



BITTER PAST

Actor Radhika Apte recalls how rude some people had been to her at the beginning of her career

LEISURE

P2



1ST H3N8 DEATH

A Chinese woman has become the first victim of H3N8, a type of rare bird flu, WHO said Wednesday

INTERNATIONAL

P10



GT FACE PBKS TODAY

Gujarat Titans eye return to winning ways when they face gritty Punjab Kings in their IPL game

SPORTS

P12

KESHUB MAHINDRA BREATHE HIS LAST



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Keshub Mahindra, a pioneer of Indian auto industry and Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd Chairman Emeritus, died Wednesday morning in Mumbai. Keshub, 99, breathed his last at his home peacefully, the company confirmed.

"He (Keshub) was a man of principles and led from the front to preserve the legacy of our founders which has ensured that the organisation has remained rooted in ethics, values and good corporate governance," Mahindra group chairman Anand Mahindra said. "Keshub was known for his astute business acumen that helped in transforming Mahindra into a diversified federation of companies," he added.

Keshub had led the Mahindra Group for 48 years as chairman and expanded it from being an automobile manufacturer to other business segments like IT, real estate, financial services and hospitality.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



It's most likely... probably... there is 90% chance that monsoon will be normal

MARKET WATCH			
INDEX			variation
SENSEX	60392.77	↑	235.05
NIFTY	17812.40	↑	90.10
DOLLAR	82.05	↑	₹0.10
EURO	90.00	↑	₹0.48
GOLD	₹60,524	↑	₹19
SILVER	₹75,242	↑	₹202

WEATHER			
	BHUB	CTK	
MAX	39.8°C	39.8°C	
MIN	24.6°C	25.5°C	
Humidity	60%	66%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	
			Forecast Dry weather very likely



PREPARING FOR D-DAY: Members of the Daredevils team belonging to Maharishi College of Natural Law perform a stunt on bikes Wednesday at PMG Square while preparing for the Foundation Day celebrations of Bhubaneswar to be held Thursday (REPORT P3)

PHOTO BIKASH NAYAK

Land acquisition: SC rejects state, Vedanta's petitions

Earlier, the Orissa High Court in Nov 2010 had stopped acquisition by the Vedanta Foundation and asked it to return the land to the original owners

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, April 12: In a major setback for the Odisha government and 'Vedanta Foundation' which is now known as the 'Anil Agarwal Foundation', the Supreme Court upheld Wednesday the Orissa High Court order which had quashed the entire land acquisition for the proposed Vedanta University in Puri. The apex court also slapped a cost of ₹5 lakh on the Foundation.

A two-judge bench of Justices MR Shah and Krishna Murari dismissed the appeals filed by the Foundation and the Odisha government. It said that the entire acquisition proceedings were vitiated by mala fides and favouritism and was a clear case of non-application of mind by the state government on several aspects.

The apex court noted that undue benefits were offered to Vedanta University like - total autonomy with regard to administration, admission, fee structures, curriculum and faculty selection; complete immunity from any reservation laws of the Odisha government, assistance in getting regulatory approvals from UGC, AICTE etc. The Odisha government had also promised to exempt all state levies/taxes/duties on R&D equipment, educational aids and construction materials from the date of signing of the MoU, the bench noted.



"It is not appreciable why the Odisha government offered such undue favour for one trust/company. Thus, the entire acquisition proceedings and the benefits, which were proposed by the state government were vitiated by favouritism and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India," the top court observed.

The apex court also noted that the land acquisition for the proposed University was in violation of the 'Land Acquisition Act, 1894'. On the submission of the Foundation that it is ready to confine to acquisition of 3,837 acres of land, the apex court expressed displeasure. It said there was no proper inquiry with respect to the requirement of the land. It noted

that initially 15,000 acres was proposed to be acquired, which is now reduced to 3837 acres.

"Meaning thereby, the proposal was for exaggerated demand. This was mala fide intention on the part of the Foundation," the SC bench said. It added that the agricultural land to be required is the only source of livelihood for 6,000 families that cannot be compensated in terms of money. Therefore, the proposal made now has to be rejected outright."

The apex court was also dismayed with the Odisha government over non-application of mind on environment aspects as the land acquired for the proposed university passes through two rivers 'Nuana' and 'Nala' and there is also a wildlife sanctuary adjacent to the land. "If the lands in question are continued to be acquired by the beneficiary company, the control of the rivers would be with the said private company, which would violate the Doctrine of Public Trust," the bench said.

The bench asked the Foundation to deposit ₹5 lakh within a period of six weeks from and the same to be transferred to the Orissa State Legal Services Authority. Earlier, the Supreme Court had in 2011 ordered the Odisha government to maintain status quo on acquisition of 6,000 acres of land for setting up of the University by Vedanta Group.

BJP NAMES TRIPATHY FOR JHARSUGUDA

Bhubaneswar: As expected, the BJP nominated Wednesday Tankadhar Tripathy for the by-election to the Jharsuguda Assembly constituency. Tripathy has already started campaigning in the Assembly segment. The Congress had earlier named Tarun Pandey as its candidate for the bypoll while the BJD has fielded slain minister Naba Kishore Das's daughter Dipali. Voting for the by-poll will be declared May 13. "It is all due to the blessings of the residents of Jharsuguda. This will be a fight between the common public and 29 years of neglect meted out by the current government," said Tripathy.

Cong vows 'historic' Oppn unity

ALL LIKE-MINDED PARTIES TO COME TOGETHER TO SAVE CONSTITUTION, SAYS KHARGE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his deputy Tejashwi Yadav held a 'historic' meeting with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi here Wednesday, and decided to bring together as many opposition parties as possible to take on the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing a joint press conference after the meeting, Kharge said the opposition will together protect the Constitution and democracy and will give a new direction to the country in a united fashion.

Rahul said the opposition will together develop its vision for the



Motorbikes lie abandoned in a street of Sambalpur town as fire rages; (Inset): Injured IIC Anita Pradhan

OP PHOTOS

country and present the same before people as they fight the ongoing ideological battle together. This is the first formal effort in forging an opposition unity ahead of next year's general elections as the Congress chief would be meeting top leaders of various parties in the coming few days.

"We held a historic meeting here. A lot of issues were discussed and we decided that we will unite all parties and fight the upcoming polls in a united manner. We have made this decision and all of us will work for this," Kharge told reporters while lauding the efforts of Kumar, Yadav and others sitting along with him.

Contd...P4

No respite from blistering heat

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: Heat wave conditions continued to prevail in many parts of the state Wednesday with mercury crossing the 40-degree Celsius mark at 14 places. The IMD said that the heat wave in the state would persist till April 16.

Meanwhile in a separate development Odisha's Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu asked Wednesday all district collectors to take precautionary measures to tackle the heat wave conditions and prevent water scarcity in the state. He also asked officials to open shelters for the needy and poor people.

Sahu said that all efforts should be made to ensure that there are no human casualties due to the heat wave condition. If any in-

formation on it is received or news report is published in the media, it should be immediately enquired into and their veracity should be promptly reported to the commissioner's office.

The IMD in its mid-day bulletin said the maximum temperature is very likely to rise further gradually by two or three degrees during the next two days in many places in Odisha due to northwesterly and westerly dry air and high solar insolation.

"The day temperature is likely to be more than 40 degrees and is likely to be above normal by three to five degrees Celsius at a few places over the districts of Odisha during the next four days. People are advised to take precautionary measures while going outside during the day time between 11.00am to 3.00 pm," the IMD said.

Contd...P4

Jagan tops list of richest Chief Ministers in India

THE ANALYSIS OF WEALTH OF 30 CHIEF MINISTERS WAS CARRIED OUT BASED ON THE SELF-SWORN POLL AFFIDAVITS FILED BY THEM

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: Jagan Mohan Reddy of Andhra Pradesh tops the list of richest Chief Ministers of India according to a report published Wednesday by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR). Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is third in the list and in between the two is Arunachal Pradesh CM, Pema Khandu.

The Chief Ministers with the least amount of assets include West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee (₹15 lakh), Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan (₹1 crore) and Haryana's Manohar Lal (also ₹1 crore). The report also states that out of the 30 CMs whose assets are public, 29 are crorepatis.



Jagan Mohan Reddy

The report states that Reddy has assets worth ₹510 crore. He is followed by Khandu with assets more than ₹163 crore. Following the two is Patnaik who has properties worth ₹63.87 crore including mov-



Naveen Patnaik

able assets worth ₹23,26,555 and immovable assets of ₹63,64,15,261. The report further said that Patnaik has self income of ₹21.17 lakh and liabilities of ₹15 lakh.

It should be stated here that

- Assets of CMs of 28 states and 2 UTs - Delhi and Pondicherry analysed by ADR
- The average of assets per Chief Minister from state Assemblies and UTs is ₹33.96 crore
- 29 of the 30 CMs analysed are crorepatis

Patnaik had declared last year the details of his movable and immovable properties. As per the declaration, Patnaik possessed bank balance of ₹94.41 lakh as on December 31, 2021.

The moveable properties of Patnaik include Post Office Savings of ₹5,033, fixed deposits worth ₹1.11 crore, RBI bonds of ₹9 crore, Post Office term deposit of ₹1 crore, jewellery worth

₹3.45 lakh and an Ambassador car (1980 model) worth ₹6,434.

Patnaik's immovable assets include two-third share in 'Naveen Niwas' worth ₹9,52,46,190 (approximately) and 50% share in the property situated at 3, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road in New Delhi worth ₹43,36,18,000 (approximately). Both the properties have been inherited by Patnaik.

According to the ADR report, out of the 30 Chief Ministers, 13 (43 per cent) have serious criminal cases against them including those related to murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping and criminal intimidation. Serious criminal cases are non-bailable offences with over five years of imprisonment, the report said.

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181*

ARIES
Ganesh predicts that there may be some disappointments today. The reason could well be your own carelessness. Ganesh advises you to draw some motivation from your superiors sometimes. It will only be for your own good.

TAURUS
This day will be filled with a lot of emotional intensity. So says Ganesh. Most of the day you will be driven by your feelings and sentiments and remain absorbed in family issues concerns. You will, nevertheless, not lose out on your professional and business affairs. Others will understand your preoccupation with home affairs and will remain helpful and appreciative.

GEMINI
You will realise today that your personal life is as important as your professional life. Therefore you will give more importance to your family and will try and spend maximum time with your spouse and children. A day filled with fun and frolic and enjoyment awaits, make the most of it, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will tour a world of fantasy and accomplish beautiful creations in literary and artistic arena. Religious acts or visit to religious spots is likely. You will feel closeness to God. Spiritualism will impact your mind. Ganesh sees it as a fruitful and profitable day.

LEO
You will have to fulfill all your responsibilities carefully, and will be duly rewarded for your troubles. Begin all auspicious work and new projects in the afternoon. Your generosity and capability will keep you at peace today, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
You will enjoy the freedom of a bird today. There will be no conditions, neither in your domestic life nor in your professional life. Ganesh says this will give a much-needed boost to your levels of confidence. However, the high expectations could bog you down, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that today you will spend with close friends or beloved people. Your romantic nature will surely please the opposite sex. By evening your imagination will be at its peak. Ganesh wishes you all the very best and sends you his greetings

SCORPIO
The day may be slightly challenging today. The day at field may be highly constructive, while in office you may be bogged down with a lot of work. However, romantic relationship may add some spice to your life and offer some surprises. Enjoy to the hilt!

SAGITTARIUS
Unlike chirpy and cheerful, you will be in a grumpy mood today; blame it on the office's petty issues, says Ganesh. Another thing that linger on your mind would be financial matters. Keep yourself balanced and let nothing affect you.

CAPRICORN
You have always believed in living in the present, but today you'll think and plan about the future. The uncertainties of life make you understand the importance of saving for the future contingencies. You will forgive and forget about the pain some of your relationships and loved ones have given you earlier.

AQUARIUS
Not everyday is the same day, and today will be one of those unfavourable days, feels Ganesh. Don't get disheartened if things don't turn out as per your expectations, as times will change. Be optimistic and enjoy life to deal with difficult times.

PISCES
You will be filled with extreme energy and enthusiasts in the earlier half of the day. However you will feel sluggish and drained out in the afternoon. The likely reason for this will be the over-enthusiasm you show towards your work in the morning.



NICK CANNON WANTS TO HAVE 13TH BABY WITH TAYLOR SWIFT

Television personality Nick Cannon is desperate to have a baby with singer Taylor Swift because he thinks they would relate well to each other. The 42-year-old comedian, from 2020 onwards, attracted significant media attention for fathering 12 children with multiple partners.

RIHANNA BECOMES THE MOST FOLLOWED WOMAN ON TWITTER

Rihanna is glowing and growing as she stands at the No. 1 position for being the most followed woman on Twitter. After surpassing Katy Perry to become the most followed woman on Twitter, Rihanna has added another great accomplishment to her résumé.



When Radhika got a raw deal

Mumbai: Ahead of the OTT release of her new film *Mrs Undercover*, Radhika looked back on her career and spoke about the unfairness that she has observed in the film industry. While she busts the myth that the film industry is filled with 'immoral' people, she reminisced how rude some people had been to her. The *Pad Man* actress shared, "Perceptions are strange. People used to think I could only be a village girl for the longest time, till I did *Badlapur*. After *Badlapur*, people thought I could only do sex comedies. I could strip. So, I stopped. I just never said yes to them. Perceptions are a bit bizarre." Explaining her take further, the *Hunterr* actress said, "I lost a film because I was overweight by three or four kilos. Of course, when you're new, they say, 'Why don't you get a better nose; why don't you get bigger breasts?' That was in the beginning. In the middle, some people would comment on your body as if they had the right to... Now we can talk about it very openly in the last few years because of awareness. We can say, 'If you say that to me again I'll make sure you're out of this project, at least'." Coming back to her forthcoming film, *Mrs Undercover*, it will start streaming on ZEE5 April 14. Besides Apte, the film also features Sumeet Vyas and Rajesh Sharma in key roles. AGENCIES



Aamir earns praise for cracking jokes on self

Mumbai: Aamir Khan is currently dominating ad breaks during IPL matches with his *Dream11* commercials as he sportingly takes jokes on himself, including those on his last film *Laal Singh Chaddha*. The ad shows Bumrah teasing him for the failure of the film. Another ad features cricketer Rohit Sharma mocking Aamir for not attending award events. Aamir has now been earning praise for how he didn't mind being mocked for *Laal Singh Chaddha*'s failure in one of the ads. It shows Aamir telling Bumrah to bowl carefully as he gives 'bade bade hits' (big hits) with his bat. Mocking him in return, Jasprit

says, "Tne hits maarte ho sir...to *Laal Singh ka kya hua* (if you give so many hits, what happened to *Laal Singh Chaddha*)?" A user tweeted about the same in sarcasm, "Aamir Khan made more money with Laal Singh joke in *Dream11* ad than Laal Singh the movie." Many others however, praised the actor for cracking a joke on himself. A Twitter user wrote, "The latest ad-series by @Dream11 proves that why @AKPPL Official #AamirKhan is actually Mr. Perfect. Dude is taking jokes on his absence in Award Shows and even #LaalSinghChaddha's bad performance in the box office. Respect." AGENCIES

Raveena opens up about nepotism

Mumbai: The debate over nepotism in the film industry refuses to die down with one star kid after other getting launched in recent years. Now, it is rumoured that Aaman Devgn, the nephew of Ajay Devgn, and Raveena's daughter Rasha will soon make their debut in films. When asked about the prevalence of nepotism in the film industry, Raveena responded, "Our kids will obviously learn what they see and if they have that in their bloodstream, if they have talent, I'm not going to tell her 'no, sorry you cannot live your dreams, you have to become a NASA scientist.'" She insisted that the film industry is brutal to the star kids.

