



BROODING OVER PAST

Advice on self-love actor Ileana D'Cruz would have given to her younger self

LEISURE P2



COMPULSORY HIJAB

Authorities in Iran making clear their determination to enforce compulsory hijab on women

INTERNATIONAL P10



CRUSHING DEFEAT

PV Sindhu routed by Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung at the Madrid Spain Masters final

SPORTS P12

Cricket legend Durani dies at 88

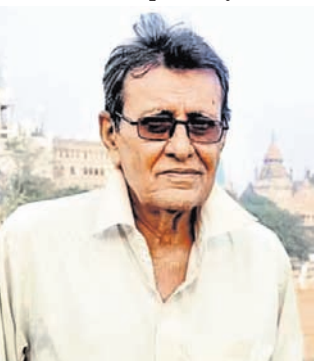
AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 2: Salim Durani, the debonair India cricketer of the 1960s with a movie-star looks, a puckish sense of humour, and a penchant for hitting monstrous sixes on demand, died Sunday. He was 88.

His death was confirmed by sources close to the family. He had been living with his younger brother, Jahangir Durani, in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

Durani had undergone a proximal femoral nail surgery after he broke his thigh bone in a fall in January this year.

The Kabul-born Durani, who packed a punch with his bat and was also a handy left-arm orthodox bowler, played 29 Tests and was instrumental in India defeating England 2-0 in the historic five-match Test series in 1961-62, picking up eight and 10 wickets in the team's victories at Calcutta and Madras respectively.



Durani, known for his fine dressing style and swagger, scored just one century though he had seven fifties in the 50 innings he played for the country, scoring 1,202 runs. A decade after the epic triumph against England, he played a key role in helping India to victory against the West Indies in Port of Spain, dismissing both Clive Lloyd and Sir Garfield Sobers.

The star cricketer also dabbled in Hindi cinema, starring opposite renowned actor Praveen Babi in the movie Charitra in 1973.

OBIT ON P12

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I am still a bachelor as I wasn't talented enough to shoot a pre-wedding video

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
MAX	35.1°C	34.2°C
MIN	22.5°C	22.5°C
Humidity	77%	87%
Rainfall	10.6mm	12.4mm
Forecast	Light rain	very likely



RESCUE ACT: Firefighters douse a fire that broke out at Bansmandi Anwarganj in Kanpur, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Youth killed in clash during cricket match

Umpire's decision during match at a village in Cuttack district turns fatal for 22-year-old

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack/Choudwar, April 2: A bid to save an umpire from a mob during a cricket match at Mashisalanda village under Choudwar police limits in Cuttack district proved fatal for a 22-year-old man, Sunday.

According to police sources, the tragic incident took place in the afternoon during a cricket match between Brahmapur and Shankarpur villages hosted by the Mahabali Cricket Club at Mashisalanda village.

Shankarpur team batted first and scored 114 runs. "A player of Brahmapur team was declared 'out' in the first ball by umpire Pritiranjan Samal. Soon after, Sangram Rout alias Jaga of Brahmapur village threatened the umpire to declare it as a 'no ball'.



A file photo of Lucky Rout

However, Pritiranjan denied, "a police official said.

Soon a mountain was made out of a molehill as a few of Jaga's

friends reached the field and joined him in assaulting the umpire. Lucky Rout, a resident of Mashisalanda, intervened to save the umpire from the mob.

In a fit of rage, Jaga hit Lucky's head with a cricket bat, while one of his friends Smrutiranjana alias Muna stabbed the 22-year-old with a knife, leaving him critically injured.

Villagers rushed a profusely bleeding Lucky to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack where he was declared 'dead on arrival'. While villagers managed to nab Jaga, the other accused fled the spot.

On being informed, ACP (Zone-I) Arun Kumar Swain and Choudwar inspector in-charge (IIC) Biranchi Narayan Pati reached the spot with a police force. Later, Jaga was taken into custody.

"A case has been registered with Choudwar police on the basis of a complaint lodged by Lucky's father Baidhar Rout," the Zone-I ACP said.

DCP Pinak Mishra said they will leave no stone unturned to nab the culprits at the earliest.

Rahul to challenge conviction today

AGENCIES

Surat, April 2: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will be in Surat Monday to file an appeal before a sessions court against his conviction in a criminal defamation case, his lawyer said Sunday.

Gandhi will be present in the sessions court to file the plea challenging a metropolitan court's order which sentenced him to two years in jail, party sources said. "Rahul Gandhi will reach the sessions court in Surat to file an appeal at around 3 pm," his lawyer Kirit Panwala said.

Senior Congress leaders will also be in Surat when Gandhi arrives Monday afternoon, party sources said.

The court of Chief Judicial Magistrate HH Varma here had March 23 convicted Gandhi and sentenced him to two years in jail in a 2019 criminal defamation case filed against him over his "Modi surname" remarks.

The court had also granted him bail and suspended the sentence for 30 days to appeal in a higher court.

Gandhi was present in the court when it had pronounced the verdict in the case.

The former Congress chief was March 24 disqualified from the



Lok Sabha following his conviction by the Surat court in the case.

Following his disqualification, Gandhi would not be able to contest elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction and sentence.

Gandhi, who had served as an MP from Wayanad in Kerala, made the remarks while addressing a rally at Kolar in Karnataka April 13, 2019 during the Lok Sabha elections campaign.

The sentence of two years invited his disqualification from the membership of Parliament under provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

SHORT TAKES

SC to hear plea of 14 parties April 5

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear Wednesday a plea filed by 14 parties, led by the Congress, alleging arbitrary use of central probe agencies against Opposition leaders and seeking guidelines for the future. According to the list of business uploaded on the apex court website, the plea of opposition parties would be heard April 5 by a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud. Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala are also part of the bench. The joint plea was mentioned for urgent hearing March 24 by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi.

'MISUSE' OF AGENCIES

Cattle trader lynched by cow vigilantes

Bangalore: A Muslim cattle trader was beaten to death by cow vigilantes in Karnataka's Ramanagara district.

Idris Pasha and his two associates were assaulted by self-styled cow protectors led by Puneet Kerehalli Friday night. The cow vigilantes intercepted a container vehicle in which Idris and others were transporting cattle. Though the traders told them that they purchased cattle from the market and showed the papers, the gang demanded Rs 2 lakh. When Idris refused to pay, they attacked him and two others. While some of the attackers chased Idris and Irfan, others assaulted container driver Syed Zaheer. A policeman intervened and took Zaheer and Kerehalli to the nearby police station. During probe, police found that Idris died after being assaulted by Kerehalli and others.

Cheetah strays into field near village

Sheopur: A cheetah strayed into an agricultural field adjoining a village near Kuno National Park in Sheopur district Sunday, an official said.

Oban, one of the eight cheetahs brought from Namibia in September last year, strayed into the field near Baroda village, some 15-20 km from KNP, from the free range area of the park into which he was released last month, Sheopur DFO PK Verma said. "As per the signals from its collar device, the cheetah was moving towards the village from Saturday night. A police team is monitoring the situation and keeping villagers away. Forest department staff are trying to send it back into the park area," he said.

In China, students get 'love break' as birth rate plummets

SEVERAL COLLEGES IN CHINA ARE GIVING STUDENTS A WEEK OFF TO 'FALL IN LOVE' IN APRIL

AGENCIES

Beijing, April 2: With a steep decline in China's birth rate, colleges in the country are giving students a week off to 'enjoy love.'

Nine colleges in China are giving students a week off to 'fall in love' in April.

According to NBC News, the Mianyang Flying Vocational College, one of nine colleges run by the Fan Mei Education Group, first announced the spring break March 21 that has a specific focus on romance. The time off, which

lasts from April 1 to April 7, encourages students to "learn to love nature, love life, and enjoy love through enjoying the spring break."

"I hope that students can go to see the green water and green mountains and feel the breath of spring. This will not only broaden students' horizons and cultivate their sentiments, but also enrich and deepen the teaching content in the classroom," Liang Guohui, deputy dean of Mianyang Flying Vocational College, said in a statement.



This effort is an attempt to serve the purpose of finding ways to boost the birth rate.

The government has come up with more than 20 recommendations to boost birth rates, though experts say the best they can do is slow the population's decline.

According to the New York Times, 9.56 million people were born in China last year, while 10.41 million died. This was the first time deaths outnumbered births since the Great Leap Forward, a failed economic experiment by former dictator Mao Zedong that

lasted from the late 1950s to the early 1960s.

As Reuters reports, the country had a one-child policy between 1980 and 2015.

China dug itself into a demographic hole largely through its one-child policy.

Officials raised the limit to three kids in 2021, but couples were still reluctant to have children even during COVID-19 lockdowns. Younger people have cited high childcare costs, low incomes and gender inequalities as reasons to stay child-free.



leisure



LILY UNSURPRISED ABOUT GETTING DIAGNOSED WITH ADULT ADHD

Actress Lily Allen has revealed about her adult ADHD diagnosis and said that the condition 'sort of runs in her family'. Unsurprised by the diagnosis, she explained she could relate many of the traits as adults with ADHD as those with the condition struggle.

TOM THANKED AMBANIS FOR NMACC LAUNCH INVITE

'Spider-Man' Tom Holland has thanked the Ambani family for inviting him and his actress-girlfriend Zendaya to the launch of the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre. Holland took to Instagram, where he shared a string of pictures of himself dressed in a black suit and bow tie at the event.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your charismatic appeal is always ready-to-use. And today, you will possibly reap rich dividends through it. But there is always scope for improvement and you will find yourself drawn to altruism. Ganesha guarantees satisfaction in lending a helping hand to the needy.

TAURUS
You will enjoy your responsibilities at the home front, says Ganesha. People whom you trusted to watch your back might let you down today. Remember, what you sow is what you reap, so do not fall short of putting in the effort required to make something fruitful. Be careful and cautious in dealing with people, advises Ganesha.

GEMINI
A favourable day to put an end to all the doubts surrounding your ability to do well, especially in the field of communication. People around you will find you incredibly charming and enchanting. You will win hearts with your verve and panache.

CANCER
It is quite possible that your personal life will take precedence over your professional life. You will not be able to repress or ignore your feelings, and you should not either, says Ganesha. But you should be careful about how you express yourself in public.

LEO
No matter how far you go, there is always a horizon that you desire to reach. And what holds true for all outer projections of life most certainly holds true for one's inner self as well, reminds Ganesha. Bear this in mind as you strive to improve yourself in as many ways as possible.

VIRGO
Financial doldrums are headed your way today. In order to seek what you desire, expect shelling out a hefty price. You might just net those short-term goals in the evening, Ganesha foretells large and important business deals will end the day on a high note.

LIBRA
Today will be fabulous for you, especially if you are in the world of business. Long-term deals seem to be on the cards for you. If you happen to be a government officer, luck favours you today. Keep your ears and eyes open, there may be news of a possible promotion. All Ganesha has to say to you today is, keep your options open and hopes alive. And smile with good luck on your side.

SCORPIO
Ganesha feels that your intuitive feelings will rule your actions today. You will need to break past your stress threshold and tackle work with zeal and zest. Follow your instincts and relax to some good music when the burden of work is overwhelming. At the end of the day, it is not the thought that matters but how that thought was implemented into action.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesha sees a spectacular day in store for you, especially if you are an artist. Radio jockeys will be heard and cheered for. Television anchors will receive thundering applause and golden opportunities.

CAPRICORN
Your extraordinary skills, passion for perfection, and an overpowering personality will inspire and motivate those around you, says Ganesha. Many will, in fact, emulate your actions, so much so that you could most likely have a fan following.

AQUARIUS
Spirituality is your new passion and Calvin Klein matters less today! Mysticism attracts you, says Ganesha. This may lead you to seek solace in holy books and religious places. It's going to take some time for you to understand that spiritual attainment can be had in the flesh-and-blood world as well.

PISCES
You are ceaselessly driven to find room for improvement. A part-time course to enhance your skills or to increase your efficiency is what you will likely be pursuing today, says Ganesha.

Ileana's advice for her younger self

Mumbai: Ileana D'Cruz has been in show business for more than a decade now, and within her career she has made great strides. In an interview, Ileana revealed what advice she would give to her younger self.

When asked whether she had any advice for the 24-year-old version of herself after all the positive and negative events she's had in life, Ileana said, "I would say everything is going to be okay. Just give yourself a little more love. Hug yourself, a little more and just be comfortable."

able in your skin because you are actually beautiful!"

Talking about self-love, she further added, "I would also advise that you don't lean towards someone else to tell you that you are beautiful. You are beautiful just the way you are. I just wish that I knew this then, but it's okay. Better late than never, I suppose. Yes, that's the one thing I would say to my younger self: It is fine; it is absolutely fine."

On the professional front, Ileana D'Cruz was last seen in *The Big Bull*, starring alongside Abhishek Bachchan. She will be next seen in *Tera Kya Hoga Lovely* alongside Randeep Hooda.



DELHI ODISSI USTAV-2023

Ching-Han Weng from Taiwan proves her elegance

Delhi: The three-day-long Delhi Odissi Ustav, hosted by the Odissi International Forum in association with the Delhi Odissi Family, began here at Subhadra Auditorium, Jagannath Mandir, Tyagraj Nagar, New Delhi, Saturday. Though it comprised numerous performances from dancers around the world, Taiwanese Odissi Dancer, Ching-Han Weng, a disciple of Kasturi Pattanaik, demonstrated that with rigorous training under her Guru, she is second to none of her Indian contemporary Odissi Dancers. Charukeshi Pallavi, performed by her, mesmerised the audience. Her technical precision and pure movements in the Charukeshi Pallavi, based on Raag Charukeshi and Taal Triputta, choreographed and composed by Visushi Kasturi Pattanaik, were also a testimony to Kasturi Pattanaik's contribution to Odissi Dance as an innovative choreographer and an outstanding teacher. The festival, which started in 2018, marked its third edition this year.



Ching-Han Weng performing Charukesh Pallavi on the occasion of Delhi Odissi Ustav

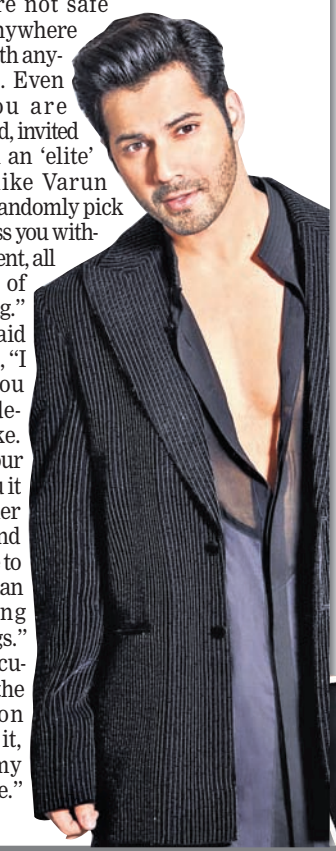
VARUN REACTS TO HIS VIRAL VIDEO WITH GIGI

Mumbai: *Bhediya* star Varun Dhawan faced severe backlash online after a video of his dance performance at Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre (NMACC) went viral on social media. The video shows him picking American supermodel Gigi Hadid up, spinning her and giving her a peck on the cheek as she was leaving the stage. The actor has reacted after the online commotion and said that it was planned for her to be on stage.

Reacting to a tweet by a woman, which read: "If you are a woman, you are not safe anywhere with anyone. Even if you are Gigi Hadid, invited to a party with an 'elite' crowd, guys like Varun Dhawan will randomly pick you up and kiss you without your consent, all in the name of fun. Disgusting."

The actor said in the reaction, "I guess today you woke up and decided to be woke. So let me burst your bubble and tell you it was planned for her to be on stage so find a new Twitter cause to vent about rather than going out and doing something about things."

Later Gigi has put all speculations to rest and shared the same video with Varun on Instagram. She wrote with it, "Varun Dhawan making my Bollywood dreams come true."



'You suddenly realise that you are not important anymore'

Mumbai: Actress Rani Mukerji returned to the big screen with the legal drama *Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway*, which is inspired by a real-life story. While the actress has been taking on limited projects at once, she has also been focusing on motherhood. She is a doting mother to a daughter, Adira Chopra. In a recent interview, Rani spoke about her daughter and how the birth of Adira changed her as a person.

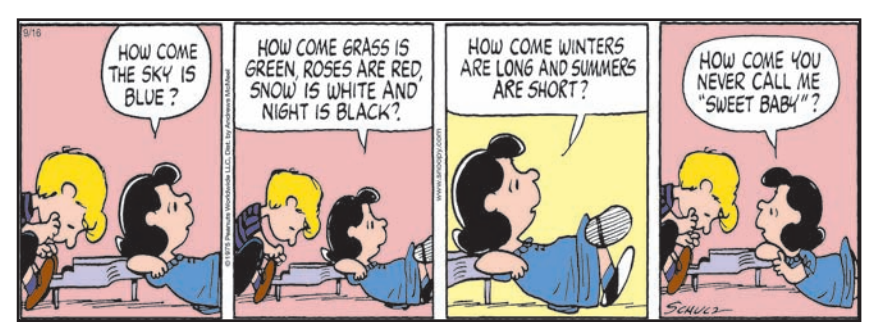
mothers is that there's something in us that changes immediately. The minute you see the baby out of your system and you look at that baby's face, you suddenly realise that you're not important anymore. There's somebody else more important than you. It's the first time in our lives that we realise we love somebody more than ourselves. When that moment happened in my life, for me, there was nothing more important than my child."

On the topic of motherhood, she said, "You suddenly realise that you're not important anymore. I think what happens to women when they become mothers is that there's something in us that changes immediately. The minute you see the baby out of your system and you look at that baby's face, you suddenly realise that you're not important anymore. There's somebody else more important than you. It's the first time in our lives that we realise we love somebody more than ourselves. When that moment happened in my life, for me, there was nothing more important than my child."

