stocks amid a bearish trend overseas following hawkish comments from the US Federal Reserve.

The BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 714.53 points or 1.23 per cent to end at 56,482.62. The broader NSE Nifty slumped 220.65 points or 1.27 per cent to 16,951.30.

SBI was the biggest laggard in the 30-share Sensex pack, losing 3.08 per cent, followed by HUL, IndusInd Bank, Dr Reddy's, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Infosys and ICICI Bank.

On the other hand, M&M, Bharti Airtel, Maruti Suzuki, Asian Paints, ITC and HCL Technologies were the gainers, climbing up to 0.98 per cent.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex lost 1,141.78 points or 1.95 per cent, while the Nifty shed 303.70 points or 1.73 per cent.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined by 0.71 per cent and the smallcap index dipped 0.38 per cent in Friday's session.

## A sharp drop in the rupee and unabated foreign fund outflows added to the gloom, analysts said

As many as 1,956 stocks declined, while 1,451 advanced and 124 remained unchanged.

All BSE sectoral indices settled lower, with bank falling the most by 2.19 per cent, followed by metal (2.17 per cent), finance (1.70 per cent), healthcare (1.57 per cent) and basic materials (1.45 per cent).

World stocks dived after US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell indicated a 50 bps rate hike in May amid efforts to rein in rocketing inflation.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.60 per cent to \$106.6 per barrel. The rupee declined 32 paise to close at 76.49 (provisional) against the US dollar Friday, amid a firm greenback in the global markets.

Foreign institutional investors continued their selling spree, offloading shares worth ₹713.69 crore Thursday, according to stock exchange data.



Reliance has bought an average 5 million barrels a month for the June quarter

an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine, it has not explicitly condemned Moscow's actions. India has also abstained from voting on multiple United Nations resolutions on the invasion.

Refinitiv's tanker flow data shows a supply of about 8 million barrels of Russian oil, mainly Urals, at the Reliance-operated Sikka port in western India, for arrival between April 5 and May 9.

Most of these barrels are supplied by Russian trader Litaseco,

the Refinitiv data shows. Traders said Reliance is buying Russian oil on delivered basis.

Reliance is scheduled to receive its first parcel of Russia's ESPO oil in early May, the Refinitiv data shows. This grade is mostly supplied to China.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance operates two refineries at the Jamnagar complex in western India that can process about 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil daily.

# Zomato declares 100% 'plastic neutral deliveries'

*Last year the company had launched 'Climate Conscious Delivery' and also started funding local environmental projects to offset the carbon footprint of all its deliveries and packaging in India*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, April 22:** Online food delivery platform Zomato Friday announced 100 per cent 'plastic neutral deliveries' from April 2022 onwards, while also setting a target to deliver more than 10 crore orders in sustainable packaging over the next three years.

The company recognises that it is important to start promoting biodegradable and other non-plastic alternatives to make them become as affordable and available as plastic is today, Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said in a blogspot. "From now on, every meal you



**I strongly believe that what's good for the planet is good for business. I also believe that profits happen when you do everything else right. And this is surely a step in the right direction**  
DEEPIKAR GOYAL | FOUNDER & CEO, ZOMATO

order through Zomato will be 100 per cent plastic neutral, which means we will voluntarily recycle more than 100 per cent of all plastic utilised in your order's packaging," he wrote.

To achieve this, Goyal said, "We have started working with cutting

edge ISO-certified plastic waste management organisations, who will partner with municipalities across India, to collect and responsibly process plastic waste."

Asserting that more work lies ahead in order to completely reduce or eliminate the use of plas-

tic in food delivery, he said Zomato is also "amping up our efforts to develop and promote sustainable packaging for all types of cuisines."

Zomato had also made "no cutlery required" as the default option on its app. This helped ensure 74 per cent of orders go without cutlery "preventing tonne of single-use plastic from reaching landfills," he said.

"We signed up for the EV100 initiative, and have committed to move to a 100 per cent EV (electric vehicle) fleet by 2030," he said adding, doing all this, last year, the company offset around 5,00,000 MTs of carbon emissions.

# Titans test awaits struggling Knights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Navi Mumbai, April 22:** Former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will be desperate to bring their flagging campaign back on track when they face leaders Gujarat Titans in the IPL here Saturday.

Having suffered three defeats in a row, the Shreyas Iyer-led outfit has slipped to seventh in the table and the task gets tougher against the Titans, who have been a revelation in their maiden season.

The Hardik Pandya-led Gujarat Titans have been firing on all cylinders, with their batting prowess and bowling might.