"There is, in fact, so much more pressure because of the fact that if they have no talent you will make one film for them. You are the audience, if you don't want to watch them, then don't. Audience is king. They will tell you whether you are worth being here or not," asserted Raveena. The *Mohra* actress also claimed that the audience had turned away several filmy kids, "They have to go through much more pressure because they have to live up to a certain expectation also. It's even tougher for them."



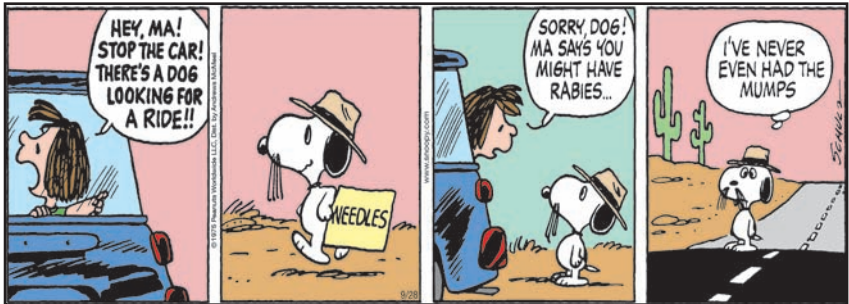
Yami recollects being asked for a nose job

Mumbai: Actors turning to surgery to look better isn't something new in the film industry. Out of these, a nose job is one of the most well-known. Actress Yami Gautam Dhar has recently opined on the topic, as she was advised to get her nose job done. Speaking to a news portal, Yami revealed, "I was advised to get a nose job! There is so much advice floating around. What is people's obsession with others faces? There are girls and people who take it seriously." The 34-year-old also believes that people's choices in such matters should also be respected. "I mean, it is a personal choice; to each his own. I am not someone to comment on anybody else. But I feel it is not right. If you want to do something, that should be your choice. It shouldn't be coming from anyone that, 'Oh, this is what you need to do so that you will get cast or look better.' I don't agree with all those things," the *Lost* actress added. Yami is currently basking in the rave reviews for her latest film streaming on Netflix, *Chor Nikal Ke Bhago* and her performance in it. AGENCIES



FUN post

PEANUTS



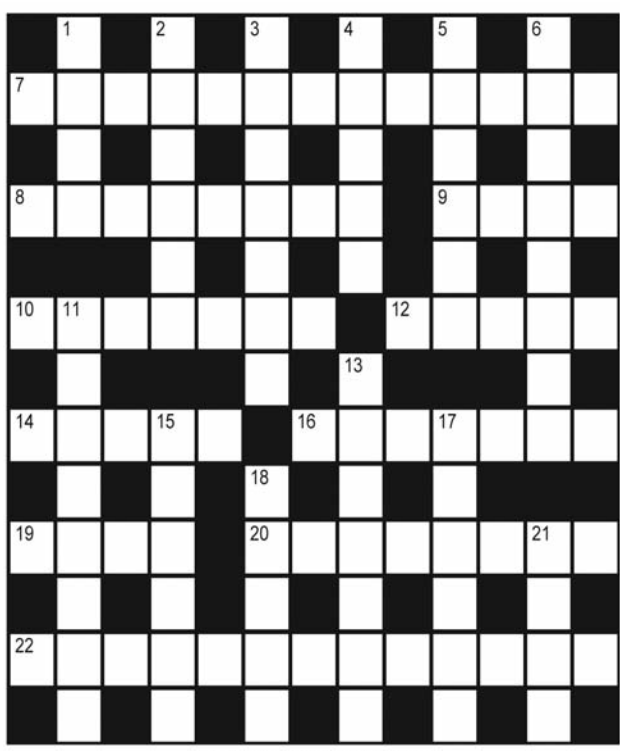
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



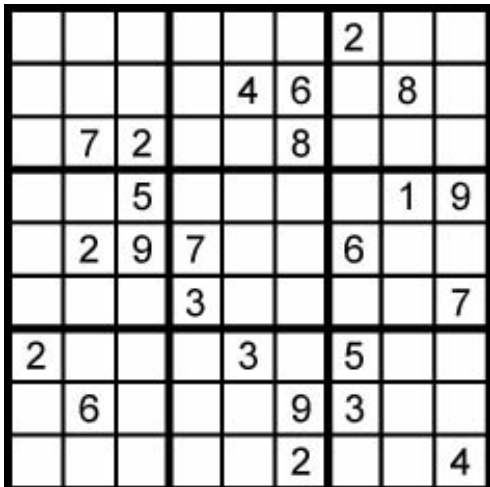
CROSSWORD



Across
7 Quarrelsome
8 Stretch
9 Stew vegetable
10 Fettuccine follower
12 Hang loose
14 Oblivion
16 Weight room item
19 Scoff
20 Overtly expressed
22 Lucky
Down
1 Word-of-mouth
2 Heating element
3 Outdoor seating area
4 Precipitous
5 Golf shot
6 Give a face lift
11 Dawdler
13 Primitive wind instrument
15 Desolate
17 Jewish pancake
18 Rundown
21 Markers

SUDOKU

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

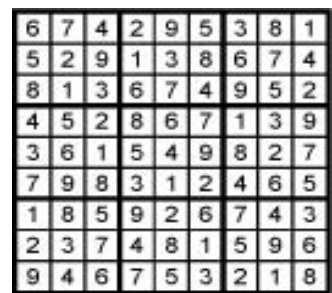


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

prelude/kmr/2023

Man gets 3-yr jail over fake certificate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The Special Vigilance Court here Wednesday sentenced a man to three years of rigorous imprisonment after finding him guilty of submitting fake birth certificate while joining service in 1975. The court also slapped a penalty of Rs 20,000 on the convict. Failure to pay the penalty would entail an additional six month jail term, the court said. The convict, identified as Banshidhar Mahapatra, was the former market sarkar at Regulated Market Committee (RMC) of



Bahadajhola village under Odagaon police limits in Nayagarh district. “While joining service as market sarkar in RMC, Bahadajhola, August 20, 1975, the convict submitted school leaving certificate issued by the headmaster of Sardar Patel Bidyapitha, Godipada, Nayagarh showing his date of birth as August 1, 1955. Investigations revealed that as per the records of

Bahadajhola ME School, where the convict did his schooling, his actual date of birth was April 23, 1951,” Special Public Prosecutor Kamadev Tripathy said. The tehsildar also found during the probe that Banshidhar was never a student of the Sardar Patel Bidyapitha at Godipada and that he had forged the certificate in order to avail the job. The court examined the statements of six witnesses and went through various documents before pronouncing the judgment. The court has initiated the process of withholding Banshidhara’s pension.

Continued from P1

Cong vows ‘historic’ Oppn unity

Rahul termed the meeting as a ‘historic step’ to unite the opposition. He was asked how many opposition parties will come together. “This is a process and we will develop the opposition’s vision for India and all those parties that will come together with us, we will together fight the ongoing ideological fight,” Rahul said. “We will stand against the attack on institutions, the attack on the country. A very important step has been taken today,” he added. In his remarks, Kumar said, “We will make all efforts to unite more and more parties in the country. We will make all efforts, sit together, and work unitedly this has been decided. After today’s discussions we will move forward on that basis.” The leaders also had lunch at Kharge’s residence, where JDU president Lalan Singh, Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Congress leader Salman Khurshid and RJD leader Manoj Jha were also present. Kharge has spoken to several opposition leaders including MK Stalin and Uddhav Thackeray recently, in an attempt to forging unity among like-minded parties to take on the BJP.

No respite from blistering heat

According to the IMD bulletin, Jharsuguda was the hottest place in the state recording a temperature of 43 degrees Celsius followed by Baripada, which sizzled at 42.5 degrees Celsius. Similarly, Sambalpur recorded a maximum day temperature of 42 degrees Celsius while it was 41.6 degrees in the districts of Boudh and Talcher. Bolangir and Titlagarh towns in western Odisha witnessed a maximum temperature of 41.2 degrees. They were followed by Angul (41.1 degrees), Bhadrak (41 degrees), Sundergarh (41 degrees), Sonepur 41 degrees), Hirkud (40.7 degrees), Rourkela (40.6 degrees) and Chandbali (40.3 degrees). The IMD has also sounded a ‘yellow alert’ for several districts as the maximum temperature is likely to increase considerably. Among the districts are Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Deogarh and Angul.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

It is hereby informed that original sale deed bearing No.- 10391001145 dt.10.02.2010 in favour of Laxmandas Agarwal and sale deed No. 535, dt.04.01.2008 in favour of Laxmandas Agarwal has been lost by me on dt.09.04.2023. My document has lost at Jholasahi while going to Court and request the public to handover the same and missuser will be prosecuted. Address for communication: Ananta Kumar Kanungo, Glass Palace, Badambadi, Cuttack-753012.

Rowdy Raghav’s houses bulldozed



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: In a joint operation, the Commissionerate Police and the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) razed down houses and shops illegally constructed by the “Bouncers Gang” king-pin Raghav Jena in the Jharpada area here Wednesday. The Raghav-led gang was involved in various illegal activities including forceful possession of disputed plots in the City. As many as 93 illegal constructions, 40 of which Jena owned, were demolished by the joint enforcement squad of BMC and Commissionerate Police. “Recently a case was registered at Nayapalli police station on illegal possession of disputed property. While investigating the case, it was found that Jena was renting some houses illegally constructed on government land near Canal Road in Jharpada area,” said additional DCP Prakash Chandra Pal. Jena was using the ill-gotten money to participate in various

illegal activities. Though the gang was served several notices to evict the illegal properties in the past, they didn’t oblige. So, the houses were demolished by the eviction team of BMC today, added Pal. The additional DCP also revealed that Jena had constructed an office in the slum area and the gang from that particular house which was also demolished. He said that police are taking all necessary steps to arrest the absconding Jena as soon as possible. Pal affirmed that the demolition will reduce Jena’s hold on forceful possession which have been his main sources of income. Notably, the activities of “Bouncers Gang” came to fore following the registration of separate cases by two businessmen whose shops located on a disputed plot in the Nayapalli area were forcefully demolished by some 50 members of the gang March 24, 2023. As many as 19 members of the gang including two ladies have been arrested by the police so far.

Bouncers’ Gang was involved in various illegal activities including forceful possession of disputed plots in the City



HOLY TIMBER: Fifth batch of logs to be used in construction of chariots for Rath Yatra reached Puri from North Ghumusara forest division, Wednesday OP PHOTO

City AIIMS, IIT ink pact to promote research

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: To integrate medical science with technology to provide better and more equipped healthcare service, Bhubaneswar AIIMS and IIT have signed a MoU to promote academic and research collaboration in various areas of health and technology. Both the institutes have agreed to extend collaboration in advancing research for public health applications like early diagnosis of disease and outbreaks, artificial intelligence and data analytics, biomedical engineering, disease modelling, digital health, development of tools, equipment and strategies for diagnostic and therapeutic use. AIIMS executive director Ashutosh Biswas and IIT director Shreepad Karmalkar signed the agreement Tuesday evening here at AIIMS. “This endeavour will aid in finding solutions to the current challenges in the public health and pa-



tient treatment in the region. Application of cutting-edge technology to healthcare will have immense translational value in diagnosis and treatment of diseases,” said Biswas. The collaboration will focus on application of artificial intelligence with relation to various health disorders, material development, app development, wearable sensor development, image-based diagnostics, AI & data

sciences enabled smart health monitoring system, and early warning systems among others, Biswas said. IIT Bhubaneswar director Shreepad Karmalkar said that several faculties of both the institutions have been looking at possible mutual partnerships for some time. The institutes will also focus on dedicated laboratory development. An advanced research centre called Center for Biomedical Engineering and Technology which will largely

Application of cutting-edge technology to healthcare will have immense translational value in diagnosis and treatment of diseases
ASHUTOSH BISWAS | AIIMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
include biomedical signal processing, advanced characterisation, detector fabrication for imaging, additive manufacturing for designed materials, bio tracker and biosensor development for mental health care, is also planned under this collaboration. In addition, both the institutes have agreed to facilitate faculty and student exchange programmes and reorientation/training courses that will bring academic excellence in their respective fields. The institutes also agreed to develop and offer joint academic programmes involving technology and healthcare as well as provide an academic credit sharing mechanism, sources said.

No power cut this year: Min

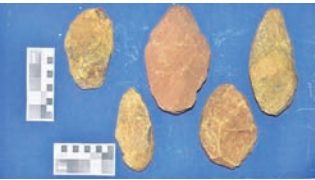
Bhubaneswar: With heatwave continuing to grip Odisha, Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Deb Wednesday said there will be no power outage in the state this year. Speaking to media here, Deb said, “There are speculative reports in the media about chances of power cut. I assure everyone that there will be no power cut in Odisha, including rural areas, this year.” However, there might be temporary power cuts due to technical issues, he said, adding, electricity is being supplied in the state as per the consumers’ demand. The minister’s statement holds significance as the state is currently reeling under intense heatwave.

Prehistoric artifacts discovered in Balasore

A total 14 prehistoric objects have been discovered from the site, which include hand axe, cleaver and chopper like tools

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Balasore, April 12: A number of Prehistoric artifacts have recently been discovered by a group of students and faculty members of Fakir Mohan University’s History & Archaeology department near Kuanrapura Mahal hills in Remuna block of Balasore district. Some students of the department,



Rajendra Patra, Mrutunjaya Mohanta, Gyanarangan Behera, accidentally spotted a site and informed the faculties about the artifacts present there. Later, faculty members Sikhasree Ray and Jeenapriyanka Jethi explored the site. A total 14 prehistoric objects have been discovered from the site, which include hand axe, cleaver and chopper like tools. “These tools seem to belong to the

middle palaeolithic period,” informed Sikharee Ray of the university, adding that they have only conducted a preliminary study and more studies are needed to understand the nature of the site as it holds many other unfinished tools. Earlier, prehistoric antiquities were discovered by a group of students and faculty members of Rayagada Autonomous College during an exploration near Anjipentha hills in the Rayagada town. The artifacts, comprising 10 ancient tools, presumed to be from the middle and upper Paleolithic Age, were found inside two caves on the hill, opposite to the Forest Park in Rayagada.