Rani tied the knot with Aditya Chopra in 2014 in an intimate Bengali ceremony in Italy. The couple embraced parenthood and welcomed their daughter, Adira Chopra, in 2015.

FUN post

PEANUTS



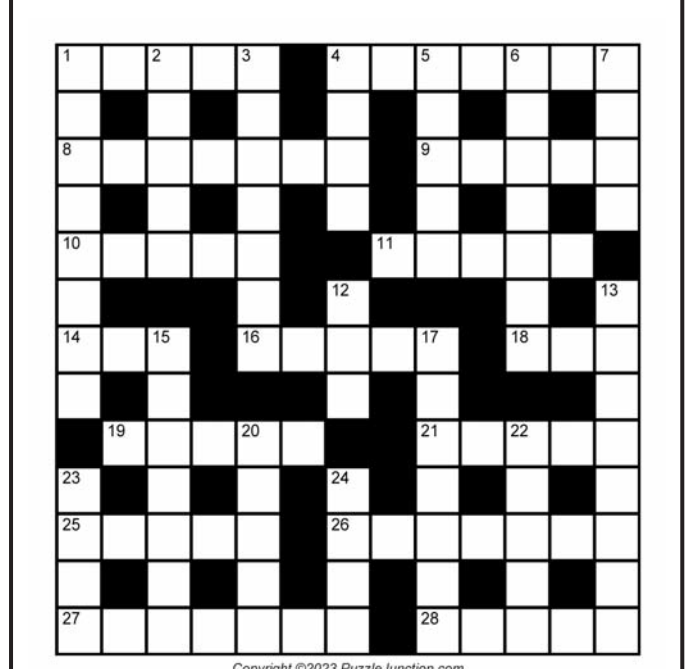
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY

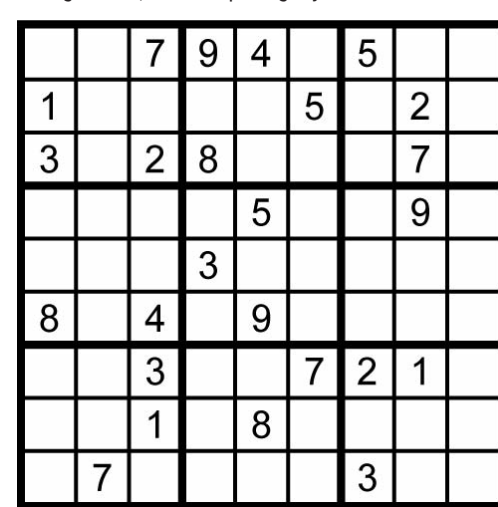


CROSSWORD

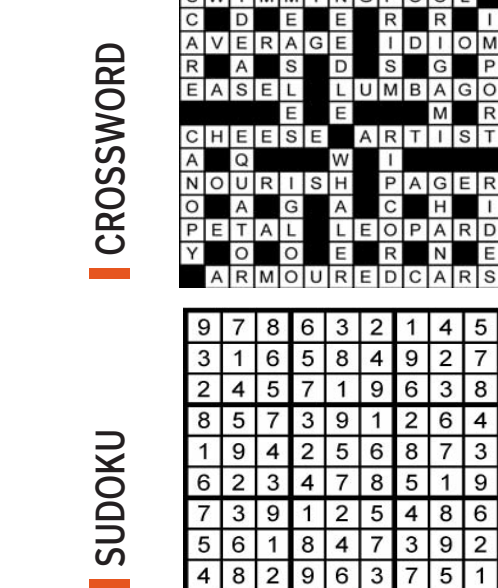


- Across**
- 1 Perfected, as a craft
 - 4 Ointment for a facial feature (3,4)
 - 8 Counsellor
 - 9 Certain automobile
 - 10 Water sources
 - 11 Terminal
 - 14 Solemn promise
 - 16 Slipknot
 - 18 Cause of 1 Down
 - 19 Building block
 - 21 Merge
 - 25 Gave it a go
 - 26 Anthropoid
 - 27 Ocean view
 - 28 Upright
 - 4 Songbird
 - 5 Adhesive
 - 6 Gruelling
 - 7 Cloistered holy man
 - 12 Candle material
 - 13 Loan cost
 - 15 Samurai, e.g.
 - 17 Difficult to find
 - 20 Spanish urban centre
 - 22 Vacuous
 - 23 Engrave
 - 24 Store sign during business hours
- Down**
- 1 Summer weather report (4,4)
 - 2 New and refreshing
 - 3 Stops what one is doing

SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Tiger footprints vanishing in Odisha

AJAY KUMAR SINGH, OP

Odisha is one of the most ecologically diverse regions in the country, home to several endangered and rare species. Among many species of animals and plants found in Odisha, the majestic Royal Bengal Tiger holds a significant place. The state over the years has played a pivotal role in conserving and reviving biodiversity. However, the decline in numbers of the big cats in Odisha has sparked concerns.

According to Wildlife Protection Society of India, there were 192 tigers in the state including 60 cubs in 2002. In 2018, the big cat population in Odisha had come down to 28, the same number that was reported in 2014. It proves that the tiger population is on the wane in Odisha.

Odisha is one of the first states to be part of 'Project Tiger' conservation programme launched in 1973. The project celebrates its 50th anniversary this month. Odisha has several dedicated protected areas for tiger conservation namely Similipal, Satkosia and Sunabeda covering a total area of approxi-



mately 5,300 square kilometres.

Established in 1973, the Similipal Tiger Reserve is the largest of all the conservation areas, spanning over 2,750 square kilometres in Mayurbhanj district. It was

one of the first nine tiger reserves in India and has also been added to UNESCO's biosphere reserves list. It is also the home of the extremely rare melanistic tiger.

The Satkosia Tiger Reserve, located in Angul and Boudh districts is spread over 964 square kilometres. On the other hand, the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Nuapada district is spread over approximately 600 square kilo-

metres and is home to a wide variety of species including leopards, sloth bears, hyenas, and bison apart from tigers.

The Sunabeda Sanctuary was in the news recently when news of an elderly woman being killed and eaten by a Royal Bengal Tiger surfaced. However, later on it transpired that a leopard had killed the woman.

The primary reason for the decline in tiger numbers in Odisha is because of loss of habitat due to human encroachment, deforestation and infrastructure development. These factors have made it difficult for tigers to move freely and reproduce.

Another major threat to tigers in Odisha is poachers. Tigers are often poached for their skin, bones and other body parts that are in high demand in illegal wildlife trade. Despite efforts to crackdown on poaching, it remains a major issue in many parts of Odisha.

Climate change has emerged as another significant threat to tigers in Odisha. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and other climate-related factors are altering the natural habitat of tigers, making it difficult for them to adapt to changing conditions.

The government of Odisha and Conservation authorities have taken numerous measures to address these challenges, which includes habitat development and management, anti-poaching initiatives, eco-development committees, village relocation and research and monitoring

programmes. However, strict enforcement of laws and increased investment in research and conservation efforts are needed to protect tigers and their habitats in Odisha.

There have been a few setbacks in the recent past for the authorities such as the failure of tiger translocation project in Satkosia as the numbers remained stagnant. However, the government of Odisha continues to look for alternatives to attain its objectives. Tiger reserve status for potential forests and increase in budgetary allocation for research and conservation could bring in some positive change

at the ground level.

Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary and Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary have been the focus of attention of state authorities, who are attempting to get tiger reserve status for these areas. Such an achievement would bolster the conservation programmes.

Recent efforts made by both Centre and state government to increase the budgetary allocation for different conservation programmes will also help in tiger conservation.

However, many wildlife experts feel that much more needs

to be done to protect tigers and their habitats in Odisha. This includes stricter enforcement of laws against poaching and habitat destruction.

The declining tiger population is not just an ecological challenge for Odisha. The state is one of the most naturally gifted regions and has centuries-old history of co-existence with nature, which needed to be protected and embraced. While there are challenges, there is also hope for the future as efforts to conserve tigers and their habitats continue to gather momentum.

In 1992 Odisha had 192 tigers including 60 cubs
In the last tiger census conducted in Odisha, the number of tigers has come down to 28



Loss of habitat and poaching have contributed majorly in decline of tiger numbers

A WELL WISHER

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EOW nabs Maha man for online ponzi scam



Bhubaneswar, April 2: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Crime Branch has arrested an accused from Pune in Maharashtra on the charge of duping investors from across the country of crores through an online ponzi or multi-level marketing online scam. The accused identified as Vishal Sakharan Utkar is a resident of Latur district of Maharashtra. He was arrested from Mundwa area in Maharashtra's Pune district March 30, 2023 in connection with a EOW police station case (10/23) registered on the basis of the complaint lodged by one Dibyajyoti Kar of Nayapalli area here. The accused was produced before the local Cantonment Court, Pune and brought to Bhubaneswar on transit remand for his production before the OPID Court, Cuttack.

THE ACCUSED WAS PRODUCED BEFORE THE LOCAL CANTONMENT COURT, PUNE, AND WAS BROUGHT TO BHUBANESWAR ON TRANSIT REMAND TO BE PRESENTED BEFORE THE OPID COURT, CUTTACK

THE EOW SOURCES UNEARTHED THAT GETSO ON ITS WEBSITE AND APP FRAUDULENTLY CLAIMED TO BE A WASHINGTON, USA, BASED COMPANY ENGAGED IN CRYPTO MINING

Kar, one of the victims, in his complaint claimed that he came across a woman identified as Olivia James on social media couple of months ago. James identified herself as the manager of the accused company, GETSO, telling him to invest in crypto through GETSO which engaged in crypto mining business. The accused lady said Kar would get 6 per cent interest on the invest daily and the freedom to withdraw a particular amount daily. Lured by the offer, he allegedly joined a Whatsapp group of the company and invested Rs 1.27 lakhs during the period from October 2022 to 24.12.2022. Kar claimed that everything was going well till December 24, 2022 when all of a sudden the accused blocked the Whatsapp and telegram groups and went uncommunicated. The EOW sources during the course of investigation unearthed that the GETSO on its website and app fraudulently claimed to be a Washington, USA based company engaged in crypto mining business. They GETSO app available in Google Play Store with more than 10,000 download claimed to be a dollar earning app. "During investigation, so far, Rs 144 crore involved in this scam have been traced. Out of the invested amount, Rs.9 Crores was found to have been transferred to the account of the arrested accused Vishal Sakharan Utkar," informed EOW sources. GETSO announced that it is withdrawing from Indian market October 25, 2022, claiming high taxation from Indian government on crypto currency.

State records ₹4,749cr GST collection during March

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The state has recorded gross GST collection of Rs. 4749.02 crore during March, 2023. With a growth of 15.14 per cent the gross collection of Rs. 4749.02 crore is the second highest gross collection of all time. The collection of GST revenue to be retained by the state i.e. OGST+IGST settlement during the month of March, 2023 is recorded at Rs. 1977.45 crore which is 15.69 per cent higher than the corresponding collection of 1709.14 crore recorded during March, 2022. The progressive collection of GST revenue to be retained by the state during FY 2022-23 is Rs. 18766.58 crore as against Rs. 16392.24 crore collected during FY 2021-22 with a growth rate of 14.48 per cent. The total collection of VAT (Petrol & Liquor) is Rs. 1917.29 crore during March, 2023 as against Rs. 1693.53 crore during March, 2022 with growth rate of 13.21 per cent. The progressive collection of VAT during FY 2022-23 is 11974.65 Rs. which is 20.16 per cent higher than the collection of Rs. 9965.60 Collected during FY 2021-22. Overall, the CT & GST Commissionerate has collected Rs. 31158.33 crore during FY 2022-23 under all Acts (GST/ VAT/ Profession Tax/ ET) as against collection of Rs. 26756.18 crore during FY 2021-22 recording a growth of 16.45 per cent. 21.91 lakh of waybills has been generated during March 2023 vis-à-vis 18.58 lakh of waybills generated during March recording a growth of 17.93 per cent.

Highlight social injustice meted out to Odisha's population: Jena to Stalin

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: As top Opposition leaders, led by DMK chief MK Stalin, are scheduled to take part in a national conference on social justice in Delhi Monday, former union minister Srikant Jena has urged the Tamil Nadu chief minister to highlight the alleged social injustice meted out to Odisha's population over the last many years by the government. Congratulating Stalin, whose brainchild All India Federation for Social Justice will hold its first national conference on "Taking Forward the Struggle for Social Justice and Joint National Programme for Social Justice Movement" in Delhi, Jena said, "You and your party have been torchbearers for the advancement of social justice in India and your achievements are an inspiration to all." In his letter, Jena urged Stalin to highlight the plight of Odisha, which, according to him, has been a laggard in social justice nationally. "Despite being one of India's richest states in terms of natural resources with tremendous mineral reserves, fertile soil and a large coastline, Odisha has remained the poorest state in India because it simply hasn't developed its human

capital - 94 per cent of whom are SC, ST and OBCs," the former union minister said. Giving examples of 'social injustice', Jena said Odisha's SC, ST population together is nearly 40 per cent, while OBCs comprise nearly 54 per cent. "Despite this overwhelming majority and more than 30 years of the Mandal Commission, there is no reservation for OBCs in higher education, and only 11 per cent (instead of 27 per cent) exists in government jobs," he said. He added that this is shameful and government over the last 23 years has been complicit in this denial of basic constitutional rights. Jena said the OBC, SC, ST Finance Corporation has been virtually defunct for the last 20 years, denying financial support to budding entrepreneurs from these communities. Jena urged DMK and other parties taking part in the seminar to highlight the 'social injustice meted out to Odisha's population over the years, so that a new chapter of social justice can actually start from Odisha in 2023'. The former union minister has also sent a copy of his letter to CM Naveen Patnaik, it was learnt.



STF RESCUES LIVE PANGOLIN; 1 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 2: The Special Task Force (STF) has arrested a wild life criminal and rescued a live pangolin weighing 12 kg in Baragarh district. The arrested criminal, Mahadev Mutkia is a resident of Gandapalli village under Paikamal police limits of Baragarh district.



Following a tip-off, the STF sleuths along with the forest officials of the Baragarh forest division Saturday evening carried out a search near Bijadihi Chhaka under Padmapur Police Station in Baragarh district where Mahadev was found standing suspiciously. "During search, one live pangolin weighing 12 kg along with other incriminating materials was recovered from his possession. The accused person could not produce any authority in support of possession of the pangolin, for which he was detained and handed over to Padmapur forest officials under Baragarh forest division. The live pangolin was also handed over to DFO Baragarh for safe custody," STF sources revealed Sunday. The Indian pangolin known as bajrakapta in Odia is a schedule-I protected animal under Wild Life Protection act, 1972. Schedule I provides absolute protection-offences under these are prescribed for the highest penalties.

CLASSIFIED

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I, Yogesh Kumar had lost my 10th class Original Certificate No.- 1153451/125, Unique Id.No.- 6014271 near my house at Sunderpada on 21.03.2023 while returning from Xerox shop. If found please contact: 9007278281.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Host of activities for children with special needs

SSEPD dept holds rally in City Bhubaneswar: Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) Sunday observed World



Autism Awareness Day to celebrate the contributions of persons with autism and to promote their inherent rights. SSEPD Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, while flagging off a huge rally Sunday morning, emphasized early diagnosis and interventions that can lead to improved outcomes for individuals with autism. Panda also described the day an opportunity to raise a col-

lective voice in support of persons with autism. Starting from Ram Mandir square, the rally reached Capital High School. Students from Special Schools and State Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SIEPD) along with volunteers, teachers and guardians participated in the rally. Students holding placards shouted slogans to spread the essential message of autism by wearing blue apparels. MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das, Bhaskar Sarma, Commissioner-cum Secretary, SSEPD department and senior officers were present in the programme to encourage the students. **KIIT Int'l School organises 'Jeepathon'** Bhubaneswar: The KIIT International School observed the 'World Autism Awareness Day' on Sunday to spread awareness among people not just to accept autism

as it is but to promote of rights of the children with autism. The day was observed under the aegis of SEN Globe, a dedicated department under the school that provides education to children t with special needs. The main event was flagged off by the President of KIIT and KISS Saswati Bal, Founder of KIIT and KISS Achyuta Samanta, Chairperson KIIT International School Mona Lisa Bal, Principal KIIT International School Sanjay Suar and advisor SEN Globe Swagatika Samantaray. A 'Jeepathon' was organised at different places including hotels, restaur-



ants, shopping malls and police station with blue ribbon and book-marks with messages for inclusion. **Need to be responsible society: Gargi Bhubaneswar:** To bring awareness about autism, Zain Foundation Trust organized a special programme on World Autism Awareness Day here Sunday. In the programme, the autistic kids of the City participated in multiple events that include ramp walk, dance show and special play. A special movie on autism titled Sweekar by XIMB students was screened. At the end, the children performed special show named The Lion King where they dressed in animal costumes to give message of safe ecosystem. A website of Zain Foundation Trust was also launched on the occasion. Gargi Bhattacharya,

Chief Trustee, Zain Foundation Trust performed a special dance drama 'Neela' choreographed by Shivangi Mohapatra an Odissi dancer; where Gargi portrayed an autistic Krishna. She said, "Autism is a developmental disorder, the severity of which varies from individual to individual. People on the autism spectrum have difficulty with social interactions and communicating. These kids are not retarded but their brains are wired in different ways. We need to step up as responsible society and include them, she said.