Pandya pulled out of their last match against Chennai Super Kings owing to a groin injury but it was business as usual for the Titans as stand-in skipper Rashid Khan led the team to a three-wicket win over the four-time champions.

The biggest plus in their win against CSK was Rashid's sensational form with the bat as he smashed a 21-ball 40 to help his team chase down the target with a ball spare.

GT's opening combination may not have given them the desired start and most of the times the middle-order has rescued the Titans. It was David Miller (94 not out from 51 balls) who anchored the show against Chennai after half the side were back in the pavilion with 87 runs inside 13 overs.

According to Rashid, Pandya's injury was "not serious and there's nothing to be worried about". Pandya has been in superlative form with 228 runs from five innings at an average of 76.00.

The onus would be on Kolkata's bowlers



to seize the momentum and stop the Titans' three-match winning run. KKR's pace attack led by Pat Cummins and Umesh Yadav and spinner Varun Chakravarty were taken to cleaners by the Rajasthan Royals batters in their last match.

It remains to be seen if the team think-tank would bring back Tim Southee in the XI as the key lies in getting early breakthroughs and giving Sunil Narine a perfect stage to restrict the flow of runs.

Narine, a vital cog in KKR's wheel for long, has once again been their go-to man and boasts of the best economy rate of 5.03 after seven matches.

The batters have stopped taking risks against the Trinidadian and he would hope that their pace battery gives some early breakthroughs to make the task easier for the wrist spinner.

The game also throws an interesting

match-up between former KKR batter Shubman Gill and Narine. Gill had a fine start to the tournament but has gone quiet after a couple of splendid knocks.

In such a scenario, the Titans bowling attack in Mohammed Shami, Lockie Ferguson, Rashid Khan and Pandya would look to capitalise.

**TODAY'S MATCHES**

**KKR** vs **GT**

Time: 03:30 pm

**RCB** vs **SRH**

Time: 07:30 pm

**TELECAST**  
Star Sports channels & Hotstar

# UPBEAT SUNRISERS SQUARE UP AGAINST ROYAL CHALLENGERS

**Mumbai:** Umran Malik's raw pace and Bhuvneshwar Kumar's consistency will be put to test against Dinesh Karthik's explosive batting and the finesse of Faf du Plessis when Sunrisers Hyderabad clash with Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, here Saturday.

Malik has caught everyone's attention with his fiery deliveries this season. His tearway pace has even troubled established batters such as Shreyas Iyer.

Alongside senior teammate Bhuvneshwar, the 22-year-old formed a match-winning partnership to defeat Punjab Kings by seven-wickets in their previous outing.

Sunrisers, who are targeting a top-4 position, also have yorker-specialist T Natarajan and South African Marco Jansen in their ranks. Jansen has also been able to tease batters with his angles and variations.

But the seasoned Du Plessis and Karthik have pummelled the best in the business. The new RCB skipper roared back to form with a fine 96 as he anchored his team's innings after the top order once again collapsed against Lucknow Super Giants.

On the other hand, Karthik is enjoying one of his best seasons in the league. The wicketkeeper batter has taken the centre stage with his heroics for RCB. With scores of 32 not out, 14 not out, 44 not out, 7 not out, 34, 66 not out and 13 not out in seven innings, Karthik has seemingly



been the best finisher this season.

But apart from the duo, the RCB batters will have their task cut out against Sunrisers, who have momentum on their side after winning four games on the trot.

All eyes will once again be on Virat Kohli, who would be eager to get out of the rut of low scores. Opener Anuj Rawat has failed to capitalise on the opportunity provided to him, S Prabhudessai and Glenn Maxwell too will be hoping to provide substantial contributions with the bat.

Their bowling unit, however, is their strong suite, which was not the case in the previous seasons. Josh Hazlewood has quickly become an irreplaceable piece in the RCB set up. In Hazlewood,

Harshal Patel, Mohammed Siraj and Wanindu Hasaranga, RCB have four match-winners, while Maxwell and Shahbaz Ahmed have also played their part well.

They will be up against a SRH batting unit where every batter has taken the responsibility to take their side over the line. Promoting Abhishek Sharma to the opener's spot has done wonders for the youngster, who has been fabulous at the top, providing SRH aggressive starts.

Skipper Kane Williamson is also back among runs while Rahul Tripathi has shown he too can win matches with the bat. And if the top order fails, the duo of South African Aiden Markram and swashbuckling Nicholas Pooran are there to finish off matches or set huge targets.

# Buttler gives Royal treat



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, April 22:** Opener Jos Buttler (116, 65b, 9x4, 9x6) struck his third century of the ongoing IPL to power Rajasthan Royals to a 15-run win over Delhi Capitals in a drama-filled match here Friday.