Health benefits of living in cities for teens down

The advantages of living in cities for young people’s healthy growth and development are shrinking across much of the world, according to a global analysis of trends in child and adolescent height and body mass index (BMI). The research, by a global consortium of over 1,500 researchers and physicians, analysed height and weight data from 71 million children and adolescents (aged 5 to 19 years) across urban and rural areas of 200 countries from 1990 to 2020. Cities can provide a multitude of opportunities for better education, nutrition, sports and recreation, and healthcare that contributed to school-aged children and adolescents living in cities being taller than their rural counterparts in the 20th century in all but a few wealthy countries. The study, published recently in the journal Nature, found that in the 21st century, this urban height advantage shrank in most countries as a result of accelerating improvements in height for children and adolescents in rural areas.



The researchers also assessed children’s BMI, an indicator of whether they have a healthy weight for their height. They found that on average children living in cities had a slightly higher BMI than children in rural areas in 1990. By 2020, BMI averages rose for most countries, albeit faster for urban children, except in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia, where BMI rose faster in rural areas. Nevertheless, over the 30-year period, the gap between urban and rural BMI remained small—less than 1.1 kilograms per square

metre (kg/m²) globally, the researchers said. “Cities continue to provide considerable health benefits for children and adolescents,” said Anu Mishra, lead author of the study, from Imperial College London’s School of Public Health. “Fortunately, in most regions, rural areas are catching up to cities thanks to modern sanitation and improvements in nutrition and healthcare,” Mishra said. The results of this large global study challenge the commonly held perceptions about the negative aspects

of living in cities around nutrition and health, the researcher added. While height and BMI has increased around the world since 1990, the researchers found that the degree of change between urban and rural areas varied greatly among different middle and low-income countries, while small urban-rural differences remained stable across high-income countries. Middle-income and emerging economies, such as Chile, Taiwan, and Brazil, have seen the biggest gains in rural children’s height over the three decades, with children living in rural areas growing to similar heights as their urban counterparts. “These countries have made great strides in levelling up. Using the resources of economic growth to fund nutrition and health programmes, both through schools and in the community, was key to closing the gaps between different areas and social groups,” said Professor Majid Ezzati, senior author for the study, from Imperial College London.

2 held for duping woman of ₹16L

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 12: The twin city Commissionerate Police Wednesday claimed to have arrested two persons from New Delhi on the charge of duping an elderly woman of Rs 16 lakh. Police identified the accused as Vikas Singh, 25, of Lohia Nagar, in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Akash Mukharjee, 22, of Rourkela in Sundargarh district. While Singh resided at UP’s Ghaziabad, Mukharjee resided in Gazipur area of Delhi. Posing as an agent of an agency, with which the woman had an investment, Singh told her that she could get an additional 75 per cent bonus on maturity her investment if she deposited Rs 16 lakh through him February 9 this year. Lured by the offer, the woman, in her 70s, gave Rs 16, 63,960 to Singh, police said. However, the woman smelled a rat when Singh continued to ask more money from her on flimsy excuses at regular intervals. She later lodged a complaint with the



Cyber Crime and Economic Offences police in this regard. Based on the complaint, police registered a case and arrested Singh from Delhi two days back. Meanwhile, the sleuths also came to know that the ill-gotten money has been transferred to the account of Mukharjee’s father. Mukharjee reportedly supplied the account number to Singh for the transfer of money. Police Tuesday arrested Mukherjee from his uncle’s place in Rourkela. Both the accused were Wednesday produced before a local court that sent them to judicial custody, police said. Police have seized a laptop, five mobile phones, nine SIM cards, five debit cards and Rs 2,03,800 in cash. The police also managed to freeze Rs 3,22,179 deposited in the account of the accused.

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Delay in land acquisition hits NH-20 construction

The highway from Kuakhia in Jajpur connects with major tourist spots such as Maa Biraja shrine, Lord Akhandalamani shrine in Aradi and Chandbali of Bhadrak district via Mangalpur in Jajpur



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 12: Delay in acquisition of 400 acre of land has hit the implementation of National Highway-20 in the state, a report said Wednesday.

This highway originates from Bakhtiyarpur in Bihar and terminates at Satabhaya in Odisha. It passes through Parsora, Kendujhargarh in Keonjhar district, Panikoiili, Kuakhia, Jajpur in Jajpur district, Aradi, Chandbali in Bhadrak district and Rajkanika before terminating at Satabhaya in Kendrapara district.

The highway from Kuakhia in Jajpur connects with the major tourist spots such as Maa Biraja shrine in Jajpur, Lord Akhandalamani shrine in Aradi

and Chandbali of Bhadrak district via Mangalpur in Jajpur.

In this route, the highway will be four and two lanes. The NHAI has engaged a multinational firm Egis India Consulting Engineers Pvt Limited (EGIS) to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) for this 139 km highway project. A sum of ₹4.68 crore is being spent on preparation of the DPR.

Except installation of an information plaque, construction of the highway has been delayed as the state government is yet to handover 400 acre of land to the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI).

Reports said that the NHAI has planned for construction of the highway to ensure safe travel for the commuters and to protect their lives and properties. Delay in land

acquisition has sparked resentment among the residents.

Meanwhile, office of the Chief Construction Engineer, NHAI (North Circle) has written to the district Collector of Jajpur to provide half an acre of government land and a government accommodation for establishment of its two section offices in Jajpur town.

The DPR of Kuakhia-Satabhaya section has been completed and land acquisition started. The project has received clearance and ₹636.10 crore will be spent on it. The tender process has also been completed. However, its implementation has been delayed as the acquisition of 400 acre of land is yet to be completed, sources from the office of chief construction engineer of NHAI said.

It is apprehended that the new highway will miss its deadline as the land acquisition is yet to get completed. The road at present is very narrow and owing to the heavy traffic, frequent mishaps take place on this road. However, the concerned officials are not showing enough promptitude to complete the land acquisition process.

Besides the construction of the new highway, the district administration in a meeting six year back had decided to construct bypass roads at Kuakhia, Jajpur and Aradi. Since then six years have passed but no effort is being made to acquire the land and hand them over to NHAI authorities.



GEARING UP: A girl makes Rangoli at an awareness programme on G-20 held at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Government College in Sambalpur, Wednesday OP PHOTO

Admin clamps Section-144 amid simmering tension in Facor plant

Five platoons of police force have been deployed at the spot

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 12: The district administration here clamped prohibitory orders under Section-144 around the Facor-owned plant at Randia under Rural police limits in this district Wednesday after two of its employees sustained critical burn injuries while charging the blast furnace in the plant, the previous day.

The injured were identified as Purna Chandra Sutar of Korant village and Bijay Mohapatra of Barpada village in the district. Both were engaged as charging operators in the plant. They sustained critical burn injuries after being engulfed in flames while charging the blast furnace, Tuesday evening.



They were first rushed to the district headquarters hospital and then shifted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. Later, they were shifted in an air ambulance to National Burns Centre in Mumbai by building a green corridor to Bhubaneswar airport, Wednesday.

Tension continued to simmer Wednesday in the area. Irate people burnt tyres outside the plant gate, staged road blockades and gave away slogans following the incident. The incident also led to

a face-off between the police and agitators.

Apprehending law and order situation, the district administration Wednesday clamped prohibitory order Section-144 within 200-metre radius of plant gate and its compound wall. The prohibitory order will remain in force from 6am April 12 till 6am April 14. Balasore SP Sagarika Nath, SDPO Sourav Ota and other police officials reached the spot and took stock of the situation.

Over 20 police officials including City DSP Anshuman Dwivedi, DSP Sarthak Ray, DSP (DIB) Kamal Lochan Bhuyan, Rural police IIC Amitav Das and five platoons of police force have been deployed at the spot and are keeping a watch on the unfolding situation.

2 held for tusker's electrocution

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur/Binka, April 12: Forest officials Wednesday arrested a man and his son for their alleged involvement in the electrocution of a tusker at Bardunguri reserve forest under Binka forest range of Subarnapur forest division and district.

The accused were identified as Birendra Sharma, 60, and his son Allaiddin Sharma, 30 of Mahda village. The accused were later produced in the court from where they were remanded to judicial custody after their bail pleas got rejected.

The 15-year-old tusker had got separated from its herd in Loisingha area in Bolangir district and strayed into Bardunguri reserve forest, Monday night



The accused had laid live wires hooked from an overhead power line to poach wild boars. The 15-year-old tusker had got separated from its herd in Loisingha area in Bolangir district and strayed into Bardunguri reserve forest, Monday night. Bolangir and Subarnapur forest officials failed to know the animal's whereabouts. It came in contact with the live wires and was electrocuted, Tuesday.

Forest officials had seized 15 kg of electric binding wires from the spot after the animal's death while Binka forest officials had registered a case in this connection.

Sand mafias axe youth to death over objection

SUNDARGARH: Two sand mafias Wednesday killed a youth by hacking him to death for objecting to the illegal smuggling of minor mineral from Ib river bed close to Daijamahula hamlet under Sundargarh Sadar police limits. The deceased was identified as Sonu Negi (33), a resident of this area. According to a police source, Sonu and a friend had gone to the river Wednesday morning for bath. They saw two tractors loaded with sand being driven from an unauthorised quarry. Sonu opposed the unlawful behaviour and cautioned the drivers, pleading with them not to do so. A verbal altercation ensued which led to a fight with the drivers who eventually departed the area leaving the tractors and informed the owners. The owners, Durgamadhav Ekka and Trilochan Sa got into a fight with Sonu. Sonu was fatally wounded when the mafia pair assaulted him in a fit of anger with an axe. The mafias fled the spot after knowing he was dead.

Fruit cultivation helping Sundargarh tribal farmers

UNPRODUCTIVE LAND BEING USED TO HELP FARMERS EARN A DECENT LIVELIHOOD

POST NEW NETWORK

Sundargarh, April 12: Tribal farmers in Sundargarh district are growing various types of fruits to augment a sustainable source of income. Among the fruits farmers are cultivating are mangoes, cashew, lemons and even lemon grass. Most of the fruits are being cultivated on land which even a few years back did not yield any product. The farmers are being helped by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA).

This fruit cultivation programme is operational in nine blocks of this district under the ITDA. From 2020-21 to 2022-23, more than 1,170 persons have joined this initiative. At present, over 1,900 acres of land is being

used for mango, cashew and lemon farming. The latest to make the list is lemon grass which is being cultivated for the first time this year.

"I had five acres of fallow and rocky land. I couldn't grow any crop on it. ITDA officials advised me try mango cultivation. It has been a success. Along with mango I also grow watermelons on my land," informed Madhusudan Majhi, a tribal farmer of Sahebdera village in Lephripada block.

Currently, 794 beneficiaries are involved in mango cultivation on approximately 1,256 acres of land. Similarly, more than 250 others have cultivated cashew on 450 acres, while 90 tribal farmers are growing lemon on 140 acres. Lemon grass is being grown by 40 farmers



on 60 acres.

"Fruit cultivation is one of the long-term programmes of ITDA Sundargarh. It has been envisioned to financially empower tribal farmers

in the area. By adding the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to the programme, local villagers have also been able

to earn a living. We aim to spread the programme to other areas in future," Ramkrishna Gond, project administrator ITDA, informed.

The Horticulture department is providing fodder and fertilizers to the beneficiaries free of cost. To ensure protection of the saplings, wire fencing is also provided. Wages are provided to the workers tending to cultivation through MGN-REGS. For proper supply of water, a well has been dug up per every five acres of plantation land, ITDA officials informed.

"I have grown cashews. Cashew saplings and fertilizers were provided to me free of cost. The cashew trees are growing and they will bear fruits from next year. I'm hoping make a decent income from

cashew," said Sudarsan Majhi, a beneficiary of Kepse village in Tangarpali block.

It takes two to three years for the plantation saplings to bear fruits. To provide livelihood for farmers in the interim period, vegetable cultivation is promoted as part of Mission Jeevika. Under this programme, farmers grow watermelons, potatoes, brinjals, tomatoes and green chillies by inter-cropping them with mango, cashew and lemon saplings. Farmers manage to earn a livelihood by selling the vegetables in the local market, officials said. They added that local voluntary organisations have been entrusted with the responsibility of supporting the beneficiary farmers.

PAT Top Performer award for BALCO



POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 12: The Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO), India's leading aluminium producer and a subsidiary of Vedanta Aluminium, has been awarded the 'PAT Top Performer award' for its efforts towards energy conservation under the Government of India's Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) scheme. The award was presented by Minister of Power, New & Renewable Energy, RK Singh, on the occasion of the 21st foundation day of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).

PAT is a scheme implemented under the BEE to encourage energy-intensive industries to reduce their Specific Energy Consumption, with an associated market-based mechanism whereby companies can trade certificates earned on the basis of excess energy savings. BALCO is

recognised as a Top Performer Designated Consumer for the Aluminium Sector for PAT Cycle-II, with the highest number of Energy Saving Certificates (ESCerts) under the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE).

Speaking about the award and BALCO's excellent performance in PAT Cycle-II, Rajesh Kumar, CEO & Director, BALCO said, "BALCO aspires to be at the forefront of sustainable business practices and be the benchmark for the aluminium industry. Our commitment to climate action has seen us deploy the most resource and energy processes, such as adoption of clean technologies and inclusion of renewable energy in our energy mix. Receiving the Government of India's PAT Top Performer Award is a testament to these principles of sustainability that are deeply embedded in our production processes."

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THE MOTHER



Trade Deglobalisation

Developing countries are increasingly worried that the United States will turn its back on the multilateral trade regime. Amid rising geopolitical tensions, policymakers in lower- and middle-income countries fear that a breakdown of that regime could make them hostages to great-power politics, undermining their economic prospects.

Their concerns are not groundless: US trade policies have changed significantly over the past few years. What seemed like a series of haphazard measures under former President Donald Trump – sanctions on Chinese firms, increased tariffs, and the fatal subversion of the World Trade Organization’s dispute-settlement body – has become a broad, coherent strategy under current President Joe Biden.

This strategy, which aims to reconstitute America’s role in the global economy, embodies two imperatives. First, the US now regards China as its main geopolitical rival and views its technological ascendance as a national-security threat. As the administration’s sweeping restrictions on the sale of advanced chips and chip-making equipment to Chinese firms show, the US is willing to sacrifice international trade and investment to thwart China’s ambitions. Moreover, it expects other countries to do the same.