COASTLINE EROSION IN STATE A CAUSE OF CONCERN

Odisha has a coastline of 480 kilometre spread over six districts- Balasore, Bhadrak, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Puri. The coastal ecosystems are now highly disturbed and very much threatened, due to sea erosion and coastal degradation in some parts of the state. As per the Odisha Climate Change Action Plan (2021-2030), the coast of the state is largely accreting (52.7 per cent) while erosion accounts for 36.9 per cent of the coast. About 10.4 per cent of the coast is stable. District-wise statistics indicate that erosion is dominant in Kendrapara while accretion is dominant in districts like Bhadrak. The stretch of Paradip to Dhamra - is highly eroding making the region highly prone to hazard. In addition to this, the region near Rushikulya River is also prone to erosion. Also, as mentioned, in Kendrapara, the region from Mahanadi River to Gahirmatha witnesses a high erosion rate. The

north of Paradip Port and near Hukitola bay accretion is predominantly high, making the region hazard prone. Similarly, out of the coastal stretch of the state, around 30 per cent has a less than 5 meter elevation profile which is resulting in about 18 per cent of the coastal zone in the area highly prone to sea water inundation. It can be observed that Bhadrak and Kendrapara are having comparatively more area which is prone to inundation due to frequent occurrence of high tides and the low elevation profile. Puri and Ganjam districts comparatively show a high elevation profile resulting in a region less prone to sea water inundation hazard. The northern region of Balasore has rural settlements situated near the coast and as rural areas dominantly have temporary unstable structures, this area is highly vulnerable to hazards. In addition to this, a huge portion of Bhadrak and Balasore lie under agriculture and aquaculture making the coast



vulnerable to hazards in terms of loss of property. Due to availability of mangroves, a strong prevalence of aquaculture can be seen in the areas of Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur making the area near coast more vulnerable to hazards. In addition to this, due to Balukhand Wildlife Sanctuary and Chilika Lake, about 35 per cent of the region is non-vulnerable. Altogether, 78 per cent of the area lies in medium and high vulnerability zones. Out of the six coastal districts, Balasore has the highest number of villages that fall in the high population vulnerability zone, followed by Kendrapara and Puri. More than 20 per cent of the villages in Balasore are vulnerable due to their high population concentration. Kendrapara district is the worst sea erosion district of Odisha as 16 villages of district had already been submerged in sea water and 247 people faced displacement due to the rise in sea-level. Similarly, two villages of Ganjam

have also been affected due to the rise in sea-level. Some villagers of erosion-hit Podampetta and Ramayapatta village of the district had already been displaced. During the ongoing budget session, in a written statement to Parliament, Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Jitendra Singh said the turtle nesting site was shifted from Bhitarkanika to Gahirmatha in Kendrapara district due to coastal degradation and erosion. Loss of habitats, vegetation and sand dunes in Pentha and Satabhaya coast were also reported in Odisha, he said. There is loss of Casuarina vegetation in Siali and adjoining areas of Jagatsinghpur district and degradation of fishing hamlets in Ramachandi, and tourist beach in Puri town. Besides, fishing hamlets in Podampeta, Ramayapattam and Gopalpur of Ganjam district were damaged due to the coastal erosion in the state, Singh mentioned in his statement.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences through National Centre for Coastal Research and National Institute of Ocean Technology provides technical solutions to the government of Odisha in mitigation of coastal erosion and they are being implemented by the government of Odisha with their own funds, he added. Besides, under 15th Finance Commission, the recovery and reconstruction window of National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for Rs 1,000 crore is earmarked for re-settlement of displaced people affected by erosion. In addition, Rs 1,500 crore is earmarked for mitigation measures to prevent river and coastal erosion. The Odisha government has been implementing the Climate Change Action Plan through 11 departments. The state has taken up the creation of new forests using scientific methods, tried to reduce the usage of water in agriculture and brought changes in building construction codes, official sources said.

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FAKE CERTIFICATE RACKET

Crime Branch team visits Bolangir

Bolangir, April 2: Considering the demand for a probe into the interstate fake certificate racket, the state government has entrusted the Crime Branch (CB) for further investigation. Reportedly, a five-member team of the CB headed by Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Debabrata Chakra arrived here Saturday night and had a discussion with Bolangir SP Nitin Kushalkar in his office.

The CB team formally took over the investigation into the fake certificate racket from Bolangir Police, Sunday. Then the CB officials went to the Town police station and had a discussion with Sadar SDPO Tophan Bag, Town PS IC Biswajeet Marbodh, and Sadar PS IC Srikant Sahu.



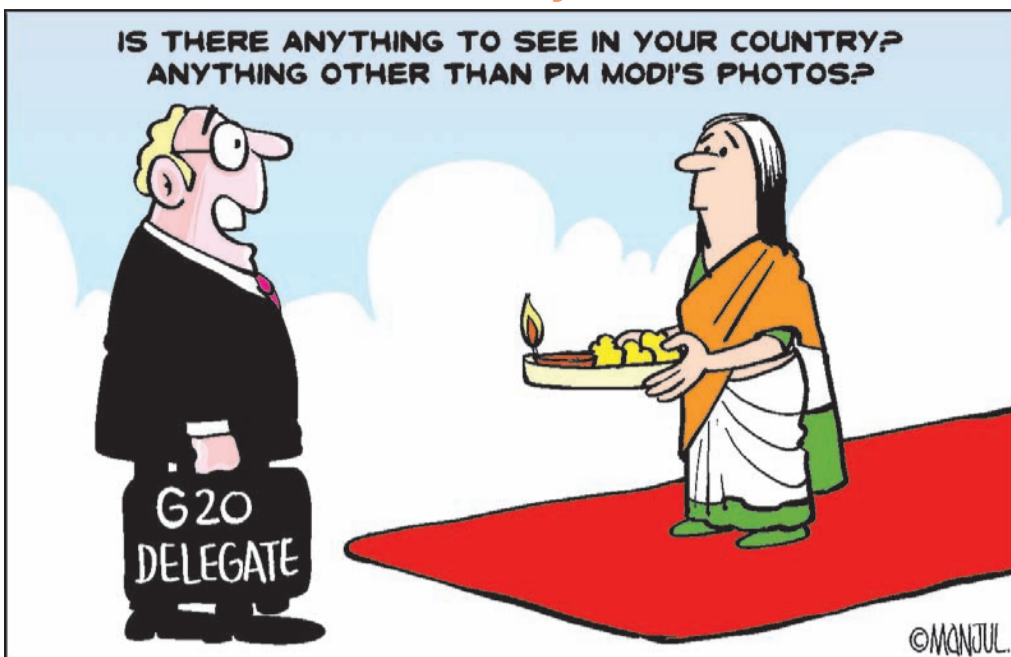
Then the team headed to the Reliance Education Complex situated on Bolangir-Patnagarh road. They took photographs of the coaching institute from all angles before entering inside. The team stopped all media-persons present there from entering into the premises. After half an hour, the team visited the Head Post Office but returned to the police station as it was closed, Sunday. The CB will take every piece of evidence related

to the case into custody, said DSP Chakra and assured a thorough investigation into the matter.

It is pertinent to mention that Bolangir police had busted an interstate fake certificate racket after Bolangir postal superintendent Rajendra Kumar Pattnaik lodged a complaint alleging that the educational certificates submitted by some candidates applying for jobs in Bolangir postal division were fake.

Subsequently, a special team raided the premises of Reliance Education Complex and seized around 5,000 fake certificates of 41 schools, colleges and universities in the country. Mastermind Manoj Mishra, the proprietor of a local coaching centre Reliance Education Complex, and his partner Alok Ranjan Udgata were arrested during the raid.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Man chops off friend's genitals

Kendrapara: A 32-year-old man allegedly chopped off his friend's genitals after a drunken brawl at a beach in Kendrapara district Sunday, police said. Bhagabat Das, 30, and his friend Akshaya Rout were drinking at the Pentha beach in the Rajnagar police station area when a fight broke out between them. As the situation escalated, Rout allegedly chopped off Das's genitals with a sharp-edged weapon, police said. Rout then fled the spot, they said. The two friends had hired an auto-rickshaw to go to the beach. Police said they have detained the driver of the auto-rickshaw as they search for Rout, who is on the run. Das was first taken to the Community Health Centre (CHC) in Rajnagar, but later shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack as his condition deteriorated, police said. A case under IPC section 307 (attempt to murder) was registered, they said.

Paradip Port handles highest traffic ever

Paradip, April 2: Paradip Port has handled its highest-ever annual traffic of 135.36 million metric tonnes during the financial year 2022-23 against 116.13 million metric tonnes during the previous financial year.



Addressing the annual press conference here Sunday Paradip Port Authority Chairman PL Hanadhar said the port recorded the highest-ever growth of 19.2 million metric tonnes (16.56 per cent) of traffic in a single financial year in its history.

The growth in cargo handling achieved by Paradip Port is the highest among all ports, both major and non-major ports of the country.

During the financial year, the port achieved the highest ever coastal shipping traffic of 58.42 million metric tonnes, with a growth of 16.22 million metric tonnes or 38 per cent over the previous year.

The thermal coal coastal shipping has grown by 14 million metric

tonnes or 50 per cent over the previous year's cargo handling and is emerging as a hub for coastal shipping in the country, he said.

Paradip Port has been able to improve its berth productivity to 31,050 MT from 27,295 MT of the previous financial year, registering 13.76 per cent growth. The berth productivity achieved by Paradip Port is the highest among all the ports of the country.

During the financial year, the port handled 20,126 rakes, registering a growth of 20.45 per cent over the previous financial year.

The port has handled 2,394 ships during the financial year registering an increase of 16 per cent over the previous financial year due to various system improvement measures undertaken by the port.

Paradip Port, with 289 million metric tonnes rated capacity port as on date, is poised to cross the 300 million metric tonnes capacity mark in another 3 years with the commissioning of the Western Dock project, the chairman said.

He said Paradip Port is aiming to develop an exclusive berth for handling green ammonia/green

hydrogen.

Haranadh said after the development of the berth Paradip Port would become the hydrogen hub port of the country.

The chairman said the port has planned to develop a 10 MW solar power plant to power the operations of the port, totally by renewable energy and to come up with a green refuelling station by setting up LNG and CNG depots at the port.

The port has also planned to add another 4 berths for which requisite approval will be taken during the current financial year; the chairman added. Paradip Port is planning to improve connectivity by commissioning two road flyovers within its premises with a cost of ₹150 crores to avoid surface crossing of rail and road traffic to handle road traffic seamlessly.

Paradip Port, which has mechanised 80 per cent of the berths as on date, plans to become 100 per cent mechanised by 2030 with the mechanisation of the existing 4 semi-mechanised berths, he said.

NHRC seeks ATR from Odisha, T'gana on migrant workers' woes

PNN & AGENCIES



Kendrapara, April 2: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought Action Taken Reports (ATRs) from the Chief Secretaries of Odisha and Telangana on the extreme sufferings of migrant labourers. Acting on a petition filed by rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the NHRC March 31 sought the ATR within four weeks from the authorities of both Odisha and Telangana on two incidents cited by him.

In one incident, a family went to work in Telangana where the husband died. The wife brought the body to Odisha but the owners of the brick kiln forcibly kept her daughter as a bonded labourer to get back his money. In another incident, one woman was forced to pawn two of her sons with a neighbour to feed other children.

Shukadev Parabhue of Banmal

village under Belapada block of Bolangir district along with his wife Usha, a son and a daughter, had migrated to work at a brick kiln in Telangana after taking ₹60,000 in advance through local labour agents. Due to overwork, Shukadev fell ill and succumbed to his illness March 8. After knowing that the kiln owner was planning to bury his body after post-mortem at the nearby hospital, Usha pleaded before him to allow her to take the body back to the village.

Usha returned to the village along with her son Pabitra (6) and her husband's body but the kiln's owner forcibly kept her daughter

Kaikkeyi (12) as a bonded labour to get back his money.

In another incident, a widow was forced to pawn her two minor sons for money to perform the last rites of her husband at Champua in Keonjhar district January 26, 2016. Sabitri Nayak, a tribal from Gadhuli village in Keonjhar district, pawned her sons Mukesh (13) and Sukesh (11) to her neighbour for ₹5,000 to perform the last rites of her husband, Raiba.

Raiba died January 26, 2016 after a long illness that drained the family's meagre resources and forced Sabitri to withdraw her children from school as she could not get any government support. The two pawned brothers are looking after the cattle of the neighbour who helped Sabitri with the money. Sabitri approached the administration for help but none came forward. It was distressing to see the kids leave their home, to turn slaves to help their mother repay her debt, Tripathy said.

'Biplabi' Chakradhar's deeds live on forever

NABENDU BIKASH DAS, OP

The narrative and exploits of legendary farmer leader Chakradhar Behera will be written in gold, in the annals of Odia as well as Indian history. Chakradhar, who was born in Bhadrak district, devoted his entire life for the peasants of Odisha as well as the common people. The might of the autocratic kings and the British Raj failed to stop him. Chakradhar was a beacon of hope for the peasants as he fought for their rights relentlessly. He was in the forefront of action as farmers fought against the imperialistic rule of the king of the Kanika estate for more than 25 years.

Chakradhar, who was born July 16, 1894 in Ankapada village under the present day Chandabali block, had a chequered academic career and was called a 'very learned man' in his village. In 1921, he was appointed as an accountant by the king of Kanika.

However, trouble was brewing even before Chakradhar's appointment. A catastrophic flood hit the estate in 1920 destroying harvest and killing a number of people. Even before the people of the estate could recoup from the losses, the king added an additional burden of taxes on their already over-burdened shoulders in December 1921. Among the 'karas' (taxes) that were imposed were 'bana kara', 'machha kara', 'bata kara', 'chula kara', 'hada kara'. The farmers were particularly peeved by the imposition of the 'chausathi kara'.

With the people and farmers suffering due to imposition of various taxes, Chakradhar decided to revolt. He resigned from his post as an accountant and started a movement which was to have far-reaching effects.

In January 1922, Chakradhar organised a meeting where it was decided that the people of Kanika estate would stop paying taxes to the king. The ma-

majority of the people responded to Chakradhar's appeal.

It was at this juncture trade unionist Baba Ram Chandra arrived in Kanika to spread the message of Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. However, with the king and officials of the British raj working in tandem, Ram Chandra was arrested. However, the authorities could not keep him behind bars for long as people refused to testify against Ram Chandra on the advice of Chakradhar.

With the resentment against the king and the British raj increasing by the day, non-cooperation reached new heights. The authorities tried to suppress the rebellion by force. During one such meeting attended by the farmers, police opened fire. Two peasants, Basu and Bisuni, were killed in the firing. However, that did not quell the protests. In fact, now the farmers and people of the estate became defiant.

With no other option left, the authorities arrested Chakradhar under the 'Chowkidari Ordinance'. He was sent to the Balasore jail where he was tortured on a regular basis as police tried to elicit information out of him in their bid to quell the farmers' protests. However, they failed to break the determination of Chakradhar.


While in captivity, Chakradhar wrote the famous poem 'Bandira Bilapa', a fitting portrayal of the hardships suffered by the farmers and their resolve to fight against injustice. His narrative inspired the people to retaliate and hit back against the king and the British raj.

In 1930, when the Civil Disobedience Movement started, Chakradhar appealed to the people to join the 'Labana (Salt) Satyagraha' and also participate in the 'Dandi March' conducted by Mahatma Gandhi. Many did so voluntarily. Also to create awareness about the 'Swadeshi movement', Chakradhar opened a khadi spinning centre in Haldia village of Bhadrak district.

Chakradhar became so popular in the district that in the Assembly elections held in 1937, he contested on a Congress ticket and defeated the candidate put up by the King. In 1938 he was elected to the district Congress committee. In spite of all his achievements, Chakradhar continued to fight for India's independence till the British were forced to leave.


'Biplabi' as Chakradhar was fondly referred to, served his entire life for the cause of the people. He breathed his last April 29, 1973. However, his deeds live on forever.






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Trump's Fate

In an unprecedented case in US history, former President Donald Trump has been indicted by a grand jury in New York on charges including hush-money paid to a porn film actor Stormy Daniels in 2016 shortly before the presidential election. That gives a new twist to the well recognised Trump tactic of bullying and denigrating opponents, the judiciary, the law enforcing agencies and the parliamentary system adopted by the former President for the past few years. Now, it will not be enough for him to play the victim card, resort to racist rhetoric and project himself as innocent. A protracted legal battle is ahead amidst uncertainties over Trump's third run for Presidency the next year and how the indictment will impact his political future. There is, however, little doubt, going by reactions so far, that Trump has been taken off guard by the verdict. He seems to have deluded himself into the belief that the indictment would not be pronounced so soon with the presidential election a few months away. The specific charges and the evidence used still remain unclear as the indictment is under seal. But, reports so far and statements made by Trump's lawyers do suggest the charges could include the payment of \$130,000 made by Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen to the actor on Trump's behalf. In fact, the deal is said to have been clinched to buy Daniels' silence to facilitate Trump's victory in the election. He is said to have reimbursed the amount to Cohen soon after he won the election. This was then passed off as legal expenses. In the US laws paying hush money is not illegal. But, falsification of business records with an ulterior motive to commit further crime may go against Trump as it violates campaign finance laws.

Now, the question is whether the indictment really makes Trump's future look bleak or will it help him turn the table on his opponents. Supporters of Trump, including some Republican senators, have said the indictment sets "a dangerous precedent." But the charge may not be tenable since the system of justice is required to show to the people that it does not favour anyone nor does it ignore the wrongdoings of the powerful. Trump has done everything possible over the past seven years to destroy that belief. He repeatedly and publicly defied laws and disregarded the US constitution. The verdict may be cited as an attempt to restore that trust in the judiciary.

Trump will find it difficult to convince the people that he is a victim of witch-hunt, even though he and some of his Republican friends have alleged he is being "persecuted" and not "prosecuted". However, his campaigns have been based on variations of this narrative. This time they may not get the traction as they got before since, in this case, a grand jury found that he had broken the law. It is really hard to brand an independent grand jury, comprising ordinary people, part of a witch-hunt. Interesting to note is that the identities of these independent jury members are always kept secret.