Buttler and Devdutt Padikkal (54, 35b, 7x4, 2x6) shared a 155-run stand for the opening wicket to help RR to the highest team total of the season, 222/2, after being sent into bat.

Buttler, enjoying the form of his life, laid the foundation of the imposing total in the company of Padikkal. It turned out to be tall task for DC as RR restricted them to 207/8.

Chasing the imposing total, DC made a brisk start with Prithvi Shaw (37, 27b, 5x4, 1x6) and David Warner (28), adding 43 runs in 4.3 overs before the latter edged a Prasadh

Krishna (3/22) delivery to skipper Sanju Samson behind the stumps.

Shaw and skipper Rishabh Pant (44, 24b, 4x4, 2x6) then added 51 runs off 29 balls for the second wicket to keep DC abreast with the asking rate.

But just when it seemed the partnership was blooming, R Ashwin (2/32) struck a vital blow in the form of set Shaw as DC reached 99/3 after 10 overs. Pant raised DC's hopes before being dismissed off Krishna in the 12th over.

Lalit Yadav (37, 24b, 3x4, 2x6) waged a lone battle before perishing. Rovman Powell (36, 15b, 5x6) struck a few lusty blows towards the end to raise DC's hopes.

With 36 needed off the last over, Powell clobbered Obed McCoy for three consecutive sixes in the first three deliveries but failed to complete the task. The win came after

a bit of drama as the DC team argued with the onfield umpires, claiming for a possible waist-high no ball but to no avail.

Earlier, Pant's decision to field first backfired big time as the duo of Buttler and Padikkal struck 155 runs in 15.5 overs for the opening stand. After reaching 50 in 6.5 overs, the duo opened up.

Padikkal perished in the 16th over before Buttler getting out in the penultimate over. Towards the end, skipper Sanju Samson (46 n o, 19b, 5x4, 3x6) played a little cameo to help RR register the highest score of the season.

**BRIEF SCORES**

RR 222/2 (Jos Buttler 116, Devdutt Padikkal 54, Sanju Samson 46 n o) beat DC 207/8 (Rishabh Pant 44, Lalit Yadav 37, Prithvi Shaw 37, Rovman Powell 36; Prasadh Krishna 3/22, R Ashwin 2/32) by 15 runs.

# Barca delay Real's looming title party



**PARTNERS IN CRIME:** Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang (L) rejoices his goal with Ferran Torres, who set up the Gabon international's goal against Real Sociedad

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Madrid, April 22:** Barcelona defeated Real Sociedad 1-0 to make sure Real Madrid will have to wait at least another week to celebrate the Spanish league title.

Barcelona's away victory reduced its gap to Madrid to 15 points, and it can further cut it to 12 points Sunday if it defeats Rayo Vallecano at home in a game it has in hand.

Barcelona and Madrid, which won 3-1 at Osasuna Wednesday, will have five games left. Madrid, trying to clinch its second title in three seasons, doesn't play this weekend.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored with a close-range header in the 11th minute to give Barcelona its first win after consecutive home losses against Cadiz in the league and Eintracht Frankfurt in the Europa League. The Catalan club had not lost two straight home games since 2003.

The victory against Sociedad left Barcelona tied on points with Sevilla, which defeated Levante earlier Thursday to stay in position to secure a Champions League place next season. Second place also is important as it guarantees a spot in the Spanish Super Cup.

Defending champion Atlético Madrid, which was held to a 0-0 home draw against relegation-threatened Granada Wednesday, stayed two points behind Barcelona and Sevilla. Fifth-place Real Betis trailed Atlético by four points and was two ahead of Sociedad.

Sociedad has not beaten Barcelona in 12 straight league matches. The Basque Country club hadn't lost in seven consecutive league games at home, all of them with clean sheets. Barcelona extended its unbeaten streak on the road to 13 league matches, having won five in a row.

Barcelona defender Ronald Araujo left injured early in the second half, and the team's other central defender, Gerard Piqué, appeared to get injured in the first half but stayed until being substituted in the 82nd while being loudly jeered by the Sociedad fans.

Piqué, who also heard some boos every time he touched the ball during the game, has been in the spotlight in recent days after stolen audio leaked to the media exposed a series of conversations between him and Spanish soccer federation president Luis Rubiales talking about behind-the-scenes negotiations on several issues.