Second, US policymakers aim to make up for decades of neglecting domestic economic, social, and environmental priorities by focusing on policies that promote resilience, dependable supply chains, good jobs, and a clean-energy transition. The US seems happy to pursue these objectives on its own, even if its actions could adversely affect other countries.

The best example of this is the Inflation Reduction Act, the Biden administration’s landmark climate-transition legislation. Many governments in Europe and elsewhere have been outraged by the \$370 billion clean-energy subsidies included in the IRA, which favour US-based producers. Pascal Lamy, the former head of the WTO, recently called on developing countries to join the European Union in forming a “North-South” coalition without the US, to “create a disadvantage for [the Americans] that would make them change their position.”

To be sure, Europe has its own brand of unilateralism, albeit a softer one than America’s. The EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which aims to maintain high carbon prices within the bloc by imposing duties on carbon-intensive imports such as steel and aluminum, is meant to placate European firms that would otherwise find themselves at a competitive disadvantage. But it also makes it harder for developing countries such as India, Egypt, and Mozambique to access European markets.

So, developing countries have plenty to worry about. As the US and Europe attempt to isolate China and craft policies in support of their new domestic agendas, they are unlikely to have poorer economies’ interests in mind. For small lower-income countries, multilateralism remains the only safeguard against the solipsism of great powers.

But developing countries would do well to recognise that these unilateral policies are driven by legitimate concerns and are often aimed at meeting global needs. Climate change, for example, is clearly an existential threat to humanity. If the US and European policies accelerate the green transition, poorer countries will benefit, too. Instead of condemning these policies, lower- and middle-income countries should seek transfers and financing that would enable them to follow suit. For example, they should demand that European countries channel CBAM revenues to developing-country exporters to support these firms’ investment in greener technologies.

More broadly, developing countries must remember that their economic prospects are determined first and foremost by their own policies. Short of a 1930s-style worldwide plunge into protectionism, they will likely not lose access to Western markets. Moreover, export-oriented countries such as South Korea and Taiwan engineered their growth miracles during the 1960s and 1970s, when developed countries were far more protectionist than they are now or likely to be in the foreseeable future.

It is also true that the export-oriented industrialisation model has run out of steam for reasons that have little to do with the Global North’s protectionist policies. Because today’s manufacturing technologies are so skill- and capital-intensive, it is difficult for latecomers to mimic the success of East Asian tigers (I call this phenomenon “premature de-industrialization”). Future development models would have to rely on service industries and small and medium-size enterprises, rather than on industrial exports, to build a thriving middle class.

Developed countries’ renewed focus on building resilient, equitable domestic economies could also benefit the global economy. Cohesive societies are far more likely to support openness to international trade and investment than those roiled by the inequalitarian forces of hyper-globalisation. As many studies have shown, disappearing jobs and regional economic decline can often engender ethno-nationalist politics.

In a 2019 “letter to the next generation,” Christine Lagarde – then Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund and the current President of the European Central Bank – lamented the rise of unilateralism and emphasised the benefits of the post-1945 bargain. “Bretton Woods launched a new era of global economic cooperation, in which countries helped themselves by helping each other,” she wrote. But the opposite is also true: any successful global regime, including the Bretton Woods system, must rely on the idea that countries could help each other by helping themselves.

In sum, when it comes to achieving stable and sustainable growth, developing countries must ask not what the world’s richest countries can do for them but what they can do to improve their own economic prospects.

The writer, Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard Kennedy School, is President of the International Economic Association. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- “Success is getting what you want. Happiness is wanting what you get.”

DALE CARNEGIE
- “One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.”

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
- “Be grateful for what you have and stop complaining - it bores everybody else, does you no good, and doesn't solve any problems.”

ZIG ZIGLAR

WORDSWORTH

Haplogy

If you’ve ever said libry instead of library, or Febry instead of February, then you have perpetrated haplogy, the omission of one of a pair of sounds or syllables. The word was invented by the American philologist Maurice Bloomfield at the end of the nineteenth century. He derived it from the Greek haplos, one or single, and -logy, a word or speech. It’s very common in English speech to drop the second of a pair of repeated sounds like this. A nice irony is that haplogy is just the sort of word to which haplogy happens ... It’s a special case of what’s called syncope, a grammatical term for losing any kind of sound in the middle of a word, such as the poetic shortening of even to e’en, or the way pacifist has been created from the longer pacifistic that was its original spelling. In writing, the equivalent is the rarer haplography – making the mistake of writing philogy instead of philology for example.

FOCUS CIVIL SOCIETY

THE VOLUNTEER ARCHIVIST



We must reflect on the dangers facing us and recognise and support the work of the current generation of unsung social leaders who are making sure we remain independent and free

IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE IN THE COUNTRY, THE NON-PROFIT VOLUNTARY SECTOR IS THE MOST TARGETED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS IT IS ONE SECTION OF SOCIETY THAT IS PRONE TO SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

Dhanada K Mishra

Recently I was looking to read the collected works of Pandit Godabarisha Mishra in preparation for an article for Utkala Divas. As usual I was looking for it on odiabibhaba.in - a treasure trove of Odia literature online. Coincidentally, I received an email from Subhashish Panigrahi - a well-known young activist who has worked tirelessly for many years now promoting Odia on the internet through Odia Wikipedia and related initiatives. He sent me a documentary he had made on the work of Dr Nikhil Mohan Pattnaik and Pushpashri Pattnaik, known for Srujanika - a voluntary organisation based out of Bhubaneswar. The documentary ‘Volunteer Archivists’ (https://archive.org/details/the-volunteer-archivists-dvd/TheVolunteerArchivists-DVD-ProRes422.m4v.mov) highlights the painstaking work to preserve Odia literature through digitisation. The website odiabibhaba.in was the result and is now a one of a kind source of Odia books, periodicals, dictionaries and newspapers.

The wonderful work of digitising Gopal Chandra Praharaj’s Purnachandra Bhashakosha and the trials and tribulation that went with it described in their own words makes for interesting viewing. So also the painstaking effort to collect all the rare books and periodicals, often from overseas libraries, including I believe the University of Michigan central library! As we reflect on the work of our great ancestors from the earlier generation, such as Pandit Godabarisha and their contribution to the formation of Odisha state, it is perhaps more relevant to pay tribute to the current day leading lights of Odisha who work beyond the limelight hogged by politicians, bureaucrats, businesspeople, sports and film stars! The earlier generation was known for its sacrifice and dedication to the service of the common masses. But we often forget that even today, there are equally talented and dedicated activists in our midst such

SPECTRUM BANKING

Indian lenders showing resilience



Dhurjati Mukherjee

BANKS NEED TO MAKE FURTHER INROADS INTO RURAL AREAS

The Indian banking system is quite strong with both PM Modi and RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das reiterating the claim in the backdrop of global concern after the US banking crisis spilled over to its stock market. While profitability is on the rise due to various factors, including better recovery, strict monitoring has changed the complexion of banks, both state-run and private. In fact, smaller banks are also quite active in their operations. Moreover, the sector is upbeat as Ajay Banga is going to become the President of the World Bank.

“Right now, Indian banks are showing resilience compared to their US counterparts and that largely has to do with their current capital levels, healthy asset quality and strict monitoring by the regulator,” observed Anil Gupta, Senior Vice President and co-group head for financial sector at ICRA rating agency. Indian lenders are capable of enduring any potential contagion effects emanating from the US banking turmoil and the recent UBS takeover of the embattled Swiss lender Credit Suisse, given their manageable exposures to their global counterparts, observed S&P Global Ratings.

To tackle inflationary conditions in the economy, the RBI has increased the policy repo rate by 250

bps since May last year. Analysts have said that Indian banks are now in a better position to withstand stress given their current capital levels and healthy asset quality and thus there has been no increase in repo rate this month.

Meanwhile, what is heartening to know is the fact that the gross non-performing assets to total advances ratio for Indian banks has been on a declining trend since hitting a high of 16.8% in September 2018. It fell from 5.9% in March 2022 to a little over 5% in September 2022 and 5.53% in December 2022. In fact, all PSBs are in profit with aggregate profit being ₹66,543 crore in 2021-22 and that further increased to ₹70,167 in the first nine months of the current fiscal, stated Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat K. Karad in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry has asked state-run lenders to adopt stricter monitoring of top corporate loan accounts and submit a plan to deal with business risks in key areas within two weeks. Indian banks, in the past, have had to take deep haircuts on their exposure to debt-laden companies admitted under the bankruptcy legislation. Banks were also asked to monitor the market impact on their trading books amid rising interest rates and maintain their liquidity ratios. Added to all this, the current

measures including amalgamation of weak banks has further given a boost to the sector. In spite of all scandals of the rich siphoning off bank funds, it is also a fact that the outreach of banks has increased considerably, and small traders and manufacturers are getting loans.

Though privatisation has been quite successful, there is need for operational autonomy and governance among PSBs. These banks should become board-driven and regulated by the RBI, which has been recommending these changes along with the Indian Banks’ Association. One area where reform is likely involves PSBs’ bad loans. With the formation of a national asset reconstruction company, the problem is expected to be solved in coming years. Lenders would have to agree to the transfer, but it is in their interest to do so, since for potential buyers of troubled loans, dealing with just one holder would be easier and encourage a resolution to the problem.

On digitisation front, India has been moving quite fast over the past two-three years or so. It has many financial technology companies in the payment space and in the distribution of financial services products. One successful innovation has been the Unified Payments Interface, or UPI, de-

veloped by the National Payments Corporation of India. Regulated by India’s central bank, it’s an instant real-time payment system allowing mobile users to transfer funds between banks. At all banks, going digital is becoming core to all their services as well as the lending business. Currently, for example, around 70% of transactions in major banks such as the State Bank of India are conducted through digital channels. Collaboration among banks and fintech companies is sure to produce even more innovation in the next few years as advances are made in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and data analytics.

The strength of Indian banks augurs well for the economy. However, banks need to make further inroads into rural areas and help small and medium farmers and traders to increase their earnings. Moreover, the cooperative banks and the regional rural banks must improve their finances and reach out to the community in a bigger way. It goes without saying that bank finance would help the rural populace to expand their business in a better manner and reduce the urban-rural divide.

The writer is Sr. Consultant & Guest Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Kolkata. @INFA

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

OrissaPOST
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Maturity on display

Sir, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has had differences of opinion with the Centre on many issues. Tamil Nadu government’s running feud with Governor RN Ravi is part of folklore. The Chief Minister has been a supporter of the Opposition bid for a common united front to fight the BJP in the next year’s general elections. But Stalin is aware that the state is in an economic crunch and owes huge debt, and the state needs funds from the Centre to ward off the crisis. This is possible only with the cooperation of the Centre. There is no point in opposing the Prime Minister of the country to the extent of refusing to welcome him at the airport and not sharing dais with him in any official function. So it was good to see Stalin, unlike some other Chief Ministers, giving such an unhealthy trend and amateurish behaviour a go-by when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Chennai. The Chief Minister welcomed Modi at the airport and was with him in three of the four functions scheduled during the visit. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister knows that ideologies may differ but approaches need not.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Encouraging numbers

Sir, This is with reference to the news item, “India’s tiger count up at 3,167 in 2022.” Orissa POST, April 10. The tiger census released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi a few days ago brings back the focus on the big cat population in the country. Tigers in India have a history of their own, often serving as the poster animal for saving our forests. From being constantly hunted during the colonial era, to being brought back from the brink of obliteration in the early 1970s, and from threats through poaching in the 1990s to the establishment of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the tiger numbers in India have shown a steady growth. Gratifyingly enough, there are a bunch of passionate wildlife enthusiasts who are trying their best to make the planet more habitable for the big cats. Less human interference in the forest areas and healthy preservation of our wildlife ecology are of vital importance in protecting our forests and the wildlife they accommodate. When tigers thrive in an ecosystem, it indicates that their ecosystem too is thriving along.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

J&K Assembly polls not anytime soon

SINCE JUNE 20, 2018 J&K HAS REMAINED WITHOUT AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, April 12: Although the final revision of electoral rolls is scheduled to be completed by May 10, most political parties in J&K believe the Assembly elections might get further delayed in the Union territory.

All regional mainstream political parties and the Congress called on the election commission recently to press for early Assembly elections in the UT.

During his press conference in which the Karnataka Assembly poll schedule was announced, the Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar said there is a gap in J&K due to the absence of an elected government which must be filled.

The last elected government headed by Mehbooba Mufti of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) fell after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) withdrew from the coalition June 19, 2018.

Mehbooba Mufti resigned as the chief minister immediately after the BJP withdrew support to her government.

The J&K Assembly was dissolved by the then Governor, Satya Pal Malik November 21, 2018.

On August 5, 2019, the state was downgraded to a union territory and bifurcated into the UTs of Ladakh and J&K. This followed the abro-



With the Lok Sabha elections due in April-May 2024, most political leaders in J&K believe that the Assembly elections in the UT might not be held this year at all

gation of Articles 370 and 35A by Parliament.

Since June 20, 2018 J&K has remained without an elected government.

Leaders of political parties like the regional National Conference (NC), J&K Apni Party, Peoples Conference and Awami National Conference (ANC) and also those of the centrist Congress and the CPI(M) have been blaming the BJP government at the Centre for trying to delay the Assembly elections.

The NC leaders have been in the

forefront of the opposition campaign to blame the Centre for delaying these elections which deprive J&K of having its own government.

Post abrogation of Article 370 August 5, 2019, all local political leaders were kept under detention to maintain law and order.

Fortunately, the abrogation of Article 370 did not witness any public unrest. Authorities said in 2019 that the political leaders were detained to prevent them from or-

ganising public protests which would be detrimental to law and order.

Generally speaking, there has been perceptible change on ground after August 2019. Public unrest, stone pelting, separatist called shutdowns, etc., have stopped.

The J&K DGP, Dilbag Singh said recently that militancy has come down although it has not been completely wiped out so far.

Kashmir had a booming tourist season last year. In the first three and half months of 2023, tourism has started on a very encouraging note.

Hoteliers, tour and travel oper-

ators, Houseboat owners and 'Shikarawallahs' on the Dal and Nigeen lakes are doing brisk business this time.

This year's annual Amarnath Yatra would start in the last week of June and last for two months till August end.

The likely booming summer tourist season and the forthcoming Amarnath Yatra are two big reasons that the Assembly elections cannot be held till autumn, credible sources told IANS.

This leaves just the last quarter of the year during which the Assembly elections could be held.

The municipal and Panchayat elections are also due by the year end as the term of office of the elected urban and rural bodies ends by January 2024.

Given these facts and the realisation that the Lok Sabha elections are due in April-May 2024 in the country, most political leaders in J&K believe that the Assembly elections in the UT might not be held this year at all.

These could spill over to 2024 and be held together with the Lok Sabha elections next year.

This is notwithstanding the fact that every political party, including the BJP has been asking its cadre not to lower the guard and start ground level activities in anticipation of the Assembly elections.