Experts argue that the critical point of the indictment is that the grand jury had relied on credible evidence to come to the conclusion that Trump had broken the law. This will influence outcomes of other serious cases against Trump. For example, prosecutors in Georgia and Washington will be able to use the indictment to build their cases more convincingly.

The broader question is, however, whether Democrats will be able to score over Trump on the basis of the indictment. There are far weightier cases against Trump, including certain dealings of the Trump Organization, his role in inciting the January 6, 2021 insurrection and withholding classified information after demitting office. There is no reason for the Democrats to be euphoric about the indictment since Trump is likely to polarise Americans further by campaigning that he is being subjected to political persecution.

Trump may find the legal process somewhat difficult to handle following the indictment, but his incendiary rhetoric has the power to swing voters. The US is in any case almost vertically split over supporting or opposing Trump. The former President appears to be down, but he sure is not out.



Maria Ressa & Nishant Lalwani

IF DEMOCRACY IS TO PREVAIL, CREDIBLE, INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA WILL BE ESSENTIAL

If democracy had its own doomsday clock, it would be at two minutes to midnight. According to the most recent analysis by Varieties of Democracy (known as V-Dem), 72 per cent of the world's population lived in autocracies last year, compared to 50 per cent a decade ago. For the first time in more than two decades, there are more authoritarian regimes than liberal democracies – and we are not doing enough to address this threat.

The reversal has been stunning. In the Philippines, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. won last year's presidential election, 36 years after a popular revolt overthrew his father's dictatorship. In Brazil, millions still refuse to accept former president Jair Bolsonaro's defeat to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has forced its citizens to rise up against a genocidal occupier. And in Egypt, the last vestiges of resistance to autocracy have been forced into the shadows. On every continent, illiberal politicians are portraying democracy as an impractical historical relic.

We must do more to stop this rapid democratic backsliding. During World War II, when democracy was similarly threatened, the free world came together to bring about a more peaceful international order. The multilateral system that was established in 1944 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, and by the creation of the United Nations the following year, led to decades of relative stability and international cooperation on human rights.

We are at a similar moment today – with an important twist. The current conflict between autocracy and democracy is fought not only on the battlefield and in the political arena but also on social media and broadcast TV. If democracy is to prevail, credible, independent news media will be essential.

Without trusted, impartial media, we cannot have shared facts; without shared facts, we cannot have political accountability or fair elec-

FOCUS DEMOCRACY

PROPAGANDA IS WINNING



The current conflict between autocracy and democracy is fought not only on the battlefield and in the political arena but also on social media and broadcast TV

tions; and without fair elections, democracy cannot survive. And yet, just when we need it most, fact-based, public-interest journalism is dying out. The ongoing demise of advertising revenue has severely limited news outlets' ability to inform citizens, hold the powerful to account, and tell important stories.

The failure of journalism's business model has led to two decades of collapsing revenues, cost-cutting, and layoffs. Thousands of news organisations across the world have shut down, while political actors have acquired others as a vehicle for spreading propaganda. China alone has spent an estimated \$6.6 billion since 2009 on strengthening its international media influence, and Russia spent at least \$1.5 billion last year on similar efforts.

International efforts to support independent journalism have been paltry in comparison. According to a 2022 report by the Center for International Media Assistance, such funding amounted to \$385 million in 2019 – roughly 0.3 per cent

of overseas development assistance – and has not grown since then. This is woefully insufficient. Public and private funders must increase support for media organisations to at least 1 per cent of global development assistance, thereby providing an additional \$1 billion a year to support public-interest journalism.

The defining challenge of our time, saving democracy, must be a collective effort. US President Joe Biden's administration holds its second Summit for Democracy, which aims to make democracies "more responsive and resilient." The first summit took place (virtually) in December 2021 and ended with several heads of state – including Biden, then-New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and French President Emmanuel Macron – committing to provide support to the International Fund for Public Interest Media (IFPIM).

IFPIM is a first-of-its-kind multilateral institution seeking to boost the economic resilience of news outlets and usher in a new paradigm for public-interest jour-

nalism within the next decade. Today, we will announce that IFPIM has received financial contributions of almost \$50 million from 16 donors, including seven governments and nine firms and philanthropies. Many of these funders are contributing meaningfully to global media support for the first time. We will also announce our first cohort of grantees: since the last summit, IFPIM has funded 11 news outlets in ten countries, including Brazil, Ukraine, Niger, Tunisia, and Colombia.

And yet our funds are still only a fraction of the billions autocrats spend on strengthening their networks for disseminating disinformation. At the Summit, and throughout this year, democratic states must step up and commit significant funds to scale up the fight for independent media. Wealthy democracies that have long understood the importance of a free press, including the G7 countries, must mobilise their vast resources to support the creation of a global information ecosystem that is more resilient to disinformation. Private firms, which rely on accurate information to thrive, must take a prominent role in this effort by committing capital to fix the market failure that has weakened public-interest journalism.

Support for public-interest media is not nostalgia for some halcyon era. The ability to access real-time, accurate information is essential to a well-functioning democracy. To defend against the rising tide of authoritarianism, fact-based news must be readily accessible to all. Liberal democracy's doomsday clock is edging closer to midnight. We must act now – or regret our indecision during the long tyrannical darkness that follows.

Maria Ressa, Co-Founder and Co-Chair of the International Fund for Public Interest Media, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021. Nishant Lalwani is CEO of the International Fund for Public Interest Media.

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WISDOM CORNER

- There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about. OSCAR WILDE
- To live is to suffer, to survive is to find some meaning in the suffering. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
- What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals. ZIG ZIGLAR

WORDSWORTH

Gunsel

In modern American slang a gunsel is a criminal carrying a gun. So it was natural that it should be spoken in the episode of Deadwood aired in the US this week. The two saloon keepers Al Swearingen and Cy Tolliver both refer to the brothers Wyatt and Morgan Earp, who had supposedly saved the stagecoach from road agents, as gunsels, meaning gunslingers. The summary of the plot on the Home Box Office Web site says: "Cy presents to Hearst his plot to engender a duel between Bullock and Wyatt Earp; '...whether Bullock or this gunsel stood at the finish there'd be no losing in it for you.'" Wyatt Earp, the famous marshal of Wichita and Dodge City, was certainly recorded as being in Deadwood in 1876, so the historical setting is right. But nobody could have called him a gunsel for two reasons: the word didn't exist then, and even when it came into existence, about twenty years later, it didn't mean a gunman but a raw youth. In particular, in convict and tramp slang a gunsel was a young homosexual male, especially one who was the companion of an older man. It is generally taken to derive from the Yiddish gendzel, a little goose, from German Gänselein, a gosling. A plausible story of the way the word changed sense was set out by Erle Stanley Gardner in an article in the Atlantic Monthly in 1965. He claimed it was the fault of Dashiell Hammett. Together with Gardner, Raymond Chandler and others, he was a contributor to the old Black Mask pulp magazine edited by Joseph Shaw that featured naturalistic crime stories. But Shaw was dead against including vulgarisms and blue-pencilled some of Hammett's underworld usages. To retaliate, as Gardner told the story, Hammett laid a trap for Shaw. In his next story he included the term gooseberry lay. Shaw pounced on this and rejected it, though it wasn't a rude term at all but tramps' slang for stealing washing off clotheslines to sell. But Hammett also included gunsel in the story, which Shaw left in, thinking it meant "gunman". The significant appearance of the word was in Hammett's The Maltese Falcon, serialised in Black Mask in 1929 and published as a novel the following year: "Another thing, Spade repeated, glaring at the boy: 'Keep that gunsel away from me while you're making up your mind. I'll kill him.'" The word was spoken by Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade in the 1941 film of the book and so became much more widely known. If you read Hammett's description of the boy, you'll realise that he was subtly making the point that he actually was gay, but if you hadn't been tuned into that you might miss it. In Australia an equally extraordinary but different shift in sense has taken place. In the spelling gunzel it means a railway or tramway enthusiast (otherwise in various countries a railfan, trainspotter or gricer). In early appearances it referred to the kind of scruffy, obsessive and over-enthusiastic fan who travels with notebooks and cameras and who would bore you to tears with arcane information if you let him get started. The new meaning is said to have grown up at the Sydney Tramway Museum in the 1960s through the reading of old American comics. These days, the term is worn with pride.

SPECTRUM DIPLOMACY

Dragon's balancing act

The manner in which China has brokered a peace deal between two arch foes: Saudi Arabia and Iran may help Beijing to emerge as a global peacemaker, eclipsing the US. A major diplomatic coup was staged by China, when it announced the results of its successfully mediated efforts, of bringing two old foes at the negotiating table and signing a friendship deal. The move also represents Beijing's first foray into Middle Eastern politics, an area that has always been regarded as a prerogative of the US.

On 10 March, both Riyadh and Tehran announced that after seven years of severed ties they would re-open embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation agreements signed more than 20 years ago. Much of the world was stunned when the two arch-rivals announced they were restoring diplomatic relations, this was not only because of the breakthrough after years of mutual animosity, but because of the mediator, who played a key role in bringing the foes to the negotiating table, i.e. the Chinese government. By this move China has ostensibly taken up a role that the US could not have fulfilled, or it never tried to perform that role.

Apparently, the Saudis had been engaged in talks with Iran from around the same time as Al Ula

Summit held in Saudi in 2021, which ended the blockade of Qatar and mended the internal rifts of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In the two years since, the United Arab Emirates has restored its diplomatic relations with Iran and even replaced China as Iran's top import partner; Kuwait, too, has returned its ambassador to Tehran. The negotiations between Iran and Saudi Arabia since 2021 largely took place in Iraq and Oman. Other regional countries, including Kuwait and Pakistan, had attempted to arrange for talks between Tehran and Riyadh on numerous occasions in the past seven years, which were largely unsuccessful.

As tensions simmer between the world's two largest economies: the US and China, American policy-makers had sounded an alarm over competition and security concerns with China, but what does Beijing's ascendance in the region mean for the Middle East – and for the larger US interests?

In recent times, China has been pushing for reconfiguring the regional security architecture in the Persian Gulf since 2020. In a UNSC meeting arranged by Russia in October of that year, China presented its proposal for security and stability in the Gulf region, arguing that with a multilateral effort, the region can become "an Oasis of Security." Apparently the edifice

of this Chinese plan to transform into a global peacemaker seems to be the Global Security Initiative (GSI), which was unveiled by Chinese President Xi Jinping in February 2023. It is portrayed as a banner for China to reform the current international security order, especially at a time when the US is prioritising alignment with countries that share the same political system and ideology, through its Democracy Summit.

Mainly, with growing power and influence China's to have a fair say in international peace and security architecture building. The GSI Concept Paper released by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 2023 identified "bringing about security changes through political dialogue and peaceful negotiation" as core concepts and principles.

China's successful brokering of the peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran has given it the confidence that this track could work. The aspiration is that China can fill the gap in regions the US has failed to lead or ignore. According to the Chinese understanding of the region, Iran and Saudi Arabia are "pivot countries" whose political, economic, and military power make them indispensable partners for Beijing, making balance between the two the most consequential strategy. For both countries, China

is the largest trading partner. Beijing has granted Tehran and Riyadh the status of comprehensive strategic partners – the highest in China's partnership diplomacy in the Middle East.

But China's balancing act is more articulated than just signing similar partnership agreements with both partners. While economic relations are unequivocally unbalanced in Saudi Arabia's favour, China guarantees Iran political support and a financial lifeline in the face of US pressure. Yet, offering different goods to equal partners often shakes the balancing act.

In December 2022, the joint China-GCC communiqué that followed Xi's trip to Saudi Arabia generated anger in Iran, exposing the limits of China's diplomacy from the sidelines. The GSI Concept Paper also emphasises the need to support political settlements of hotspot issues such as the war in Ukraine.

Therefore, President Xi's efforts to promote a political settlement to the Russia-Ukraine war would be essential to watch. If another success is achieved after his Russia visit, it may lend more credence to the GSI.

The writer is a political commentator based in New Delhi.

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Asad Mirza

BY THIS MOVE CHINA HAS OSTENSIBLY TAKEN UP A ROLE THAT THE US COULD NOT HAVE FULFILLED

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

Orissa POST
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Care for eye

Sir, India has a significant population of visually impaired individuals. The latest national survey for blindness and visual impairment in India has highlighted that corneal issues are the second most common cause of blindness in the country. The Indian government has launched various initiatives to provide opportunities for blind people and educate the population on eye health. These initiatives include the establishment of institutions that provide education, training, and job opportunities for the visually impaired, financial assistance for eye surgeries, free distribution of spectacles, and eye check-up camps. The government also focuses on research and development in the field of eye care through the establishment of the National Institute of Ophthalmology (NIO). Eye health is of utmost importance, and spreading knowledge related to it is crucial. The Government of India organises the Prevention of Blindness Week campaign every year from April 1 to April 7 to raise awareness. Advanced technology has opened up new avenues for preventing blindness and visual impairment. AI-based systems, gene therapy, and minimally invasive surgical techniques offer new hope for patients with eye diseases and can help reduce the burden of blindness worldwide. The government's focus on research and development in the field of eye care holds promise for the prevention and treatment of visual impairment in the future. Continued investment in research and development is crucial to unlocking the full potential of these technologies and ensuring that more people can enjoy the gift of sight.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Crucial polls

Sir, All eyes will be on Karnataka from May 10 to May 13 as the voters will decide which party will rule the crucial south Indian state for the next five years. By the look of things, the Congress party seems to be on the driver's seat at present. The time-tested leadership qualities of Siddaramaiah, who is almost certain to lead the Congress government if the party is voted back to power, should stand the party in good stead. However, the BJP is not making things easy for the Congress, courtesy Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The third player in the ring, the Janata Dal (Secular) of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda cannot be discounted at all. Of course, there is little chance of the party forming a majority on its own. But as past examples have proved, the JDS is imminently capable of acting as a kingmaker and, consequently, a king itself.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA



If the JPC demand is in the bin, the bills will be passed in the din, sadly
JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

WEAR MASK: EXPERTS

As Delhi is witnessing a sudden spurt in Covid cases, experts have advised people to remain cautious by masking up. Delhi recorded 416 fresh Covid cases Saturday, the highest in over seven months, with a positivity rate of 14.37 per cent



of the day quote

Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from Lok Sabha following his conviction in a 2019 defamation case has generated a "surprising wave of Opposition unity" with many parties having begun to feel the truth of the adage - "united we stand, divided we fall"

India's defence exports have reached an all-time high of ₹15,920 crore in FY 2022-2023. It is a remarkable achievement for the country

The Punjab government has failed completely on the law and order front



Farmers try to recover the harvested wheat bales after heavy rain lashed a field in Gurugram

PTI PHOTO

Fresh clashes in Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rishra (WB), April 2: Clashes broke out between two groups during a Ram Navami procession in West Bengal's Hooghly district on Sunday evening, police said. BJP vice-president Dilip Ghosh, who was in the procession, said that the incident happened on GT Road in Rishra police station area. People in the procession were walking peacefully to the Jagannath temple in Mahesh when stones were hurled at it, he alleged. A senior officer of the Chandannagar Police said the clash broke out around 6:15 pm. "The procession was going through the traditional route when one group started throwing stones at it. We took immediate steps to address the situation," the IPS officer said. Quick action was taken by the police and the situation is now under control, she said. A heavy police deployment has been made in the

area to prevent any further flare-up, the officer said. BJP's Pursurah MLA Biman Ghosh was injured in stone pelting and rushed to a hospital, Ghosh said. "There were many women and children in the procession who were walking with saffron flags in their hands. Suddenly stones were hurled at us from one side of the road. Several policemen were also injured in the stone-pelting even though I and some other leaders were rescued and taken out of the area through adjacent lanes," he claimed. The ruling TMC questioned what was the need to organise the procession two days after Ram Navami. "Why are they so bent to take out Ram Navami processions during the holy month of Ramzan? Why the Ram Navami rally was taken out two days later? The BJP wants to engineer riots in Bengal to create instability for political gains," TMC spokesperson Joyprakash Majumdar said.

AP techie burnt to death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tirupati, April 2: A 35-year-old software engineer was burnt to death near here for attempting to resolve a dispute arising out of an alleged extra-marital affair that his brother was entangled in. Nagaraju, who was working from home at Brahmanapalli village in Veduru Kuppam mandal of Chittoor District, was set ablaze in his own car allegedly by three people, namely Ripinjaya, Chanakya Pratap and Gopinath Reddy. "Nagaraju's brother Purushottam is accused of having an extra-marital affair with Ripinjaya's wife, which led to disputes between them. To sort out these issues amicably, Nagaraju was mediating through Reddy," a police official said Sunday. According to police, Purushottam, the younger brother of Nagaraju, who is also a software engineer, recently bagged a job in Bengaluru. On Saturday night, when Purushottam was away in Bengaluru, Reddy called Nagaraju for discussions. So Nagaraju went with Ripinjaya, Pratap and Reddy to discuss the issue and went out in a car. But



All three accused are on the run and the cops have launched a manhunt for them

the situation escalated, ending up in Nagaraju being burned alive by the three in his own Honda car. Nagaraju requested Reddy to avoid confrontation, but the situation took an extreme turn at Bopparajupalli Kanuma, between Chandragiri and RP Puram, the official added. As the deceased person's body has been completely burnt, police are making arrangements to carry out the post-mortem examination at the crime scene itself. Nagaraju's chain and slippers have been identified. All three accused are on the run, and the police have launched a manhunt for them.