# Jadeja lauds Dhoni's latest Houdini act

**Navi Mumbai:** MS Dhoni "is still hungry" and Chennai Super Kings stay afloat in IPL-15 after the legend's latest Houdini act at the death. And they are all that matter to skipper Ravindra Jadeja.

Five defeats from seven outings became a thing of the past after Dhoni turned back the clock to script a memorable three-wicket victory for CSK against Mumbai Indians in the IPL here on Thursday following a heart-stopping finish that saw him hit a four off the last ball of the game.

"It's very good that he is still hungry (for runs and wins)," the new CSK skipper said after Dhoni's 13-ball 28 propelled the team to an epic win over their arch-rivals.

"His touch is still there. And looking at it, all of us remain calm, that if he is in the middle and stays till the final over, he will win the game," added Jadeja.

"We were tense but had a belief that he (Dhoni) was out there, he would finish the game and come. He has won so many games for India, in the IPL, we knew that he would finish the game."



Dhoni (28 not out off 13) batted like the finisher of his hey days to help CSK get the required 17 runs off the final over to win their second game of the season and extend Mumbai Indians' winless streak to seven games.

He smashed a six and four off third and fourth ball off Jaydev Unadkat before maintaining his calm to put one past short-fine leg for the match-winning boundary, leaving the bowler and the rest of his Mumbai teammates shattered.

"Look we were in pressure and the way the match was going, I believe there was pressure in both the dugouts... As the world's best finisher (Dhoni) was out in the middle.

"Somewhere we knew that if he (Dhoni) stays till the last ball, then definitely he would win the game for us. We had the belief that he wouldn't miss the final two-three balls and luckily that happened," Jadeja said at the virtual post-match press conference.

# Indian recurve mixed pair advances to final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Antalya, April 22:** Shrugging off their disappointment in the team events, the recurve mixed pair of Tarundeep Rai and Ridhi Phor downed Spain 5-3 to advance to the final and confirm a second medal for India in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 here Friday.

The fifth seeded Indian duo started with a 2-0 lead but faced some resistance in the middle sets before sealing it 5-3 (38-35, 36-39, 38-38, 36-35) in a four-setter. Rai and Phor will face 11th seed Britain in the recurve mixed team gold medal clash Sunday.

The Indian men's and women's

recurve teams had made last-eight exits Thursday.

India has been assured of another medal in the ongoing tournament. The compound men's team of Abhishek Verma, Rajat Chauhan and Aman Saini had advanced to the final on Wednesday. The will take on France in the summit clash Saturday.

India are also in the hunt for a third medal as the compound mixed pair duo of Abhishek Verma and Muskan Kirar will fight in the bronze playoff against Croatia Saturday. Verma and Muskan lost out to their Slovenian rivals Toja Ellison and Aljaz Brenk 156-157 in the semifinals.

# Anshu, Radhika settle for silver, Manisha bags bronze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia), April 22:** Anshu Malik finally lost in the title clash after winning three earlier bouts in a dominant fashion to clinch a silver in the 57kg category at the Asian Wrestling Championships here Friday.

Radhika also won a silver in 65kg category while Manisha bagged a bronze in the 62kg division. Anshu lost to Tsugumi Sakurai of Japan by fall in the gold medal bout.

The Indian was dominance personified as she won all her three earlier bouts by technical superiority before losing to Sakurai in the 57kg final.

The 20-year-old defending champion from Haryana's Nidani vil-



ANSHU MALIK



RADHIKA

lage dished out a strong performance and literally toyed with her opponents to assure herself a third Asian Championship medal. She had won a bronze in the 2020 edition at home and won the 57kg title last year in Almaty.

Anshu, who became the first Indian woman wrestler to reach the World Championship final last year, began with a win over Uzbekistan's Shokhida Akhmedova and followed that up with another dominating victory against Singapore's Danielle Sue Ching Lim, who appeared at sea against her superior Indian rival.

Anshu hardly gave her rivals time to think or strategise as she pulled off move after move with ease to bamboozle them. She overpowered Mongolia's Bolortuya

Khurelkhuu in the semifinals, beginning with a four-point throw that ensued from a double-leg attack.

Radhika emerged victorious against Dariga Aben of Kazakhstan in her Round 5 bout to clinch the silver.

Manisha, meanwhile, settled for a bronze after losing to Korea's Hanbit Lee.

The Indian, who has been doing well in the 62kg category at domestic events for some time, lost her semifinal in just 40 seconds to Japan's Nonoka Ozaki to bow out of gold medal race.

Ozaki trapped her in leg-lace move early in the contest and finished the bout in a jiffy. Meanwhile, Swati Shinde (53kg) lost both her bouts by technical superiority to go out of medal race.