Srinagar readies to host G-20 event as Pak sulks

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement Tuesday in an attempt to vitiate the atmosphere ahead of the scheduled G-20 meeting in Srinagar 22-24 May

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, April 12: With large scale preparations going on for the dignitaries who will arrive for the G-20 events to be held in the Kashmir valley, Pakistan has fired its first salvo at India hosting the meeting in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in a bid to vitiate the atmosphere.

Holding the group's Presidency, India is hosting a number of the G-20 events and group meetings across the country. The University of Kashmir is part of some G-20 programmes in coordination with some other universities, the UT and the Union government. G-20's second meeting of the Development Working Group was held at Kumarakom, Kerala, 9 April. Different Working Groups are holding similar meetings all over the country.

While criticising the scheduling of the three G-20 events in J&K and Ladakh, Islamabad has yet again raked up the UN resolution of 1948-49.

"With its decision to host G-20 events in IIOJK, India is again exploiting its membership of an important international grouping for advancing its self-serving agenda. For a country that has a grandiose vision about itself and its place in the world, India has once more demonstrated that it is unable to act



For the Tourism Working Group, a grand meeting is scheduled at Srinagar Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre in Srinagar 22-24 May, 2023. Arrangements have been made for the guests' visits to the Dachigam National Park and the world-famous tourist resort of Gulmarg. Officials said that almost all arrangements related to security and hospitality of the guests are being finalised.

Under the Government of India's Smart City Mission, the capital city of Srinagar is being spruced up at a large scale. Currently the face-lifting and remodelling works are in progress in Srinagar's Civil Lines where Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) is dismantling the old iconic Bajaj Clock Tower and raising a fresh one with modern value additions.

Commissioner SMC, Athar Aamir Khan, has issued a public appeal, imploring the residents to contribute to the city's beautification ahead of the G-20 event in Srinagar. "It is an occasion for enhancing the reputation of the city as a famed tourist destination known for scenic beauty, traditional architecture and hospitality of the people. While the government is making necessary arrangements for the uplift of the city, it is important that the citizens also play their part in sprucing up the city and making the event a grand success," said the SMC's appeal to the citizens.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, issued a statement Tuesday in an attempt to vitiate the atmosphere ahead of the scheduled G-20 meeting in Srinagar 22-24 May. "Pakistan expresses its strong in-

as a responsible member of the international community," the MFA statement said, claiming that J&K and Ladakh were "disputed" territories.

Officials in Jammu and New Delhi maintained that the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs would respond to the Pakistan statement later Tuesday. They asserted that both, J&K and Ladakh, were the union territories under the Indian sovereignty and the only dispute was about Pakistan's illegal occupation on over 50 percent of the erstwhile state that had legitimately acceded to India in October 1947.

India is holding the Presidency of the Group-20 from 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023. The G-20 was founded in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis as a forum for the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss global economic and financial issues. The group is responsible for bringing together the G-20 agenda in consultation with other members and in response to developments in the global economy. Its member countries represent around 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade and about two-thirds of the world population.

The United States of America, The United Kingdom, China, Russia, Germany, France, Japan, Canada, India, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey and The European Union are permanent members of G-20. Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE are its "guest countries".

Rajasthan gets its 1st Vande Bharat



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off poll-bound Rajasthan's first Vande Bharat express Wednesday.

While launching the train between Ajmer and Delhi Cantonment through video conferencing, the Prime Minister lamented that an important and basic need of the citizens like railways was turned into an arena of politics for a long time.

PM Modi said, India inherited a fairly big railway network at the time of Independence, but political interest dominated the need for modernisation in the years

after independence.

Politics was evident in the selection of railway minister, announcement of trains and even in recruitments. Land acquisition was done under the false pretence of railway jobs and many unmanned crossings continued for a very long time and cleanliness and safety took a back seat, he said while alluding to the land for job scam, in which former railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav and his family members are being probed.

The situation took a turn for the better after 2014 when people elected a stable government with full majority, when the pressure

of political give and take receded, railway heaved a sigh of relief and sprinted to new heights, Modi said.

Incidentally, all the three trains -Ajmer-Delhi Cantonment Vande Bharat express, Rani Kamlapati-Hazrat Nizamuddin Vande Bharat express and Secunderabad-Tirupati Vande Bharat express - cater to the needs of three poll-bound states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana respectively.

All the three states are scheduled to witness Assembly elections later this year.

Meanwhile, Modi remarked that the railway budget for Rajasthan has been increased 14 times since 2014, from Rs 700 crore in 2014 to more than Rs 9,500 crore this year.

Addressing the gathering, Modi congratulated the land of valour Rajasthan for getting its first Vande Bharat Train, which he said, will not only ease the travel between Jaipur Delhi but will also give a push to the tourism industry of Rajasthan, as it will facilitate faster access to places of faith like Theerthraj Pushkar and Ajmer Sharif.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jaipur, April 12: In Rajasthan, 5,137 teams of police have arrested over 20,000 miscreants in the last three months (January to March) under 'Operation Vajra Prahar', reducing the number of criminal cases by 9 per cent, DGP Umesh Mishra informed recently.

Strict action has been taken against those who praise, follow and support criminals, the DGP said during a media briefing at the police headquarters here.

The campaign specifically targeted gangs possessing illegal weapons and also those involved in firing incidents. Eventually, there has been a decrease in the number followers of gangsters on social media due to which there has also been a drop in calls for ransom, Mishra said.

The DGP said that an 'area domination and raid and search' campaign has been launched in the desert state after in-depth homework in all the districts and ranges.

As many as 5,137 teams of police raided about 13,600 places and arrested 20,542 miscreants in the first three months of the year, due to which there has been a decrease of 9 per cent in the number of criminal cases as compared to the corresponding period of last year,

Mishra said.

The DGP said that some criminals commit crimes while sitting outside the country and a probe has been initiated against them with the help of Interpol. In this regard, a red corner notice has been issued against gangster Rohm Godara, while similar notices are being prepared for gangsters Anmol Vishnoi and Goldie Brar, the DGP said.

"Strict action is being taken by the police against those who attack cops and those who try to escape from police custody. In 2023, 21 criminals were shot dead in police encounters so far, while 25 miscreants were injured while trying to escape," Mishra said.

ADG (Crime) Dinesh MN said that Operation Vajra Prahar was started by the police to root out the criminals. Under this campaign, homework is also being done to take action against illegal properties and vehicles.

The ADG said that a total of 36 cases were registered against those who followed criminals on social media, 56 persons have been arrested in such cases. As a result of police action, the number of followers of 'Monu' group in Bikaner has gone down from 36,537 to 9,189. Similarly, the number of followers of gangster Rohit Godara has dropped from 38,862 to 6,558.



GUARDING UP: A healthcare worker collects a swab sample of a woman for Covid-19 test amid a rise in coronavirus cases in the country, in Jammu, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

BEWARE OF TOUTS WHILE BUYING TICKETS FOR GULMARG GONDOLA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, April 12: The J&K Cable Car Corporation has cautioned tourists of falling in the trap of tout, saying that tickets for the Gondola in Gulmarg are available only on the official website.

A statement said, "It has come to the notice of the management of the Cable Car Corporation that some tourists are falling into the trap of tout regarding tickets for the Gondola in Gulmarg."

All our esteemed tourists are

informed through this press note that the tickets for the Gulmarg Gondola Project are available only through online mode on the official website - www.jammukashmir-cablecar.com - and there is no other means to get tickets for the project.

There is a transparent system of online ticketing and the question of black-marketing of Gondola tickets does not arise. Therefore, our esteemed tourists are advised not to fall prey to the propaganda of tout and not to go for Gondola booking by any mode other than online booking.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, April 12: The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) lauded the Rajasthan government for declaring 931-hectare of lush grassland as a 'Lesser Florican Conservation Reserve', in Ajmer district Monday.

The smallest of the bustard family, the Lesser Florican is renowned for its spectacular leaping breeding display, but currently faces severe threats and stands on the verge of extinction.

The Lesser Florican is found only in India and as per current estimates barely 700 mature birds are now left, and the BNHS is actively working for the conservation of these feathered creatures.

"The Lesser Florican is the smallest bird of the bustard family which was formerly a common game bird of Indian grasslands. But now its global population is 250-300 males

The Lesser Florican is found only in India and as per current estimates barely 700 mature birds are now left



confined in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan, with an IUCN status of CR (Critically Endangered)," said Kishor Rithe, Hon. BNHS Secretary.

The Ajmer landscape of Rajasthan is one of the last remaining breeding grounds where it is surviving in a human-dominated landscape, he added.

The BNHS started working with the Rajasthan Forest Department

on its conservation project in 2017, and their scientific teams collected data regarding its status, distribution, behavior, habitat, etc. in the desert state with the help of local communities.

"We identified 26 sites (73 locations) spread across 50 villages in the Ajmer district and recorded many important observations on its strong site fidelity; its movements in the grasslands and croplands before settling down in its breeding site," said scientist Dr Sujit Narwade, BNHS Assistant Director, project head working in Rajasthan and other parts of India.

The data and observations recorded by BNHS teams are now helping Rajasthan Forest Department to take policy decisions to save this species from extinction.

Among these are the changes from traditional crops like Jowar, Moong, and Urad growing up to a height of 50-100 cm to irrigated

cash crops and the use of heavy machines and music systems on tractors that affect the birds in this landscape, said Narwade.

An increase in free-ranging dogs, land use changes, chemical sprays, uncontrolled tourism, and unavailability of grasslands was recorded as threats to be addressed immediately, but after the Rajasthan Government's notification, the conservation efforts shall be expedited, said Rithe.

Lesser Floricans mainly breed in the north-west part of India in monsoon and then fly to spend winters in the Deccan plateau, said the BNHS experts.

Hence the participation of locals is essential for the survival of the species which requires mosaics of the grasslands and crop fields plus inter-state and inter-departmental coordination, to save the Lesser Floricans from being snuffed out forever.

of the day quote

The issue of unity among the allies was discussed during his meeting with Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP CHIEF

Covid cases have been rising across the nation. There are more than 38,000 active cases in the country, though the situation is under control in Uttar Pradesh. Not only is the positivity rate here low, but the health of Covid positive patients is also normal

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

Streetlights will be installed in 750 villages with more than 10,000 population across the state

MANOHAAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

4 Indians killed in Nepal car accident

Kathmandu: Four Indian nationals were killed and another person was seriously injured when their car plunged into a ravine in Nepal's Bagmati province, police said. The accident occurred late Tuesday when the car with the five Indian nationals lost control and plunged some 500 metres off the road in Sindhuli district's Kamala Mai Municipality, along the Banepa Bardibas Highway, police said.

ED questions Lalu's daughter

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday questioned Ragini Yadav, one of the daughters of former Railway Minister Lalu Prasad, in connection with the alleged land of jobs case, an official said. She was recently summoned by the ED to join the investigation into the matter. Lalu Prasad's daughter Misa Yadav and son Tejashwi Yadav were also questioned by the ED in connection with the matter.

Normal life affected due to trade strike

Port Blair: Normal life was affected in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including capital Port Blair, due to a 12-hour strike called by an industry body over several demands. Shops and business establishments remained shut in many areas including Aberdeen Bazar, Bathubasti and Junglighat areas of Port Blair and commercial vehicles remained off the roads during the bandh called by the Andaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI).



BJP wants to indulge in the politics of religion to hide its failures. Will politics over religion help it to satisfy the hunger of the poor people, who are reeling under the rise in the prices of essentials and cooking gas? The answer is no

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TMC GENERAL SECRETARY

SII RESTARTS COVISHIELD MANUFACTURING

Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla Wednesday said the company has restarted manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccine Covishield amid rising numbers of cases of the virus infection



BJP FACES HEAT IN K'TAKA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 12: Discontent seems to be brewing within the ruling BJP in Karnataka, with the party facing the heat after announcing its first list of candidates for the May 10 Assembly polls, as some ticket aspirants who missed the bus openly expressed displeasure.

With the BJP denying him the ticket from Athani, former Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi Wednesday announced his decision to resign from the primary membership of the party.

Minister and six-time MLA S Angara from Sullia constituency in Dakshina Kannada district announced his retirement from politics today, after failing to get a ticket again. Udupi MLA Raghupati Bhat, who was also overlooked by BJP, said he was deeply pained by the treatment meted out to him by the party.

BJP MLC R Shankar, who was an aspirant for Ranebennur Assembly seat, resigned as legislator today after the party ignored his request. After a series of deliberations, the BJP Tuesday announced its first list of 189 candidates out of the total 224.

Reacting to the developments, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the party will speak to all those disgruntled, and will take care of their concerns.

Amid speculation that he may join the Congress, the 63-year-old



Even as the BJP is facing rebellion from some senior leaders, who have not been given the tickets to contest the Assembly poll, the Congress is ready to poach disgruntled leaders, sources have said

three-time MLA said he will make a "strong decision" Thursday evening and start working on it from Friday.

Sitting MLA Mahesh Kumathalli, who was backed by BJP leader and former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, was given a ticket in Athani in Belagavi district. Kumathalli was among the group of defectors, including Jarkiholi, who helped the BJP to bring down the Congress-JD(S) coalition and form its government under the leadership of B S Yediyurappa in 2019.

A visibly aggrieved Angara said that this was not the way an MLA who toiled for the party with dedication was to be treated. "I am not disgruntled for being denied a ticket by the party. But this is not a way to honour (me) for working for the party and society without any black spot.... There is no value for honesty". The 58-year-old said he was retiring from politics and

he will not work for the party any more. The BJP has nominated Bhagirathi Murulya as its candidate from Sullia. According to party sources, while deciding tickets, the BJP seems to have adopted a policy of trying to

Jagadish Shettar meets Nadda

New Delhi: BJP veteran and former Karnataka chief minister Jagadish Shettar Wednesday conveyed his wish to contest the May 10 assembly polls in a meeting with party president J P Nadda, after openly expressing his unhappiness over reports that he may be denied the ticket. After meeting Nadda, Shettar told reporters that he cited his experience, including his six consecutive wins in assembly polls, and was told by the party president that the issue will be discussed with other senior leaders. The development is a clear indication that the BJP will field the veteran leader from the Lingayat community after initially toying with the idea to drop him as part of its plans to nudge senior leaders to make way for a younger leadership. Union minister Pralhad Joshi accompanied Shettar in the meeting with Nadda after the BJP leadership called him to the national capital.



GREAT EXPECTATION: A farmer works in a wheat field during harvesting season in Amritsar, Punjab

PTI PHOTO

Delhi school evacuated after bomb threat e-mail

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 12: A school in Delhi's Defence Colony was evacuated Wednesday morning after an e-mail said there were bombs on the premises, police said.

The panicked students and parents of 'The Indian School' gathered outside the school as the bomb squad and other agencies inspected the premises for any explosive substance, they said.