Sarma's security tightened

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: The security of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has been tightened after a voice message issuing threat to him was received by a number of Assamese journalists based in Delhi and Assam on Sunday from a person identifying himself as Gurpatwant Singh Pannu from the banned Sikhs for Justice. Officials in the know claimed that the voice in the message was that of Pannu, who has been designated as a terrorist under the stringent anti-terror law - Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act - by the Union Home Ministry. He is at present in the United States. The caller claimed that Sikhs were being "tortured" in Assam jail and asked Sarma to desist from it. After the March 18 crackdown on pro-Khalistan radical preacher Amritpal Singh, the Punjab government had shifted seven of his close aides to Assam's Dibrugarh jail after slapping them with the National Security Act. The voice message, which was received twice by some of the jour-



nalists in the afternoon, came from masked Indian phone numbers. Acting promptly, the Assam Police said it has taken the threat to Sarma seriously and his security has been "adequately sensitized to the emerging threat" and a case has been registered.

Director General of Assam Police G P Singh tweeted: "Reference audio clip threatening Hon CM Assam by a person called Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, a designated individual terrorist under Indian law and heading an unlawful association called Sikhs for

THE VOICE MESSAGE, WHICH WAS RECEIVED TWICE BY SOME OF THE JOURNALISTS IN THE AFTERNOON, CAME FROM MASKED INDIAN PHONE NUMBERS
THE CALLER CLAIMED THAT SIKHS WERE BEING "TORTURED" IN ASSAM JAIL AND ASKED SARMA TO DESIST FROM IT
"IN VIEW OF GLOBAL EVENTS, THE THREAT IS BEING TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY BY ASSAM POLICE. THE CENTRAL AGENCIES HAVE BEEN KEPT IN THE LOOP ON THE ISSUE," THE DGP TWEETED

Justice: A case under appropriate sections of IPC and UAP Act has been registered at STF Police Station of Assam; the security component of Hon CM has been adequately sensitized to the emerging threat. "In view of global events, the threat is being taken very seriously by Assam Police. The central agencies have been kept in the loop on the issue," the DGP tweeted.

SHORT TAKES

Accident kills Kargil war hero

New Delhi: Subedar Major Tsewang Muroop, a Kargil war hero and Vir Chakra awardee, died in a road accident near Leh Saturday night, Army officials said. Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande and all ranks of the Indian Army expressed condolences on the demise of Subedar Major Muroop. "Kargil war hero Subedar Major Tsewang Muroop, Vir Chakra, lost his life in a road accident last night near Leh," said an Army official. The exact nature of the accident is not immediately known.

2 dead, 38 injured

Dehradun: A woman and her daughter were killed and 38 injured Sunday when an Uttarakhand Roadways bus in which they were travelling from Mussoorie to Dehradun fell into a deep gorge, police said. The accident occurred on a turning near the ITBP camp when the driver lost control of the vehicle, plunging the bus into a 70-metre-deep gorge. Mussoorie police station SHO D S Kohli said.

Farmer ends life

Ghaziabad (UP): A 65-year-old farmer allegedly committed suicide by slashing his wrist at a public grievance redressal event where senior officials were present. Sushil Tyagi had gone there with the complaint that his land was allegedly grabbed by some people and that the revenue department allegedly did not take action, officials said.

Blast in car

Srinagar: A blast took place in the back of a car near Dal Lake here on Sunday with police suspecting equipment failure to be the reason behind it, officials said. The blast took place near ghat no. 21 on Boulevard Road when thousands of locals and tourists were visiting the tulip garden.

KOVIND'S KAZIRANGA VISIT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 2: The Assam government on Sunday said it has directed an additional chief secretary to "examine" the alleged diversion of funds under tiger conservation and other projects to the visit of former President Ram Nath Kovind and his family to Kaziranga National Park. Environment and Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said the additional chief secretary of the forest and environment department Ravi Shankar Prasad has been directed to look after the allegation following a reply to a social activist under the Right to Information Act. "We have asked Prasad to examine the entire issue. He is currently examining if funds allocated to tiger projects and other conservation efforts were diverted and misused during the visit of the former President to Kaziranga National Park," he said. Patowary, however, declined to share further details and said other



information will be shared once Prasad gives his opinion. Meanwhile, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) M K Yadava, who is also the Head of Forest Force (HoFF) Assam, was relieved from his additional charge of Chief Wildlife Warden with immediate effect.

The Forest minister said that Yadava has been relieved of his "additional charge" as Chief Wildlife Warden with immediate effect. "We have given the charge of Chief Wildlife Warden to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Sandeep Kumar. Yadava will continue to be the PCCF and

HoFF," he added. According to an RTI reply to animal rights activist Rohit Choudhury in November 2022, the Field Director of Kaziranga National Park had informed that a total of ₹1,64,16,000 from the funds meant to protect wildlife in park were spent during two nights of stay of the then President and his entourage. The Assam government had used ₹1.13 crore from the tiger conservation fund of the Kaziranga National Park, while an additional ₹51.98 lakh was allocated by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and then Chief Wildlife Warden Yadava from another wildlife fund of the KNP to lay out the red carpet to the visiting dignitaries. Kovind, accompanied by his wife and daughter, was on a three-day tour to Assam on February 25-27, 2022. He along with his family stayed the last two nights of the visit at Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and took part in a host of programmes.

Assam probes fund misuse

HoFF," he added. According to an RTI reply to animal rights activist Rohit Choudhury in November 2022, the Field Director of Kaziranga National Park had informed that a total of ₹1,64,16,000 from the funds meant to protect wildlife in park were spent during two nights of stay of the then President and his entourage. The Assam government had used ₹1.13 crore from the tiger conservation fund of the Kaziranga National Park, while an additional ₹51.98 lakh was allocated by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and then Chief Wildlife Warden Yadava from another wildlife fund of the KNP to lay out the red carpet to the visiting dignitaries. Kovind, accompanied by his wife and daughter, was on a three-day tour to Assam on February 25-27, 2022. He along with his family stayed the last two nights of the visit at Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and took part in a host of programmes.

Kuno cheetah strays into nearby village

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sheopur, April 2: A cheetah strayed into an agricultural field adjoining a village near Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district on Sunday morning, an official said. Oban, one of the eight cheetahs brought from Namibia in September last year, strayed into the field near Baroda village, some 15-20 kilometres from KNP, from the free range area of the park into which he was released last month, Sheopur divisional forest officer (DFO) P K Verma said. "As per the signals from its collar device, the cheetah was moving towards the village from Saturday night. It is sitting at the spot and a police team is monitoring the situation and keeping villagers away. Forest department staff is trying to send it back into the park area," he said. Forest department officials also shared a video in which staffers

can be seen trying to coax Oban to get back into the forest. So far, four out of eight cheetahs brought from Namibia to KNP in September, 2022, have been released in the wild (free range area) from hunting enclosures. Oban and Asha were released into the wild on March 11, while Elton and Freddie, also known as "rock-stars" due to their names, were allowed to move into the free range area on March 22. Eight Namibian cheetahs, comprising five females and three males, were brought to KNP as part of an ambitious reintroduction programme of the species and were released into special enclosures on September 17 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. One of them, Sasha, died of a kidney ailment on March 27, while another, Siyaya, gave birth to four cubs, which were first spotted on March 29. A set of 12 cheetahs, comprising seven males and five females, were brought in from South Africa on February 18 this year.

Despite ban, e-cigarettes widely available: Survey

The survey found out that e-cigarettes are available among the tobacco vendors operating near educational institutions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: E-cigarettes are easily available at tobacco shops and sold to anyone without any age verification, the findings of a joint survey have revealed. The findings have been shared with the Union health ministry. The survey conducted across six states -- Assam, Goa, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana -- and Delhi also found

that e-cigarettes get delivered within a couple of days when ordered online (through e-commerce websites, exclusive vape websites, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook and other social media sites) and are sold without any age verification. Also, most of the vendors are not aware that e-cigarettes have been banned by law and are openly selling those, and the e-cigarettes that are being sold are mostly manufactured in China, the survey conducted by five organisations - Voluntary Health Association of India, VOICE, Nadda India, National Law School University India, Bangalore and Karnataka NO for Tobacco - said. Despite the ban clamped by the



government in 2019, e-cigarettes are easily available at tobacco shops and sold to children below 18 years of age, it added. Shops and vendors were randomly selected for the survey. A total of 100 points of sale were surveyed across the six states and Delhi. The survey was conducted both online and offline. The field investigators checked on the avail-

ability of e-cigarettes, age verification, awareness on the ban and subsequent penalties in case of being found guilty among the vendors. The survey also found out that e-cigarettes are available among the tobacco vendors operating near educational institutions. Some tobacco vendors do not sell such products but assure a doorstep delivery in accordance with demand. While ordering online, a few websites ask for age verification, which merely requires ticking a checkbox asking whether the customer is aged 18 years or above, the survey said while pointing out that most of the e-cigarettes that are being sold are manu-

factured in China. The key findings of the survey were presented at the National Consultation on the Enforcement of Prohibition of Electronic-Cigarettes Act 2019 - Challenges and Way Forward, which was held here on February 23. E-cigarettes were banned to protect youngsters from a new form of toxic addiction. However, its enforcement has been weak, resulting in the market being flooded with cheap and unbranded China-made e-cigarettes. Thus, a coordinated effort at the central and state levels is urgently needed to ensure that the ban is effective, said Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, chief executive, Voluntary Health Association of India.

PUBLIC CAUTION
This is to inform that Mrs. Suka Jena (F) aged 75 years, W/o. Late Banamber Jena of Nachhipur, P.O.: Telengapent, P.S.: Cuttack Sadar, Dist.: Cuttack, PIN - 754001 is the owner of Plot No. 482 (A0.06d) and Plot No. 483 (A0.06d) of Nachhipur Mouza. She has lost and misplaced the original title document in respect of the above property vide Sale Deed No. 1300 (Khata No. 187, Plot No. 482) and Sale Deed No. 8824 (Khata No. 448, Plot No. 483) which she had purchased from Mr. Chandramani Panda on 09.04.1987 and from Mr. Hadibandhu Panda on 31.07.1989 respectively. Accordingly Mrs. Suka Jena has lodged a missing complaint in Cuttack Sadar Police Station Dt.01.04.2023 vide lost report No. 298. If anybody found the above missing documents, kindly return the same to undersigned. This Public Caution is published in general interest of public, so as to avoid any misuse of the above original documents.
Sd./- Mrs. Suka Jena
At: Nachhipur (Kotha Sahi)
P.O.: Telengapent, P.S.: Sadar,
Dist.: Cuttack, PIN - 754001
Ph.: 9337851782

Millet melas to be held across UP soon

The millet mela in Lucknow has been a success as more than 60 brands that put up stalls here reported brisk sales of food items made from coarse grain and now, we will promote millet food through more such events all across Uttar Pradesh," said additional commissioner

SP SINGH | ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER FSDA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 2 :The Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is now planning to hold 'Eat Right Millet Melas' across the state to promote millet food.

"The millet mela in Lucknow has been a success as more than 60 brands that put up stalls here reported brisk sales of food items made from coarse grain and now, we will promote millet food through more such events all across Uttar Pradesh," said additional commissioner, Food Safety and Drug Administration Department (FSDA),



SP Singh. He said, "Millets have traditionally been used by Indians as they are nutritious and tasty. They will soon get popular among the fitness-conscious youth." Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak also praised the efforts of the district administration in popularising millet food and of FSDA in hosting the 'millet mela' among the

masses. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to promote millets (Shri Anna) will ensure healthy living besides helping to solve the food problems of the world. Eat Right Millet Mela was not only about promoting food and drink in clean and hygienic conditions but also about promoting new food style," he said.

"People have been introduced to new recipes of millet such as 'bajra dosa' and 'idli' and these will soon become popular. Millets are being used to prepare a range of dishes and soon, along with regular food, the young will take a liking to this variety too," he added.

Bulldozer and Baba haunt UP's Oppn in the run-up to 2024

The BJP, Bulldozer and Baba (Yogi Adityanath) continue to dominate the political skyline of Uttar Pradesh and there are no prizes for guessing the results of the Lok Sabha polls. Not unless something drastic happens



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 2: The game has begun, but the players and positions remain unchanged. The Opposition in Uttar Pradesh, the largest state in the country, suddenly seems wary of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, mainly because the ruling alliance is armed with over confidence and people-friendly issues, while the Opposition lacks both. The BJP, Bulldozer and Baba (Yogi Adityanath) continue to dominate the political skyline of Uttar Pradesh and there are no prizes for guessing the results of the Lok Sabha polls. Not unless something drastic happens.

"What is the fun in a fight if there is no Opposition," asked a BJP leader, and rightly so. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, by all means, launched the party's election campaign this week and the Opposition, having sensed the force of the tide, is decidedly afraid to swim against it. In the 2022 Assembly elections, the Samajwadi Party had used the bulldozer to hit back at the BJP in its election campaign and Akhilesh Yadav, in his every speech, had projected the bulldozer as an example of dictatorship of the BJP leadership. SP

leaders even drew a parallel between the bulldozer and the excesses of the Emergency, but the ploy did not work. In fact, it boomeranged and hurt the Samajwadi Party the most. The voters, apparently, approved of the bulldozer politics. Post-election, the SP leaders have almost stopped talking about the bulldozer and have reverted to the

poor law and order situation to hit at the Yogi Adityanath government. The SP has already burnt its fingers with the Ramcharitmanas issue. SP MLC Swami Prasad Maurya tried to give a casteist twist to the verses in the epic, but the BJP effectively managed to clobber the SP back by giving a communal overtone to the matter.

The issue of caste census raised by the SP has also petered out. Akhilesh Yadav said, "The BJP has mastered the art of giving a Hindu-Muslim colour to everything - whether it is using the bulldozer or taking away the sarus. They claim to have the copyright on Hindutva and it is now for the people to see through their game."

The Congress, meanwhile, is wandering in wonderland. The party remains completely leaderless and directionless in Uttar Pradesh.

The bulldozer politics in Uttar Pradesh has already put the Samajwadi Party and the Congress in a Catch 22 situation

Lucknow, Kanpur, Ghaziabad to elect women mayors

AGENCIES

Lucknow, April 2: The Uttar Pradesh government has released the reservation list for the position of mayors and chairpersons of the urban local bodies in the state.

Residents of Lucknow, Kanpur and Ghaziabad are going to elect a woman mayor once again as for the second consecutive time, the mayoral positions in these cities have been reserved for women. Overall, six out of 17 mayoral positions have been earmarked for women candidates.

Eight out of the 17 mayoral positions have been left unreserved (Ayodhya, Mathura-Vrindavan, Gorakhpur, Moradabad, Bareilly, Aligarh, Prayagraj and Varanasi). Agra municipal corporation has been reserved for SC women, while Shahjahanpur and Firozabad cities have been reserved for OBC women. Jhansi will get an SC mayor while Saharanpur and Meerut cities will have OBC mayors governing the local municipal corporations.

A total of 760 individuals, who will head the 17 nagar nigams (municipal corporations), 199 nagar palikas (municipal councils) and 544 nagar panchayats (town councils), are going to be elected through the upcoming local body polls. All the political parties in the state are going to prepare their strategy on the basis of the amended reservation list.

Urban development Minister AK Sharma said that recommendations of the dedicated backward classes commission have been implemented by the state government through the latest reservation list.

While the overall reservation for the OBC community has been capped at 27 per cent like the last time, the state government will give higher representation as overall 288 seats out of the 760 have been reserved for women candidates (includes general, OBC, SC and ST communities).



A damaged wall along the Jammu and Kashmir national highway due to landslide after heavy rainfall in Samroli area, Jammu and Kashmir

PTI PHOTO

Kashmir abuzz with migratory birds in '22

The significant increase in the bird arrivals, which came to the fore during a census carried out by the wildlife department, was due to the efforts to restore and rejuvenate the wetlands, which form the winter home for these winged guests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, April 2: A record 13 to 14 lakh birds from eastern Europe and Central Asia visited the wet-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

lands of Kashmir during 2022 winter, a senior official of the Wildlife department said here.

"We have seen a remarkable increase in the number of certain species of birds and the results are encouraging, especially with regard to the areas that used to be the primary habitats of these migratory birds, such as Hokersar, Hygam and Shallabugh," Chief Wildlife

Warden Rashid Naqash told PTI.

He said an estimated 13 lakh to 14 lakh migratory birds visited the wetlands of Kashmir, including areas protected by the wildlife department as well as those falling outside its jurisdiction.

"If we compare this number to the previous years -- the last three to four decades -- this is the highest recorded number," Naqash

added. Most of the birds seen at the wetlands are ducks and other waders and water birds.

The officer said the Wullar Conservation Management Authority has done some good work in terms of improving the habitat by restoring the critically-silted areas, which has attracted a large number of migratory birds.

"Wullar earlier used to be recognised as one of the biggest areas in terms of hosting a high number of migratory birds. But this time, we saw that the birds that used to arrive at these wetlands or the Wullar lake 30 to 40 years ago also made a comeback. Even some birds, such as long-tailed ducks and skimmers, were seen after decades," he added.

Covid cases in UP cross 350-mark

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 2: The number of active Covid cases in Uttar Pradesh crossed 350 Saturday night, which is the highest in this year so far.

In all, 66 more people tested positive for Covid across the state, including 11 in Lucknow, according to the data from the health department.

In the past 24 hours, 46 patients have recovered in the state. The major caseload in the state is in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad, Lakhimpur Khari and Lucknow.

In Lucknow, one woman in Aliganj, two women and two men in Chinhat, two women and three



men in Sarojini Nagar and a man in N.K. Road area have tested positive for Covid. The number of active Covid cases in Lucknow now is 41, which is the highest this year.

"No Covid patient in Lucknow is admitted to hospital," said Yogesh Raghuvanshi, district health education officer of Lucknow. He said, "Social distancing is the most significant thing to follow.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has already put the medical sector on alert in view of the rising Covid cases in the state

This is because you do not know the medical condition of the person you are meeting outside your house. With social distancing and use of masks you can avoid getting infected. Avoiding crowded places is the second most important thing when it comes to Covid protocol."