"This morning, a bomb threat e-mail was received by the school. Immediately all safety protocols were carried out and all children and staff were safely evacuated,"

Tania Joshi, principal, The Indian School told PTI. She said the police is investigating the matter to identify the perpetrator. "Prima facie, the threat seems to be a hoax," she



added. A senior police officer said a person named Brijesh of The Indian School, BRT Road, informed them about the e-mail.

The e-mail was received at 10:49 am, the officer said. Police said the school had received a similar e-mail in November last year.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Chandan Chowdhary said, "The school received the e-mail re-

garding the bomb threat at 10:49 am Wednesday. They then informed the Defence Colony police station following which the security personnel reached the spot and immediately evacuated the school.

"We deployed our bomb squads and also informed the Special Cell and the Special Branch. The SWAT team is also conducting searches inside the premises," he said.

Chowdhary further said that the police force has so far conducted two rounds of search and that the third round is underway. "We are looking for the source of the e-mail. In November last year, the school received a similar mail which was sent via a German server," he said.

The DCP also said that the e-mail threat appeared to be a hoax. Vigyan, a class 5 student, said he along with his classmates was evacuated from the school building and taken to the ground.

"We were asked to go home before lunch. We were not given any information as to why we were evacuated," another student said.

A parent waiting outside the school to receive his son said several students told him that they saw bomb squads inside the premises.

Sweltering summer heat splits large rock in AP village

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kurnool (AP), April 12: Sweltering summer heat split open a large rock located at an elevation amidst houses in Gonegandla village of Kurnool district.

Kurnool district Collector Srijana Gummalla Wednesday said the incident occurred in Adoni sub-division Tuesday, leading to the evacuation of 150 families from the rock's vicinity to avert any untoward incident.

"There is a crack in the rock but the crack is not expanding thankfully from Tuesday. There was that fear of it disintegrating and going down... We have deployed the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams at the site," said Gummalla. She said the district administration has also roped in the



The rock that is estimated to be 500 years old is on the outskirts of Gonegandla village in Kurnool.

nearby cement companies and renewable energy company Greenko to help reinforce and stabilize the broken rock.

For the safety of the evacuees,

Gummalla said they have been accommodated in a nearby school for now as the fragments of the rock may crash onto their houses if the situation aggravates. The

school is located against the slope behind the rock's location. Considering that no quarrying occurred at the site of the incident, the Collector observed that the scorching summer heat could be the reason for the split, even as no other suspicious activity was found to have occurred at the rock site.

However, a Met official said that Kurnool district did not record abnormally high temperatures Tuesday while the Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management

Authority (APSDMA) recorded Gonegandla's maximum temperature as 38.2 degrees Celsius on the same day.

Meanwhile, the Sub-Collector, Tehsildhar and police teams are monitoring the situation in the village. Incidentally, the Geological Survey of India (GSI) did not receive information on this development until Wednesday morning, said Janardhan Prasad, Additional Director General (ADG).

"We have not received any complaints or report from the local government officials. If the Department of Mines and Geology, Government of AP will write to us, certainly I will send one team to see that area," said Prasad, who oversees southern India for GSI.

Later, on being alerted by reporters, Prasad said GSI has dis-

cussed with the district administration and told that the situation is under control.

He said a GSI team may go to Gonegandla if required but no team has been dispatched as of now. However, Prasad clarified that unless a geologist personally examines the crack, he cannot come to a conclusion, whether that crack is an older one or a recent one. For Wednesday, the disaster management authority forecast severe heat wave in the four mandalams of Kunavaram (46 C, Alluri Sitarama Raju district), Golugonda (42.6 C, Anakapalli), Nathavaram (42 C, Anakapalli) and Kotananduru (41 C, Kakinada).

Likewise, heat wave in 126 more mandalams across the State, all of them estimated to log temperatures over 40 C.

ceptable and unbecoming of a judicial officer," the bench said.

The top court said the defence taken by the judge that the lack of experience and the inefficiency on the part of the stenographer has to be blamed was entirely unacceptable.

"But unfortunately, the High Court not only accepted this pan-

chatantra (a false or improbable account) story, but also went to the extent of blaming the administration for not examining the stenographer as a witness. Such an approach is wholly unsustainable."

"If it was the case of the respondent that the entire blame lay upon the stenographer, it was for him to have summoned the stenographer as a witness. The High Court unfortunately reversed the burden of proof," the bench said.

The apex court said the high court was swayed unduly by the animosity attributed by the judge to a member of the local Bar and the assistant public prosecutor in granting him relief. "We have not come across a case where the High Court, while setting aside an order of penalty has held that there shall not be any further inquiry against the delinquent."

"But in this case, the High Court has done exactly the same, creating a new jurisprudence," the bench said.

BJP protests near AAP office

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Delhi BJP leaders and workers Wednesday staged a protest near the AAP office on DDU Marg here demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over charges of corruption against the ruling party leaders.

Addressing the protesters, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva termed the AAP dispensation a "government of criminals" while citing names of former ministers currently in jail over corruption charges. No reaction was immediately available from the AAP over the BJP's charges.



Referring to AAP convener Kejriwal's remark at an event Tuesday to mark its national party status that the party workers miss Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, the Delhi BJP chief said, "I want to assure Kejriwal that he will soon join Sisodia and Jain."

"There is a long list of AAP leaders who have been in jail over criminal charges and the BJP will expose the party by reaching out to every household in the city in the next three months," Sachdeva said. Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, BJP's state general secretary Harsh Malhotra, and the party's Assam unit co-in-charge Pawan Sharma also addressed the protesters.

international

of the day quote

Ukraine is fighting for the values and the principles that underpin all of our democracies. We will continue to do everything necessary to ensure Ukraine prevails



JUSTIN TRUDEAU | PM, CANADA

External forces are intensifying their endeavor of containing China with Taiwan as a tool



ZHU FENGLIAN | SPOKESPERSON (TAIWAN AFFAIRS OFFICE), CHINA

The decision to bar Afghan women from working at the UN was an internal matter and should be respected by all sides



ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID | TALIBAN-LED GOVERNMENT'S CHIEF SPOKESMAN, AFGHANISTAN

SHORT TAKES

Germany halts cannabis plans

Berlin: The German government Wednesday watered down plans to legalise cannabis, presenting legislation that would allow private cultivation and distribution through non-profit groups but not widespread sales of the drug in shops. The legislation also foresees a pilot project for a small number of licensed shops in some regions to test the effects of a commercial supply chain of recreational cannabis on public health, the protection of minors and the black market.

Indian-origin CEOs convicted of graft

New York: Two Indian-origin executives of a Chicago-based start-up have been convicted by a federal jury in the US of running a \$1 billion corporate fraud scheme that targeted the company's clients, lenders and investors. Following a 10-week-long trial, jurors Tuesday found health technology company Outcome Health co-founder and former CEO Rishi Shah guilty on 19 of 22 counts, co-founder and former president Shradha Agarwal guilty on 15 of 17 counts and former chief operating officer Brad Purdy guilty on 13 of 15 counts. The defendants face a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison for each count of bank fraud and 20-year imprisonment for each count of wire fraud and mail fraud.

China SC judge jailed for 12 yrs

Beijing: A supreme court judge in China has been jailed for 12 years for accepting bribes worth 22.7 million yuan (\$3.3 million) over two decades. Judge Meng Xiang, a former director of the Supreme People's Court's enforcement bureau and member of its trial committee, was also fined two million yuan after he admitted accepting bribes between 2003 and 2020, the intermediate people's court in Zhengzhou city announced Tuesday. The court said Meng had used his status and power to accept bribes in exchange for helping others.

IMF slashes Pak's growth rate to 0.5%

Islamabad: The IMF has lowered its forecast for Pakistan's economic growth rate from 2 per cent to just 0.5 per cent for the current fiscal year, amid high inflation and a growing unemployment rate in the cash-strapped country. This showed an unambiguous deterioration of economic fundamentals over the last six months since October when the IMF forecast the country's gross domestic product to grow by 3.5 per cent against 6 per cent for 2022 ago and inflation at 20 per cent against 12.1 per cent.

China sees world's first human death from H3N8 bird flu

REUTERS

Beijing, April 12: A Chinese woman has become the first person to die from a type of bird flu that is rare in humans, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said, but the strain does not appear to

spread between people.

The 56-year-old woman from the southern province of Guangdong was the third person known to have been infected with the H3N8 subtype of avian influenza, the WHO said in a statement late Tuesday.

All of the cases have been in China, with the first two cases reported last year. The Guangdong Provincial Centre for Disease Control and Prevention reported the third infection late last month but did not provide details of the woman's death. The patient had multiple underlying conditions, said the WHO, and a history of exposure to live poultry. Sporadic infections in people with bird flu are common in China where avian flu viruses constantly circulate in huge poultry and wild bird populations. Samples collected from a wet market visited by the



Your (Northern Ireland) history is our history. And even more important, your future is America's future

JOE BIDEN | PRESIDENT, US

HARRY TO ATTEND KING'S CORONATION

Prince Harry will attend the Coronation next month of Britain's King Charles but his wife, Meghan, will remain in California with their children, a spokesperson for Buckingham Palace said. Charles will be crowned at London's Westminster Abbey May 6 in a ceremony full of pomp and pageantry, with traditions dating back 1,000 years



Sporadic infections in people with bird flu are common in China where avian flu viruses constantly circulate in huge poultry and wild bird populations

woman before she became ill were positive for influenza A(H3), said the WHO, suggesting this may have been the source of infection.

Though rare in people, H3N8 is common in birds in which it causes little to no sign of

disease. It has also infected other mammals. There were no other cases found among close contacts of the infected woman, the WHO said. "Based on available information, it appears that this virus does not have the ability to spread easily from person to person, and therefore the risk of it spreading among humans at the national, regional, and international levels is considered to be low," the WHO said in the statement.

Monitoring of all avian influenza viruses is considered important given their ability to evolve and cause a pandemic.

WAR GAMES

Leaked US intel docu claims Serbia agreed to arm Kyiv



Someone clearly wants to drag Serbia into that conflict, but we are diligently maintaining our policies

MILO VUCEVIC | DEFENSE MINISTER, SERBIA

SK to arm Ukraine via US

SEOUL: South Korea has reached an agreement to lend the United States 500,000 rounds of 155mm artillery shells that could give Washington greater flexibility to supply Ukraine with ammunition, a South Korean newspaper reported Wednesday. The DongA Ilbo newspaper cited unidentified government sources as saying South Korea decided to lend the ammunition instead of selling, to minimise the possibility of South Korean shells being used in the Ukraine conflict. South Korea's defence ministry said the allies have been exploring ways to support Ukraine but declined to confirm specific discussions. The report came after leaked highly classified US military documents highlighted South Korea's difficulties dealing with pressure from Western allies to help with the supply of military aid to Ukraine. South Korea, a key US ally and major producer of artillery ammunition, says it cannot provide lethal weapons to Ukraine, citing its own security situation amid evolving nuclear and missile threats from North Korea.

lethal aid or both; countries with the military ability and the political will "to provide future lethal aid." Since the war began in February last year, Vucic has tried to balance close ties with Moscow with Serbia's goal of joining the European Union.

Although Belgrade has repeatedly condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine in the United Nations and other international forums, Serbia remains the only holdout among Europe's 44 countries in imposing sanctions on Moscow.

Serbia has professed neutrality in the Ukraine war, despite the country's deep historic, economic and cultural ties with Russia

REUTERS

Washington, April 12: Serbia, the only country in Europe that has refused to sanction Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, agreed to supply arms to Kyiv or has sent them already, according to a classified Pentagon document.

The document, a summary of European governments' responses to Ukraine's requests for military training and "lethal aid" or weapons, was among dozens of classified documents posted online in recent weeks in what could be the most serious leak of US secrets in years.

Serbia's Defense Minister Milos Vucevic dismissed the intel as "untrue" in a statement Wednesday. "Serbia did not, nor will it be selling weapons to the Ukrainian nor the Russian side, nor to countries surrounding that conflict," Vucevic said.

Entitled "Europe's Response to Ongoing Russia-Ukraine Conflict," the Pentagon document in chart form lists the "assessed positions" of 38 European governments in response to Ukraine's requests for military assistance.

The chart showed that Serbia de-

clined to provide training to Ukrainian forces, but had committed to sending lethal aid or had supplied it already. It also said Serbia had the political will and military ability to provide weapons to Ukraine in the future.

The document is marked Secret and NOFORN, prohibiting its distribution to foreign intelligence services and militaries. It is dated March 2, and embossed with the seal of the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In his statement, Defense Minister Vucevic said there was a possibility that Serbia-made weaponry and ordnance could "magically appear" in the conflict, but "that has absolutely nothing to do with Serbia."

"This is the question for countries that do not respect international norms, contractual clauses and business practices," he said, dismissing the intelligence document.

TIES TO RUSSIA

"If this document is accurate, it either shows Vucic's duplicity vis a vis Russia or he's under enormous pressure from Washington to deliver weapons to Ukraine," said Janusz Bugajski, an Eastern European expert with the Jamestown Foundation, a foreign policy institute.

The Justice Department is investigating the leak, while the Pentagon is assessing the damage done to US national security.

The Pentagon chart divided the responses to Ukraine's requests for aid into four categories: countries that had committed to provide training and lethal aid; countries that had already provided training,

Start-up grows hydroponic hops to help 'save' beer

BEER, WORLD'S MOST POPULAR ALCOHOLIC DRINK, IS NOW THREATENED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

REUTERS

Madrid, April 12: In warehouses outside Madrid, twists of hop vines grow under LED lights and close supervision in what their guardians say could be the best way to future-proof the supply of a key ingredient in the world's most popular alcoholic drink, now threatened by climate change.

Due to their need for "goldilocks" conditions of long summer days and mild temperatures, hops are traditionally grown in temperate climates found in areas like Germany's Hallertau, the Czech Republic or the northwestern United States. However, research shows more frequent droughts

and plagues due to global warming are driving down both yields and quality - a growing headache for the beer industry.

According to growers' associations, US production was down 12% year-on-year in 2022, while German output saw a 21% decline and Czech yields fell by more than 40% due to abnormally hot and dry growing conditions.

Spain's Ekonoke is seeking a solution by cultivating the water-intensive vines indoors through renewable-powered hydroponic systems that use nearly 95% less water than traditional outdoor farming.

"We're on a mission to save the world's beer," Ines Sagrario, chief executive and co-founder of Ekonoke, told Reuters.

The start-up's 11-member team of agronomists, chemists and biotechnologists tinkers with different combinations of light and fertigation - the blending of fertilisers and water - at its test facility near Madrid, seeking the "secret sauce" that best suits each variety



The ultimate goal is to maximise production of alpha-acids and essential oils that impart the bitter and fruity aromas so cherished by craft beer enthusiasts.