J&K govt set to emulate 'Nadakkavu' model



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kochi, April 2: The J&K government is set to adopt Kerala's 'Nadakkavu' model of modernising government schools in the Union Territory.

The Nadakkavu model was introduced by the Kozhikode-based Faizal and Shabana Foundation, with whom the J&K government has inked a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) now. The Faizal and Shabana Foundation was founded in the UAE in 2007 by UAE-based Keralaite industrialist couple Faizal E. Kottikollon and his wife Shabana Faizal.

In J&K, the model will be first introduced in the Government Higher Secondary School for Girls in Kothibagh, Srinagar. The objective is to establish the school as a centre of educational excellence so that it can serve as a blueprint for other schools throughout Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the agreement, the foundation will provide funding for the project and assume responsibility for its implementation. This includes holistic development of the school.

Unseasonal rain hits booming mango crop



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

AGENCIES

Lucknow, April 2: Unseasonal rain earlier this month has caused considerable damage to the booming mango crop in the Malihabad mango belt.

The showers March 17 and 21 have damaged the flowering mango trees, most of which have lost the baur (clusters of flowers).

Insrām Ali, president, All India Mango Growers Association, said that the adverse weather has damaged at least 50 per cent of the 'baur'. The varieties that were the worst hit include Dussehri, Chausa, Langda and Lakhnauva Safeda. Whatever flowers are still visible on trees may or may not develop into a healthy fruit, he said. Insrām Ali further said, "With weather, you cannot predict anything. It is still two months before the fruit is fully developed and the extent of damage will be fully known later."

Malihabad is the biggest producer of Dussehri, the famous mango variety, known worldwide. "By mid-March, all mango trees complete their flowering stage and

Mangoes need a temperature between 27 degrees to 35 degrees Celsius to grow ideally in March and April. Temperature less or more than this damages the fruit

Uttar Pradesh produces around 40 lakh MT of mangoes every year with about four lakh hectares under mango cultivation in north and central parts of the state

within a week, fruit sets in. The rain on March 17 was very damaging because that was just when the flowers would have opened, and pollination happened. But rain made the flowers either drop or turn black. The few that remain, at least, need conducive weather now," said Naseem Ahmad, a mango grower in the region.

Mango growers have also seen a fungal attack on most flowers which will affect the quality of the fruit. Going by the Malihabad mango cycle, it yields good fruit every alternate year. This was the on-year for the belt and there would have been a bumper crop.

Lack of space turns Jammu into one big parking bay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, April 2: Lack of urban planning and an apathetic attitude towards law among drivers has made Jammu into a one big parking lot with vehicles parked everywhere and intractable traffic jams the order of the day.

"The majority of roads have been turned into parking places in Jammu due to lack of parking lots. The Old city is facing the worst situation. Traffic jams are a common sight due to the wrong parking," Arvind Koul, a businessman, told PTI. Poor urban planning too has its share in making commuting in the city difficult.

"Due to carving of footpaths on the majority of roads, space has further shrunk adding to the traffic chaos," Koul said. Authorities in their turn blame the people, who they say have scant regard for traffic rules.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

"See this is an attitude and behavioural problem on part of the people. It will take time to change. I request that people should park their vehicles in proper parking," said Jammu Municipal Corporation Mayor Rajinder Sharma. The Jammu Mayor also said that the JMC is planning for more parking facilities for the people.

"It is very tough to walk on the roads in the Old city. Going to that part of the city is a torture. Traffic police and JMC have failed to take any measures to save pedestrians from such harassment," Nidhi, a housewife, said. For Ankush Sharma, a businessman from Dogra Hall, the city's traffic woes are a result of wrong parking, narrow

Situation tends to go worse in the old city areas, particularly, in Dogra Hall, Jain Bazar, Raj Tilak road, Parade, Link Road, Purani Mandi, Janipur, Sarwal, new-plot and other adjoining old city roads, where honking and screeching vehicles have become part of a daily routine

roads, and illegal encroachment by vendors. He also attributed jams to rash driving by matador drivers and indiscriminate parking by them in absence of designated stops.

"There have also been instances when some drivers violated red

signals even in presence of traffic cops, who just stood there," he said. Another businessman, Vikas Raina, called on authorities to widen the roads, build more flyovers, and rid public spaces of encroachment if they want to see city roads unclogged.

He also advocated for making proper parking spaces near shopping complexes and at markets. The multi-level parking lots at Kachi Chawni and City Chowk, which are fully functional, are still underused as people prefer to park their vehicles at random spaces.

According to Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Traffic, City, Raj Paul Singh, police have begun a strict crackdown against such violators by slapping them with fines, the number of which has already crossed more than half of what it was last year.



national



A new man, Amritpal Singh, has emerged who is saying that if Mohan Bhagwat and Narendra Modi talk about Hindu Rashtra then why should I not talk about Khalistan. Why has he got such courage?

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

ARMY CHIEF ON AUSTRALIA VISIT

Army chief Gen Manoj Pande Sunday left for Australia on a four-day visit to explore ways to boost defence cooperation between the two countries



of the day quote

The Jewish communities in India have maintained and enriched their unique heritage and traditions and will always be an integral part of the country's composite society

Israel and India have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations. The two countries share a robust democratic heritage and as fellow democracies both have many similarities, including respecting diverse cultures and following democratic values

Pelting of stones, arson, hurling of bombs -- all these have become common in Bengal. The way journalists were attacked and stones were pelted on those taking out the Ram Navami procession, nothing could be more shameful than this

Rioters will be hanged upside down: Shah

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, April 2: Days after communal violence was reported from Sasaram and Nalanda in Bihar, Union Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday said that rioters will be hanged upside down, if BJP comes to power in the state in 2025.

Shah also claimed that riots have never happened in the BJP government. While addressing a rally in Hisua block in Bihar's Nawada district, Shah said that riots have taken place in Bihar's Sasaram and Nalanda districts.

"I have a programme in Sasaram to celebrate the birth anniversary of Samrat Ashok but it was unfortunate that I did not go there. The situation is not normal in Sasaram. Firing took place on the day of Ram Navami march. I apologise to the people of Sasaram and also promise them that I will return for a rally at that place," Shah said.

"After the violence in Sasaram and Nalanda, I contacted the Bihar governor and raised concern about the law and order situation of these two places but JD-U national president Lalan Singh felt bad. The Nitish Kumar government has failed over the law and order situation in these two places. As I am a Union Home Minister and Bihar is a part of our country, I have to



Nitish Kumar is sitting in the lap of corrupt leader Lalu Prasad Yadav. He cannot bring peace in Bihar. The hunger of power forced Nitish Kumar to sit in the lap of Lalu Prasad Yadav but we have no such compulsions. We will go before the people of Bihar and uproot this government

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

be concerned about it," Shah said.

"We never do the politics of votes. If our government is formed in the Centre in 2024 and the BJP government in Bihar in 2025, we will hang the rioters upside down. Bihar is burning due to riots. I pray to God that the situation normalises soon," he said. "I want to tell you that half of the JD-U MPs are knocking the door of BJP but I want to make it

clear that the alliance will never happen with Nitish Kumar in future. The door of BJP for Nitish Kumar is closed for ever and no one should remain in confusion that BJP would allow him inside the NDA post 2024 Lok Sabha election. We will not go with Nitish Kumar who is responsible for poisoning the society on the basis of castes and Lalu Prasad Yadav who is known as the

Kejriwal promises free electricity, jobs



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, April 2: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday promised free electricity and jobs for all youths in Assam if his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is voted to power in the Northeastern state.

He also claimed the AAP government changed the face of Delhi in seven years, and that "nothing but dirty politics" took place in Assam, even though BJP has been in power in the state for the same duration.

AAP governments in Delhi and Punjab are giving free electricity to their states, and it will be the same in Assam, too, if the party forms government, Kejriwal said at a rally here. He promised jobs for all unemployed youths of Assam if AAP is voted to power, adding that the party has given employment to 12 lakh people in Delhi in seven years, and 28,000 people in one year in Punjab. Kejriwal also assured of providing piped water to all households of Guwahati within a year of the AAP government in the state.

"AAP came to power in Delhi in 2015 and the BJP here in 2016. Today, we have changed the face of Delhi. What has Himanta babu (Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma) done for the state in seven years? Nothing, only dirty politics

Biswa Sarma) done for the state in seven years? Nothing, only dirty politics," Kejriwal alleged.

Taking a jibe at Sarma for the private school being run by his wife, the Delhi CM said, "In a state where the CM's wife operates a private school, how can you expect the government to improve government schools?"

On Sarma's threat of suing him if he raised corruption charges against the BJP leader, Kejriwal said his Assam counterpart has not learnt the culture of people of the state, who accord a warm welcome to their guests.

"For two days, he has been threatening me that he will put me in jail. Am I a terrorist? I invite Himanta babu to come to my house in Delhi for tea. And if he can make time, also have a meal with me. I will show him around the city, the wonderful work we have done there," Kejriwal added.

Earlier in the day, he had extended a similar invitation to Sarma shortly after he arrived at Guwahati. Sarma had on Friday threatened to file a defamation case against Kejriwal if the Aam Aadmi Party leader alleged corruption cases against him outside the assembly.

Kejriwal had reportedly said in the Delhi Assembly that there are cases against Sarma.

SHORT TAKES

Teacher arrested

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh police have arrested a teacher for allegedly tricking a minor girl student to marry her. Chalapathy (33), teacher at a private junior college at Gangaravaram in Chittoor district, married the 17-year-old student. The girl is a student of intermediate second year (12th standard) and the teacher, who was already married, took her to Bengaluru immediately after the completion of her examinations on March 29 and married her there.

Two conmen held

New Delhi: Two conmen, who used to deceive people with bundles of fake currency notes, were held by the anti-burglary cell of Delhi Police in Dwarka district. Police said they were running a 'nakli-gaddi' gang. M. Harsha Vardhan, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Dwarka said that the accused were identified as Gyasi Kashyap (45) and Ramesh (48). A car used in the commission of crime and cheated amount ₹26,000 were recovered from their possession, said Vardhan.

Boy ends life

Shahjahanpur: A 13-year-old boy allegedly ended his life by hanging after he failed in class 7 examinations. The incident took place in Aatsalia village under the limits of Roza police circle. The boy, in a suicide note, said that he was being "humiliated" by his teachers at the private school he attended, and that his parents had forced him to continue studying despite his struggles.

Man opens fire

Aligarh: A trigger-happy man, in an inebriated condition, ended up injuring five persons in Saalpur village of Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh district. According to police sources, the accused, Bhura, who was recently released on bail in a criminal case, had a dispute with one Yashpal, of the same village, and opened fire at him, injuring five passers-by.

Three killed

Thiruvananthapuram: Three people from Kerala were killed and over 41 injured on Sunday in a road accident in Tamil Nadu's Velankanni, police said. The three were part of a group of 51 people from Ollur in Kerala's Thrissur district, who had left their native place Saturday for visiting the Velankanni Church in Tamil Nadu. A woman and an 8-year-old child are among the dead.

PhD scholar ends life, third incident at IIT-M

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, April 2: A 32-year-old research scholar at Indian Institute of Technology, Madras committed suicide by hanging at his residence at Velachery in Chennai. The deceased, Sachin Kumar Jain, was a native of West Bengal.

Police said that on March 31, he had put a WhatsApp status: "I am Sorry, not good enough." His friends reached home upon seeing this and found him hanging in the room.

Sachin was a PhD research scholar at the Mechanical Engineering Department of IIT, Madras. This is the third incident of suicide here in the year 2023 and demands have begun for conducting mental health surveys among the students in the premier institution.



According to police, Sachin was staying at Brahmin street, Velachery along with two of his friends. He allegedly committed suicide on March 31 afternoon. The body has been sent to Royapettah government hospital for postmortem.

The IIT, Madras issued a condolence statement saying: "We are deeply anguished to convey the untimely passing away of a PhD research scholar from the Mechanical Engineering Department on the afternoon of March 31 at his residence in Velachery, Chennai. A student with an exemplary academic and research record is a big loss to the research community."

The statement further said: "The institute expresses its heartfelt condolences and shares the grief of friends and family of the deceased student. The Institute requests everyone respect the privacy of the student's family at this juncture. May the departed soul rest in peace."



Tourists visit Rohtang, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

Draft bills in simple language: Par panel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Bills should be drafted in a language which helps a layman understand them and reasons for bringing the proposed legislation, a Parliamentary panel has recommended.

The department-related parliamentary standing committee on law and personnel also said that currently all the bills that are being drafted by the Legislative Department in the Union Law Ministry can be understood either by the intelligentsia of the country or the people having legal acumen or knowledge.

"For a layman to understand the bills which are presented to Parliament is very difficult. The Committee, therefore, would like to recommend that the bills should be drafted in such a simple language so that even a common man

can also understand about the proposed objective and implications of the bill like the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 and Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022 recently brought by the government," the committee chaired by BJP's Sushil Kumar Modi said.

"The key mandate of the Legislative Department is to vet crucial government documents and help draft various ministries draft ordinances and bills so that they can hold good during parliamentary and judicial scrutiny.

The department is also the nodal agency to deal with issues related to the Election Commission, including appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners. It also deals with Representation of the People Act 1950 and 1951 and related electoral rules.

Atiq's brother-in-law held

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, April 2: The Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) in a joint operation with the Prayagraj Police have arrested Atiq Ahmed's brother-in-law, Akhlaq Ahmed from Meerut, in connection with the Umesh Pal murder case.

According to the police, Akhlaq Ahmed had a key role in financing the shooters of Umesh Pal, who was a prime witness in the 2005 murder of BSP MLA Raju Pal.

Police had earlier questioned Akhlaq Ahmed multiple times in the Umesh Pal murder case. He has now been arrested from Meerut, said a home department spokesman. Umesh Pal was shot dead in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj on February 24. Atiq Ahmed is the main accused in the murder case of BSP legislator Raju Pal, which took place in 2005. He is also accused of killing Umesh Pal, the prime witness of Raju Pal's murder.



An MP-MLA court has held mafia-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and two others guilty in the 2006 Umesh Pal kidnapping case and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment for life. This was Atiq Ahmed's first conviction even though more than 100 cases are registered against the former Samajwadi Party (SP) MP.

Akhlaq Ahmed is the husband of Shaista Noori, Atiq Ahmed's sister, who went to Prayagraj with

the mafia from Sabarmati Jail. She was also present at Bareilly Jail when the process to bring her younger brother Ashraf to Prayagraj began.

Ashraf and six others have been acquitted in the 2006 Umesh Pal kidnapping case. Interestingly when Shaista Noori reached the Bareilly Jail to ensure the safety of her brother, the Prayagraj police arrested her husband Akhlaq Ahmed from Meerut. Akhlaq Ahmed had been on police radar for funding the shooters of Umesh Pal.



Rahul in prolonged legal battles

It is now clearly emerging that the BJP leadership is determined to engage Rahul Gandhi in prolonged legal battles in the run up to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The Surat court convicted and sentenced him to 2-year jail. Rahul Gandhi is also facing trial in a defamation case filed by

Ahmadabad District Cooperative Bank for alleging the bank was involved in swapping currency notes following DeMo in November 2016. Rahul Gandhi was also granted bail in 2019 by a Mumbai court in a defamation case filed by a RSS worker for linking the murder of Bangalore journalist Gauri Lankesh with "BJP-RSS ideology". A Guwahati court granted bail in a case related to Rahul Gandhi alleging that he was stopped by the RSS from entering Barpeta Satra in Assam in December 2015. A court in Maharashtra's Bhiwandi granted him bail in 2016 in a case for alleging that the RSS killed Mahatma Gandhi. The SC ruled he would have to face trial. He is out on bail since December 2015 in the National Herald case along with his mother Sonia Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi is also facing defamation case over Savarkar remarks in Thane in November 2022. As if this is not enough, he has also been charged of sedition for

'Rape in India' remarks in 2019 at an election rally in Gada (Jharkhand).

Maha buzz for simultaneous polls

It is now clearly emerging that the BJP leadership may go in for simultaneous polls in Maharashtra in April-May 2024. If reports emanating from the ruling dispensation are any indication, the BJP may advance Assembly elections and hold it along with the Lok Sabha polls early next year. But the move of simultaneous polls has rattled the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) partners. The MVA partners comprising Sena, NCP and Congress had been struggling hard to amicably settle the seat-sharing formula for the Lok Sabha polls. There is a buzz that the Thackeray faction may contest

21 Lok Sabha seats followed by NCP with 19 and Congress 8 under this formula. However, a formal decision is still far away. The parties would like to wait for the outcome of Assembly polls being held in 2023. Meanwhile, the BJP is busy head-hunting in the state.

When Manmohan showed spine too

Modi earned laurels when the government withdrew barricades and security outside the office and residential premises of British High commission and commissioner in Chanakyapuri. India retaliated after the Indian high commission in London was attacked and the Indian flag was removed by a handful of protesters. But few would recall that Modi's predecessor Dr Manmohan Singh had withdrawn all

security cover from the American embassy and consulates in India in 2013 when an IFS officer Devyani Khobragade was arrested and strip searched in New York.