Dozens of sensors hooked to the leaves, roots and stems of the tall-growing climbers measure

every parameter, from humidity to CO2 levels, as changing wavelengths from LED lights give the repurposed warehouses a nightclub-like feel. "These hops have never seen any sunlight, only our own light show," said Javier Ramiro, Ekonoke's co-chief sci-

entific officer. Strict hygiene measures such as protective clothing for staff ensure the space remains pest-free, taking the pesticides on which traditional farming often depends out of the equation.

Sagrario said that in the future, indoor plantations could ideally be set up nextdoor to brewers, acting as a carbon sink by reusing the CO2 emitted during fermentation to speed up the plants' photosynthesis and recycling filtered water residues left over from the manufacturing.

"You should not underestimate traditional (outdoor) hop growers. They always come up with new ideas," he added.

The most obvious challenge indoor farming faces, he said, is its high energy cost. But he is optimistic soaring energy prices will normalise, while the added value of a secure supply of special varieties and more frequent harvests resulting in higher yields per acre could make indoor farming competitive in pricing.



Pope Francis blesses a pregnant spouse on the day of the weekly general audience in St Peter's Square at the Vatican

Convinced China to rein in no-fly zone plan, says Taiwan

REUTERS

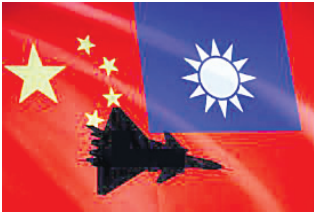
Taipei, April 12: Taiwan said Wednesday it had successfully urged China to drastically narrow its plan to close air space north of the island, averting wider travel disruption in a period of high tension in the region due to China's military exercises.

China has not commented on the no-fly zone but South Korea, which was also briefed on the plans, said the decision was taken due to an object falling from a satellite launch vehicle.

Beijing initially notified Taipei it would impose a no-fly zone from April 16-18, but Taiwan's transport ministry said this was later reduced to a period of just 27 minutes Sunday morning after it protested.

The ministry published a map showing what it labelled China's "aerospace activity zone" to the northeast of Taiwan and near a group of disputed islets call Diaoyu by China and Senkaku by Japan.

That would be close to civilian aviation routes between Taiwan and China as well as between Taiwan and South Korea, among others. Japan's Kyodo news agency, citing a government source, said China's no-fly zone included what Japan claims as its exclusive eco-



nomie zone around the Senkakus.

The development follows days of intense military drills that China has staged around Taiwan in response to President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California last week. Beijing said the drills - in which it practised blockading the self-ruled island that it claims as its own - were "a serious warning against the collusion and provocation of Taiwan independence separatist forces and external forces". It was against this backdrop that word of the air space closure stoked fears of travel disruption across the region. China said Wednesday that Tsai was pushing Taiwan to "stormy seas" after she met with McCarthy during an overseas trip which also included stops in Guatemala and Belize. The trip infuriated Beijing, prompting days of military drills designed to show it could forcefully take control of the democratic island.

BEHEADING VIDEO

Kyiv compares Russia to IS

REUTERS

Kyiv, April 12: Ukraine compared Russia Wednesday to Islamic State and called on the International Criminal Court to investigate after a video emerged online showing apparent Russian soldiers filming themselves beheading a Ukrainian captive with a knife.

Reuters could not immediately verify the authenticity or provenance of the video on social media, which showed a man in uniform beheading a man who wears the yellow arm band used by Ukrainian soldiers.

The Kremlin described the video as "awful" but said its authenticity needed to be checked. Moscow has denied in the past that its troops carry out atrocities during the conflict.



"There is something that no one in the world can ignore: how easily these beasts kill," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video message. "There will be legal responsibility for everything. The defeat of terror is necessary."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter: "A horrific video of Russian troops decapitating a Ukrainian prisoner of war is circulating online. It's absurd that Russia, which is worse than ISIS, is presiding over the UNSC," he said, referring to the UN Security Council, where Russia took up the rotating presidency this month.

"Russian terrorists must be kicked out of Ukraine and the UN and be held accountable for their crimes." Militants from Islamic State in Iraq and Syria were notorious for releasing videos of beheadings of captives when they controlled swathes of those countries from 2014-2017.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters at a briefing: "First of all, in the world of fakes that we live in, we need to check the veracity of this footage. Then it could be a pretext to check whether or not this is true, whether it happened, and if it did, where and by whom."

Ukraine's foreign ministry called on the International Criminal Court to "immediately investigate yet another atrocity of the Russian military".

of the day quote

We expect lower seaborne met coal prices will help Indian steel mills, as they import 70 per cent of their total requirement



ANSHUMAN BHARATI | CREDIT ANALYST, S&P GLOBAL RATINGS

Sugar was sold as low as Rs 3,100 to 3,200 per quintal in Maharashtra and Karnataka during November-March period of the current 2022-23 season, which is 10 per cent lower than that of cost of production



PRAFUL VITHALANI | CHAIRMAN, AISTA

With 28 years of experience in the wind energy market, our company is well positioned to contribute to India's fight against climate emergency with a focus on renewable energy



JP CHALASANI | CEO, SUZLON GROUP

SHORT TAKES

TCS net income rises 14.8% in Q4

Mumbai: Software major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) Wednesday opened the earnings season for the March quarter with a 14.8 per cent growth in net income to Rs 11,392 crore against Rs 9,926 crore in the year-ago period. The largest software company by revenue and market value said its revenue rose 16.9 per cent to Rs 59,162 crore in the March 2023 quarter from Rs 50,591 crore a year ago. For the full year, the Tata Group flagship reported a 17.6 per cent year-on-year rise in revenue to Rs 2,25,458 crore and earned a net income of Rs 42,147 crore, which was 10 per cent more than it booked in the 12 trailing months. TCS -- the cash cow for the Tata Group with more than 85 per cent of the group's net income -- said its free cash flow stood at Rs 41,440 crore, which is 104.1 per cent of the net income, and declared a final dividend of Rs 24 per share. This will take the annual payout to Rs 45,602 crore.

PhonePe gets addl \$100 million fund

New Delhi: Decacorn fintech firm PhonePe has received an additional \$100 million from General Atlantic during its ongoing fundraising round of \$1 billion at a pre-money valuation of \$12 billion, the company said Wednesday. With this fresh funding, the Walmart group firm has raised \$750 million till date. "PhonePe confirms a \$100 million additional tranche of investment from General Atlantic, a leading global growth equity firm, and its co-investors as part of our ongoing fundraising. General Atlantic initially invested \$350 million in PhonePe in January 2023," PhonePe said in a statement.

Tur dal traders under strict vigil

New Delhi: The Centre Wednesday directed state governments to take strict action against traders, millers and importers and stockists, who have not provided full disclosure about their tur dal stocks. In a review meeting on status of stock disclosure of tur and urad with major pulses producing and consuming states, Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said that the quantity of tur dal stocks disclosed as compared to its production and consumption has also been found to be "low" in certain states. While the number of entities registered in the stock disclosure portal has increased, it was observed that the actual number of stakeholders in certain states could be higher, he said in a statement.



Our baseline projection is for the global public debt-to-GDP ratio to reach 100 per cent again by 2028. It is going to take a few years, but that seems to be the direction of travel

PAOLO MAURO | DEPUTY DIRECTOR (FISCAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT), IMF

SEBI CELEBRATES 35TH FOUNDATION DAY

Capital markets regulator Sebi Wednesday unveiled a new logo on the occasion of its 35th foundation day. The logo was unveiled in the presence of former Chairmen, former and present Whole Time Members of the regulator, Sebi said in a statement



भारतीय प्रतिभूति और विनियम बोर्ड
Securities and Exchange Board of India

Inflation dips to 15-month low

Retail inflation plunged to 5.66% in March; back in RBI's comfort zone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Retail inflation in March fell to a 15-month low of 5.66 per cent and came back to the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent, as prices of vegetables and protein-rich items eased, showed government data released Wednesday.

The retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 6.44 per cent in February 2023 and 6.95 per cent in the year-ago period. The previous low was also 5.66 in December 2021.

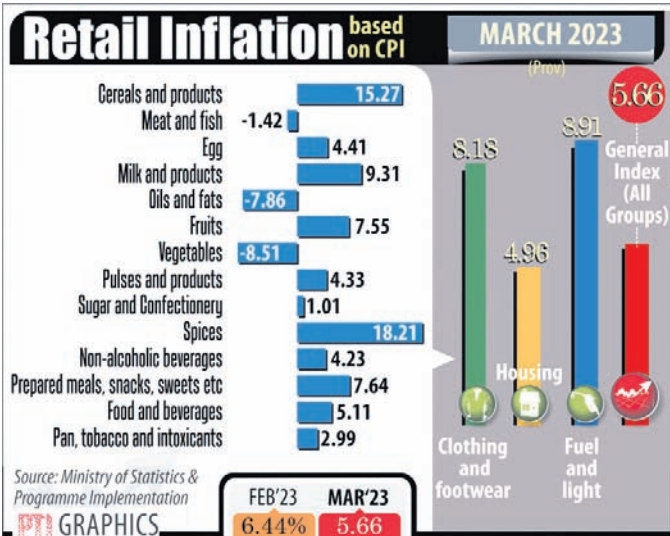
The Reserve Bank has been mandated by the government to ensure inflation remains within the 4-6 per cent bracket. The CPI was above 6 per cent in January and February.

According to the National Statistical Office (NSO), the year-on-year inflation declined in the vegetable basket by 8.51 per cent, oil and fats by 7.86 per cent and meat and fish by 1.42 per cent in March.

However, the rate of price rise in spices was high at 18.2 per cent in March, followed by 'cereals and products' by 15.27 per cent. Fruits too were expensive.

The overall inflation in the food basket was 4.79 per cent in March against 5.95 per cent in February and 7.68 per cent in the year-ago period. The food basket has a weightage of 54.18 per cent in the overall CPI.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head Research and Outreach,



ICra, said unless the feared heatwave leads to a rapid rise in prices of perishables, inflation may report a substantial base-effect led drop to around 5-5.2 per cent in the next two prints, which will reinforce the decision of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to pause key interest rate in April 2023.

"With reasonably healthy reservoir levels, and the El Nino expected to materialise only in the second half of the monsoon season, kharif sowing may not be impacted. However, any subsequent deficiency in monsoon rainfall could affect yields and food inflation, which along with any further hardening in crude oil prices remains a risk for the inflation trajectory," she opined.

Retail inflation was 6.44% in Feb and 6.95% in the year-ago period

Inflation dropped in the vegetable basket by 8.51%, oil and fats by 7.86% and meat and fish by 1.42% in March YoY

Retail inflation had remained above the RBI's upper tolerance level of 6 per cent since January 2022, except for November and December 2022.

Assocham Secretary General Deepak Sood said it is a matter of relief that India's inflation has started to drop on the back of a decline in the indices for several food items, including vegetables and edible oils.

Markets maintain momentum for eighth day; Nifty nears 18K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 12: Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty extended rally for the eighth straight session Wednesday, propelled by intense buying in IT, healthcare and auto stocks amid sustained foreign fund inflows.



A strengthening rupee and positive opening in European markets further bolstered sentiment, traders said.

Industrial Production data for February and March inflation rates are scheduled to be announced post-market hours. TCS will kick start the Q4 earnings season later in the day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 235.05 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 60,392.77, as 17 of its scrips marched higher: During the session, it jumped 279.92 points or 0.46 per cent to 60,437.64.

The broader NSE Nifty gained 90.10 points or 0.51 per cent to finish at 17,812.40, with 38 of its scrips ending in the green.

Among the Sensex firms, Infosys, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, HDFC, Tata Consultancy Services, Sun Pharma and ICICI Bank were the biggest winners. On the other hand, PowerGrid, NTPC, Nestle, UltraTech Cement, State Bank of India and ITC were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.57 per cent and smallcap index gained 0.41 per cent. Among sectoral indices, healthcare jumped 2.22 per cent, IT (1.04 per cent), auto (0.88 per cent), teck (0.86 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.74 per cent) and metal (0.51 per cent). FMCG, utilities, capital goods and oil & gas were the laggards.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.35 per cent to \$85.91 per barrel.

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled for the day 1 paise higher at 82.11 against the US dollar Wednesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital market as they purchased shares worth Rs 1,907.95 crore, according to exchange data.

Panda addresses US industry leaders

New Delhi:

Subhrakant Panda, President, FICCI and Managing Director of Indian Metals & Ferro Alloys Limited (IMFA) after a roundtable on "Investing in the India Decade" attended by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "There's a lot of interest in India's growth story" and added, "When it comes to any large corporation looking at growth, it's impossible to do so without having a presence in India". In his remarks, Panda highlighted the ease of doing business, infrastructure development, and various reforms undertaken by the government to promote inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth in India. The roundtable was organised by FICCI and the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum on the sidelines of the Spring Meeting of the IMF at Washington DC. Senior business leaders across industrial sectors attended the roundtable. Panda is leading a FICCI delegation to Washington DC, and also had a meeting with Shaktikanta Das, Governor of Reserve Bank of India. They talked about the post-pandemic growth prospects and resilience of the Indian economy.



Industrial safety training programme at Paradeep Phosphates Limited

Paradeep: Focus on industrial safety is a priority of the state Government now and accordingly it has geared up its officials and all the industry heads to conduct specific training programmes to reduce accidents in industrial areas. The whole intention is to fulfil this year National Safety Day theme 'Our Aim, Zero Harm'. Under this context, a one-day training programme was arranged at Paradeep Phosphates Limited in association with Directorate of Factories & Boilers and Training Partner was reputed agency IQEMS April 11. Around 200 industry personnel of PPL, IFFCO, IOCL, IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, Goa Carbon Adani Wilmar etc attended the training sessions. Manoj Kumar Panda, Dy Director Factories & Boilers (Cuttack Division) inaugurated the event in presence of Chandrakant Dalai, Asst Director (Factories & Boilers-Paradeep Zone). Vinod Kumar, IFS (Retd) Chairman, IQEMS presided over the meeting.



Aakash BYJU's opens first classroom centre in Sambalpur

Sambalpur:

Aakash BYJU'S, India's leader in test preparation services, has opened its first classroom centre in Sambalpur, Odisha responding to the growing demand for its NEET, IIT JEE, olympiads coaching and foundation courses from the city. This new addition to the Aakash BYJU'S expanding pan-India network of centres, currently totalling 325+ in 24 states and union territories, reflects the institute's commitment to reaching its standardised direct coaching services to students where they live. The centre is located behind Hotel Kaveri, Bhimabhoi Park Road, Near Woody Jhone's Pizza, Ainthapali. It has 8 classrooms and can offer direct classes to 1000+ students. Featuring connected and smart classrooms, the centre can also provide a seamless learning experience to the students of its hybrid courses. The new center at Sambalpur was launched by Ajay Bahadur Singh, Regional Director, Aakash BYJU'S in presence of other company officials. Among other dignitaries present at the occasion were Joydip Mookherjee, Regional operation Head, East; Bikash Das, Regional Sales & Growth Head, Odisha; Suryabhanu Singh, Deputy Director, East; Rajeev Nayan, Assistant Director, Odisha and Sagar Chakrabarti, Regional HR Head .