Why Kejri changed tack

AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is re-calibrating his strategy after playing a solo match all these years. He has sharpened his attack on Modi and now decided to join hands with the other Opposition parties including the Congress he had shunned earlier. The AAP joined Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's dinner invite on March 27 at his residence and decided to walk together. Though his party may contest Lok Sabha polls alone, but there are enough indications that the AAP may have some tacit understanding with some of the Opposition parties in states.

international

of the day quote

Reform is obviously necessary to prevent a terrorist state - and any other state that wants to be a terrorist - from destroying the peace

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY | UKRAINE PRESIDENT

Japan has suffered that pain, and should not help a villain do evil. The containment will only further stimulate China's determination to become self-reliant

QIN GANG | CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER

India's success in incorporating information technology into public service delivery, has resulted in significant progress and cost savings

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

Finns vote in tight election

Helsinki: Three parties were expected to be in a tight race as Finland held its general election Sunday, with Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Social Democrats fighting to secure a second term running the government. Over 2,400 candidates from 22 parties were vying for the 200 seats in the Nordic country's parliament, the Eduskunta. Some 40 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots in advance. Marin, who at age 37 is one of Europe's youngest leaders, has received praise for her Cabinet's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and for her prominent role, along with President Sauli Niinisto, in advocating for Finland's successful application to join NATO.

1 dead, 3 hurt in shooting

Los Angeles (US): One person is dead and three others were injured in a shooting during a drug deal outside a Los Angeles shopping centre on Saturday, police said. Multiple suspects shot at each other during what police believe was a dispute during a narcotics deal in a parking lot in the area of Vanowen and Fallbrook in West Hills around 3.45 pm, Los Angeles Police Department Deputy Chief Alan Hamilton said. The deceased man was not immediately identified by police.

Forest fires break out across S Korea

Seoul: Forest fires broke out across South Korea Sunday due to dry and windy weather in spring, a media report said. According to the KFS real-time forest fire information website, a total of 30 forest fires broke out across the country at 3:30 p.m. local time (0630 GMT), Yonhap News Agency reported. Among the total, 15 fires had been extinguished. The government issued a special dry weather warning.

Death toll from US storms rises to 29

Wne (US): The death toll from a violent storm that whipped up tornadoes in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States rose to at least 29 over the weekend, according to officials and media reports. In Memphis, Tennessee, two children and an adult were found dead Saturday after the storm's heavy winds knocked trees onto several houses, according to the Memphis Police Department. In Tennessee's McNairy County, officials reported that an additional two people had died, having reported seven deaths earlier Saturday, according to local media.

Antony Blinken urges Russia to release two detained Americans

In the call with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Blinken conveyed "grave concern" over the Kremlin's detention of journalist Evan Gershkovich on espionage allegations, according to a State Department summary of the call. Blinken called for his immediate release

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, April 2: Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged his Russian counterpart, in a rare phone since the Ukraine war, to immediately release a Wall Street Journal reporter who was detained last week as well as another imprisoned American, Paul Whelan, the State Department said Sunday. In the call with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Blinken conveyed "grave concern" over the Kremlin's detention of journalist Evan Gershkovich on espionage allegations, according to a State Department summary of the call. Blinken called for his immediate release.

Blinken also sought the immediate release of Whelan, whom the statement said was wrongfully detained.

Whelan, a Michigan corporate security executive, has been imprisoned in Russia since December 2018 on espionage charges that his family and the US Government have said are baseless. He is serving a 16-year sentence.

Blinken and Lavrov also discussed "the importance of creating an environment that permits diplomatic missions to carry out their work," according to the State Department. The FSB, Russia's top security agency and successor to

the KGB, said Gershkovich was collecting information on an enterprise of the military-industrial complex.

Russian authorities detained him last week, the first time a US Correspondent has been held on spying accusations since the Cold War.

The Journal has adamantly denied the allegations and demanded his release. US Officials have also called on Russia to let him go, with President Joe Biden telling reporters on Friday that his message to the country was "Let him go."

More than 30 news organizations and press freedom advocates have written the Russian ambassador in the United States to express concern Russia is sending the message that reporting inside the country is criminalised.

And Saturday night, basketball star Brittney Griner, who was detained for 10 months by Russian authorities before being released in a prisoner swap for convicted Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout, issued a statement with her wife, Cherelle, calling for the release of the 31-year-old Gershkovich.

"Every American who is taken is ours to fight for and every American returned is a win for us all," the couple said in a statement posted on Instagram.



US-CANADA BORDER DEATHS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Toronto, April 2: Canadian police have named two of the eight people, including four Indians, whose bodies were found in a marshland area along the US-Canada border, amid an investigation into the circumstances of their deaths.

Bodies of eight persons were recovered last week from the marsh on the riverbank near Akwesasne, a community which straddles Quebec, Ontario and New York state.

Police say the deceased — believed to be two families of Indian and Romanian descent — were trying to cross into the US from Canada. Among them were two children under the age of three, both Canadian citizens. On Saturday, police said that four Indian na-

tions, who they believed were a family attempting to cross into the US, have not been identified.

Citing a source with the police in India, the *CBC News* reported that

IRAN TO ENFORCE COMPULSORY HIJAB RULE ON WOMEN

Iranian Government has warned the Women in Iran upon the strict hijab rules, the penalties will be applied to women caught flouting the mandatory hijab rule in public spaces like restaurants, government offices, schools and universities

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tehran /New Delhi, April 2: Authorities in Iran have been making clear their determination to enforce compulsory hijab on women, according to a media report.

This comes after months of protests demanding an end to the restriction, *BBC* reported. A hardline Iranian MP has issued an ultimatum to the judiciary to come up with measures to put a stop to

women flouting the rules on headscarves within the next 48 hours, the report said.

The mass protests that erupted across Iran in September last year have largely been quelled for now by brute force. But some women continue to defy the rules on wearing a mandatory headscarf in public. Videos and pictures posted online show the upswell of frustration and anger with the restrictions is still a potent force in Iranian society



Bajwa wanted friendship with India and put pressure on him for this

IMRAN KHAN | PTI CHAIRMAN

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO DIES

Ryuichi Sakamoto, a world-renowned Japanese musician and actor who composed for Hollywood hits such as "The Last Emperor" and "The Revenant," has died. He was 71. Japan's recording company Avex said in a statement Sunday that Sakamoto died March 28 while undergoing treatment for cancer



A penitent from "La Paz" brotherhood carries a kid taking part in a procession in Seville, Spain. Hundreds of processions take place throughout Spain during the Easter Holy Week

Donald Trump to deliver remarks at Mar-a-Lago Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 2: Former US president Donald Trump, who has been indicted by a federal court in New York, would deliver remarks at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida Tuesday night, his office said.

Trump, who is the first former US president to face a criminal charge, will be arraigned Tuesday. "Former President Donald J Trump, 45th President of the United States of America, will deliver remarks at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida Tuesday, April 4, 2023, at 8:15PM EDT," his presidential campaign announced Sunday. Trump, 76, is expected to make a court appearance in Manhattan earlier in the day. A federal grand jury had indicted him last week. "The Judge 'assigned' to my Witch Hunt Case, a 'Case' that has never been charged before, hates me," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform and alleged that the judge was "hand picked" by the Democratic district attorney investigating him. Appearing on *Fox News*, his attorney Jim Trusty alleged that the case is politically motivated.

'Nepal seeks to sign 25-yr electricity deal with India'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, April 2: Nepal is keen to sign a 25-year agreement with India on selling its surplus power to the neighbouring country during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda's expected visit to New Delhi.

Though the official date of Prachanda's visit to India is yet to be announced, the Kathmandu Post newspaper, quoting Nepali officials, reported Sunday that the prime minister is likely to travel to New Delhi after the second week of April. However, the two sides have yet to announce the dates, it said.

"We are preparing a proposal for the Indian side on the 25-year agreement. But a lot also depends on whether the Indian side agrees to include our proposal in the agenda," the report quoted a senior official at the energy ministry as saying.

Dinesh Ghimire, secretary at the ministry, said the issue of the



long-term inter-governmental agreement was under discussion at the ministry but was yet to be forwarded to Nepal's foreign ministry to make it an agenda item ahead of the prime minister's trip.

He said such an agreement can be signed only if the Indian side gives its nod at the bureaucratic level before Prachanda reaches New Delhi, the report said. Nepal proposed such a deal during the 10th secretary-level meeting of the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) on Energy Cooperation in India in late February.

"During the meeting, it was decided that Nepal would make a proposal which India would ex-

amine," said Prabal Adhikari, power trade director at the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA), who was also in the Nepali delegation.

At the JSC meeting in Mount Abu, Rajasthan in February, Nepal and India inked an agreement to increase the power import and export capacity through the Dhalkebar-Muzaffarpur transmission line from 600 megawatts to 800 megawatts.

An agreement to import and export 70 to 80 MW of electricity from Tanakpur-Mahendranagar 132 KV (kilovolt) power transmission was also signed between the two sides.

They agreed to set up the necessary mechanisms to export power from Nepal to Bihar during the rainy season through the existing 132 KV transmission line.

Adhikari said an inter-government agreement could also pave the way for selling power to India irrespective of whether a third country has invested or is involved in a particular project.

Israel attacks Syria's Homs province

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beirut, April 2: Israeli airstrikes hit several sites in Syria's Homs province early Sunday, wounding five soldiers, Syrian state media reported.

In Iran, state media reported that an Iranian adviser who was wounded in an Israeli strike Friday died of his wounds. Since the start of Syria's conflict in March 2011, Iran has been a main supporter of President Bashar Assad's government and has sent advisers since the early days of the war. Sunday's strike marked the ninth time Israel has struck targets in Syria since the beginning of the year, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition-linked war monitor.

State news agency SANA, citing military sources, said the strikes



targeted sites in the city of Homs and surrounding countryside. Syrian air defences intercepted the missiles and shot down some of them, it said.

The observatory reported that the missiles targeted Syrian military sites and those of Iran-linked militias, including a research centre. There was no immediate statement from Israel on the strikes.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not directly mention the strikes at a meeting of his Cabinet on Sunday, but said Israel was acting against foreign threats.



A video posted this week shows a man throwing a tub of yogurt in the face of an unveiled woman. His action was met with outrage by male and female bystanders, *BBC* reported.

Protests swept across the Islamic Republic following the death in September of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman detained by morality police in Tehran for allegedly wearing her hijab "improperly".

Protests swept across the Islamic Republic following the death in September of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman detained by morality police in Tehran for allegedly wearing her hijab "improperly"

The interior ministry announced this week that there would be no retreat or tolerance on the issue. The statement said that the hijab remained an essential element of Islamic law and as such would remain one of the key principles of

the Islamic Republic of Iran, *BBC* reported.

The unyielding rhetoric echoed that of the head of the judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, who had recently said that women who do not wear the head covering would be prosecuted without mercy. Now, a hardline MP has said that legislative measures must be taken to enforce what he called the "divine decree" of the hijab, *BBC* reported.

Hossein Ali Haji Deligani said that if the judiciary does not provide such action within the next 48 hours, MPs would put in motion a bill to fill the legal vacuum.

He said it would be in line with a report by the parliamentary cultural commission on "chastity and the hijab", *BBC* reported.



I am leaning towards a further and final 0.25 percentage point hike in rates
SAUGATA BHATTACHARYA | CHIEF ECONOMIST, AXIS BANK

GOOGLE TO CUT AMENITIES

Amid layoffs over recession fears, tech giant Google is also creating several cost-cutting measures such as cutting down on free snacks and workout classes for its existing employees, the media reported. The company would also discontinue spending on personal equipment like laptops



of the day quote

NCLAT's ruling in the Google matter will open the market for free innovation and will resonate as part of the global theme on abuse of dominance

N VENKATARAMAN | ADDITIONAL SOLICITOR GENERAL, SC

From here we cater to domestic and export to neighbouring markets such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. Going forward, the idea is to build it a hub for the domestic market and exports

SATISH NS | PRESIDENT, HAIER INDIA

Telecom is an infrastructure industry, but we are still being charged at commercial rates for power. So we don't get the benefits

SP KOCHHAR | DIRECTOR GENERAL, COAI

'Govt may consider 0.3% fee on UPI payments'

A study has found that Centre may consider 0.3% fee which could generate as much as ₹5,000 crore in fiscal 2023-24 to maintain UPI payment system & ensure financial viability

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: The government may consider a 0.3 per cent uniform digital payment facilitation fee to fund the infrastructure required for such transactions and also to ensure financial viability of the UPI payment system, suggested a study by IIT Bombay.

The facilitation fee of 0.3 per cent can generate around ₹5,000 crore in 2023-24, said the study titled 'Charges for PPI-based UPI payments—The Deception'.

The study, which analyses the impact of the decision of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to introduce interchange fee on payments through mobile wallets, argued that the payments received by merchants should remain 'unpolluted' whether they are from UPI directly or through prepaid e-wallets.

The NPCI, with effect from April 1, 2023 introduced an interchange fee of 1.1 per cent on transaction amount for usage of prepaid payment instruments for making pay-



ments through UPI to merchants. These will apply on prepaid wallet-based UPI merchant transactions.

Rather than trusting the operational expenses onto the merchants and creating a disparity, it should be borne by the prepaid wallet user, thereby never introducing a situation similar to passive smoking.

This will keep all UPI-based payments received by merchants un-

The players in the payment system are exploiting the merchants and all consumers by integrating an avoidable layer of cost to the pure payment system that exists in plain vanilla UPI, the study noted

polluted and unburdened of merchant discount rate (MDR).

According to the IIT Bombay Technical Report, the absence of an upfront payment-surcharge would

lead to an overall increase in the selling price for all, even those who pay through plain vanilla UPI (normal UPI). As a consequence, the business cost of merchant will go up.

Against this backdrop, the study made a case for introducing 0.3 per cent facilitation fee on digital payments which could generate as much as ₹5,000 crore in fiscal 2023-24.

However, as per the present law no bank or system provider who operates UPI (unified payments interface) shall impose, whether directly or indirectly, any charge upon a person making or receiving a payment by using UPI as a mode of payment.

Adani's Dhamra LNG terminal in Odisha receives first cargo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: Adani Group and French company TotalEnergies' newly built ₹6,000 crore LNG import facility at Dhamra on the Odisha coast has received its first ever shipment of liquefied natural gas - a fuel that will be used to make steel, produce fertilizers and turned into CNG and cooking gas, helping change the landscape of Eastern India.

Qatari ship 'Milaha Ras Laffan' docked at Dhamra Port April 1 morning, bringing in 2.6 trillion British thermal units of natural gas in its frozen form (LNG) which will be used to commission the facility, officials said.

"On Utkal Diwas, Odisha's formation day, Adani Ports and SEZ is privileged to welcome to Dhamra Port its first cargo of LNG aboard the 'Milaha Ras Laffan'," Karan Adani, CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ), wrote on LinkedIn. "This is a huge leap forward not only in access to clean and affordable energy but also in decarbonising India's energy sector."

Commissioning and testing operations will take up to 45 days and commercial operations are expected to start thereafter. The start of the 5 million tonne per annum LNG import terminal is crucial to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plan to boost natural gas use in the country's energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030 from current 6.3 per cent.

Dhamra is the only LNG import terminal in eastern India and only second on the entire east coast. The country's five other terminals are on its western coast (three in Gujarat, one each in Maharashtra and Kerala).

Adani Total Pvt Ltd, where Adani Group and TotalEnergies SE have 50 per cent stake each, will use the cargo received April 1 to do safety check and test systems.

After all checks, the terminal would be ready to start commercial operations with an expected 2.2-2.3 million tonne of LNG expected to be imported in the first year and a gradual ramp-up to full capacity in the next.

Dhamra is a tolling facility where state-owned GAIL (India) Ltd and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have booked capacity. They will import LNG at the terminal which will be re-converted into gas before being piped to refineries and fertiliser units.

AGRI SEASON PICKS UP

Petrol, diesel sales rise

India's recovery has continued to gain momentum in recent months and the country's oil demand had been rising steadily since the easing of Covid-19 restrictions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: India's fuel demand rose in March as a pick-up in agriculture activity helped reverse a slowdown that was witnessed in the first half of the month, preliminary industry data showed Sunday.

Fuel sales soared to the highest levels in February on the back of robust demand from the agriculture sector as well as transport picking up after the winter lull. But a seasonal slowdown kicked in during the first half of March. However, there was a pick-up in the second half, which helped sales rise even month-on-month despite the high base of February.

Petrol sales rose 5.1 per cent to 2.65 million tonne in March when compared with the same period of last year. Sales were up 3.4 per cent month-on-month, the data showed.

Diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country, saw demand rise by 2.1 per cent to 6.81 million tonne during March when compared with 6.67 million tonne sales in the same period a year back. Month-on-month the demand was up 4.5 per cent.



With the continued opening of the aviation sector, India's overall passenger traffic at airports inched closer to pre-Covid levels.

Reflecting the trend, jet fuel (ATF) demand jumped 25.7 per cent to 614,000 tonne during March when compared to the same period last year. It was 41.9 per cent higher than March 2021 and 34.8 per cent more than March 2020. Month-on-month

Export curbs on gasoline, diesel extended

India has extended restrictions on the export of diesel and gasoline, the government said in a notification, as New Delhi tries to ensure the availability of refined fuels for the domestic market. The government had imposed the curbs on gasoline and gasoil exports through Friday's end of the financial year. The extension may discourage some Indian refiners, mainly private companies, from buying Russian fuel for re-exports to countries including those in Europe that have stopped purchases of refined products from Russia due to its invasion of Ukraine.

PETROL SALES ROSE 5.1% IN MARCH YOY; 3.4% MOM

DIESEL SAW DEMAND RISE BY 2.1% YOY; 4.5% MOM

IN H1, PETROL SALES HAD FALLEN 1.4%, DIESEL 10.2% YOY

In the first half, petrol sales had fallen 1.4 per cent and diesel 10.2 per cent year-on-year. Consumption of petrol in March was 16.2 per cent more than Covid-marred March 2021 and almost 43 per cent more than in the same period of 2020.

Diesel consumption was up 13.5 per cent over March 2021 and 41.8 per cent higher than in the same month of 2020.

sales were 4.54 per cent higher.

Cooking gas LPG sales fell 3 per cent year-on-year to 2.37 million tonne in March. LPG consumption was 9 per cent higher than in March 2021 and 5.8 per cent more than in March 2020. Month-on-month, the demand dropped 6.54 when compared to 2.54 million tonne of LPG consumption during February, the data showed.

FIRST TIME IN 31 MONTHS

Power consumption slides 0.74 per cent

THE CONTRACTION IN POWER CONSUMPTION IS MAINLY BECAUSE OF WIDESPREAD RAINS DUE TO WESTERN DISTURBANCES IN THE COUNTRY AND LOW TEMPERATURE IN MARCH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: India's power consumption dipped 0.74 per cent to 127.52 billion units (BU) in March this year for the first time in 31 months, according to government data.

Last contraction in power consumption was recorded in August in 2020, when it declined by over two per cent to 109.21 BU, compared to 111.52 BU in August 2019.

Power consumption had slumped in 2020 due to the impact of lockdown restrictions imposed to curb the spread of deadly coronavirus.

Experts are hopeful that power consumption and demand would grow April onwards, due to further improvement in economic activities as well as rise in temperature.

In March 2022, power consumption stood at 128.47 billion units (BU), higher than the 120.63 BU in the same month of 2021, the data showed.

Electricity consumption in March 2020 stood at 98.95 BU.

However, the data showed that the peak power demand met, which is the highest supply in a day, rose to



209.01 gigawatt (GW) in March 2023.

The peak power supply stood at 199.43 GW in March 2022 and 185.89 GW in March 2021.

The peak power demand met stood at 170.16 GW in the pre-pandemic March 2020.

Experts are of the view that the power consumption and demand would log higher growth rates in coming months due to forecasts of higher temperature during this summer season compared to last year.

Peak power demand is expected to touch 229 GW during this summer season as per power ministry estimates.

SHORT TAKES

Credit Suisse, UBS merger to hit 36K

Washington: The merger between banks Credit Suisse and UBS could see up to 36,000 jobs being cut across the world, the SonntagsZeitung weekly reported Sunday. The takeover by UBS of Credit Suisse was hastily arranged by the Swiss government March 19 to prevent a global financial meltdown, following fears of contagion from the collapse of banks in the United States. UBS announced Wednesday it would bring back former Chief Executive Sergio Ermotti to handle the huge risks involved in the Swiss banking giant's controversial absorption of its troubled rival Credit Suisse. On Sunday, SonntagsZeitung said management was mulling cutting between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the workforce, meaning between 25,000 and 36,000 jobs.

Southern Rly logs record revenue

New Delhi: Southern Railway Sunday said it had recorded about 80 per cent jump in its revenue, which stood at ₹6,345 crore in the passenger segment during the financial year 2022-23, its highest ever. During the corresponding period in the last financial year, it had earned revenues of ₹3,539.77 crore. The highest revenue registered by Southern Railway before this was in the financial year 2019-20 at ₹5,225 crore. About 640 million passengers travelled by Southern Railway in 2022-2023, which is a massive increase of 88.5 per cent over the 339.6 million passengers of 2021-22, an official release said.

Saudis to cut oil production

Dubai: Saudi Arabia said Sunday it will cut oil production by 500,000 barrels per day from May until the end of 2023. The move would likely raise prices at the pump, further straining relations between Riyadh and Washington as the world copes with inflation fuelled in part by the war in Ukraine. The Saudi Energy Ministry said Sunday that the cuts would be made in coordination with some OPEC and non-OPEC members, without naming them. The cut is in addition to a reduction announced last October that infuriated the Biden administration. The ministry described the move as a "precautionary measure" aimed at stabilising the oil market. The cuts represent less than 5 per cent of Saudi Arabia's average production of 11.5 million barrels per day in 2022. The earlier cuts — of some 2 million barrels a day — had come on the eve of US midterm elections in which soaring prices for gas and other basic goods was a major issue.

Export of military hardware at all-time high

INDIA IS EXPORTING MILITARY HARDWARE TO MORE THAN 85 COUNTRIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: India's export of military hardware reached an all-time high of ₹15,920 crore in the financial year 2022-2023 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing it as a clear manifestation of enthusiasm towards 'Make in India' initiative.

The value of total defence exports in 2022-23 is a ten-fold increase compared to the amount of ₹1,521 crore recorded in exporting military hardware in 2016-17.

The key platforms that India has been exporting are Dornier-228 aircraft, 155 mm Advanced Towed

Artillery Guns (ATAGs), Brahmos missiles, Akash missile system, radars, mine protected vehicles, armoured vehicles, Pinaka rockets and launchers, ammunition, thermal imagers and various components of avionics and small arms.

There is growing global demand for Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, light combat helicopters and aircraft carrier, MRO (maintenance, repair and operations) facilities, the ministry said.

"The Indian industry has shown its capability of design and development to the world, with 100 firms exporting defence products at present. The rising defence exports



and participation of 104 countries in Aero India 2023 are proof of India's growing defence manufacturing capabilities," the ministry said.

"Through consistent policy initiatives of the government and tremendous contribution of the defence industry, India has achieved a remarkable milestone in defence exports in 2022-23. The exports have reached an all-time high of approximately ₹16,000 crore, almost

It is a remarkable achievement for the country. It also shows the reforms in this sector over the last few years are delivering good results. Our Government will keep supporting efforts to make India a defence production hub

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

₹3,000 crore more than the previous financial year," it said.

India exported military hardware worth ₹8,434 crore in 2020-21, ₹9,115 crore in 2019-20 and ₹10,745 crore in 2018-19, according to official data. The amount in 2017-18 was ₹4,682 crore.

Foreign trade set to cross \$1.6trn mark this fiscal

Key sectors which are expected to register healthy growth include basic and processed agriculture products; fish, meat, dairy; petroleum items, chemicals, diamonds, machinery and automobiles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 2: India's foreign trade is expected to cross the \$1.6 trillion mark this fiscal despite global economic uncertainties, economic think tank GTRI said in a report.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said the \$1.6 trillion would be about 48 per cent of India's nominal GDP of \$3.4 trillion for the fiscal year ending March 2023.

The higher trade-to-GDP ratio also speaks of high trade openness which the country practices, GTRI co-founder Ajay Srivastava said.

According to their analysis of the data by the think tank, the growth rate in the exports of services would be higher than that of goods.

India's overall exports of goods and services during April-March 2023 are estimated to reach \$755 billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 11.6 per cent over the same period last year (April-March 2022).

The report said that India's merchandise exports during the fiscal are likely to increase by about 5 per cent to \$442 billion. Similarly, services exports are estimated to grow by 22.6 per cent to \$311.9 billion in 2022-23.

"India's foreign trade (exports



and imports of merchandise and services) is estimated to cross \$1.6 trillion or 48 per cent of India's nominal GDP of \$3.4 trillion for the fiscal year ending March 2023," it added.

Despite sectoral weaknesses,

high trade figures underline the emergence of trade as an important component of the Indian economy, it said.

The top export destinations include the US, UAE, the Netherlands, China, Bangladesh, Singapore, the

Higher growth rate in services exports compared to the outbound shipments of goods has improved overall performance of India's exports

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

Overall exports during April-March 2023 estimated to reach \$755bn, 11.6% growth YoY

Merchandise exports likely to increase by about 5% to \$442bn

Services exports to grow by 22.6% to \$311.9bn in 2022-23

In 2021-22, India's foreign trade stood at \$1.43trn

UK and Germany. On the outlook for exports during the next fiscal, Srivastava said that 2023 will make most countries turn inward to stay safe from the global headwinds, not of their creation.

"Indian exports will be moderately impacted by weak global demand and recession in large economies but will gain as the domestic economy looks resilient and exports from high growth sectors like electronics are picking

up almost for the first time, he added. Further, the report said that the estimated value of exports of petroleum products and coal this fiscal year would be around \$98.2 billion, an increase of over 41 per cent. Similarly, the country's outbound shipments of electronics, and electrical machinery are expected to grow by about 36 per cent to \$27.4 billion.

The commerce ministry is scheduled to release the trade data for 2022-23 April 15.

Royals thrash SRH

Rajasthan Royals crush Sunrisers Hyderabad by 72 runs to make winning start in IPL



Rajasthan Royals players celebrate a wicket during IPL 2023 match against Sunrisers Hyderabad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, April 2: Rajasthan Royals crushed Sunrisers Hyderabad by a massive 72-run margin in a one-sided match to start their 2023 Indian Premier League campaign on a winning note here Sunday.

Half-centuries from openers Jos Buttler (54) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (54) and captain Sanju Samson (55) propelled Rajasthan Royals to a huge 203 for 5 batting first, and then Trent Boult (4-1-21-2) and Yuzvendra Chahal (4-0-17-4) ran through SRH's batting line-up, sharing six wickets between them to seal the game in emphatic style.

Chasing 204, SRH could manage a meagre 131 for 8 in 20 overs as Jason Holder, playing against his former franchise, returned with figures of 3-0-16-1 while Ravichandran Ashwin recorded 4-0-27-1.

Mayank Agarwal's 27 (23 balls),

RR's 85 for one was overall the sixth highest total for any team in the powerplay while it was also their highest score in the first six overs in IPL history

3x4s) was the only bright spot for SRH in the top order while debutant Harry Brook, playing his first IPL game, managed 13 (21 balls, 1x4) before he was cleaned up by Chahal.

Boult rocked SRH twice in the first over, cleaning up Abhishek Sharma (0) in the third ball and a brilliant catch on his left on first slip by Holder saw Rahul Tripathi walking back for a two-ball duck.

SRH never recovered from the poor start as rampant RR kept making inroads.

Earlier, last year's runner-up side RR made a rollicking start,

amassing 203 for five, ripping apart the Bhuvneshwar Kumar-led SRH in their own backyard to pile up season's highest total yet.

In the process, they also became the first team to breach the 200-run mark.

One of the consistent performers in the IPL for RR over the last few years, Buttler made a sensational start stroking his way to a 22-ball 54 with seven fours and three sixes until his assault was ended by SRH debutant Fazalhaq Farooqi.

Buttler started with a six off Bhuvneshwar in the third over and smacked four boundaries off T Natarajan in the fifth over to make it a perfect start for the Royals, after SRH stand-in skipper Bhuvneshwar opted to bowl.

RR, though, lost some steam with regular fall of wickets and it took them the penultimate ball of the innings to get past the 200-mark.

If Buttler was ruthless at one

BRIEF SCORES

RAJASTHAN ROYALS: 203 for 5 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 55, Yashasvi Jaiswal 54, Jos Buttler 54; T Natarajan 2/23, Fazalhaq Farooqi 2/41)

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: 131 for 8 in 20 overs (Abdul Samad 32 not out; Yuzvendra Chahal 4/17, Trent Boult 2/21)

end, Jaiswal successfully transitioned his domestic circuit form into making a strong opening to IPL 2023 with ease. The left-handed batter brought up his overall fourth fifty in the competition, finishing at 54 off 37 balls with nine hits to the fence. Overall, RR enjoyed a successful outing with the bat with captain Samson hitting 55 from 31 balls (3x4s, 4x6s).

If RR's top three made merry with the bat, the young Devdutt Padikkal (2) had no answer to Umran Malik's 149.2 kmph thunderbolt - in the first delivery of the 15th over - that sent his off-stump flying.

With four of their six bowlers giving away more than 10 runs an over, SRH's stand-in captain for the game Bhuvneshwar (3-0-36-0) would certainly have revisited his decision to bowl first.

Kohli, Du Plessis hand RCB easy win over MI

Sensational start for RCB as Kohli, Du Plessis slam twin fifties to power the team to 8-wicket win over MI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 2: Virat Kohli and Faf Du Plessis dished out a chasing master-class with a 148-run opening partnership as Royal Challengers Bangalore made a sensational start to their IPL campaign with a comprehensive eight-wicket demolition of Mumbai Indians here Sunday.

Sent into bat, Tilak Varma smashed a scintillating 84 off 46 balls to single-handedly power MI to 171 for seven but Kohli and Du Plessis made mockery of the total, slamming twin fifties as RCB romped home with as many as 22 balls to spare.

Chasing 172, Kohli (82 not out) and Du Plessis (73) produced an exhibition of sublime stroke-making, plundering 10 boundaries and as many maximums during their near flawless 89-ball stand.

After du Plessis perished in the 15th over, Kohli completed the job, hitting a four and six off Arshad Khan to knock off the winning



BRIEF SCORES

MUMBAI INDIANS: 171 for 7 in 20 overs (Tilak Varma 84 not out; Karn Sharma 2/32)

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE: 172 for 2 in 16.2 overs (Virat Kohli 82 not out, Faf du Plessis 73; Arshad Khan 1/28)

but it was too late as Glenn Maxwell (12 not out off 3 balls) and Kohli finished off things in style.

Earlier, MI had a poor start but Varma, coming off a successful last season, held the innings together with a sensational knock.

RCB bowlers had reduced MI to 20 for three in 5.2 overs but Varma added 50 and 48 with Nehal Wadhwa (21) and Arshad Khan (15 not out) for the fifth and eighth wickets respectively.

The 20-year-old decorated his knock with nine boundaries and four sixes.

SHORT TAKES

Kvitova wins women's Miami Open title

Miami Gardens: Twelfth-seeded Petra Kvitova won the Miami Open in her 13th appearance, beating seventh-seeded Elena Rybakina with a marathon tiebreaker in a 7-6 (14), 6-2 victory Saturday. The 33-year-old Kvitova, 10 years older than her opponent, snapped Rybakina's 13-match winning streak and halted her bid to win the Sunshine Double (Indian Wells and Miami Open). The lefty Kvitova captured her 30th WTA singles title and first one since 2018 in Madrid.

Verstappen wins 1st Australian Grand Prix

Melbourne: Red Bull's Max Verstappen claimed his first Australian Grand Prix Sunday in remarkable circumstances after a chaotic F1 race filled with drama from the green light to the checkered flag. Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who drove superbly in his Mercedes, finished second, while Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso took third spot on the podium.

MADRID SPAIN MASTERS

Sindhu finishes runner-up

Sindhu showed flashes of her brilliance throughout the tournament as she didn't drop a game en route to the final but slipped during decider match



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, April 2: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu of India was completely routed by Indonesia's Gregoria Mariska Tunjung in a lop-sided women's singles title clash at the Madrid Spain Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on a mistake-filled Sunday.

Sindhu, who had slipped out of the elite top 10 after a series of early exits following her return from a five-month long injury lay-off, looked completely clueless during her 8-21 8-21 demoli-

tion at the hands of world number 12 Tunjung at Centro Deportivo Municipal Gallur.

Despite coming into the finals with a dominating 7-0 lead over the 23-year-old Indonesian, Sindhu looked a pale shadow of her old self as an opportunity to seal her first crown in eight months slipped out of her hands.

Nevertheless, the final finish will give her some confidence in a crucial year which will see the Paris Olympic qualification process start next month. Sindhu, a former world

champion, last won a title at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in August 2022, while her last world tour crown came at the Singapore Open in July last year.

The 27-year-old from Hyderabad, who currently trains under Vidhi Chaudhary following the exit of Korea's Park Tae Sang, entered the final after coming into the tournament following a failed bid to defend her title at the Swiss Open.

However, Sunday Sindhu couldn't match the tactical acumen and sharpness of Tunjung, a former junior world champion, who was part of the Indonesian women's team which won the 2022 Asia Team Championships.

The young Indonesian grabbed 12 championships point and sealed it in style when Sindhu committed another net error to record her maiden world tour title.

The 'Prince' who redefined flamboyance

SAKYASEN MITTRA, OP

ML Jaishima will be very happy, so will be Kalyan Mitra. They will be because a reunion is taking place up there somewhere among the clouds. It has been a long wait for them... but finally the first 'Prince' of Indian cricket has travelled heavenwards.

Salim Durani, one of the first and foremost flamboyant men of Indian cricket, breathed his last, Sunday. The modern-day shenanigans of T20 cricket will probably not understand the impact that Durani had on the game. This year, the IPL has introduced the 'Impact' player rule in the tournament. Had he been in his prime heydays, one can safely say that the franchises would have made a beeline for him.

The great cricket writer Sir Neville Cardus had once said 'scoreboard is a donkey'. Cardus was that cricket romanticist who saw more in a cricketer than the scoreboard portrayed. Durani was in that category, a man who left an indelible mark in the game, much more than his 1,202 Test runs and 74 wickets.

Durani played a quintessential role when India won their first series in the West Indies. He

picked up the crucial wickets of Sir Garfield Sobers and Sir Clive Lloyd in the second innings to hasten the downfall of the hosts as India won the game by seven wickets. It was he who took 23 wickets against England in the 1961-62 series to facilitate India's series win. In a whiff he could change the complexion of a game.

Collar up, shirt buttons open at times till the midriff, Durani always was the darling of the spectators. And why he wouldn't be? He was the one who could hit a 'six on demand', one who always had the smile that could mesmerise a thousand hearts, one who never thought about tomorrow, but always lived for the moment. And he lived it to the hilt. It is good that no one saw him bedridden for the



last couple of months after undergoing a surgery; it would have been too painful a sight to behold.

What made Durani all the more popular was his heart which was literally made of gold with capital 'G'. There have been numerous occasions when his blazers have found a way into the hands of a beggar shivering in the cold night; there have been times when he has emptied his wallet for someone without even thinking how will he return home without any money in his pocket. Nothing mattered to him more than helping out someone in distress. And that is why he was special... very special indeed.

This writer did have the chance to spend substantial time with him in the early 1990s in Kolkata when Durani was a frequent visitor to top police official AIN Rashid Khan in Golpark. Needless to say his cricket acumen was fantastic, but such was the man's humility that he rarely talked about his deeds.

Not for nothing he was called a 'Prince'. He deserved that status even though he played mostly under a 'Nawab' (Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi) whom he called 'snooty'. There will just not be another like Durani.

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