India's growth projected to decelerate to 6%: UN

UNCTAD SAID THAT MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE A DEEPENING DEVELOPMENT CRISIS AS SOARING DEBT LEVELS AND HIGHER SERVICING COSTS SQUEEZE PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENT IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

United Nations, April 12: India's economic growth is projected to decelerate to 6 per cent in 2023 from 6.6 per cent in 2022, according to the United Nations.

The UN Trade and Development Conference (UNCTAD) in its latest Trade and Development Report Update released Wednesday expects global growth in 2023 to drop to 2.1%, compared to the 2.2% projected in September 2022, assuming the financial fallout from higher interest rates is contained to the bank runs and bailouts of the first quarter.

It warned that developing countries are facing years of difficulty as the global economy slows down amid heightened financial turbulence. Annual growth across large parts of the global economy will fall below the performance registered before the pandemic and well below the decade of strong growth be-



fore the global financial crisis.

The report said that India grew 6.6 per cent in 2022, ceding the pole position among G20 countries in 2022 to oil-rich Saudi Arabia, which grew at 8.6 per cent. Meanwhile, as current government spending has been weakening, but export orders remain on the rise, India's GDP growth is projected to decelerate to 6.0 per cent in 2023.

For India, it said the positive effect of high public and private investment and consumption as well as rising exports was partly offset by higher energy import bills, which deepened the current account deficit and ate up reserves.

"The Reserve Bank of India started tightening its policy stance during the spring of 2022 to limit damage caused by foreign capital

The report projected that the US, which grew at 2.1% in 2022, will see growth slow down to 0.9% in 2023. China, which grew at 3% last year will see its growth accelerate to 4.8% in 2023

outflows, a weakening currency and inflation risks. Higher financing cost slightly dented buoyant economic activity, and over-leveraging in the corporate sector may become a factor of financial instability," the report said.

In view of financing its growth ambitions, the Indian Government has committed to massive infrastructure investment. In 2020 and 2021 and in the energy sector alone, funds amounting to \$160 billion had been committed to fossil and

non-fossil projects alike, the report noted.

South Asia registered a growth of 5.7 per cent in 2022 but the stark rise in already high poverty rates has not abated yet. UNCTAD expects the region to expand at a still fast pace of 5.1 per cent in 2023, "driven by the growth of its largest economy, India."

The report further said that highly indebted South Asian countries, such as Sri Lanka or Bangladesh, will keep facing pressures from external creditors to cut public spending and cancel social, productive and climate adaptation investments.

UNCTAD found that 81 developing countries (excluding China) lost \$241 billion in international reserves in 2022, an average decline of 7%, with over 20 countries experiencing a drop of over 10% and in many cases exhausting their recent addition of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs).

Aviation industry on recovery path

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 12: The domestic aviation industry continues to witness recovery with air passenger traffic logging around 60 per growth at 13.60 crore in FY23 annually, ICRA said Wednesday.

Despite this, domestic air passenger traffic remained around 4 per cent below the pre-pandemic (FY20) volume of 14.15 crore, the credit rating agency said.

The Indian carriers had flown a total of 8.52 crore passengers on local routes in the year ended March 2022, as per ICRA.

Domestic passenger traffic stood at 1.30 crore in March this year, a growth of around 22 per cent from March 2022 volume of 1.06 crore, said Suprio Banerjee, Vice President, ICRA.

In FY23, the overall airlines' capacity deployment was higher by 38 per cent as compared to FY22, he said. The airlines' capacity deployment last month was higher by 14 per cent year-on-year and around 7 per cent more than pre-Covid level of March 2019, ICRA said.

TITANS LOCK HORNS WITH PBKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mohali, April 12: Defending champions Gujarat Titans, smarting from Rinku Singh's last-over blitzkrieg, would like to forget that nightmarish outing and get back to winning ways when they take on gritty Punjab Kings in an IPL match here Thursday.

GT had several heroes on that electrifying night, including young Sai Sudharsan, Vijay Shankar and the hat-trick man from Afghanistan Rashid Khan, who led the side in place of unwell Hardik Pandya.

But Rinku had other ideas. When the match looked as good as over, the Uttar Pradesh batter pulled the rabbit out of the hat for Kolkata Knight Riders, smashing five maximums in the last over to stun the home team.

That last-ball defeat will hurt GT for years to come but, in the immediate, they would like to forget it and get on with the next game.

GT, currently fourth on the table

with four points from three games, still have a great chance to top the chart, but for that they will have to collectively come together against PBKS, who are fast emerging as one of the most difficult sides to surmount.

Going by their current form, PBKS' eight-wicket loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad could just be an aberration, given the form of their captain Shikhar Dhawan and young left-arm bowler Arshdeep Singh.

Dhawan's innings in Hyderabad April 9 was a testament to the stalwarts' resilience and his ability to stay composed as wickets fell like ninepins at the other end. His 99 in a losing cause was far bigger and better than playing a winning hand in the match against Rajasthan Royals with an unbeaten 86, or a stroke-filled 40 against KKR.

GT would be wary of Dhawan's form and Hardik would know all too well how the veteran Delhi cricketer would be itching to once



again prove himself.

This could well be a contest of one-upmanship between Dhawan and Shubman Gill, with the former still wanting to prove himself and be in contention for a place in the India squad for the ODI World Cup at home later this year.

The way Dhawan and young opening partner Prabhsimran Singh have blasted off in powerplays gives an indication that they are unlikely to alter their strategy against



GT, who have bowlers of the calibre of Mohammed Shami, Hardik and Rashid, to name a few.

Lower down, PBKS have the most expensive buy in IPL history, all-rounder Sam Curran besides Liam Livingstone and Jitesh Sharma, while in the bowling department Arshdeep and Nathan Ellis have created quite a few problems for the rivals.

GT though have their own firepower, boasting of the likes of

Gill, top-order batter Sudharsan and Shankar, who struck an unbeaten 24-ball 63 to guide the side to a 200-plus total in their game against KKR.

Had it not been for Rinku's breathtaking last-over mayhem, Vijay could well have been patting his back for the wonderful effort. Unfortunately, that was not to be and things turned upside-down in the last over bowled by Yash Dayal.

GT would perhaps take a second look at their bowling combination and see how they can rotate their bowlers more efficiently.



Things are not falling in place for Warner: Patel



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Delhi Capitals vice-captain Axar Patel feels skipper David Warner is trying his best to lead from the front, but things are not falling in place for the veteran Australian opener.

DC slumped to their fourth consecutive loss in the ongoing IPL after being outplayed by Mumbai Indians by six wickets here Tuesday night. They are languishing at the bottom of the table without any points.

Delhi Capitals scored 172 on the Ferozeshah Kotla pitch, which was chased down by the five-time IPL champions on the last ball, with skipper Rohit Sharma playing a captain's knock of 65. Even though Warner has been among the runs, scoring 209 in four innings, Axar feels the Australian is not able to close out the games for the side.

"If you talk about the last two-three games, he is trying, but it's just not happening for him. I don't know what he is thinking as a batter at that time," said Axar during the post-match press

conference.

Axar also indicated that the Australian stalwart was getting confused over when to drop anchor and when to attack the bowling. Warner has been criticised for his inordinately slow batting in powerplays, with the 36-year-old opener scoring his half century at a strike rate of just 108.51 in Tuesday's game.

Though the Australia has scored three half-tons in four games, they have been painfully slow, and one of the reasons for the Delhi franchise's poor run this season. Warner scored a 55-ball 65 at a strike rate of 118 against Rajasthan Royals, while against Lucknow Super Giants, the stalwart hit a 48-ball 56 at a strike rate of 116.

"When Prithvi (Shaw) is batting with him, he (Warner) tries to play the anchor role. (And) when wickets are falling from one end, it's not good (for Warner) to try and keep attacking from the other end as well.

"Even when he is trying, it's not coming off. Everyone spoke to him - (head coach) Ricky (Ponting), (Shane) Watson, Dada (Sourav Ganguly). The conversation about his strike rate also came up. They looked at his videos and he's working on it," added Axar.

Axar, however, feels all is not lost for DC and they need to keep a positive frame of mind to give themselves a chance to qualify for the play-offs.

Narrow escape for Royals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, April 12: MS Dhoni (32 n o, 17b, 1x4, 3x6) gave a glimpse of the good old days of thrilling finishes but unheralded Rajasthan Royals seamer Sandeep Sharma (1/30) nailed a couple of perfect block-hole deliveries to earn a three-run victory for Rajasthan Royals over Chennai Super Kings in a close IPL encounter, here Wednesday.

Chasing a target of 176, Dhoni and Ravindra Jadeja (25 n o), veterans of many such tantalising finishes were on course as 21 was needed off the last over. CSK's final score was 172/6 as Dhoni didn't end his 200th game for CSK in a manner he would have liked in his spiritual home with 30,000 plus spectators rooting for him.

Sandeep seemed to lose his nerve as he bowled a couple of wides and then Dhoni whipped him over square leg and mid-wicket for a couple of sixes. Needing 6 off last two deliveries, the medium pacer got a wide yorker to Jadeja and then a perfect block-hole ball to Dhoni as it fetched a couple of singles.

However Devon Conway had a scratchy approach on tacky pitch as his 50 (38b, 6x4) didn't provide the momentum with Ravichandran



Ashwin (2/25) and Yuzvendra Chahal (2/27) bowling exceptionally well.

Earlier, Jos Buttler (52, 36b, 1x4, 3x6) wasn't exactly devastating in his approach but yet managed the 18th half century of his IPL career as Royals posted a decent 175/8 after being put into bat first.

While Royals were 135/4 after 15 overs, the last five overs wasn't as productive as they would have



expected with only 40 runs being added and four wickets lost in the process.

Jadeja (2/21) was as usual menacing on a surface that assisted the spinners. Buttler had a good 77-run second wicket stand with Devdutt Padikkal (38), who after his struggles against Punjab Kings, was back in his element.

Towards the end, Shimron

Hetmyer (30 n o) was ever impressive as a finisher while Tushar Deshpande (2/37) gave only eight runs in the 20th over.

Dhoni was felicitated prior to the match for captaining CSK for a 200th time in IPL by former BCCI president N Srinivasan in the presence of his wife Chitra Srinivasan and former TNCA president Rupa Gurunath.

BRIEF SCORES

RR 175/8 (Jos Buttler 52, Devdutt Padikkal 38, Shimron Hetmyer 30 n o, R Ashwin 30; Ravindra Jadeja 2/21, Tushar Deshpande 2/37, Akash Singh 2/40) beat CSK 172/6 (Devon Conway 50, MS Dhoni 32 n o, Ajinkya Rahane 31, Ravindra Jadeja 25 n o; R Ashwin 2/25, Yuzvendra Chahal 2/27) by 3 runs.

City inch closer to CL semis Antim signs off with silver at Asian C'ships

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, April 12: After a 3-0 win against Bayern Munich Tuesday, Manchester City looks to be cruising toward the Champions League semifinals for the third year in row.

Even if Pep Guardiola claimed it was a tortuous night watching from the sidelines at Etihad Stadium, it will take a remarkable fightback from Bayern to turn things around in next week's quarterfinals second leg in Germany.

While Guardiola is trying to keep minds focused, this was a statement performance from the Premier League champions against one of the giants of European football.

Bayern had gone into the game with a 100 percent record in this season's competition, with eight straight wins, including victories against Inter Milan, Barcelona and PSG — all under former coach Julian Nagelsmann.

But the visitors were blown away by City's attacking power, with goals from Rodri, Bernardo Silva and Erling Haaland the difference on the night. Bayern had chances, too. Leroy Sane forced three saves from Ederson early in the second half, including one when through on goal with only the goalkeeper to beat.

Yet by the time Haaland slid in to convert John Stones' headed knockdown in the 76th minute, the semifinals looked to be within reach, even with a second leg to come at Allianz Arena.

It was still a performance of maturity that City has lacked when playing in European football's elite competition in the past. In previous years Guardiola's team has buckled when under pressure on this stage. Losses have come against underdogs Monaco, Tottenham and Lyon.

Guardiola, who won the Champions League twice as coach of Barcelona, has so far failed to de-



JUST THE USUAL: Erling Haaland celebrates after scoring Man City's third goal against Bayern Munich, Tuesday

liver the trophy to City, despite dominating English football during his seven years at the club. He has won four league titles, one FA Cup and four League Cups but has not been able to transfer that supremacy to Europe.

The closest he came was in 2021 when beaten in the final by a Chelsea team managed by Tuchel. City was knocked out by Real Madrid in the semifinals last season. But even with the last four in sight once again, Guardiola, who coached Bayern for three years before taking over at City, is reluctant to look that far ahead.

City took the lead through a stunning strike from Rodri. Just moments after Ruben Dias had blocked a Jamal Musiala effort at the other end, the Spaniard cut onto his left

foot and swept a curling shot into the top corner from around 20 meters.

The home team could have doubled the lead shortly after, but Ilkay Gundogan was denied by the feet of Bayern goalkeeper Yann Sommer from close range.

The visitors mounted a fightback in the second half, with Sane the main threat before City scored a second after Upamecano lost possession deep in his own half. Jack Grealish passed to Haaland, whose cross was headed in by Bernardo.

Haaland then got on the score sheet himself with his 45th goal of the season. It leaves Tuchel, who only replaced Nagelsmann last month, with a major task to lift his players for the second leg next Wednesday.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Astana, April 12: Young Antim Panghal signed off with a silver medal in her debut Asian Championships after going down to the formidable Akari Fujinami of Japan in the 53kg title clash while four other Indian wrestlers clinched bronze medals, here Wednesday.

Anshu Malik (57kg), Sonam Malik (62kg), Manisha (65kg) and Reetika (72kg) added to India's medal rush, winning their bronze medal bouts. Panghal gave a good account of herself in tournament as she registered dominant wins to breeze into the summit clash.

But Fujinami, the 2021 world champion and someone who has hardly lost a bout since she started competing at the senior level in 2020, put an end to her winning run.

The 18-year-old Indian, competing in star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat's weight class, lost by technical superiority to the Japanese grappler.

The talented Anshu looked her



formidable best as she won by technical superiority over Mongolian Erdenesuvd Bat Erdene to bag a bronze in the 57kg event.

On the other hand, Sonam, who had lost in the quarterfinal to Orkhon Purevdorj, bounced back into the competition after the Mongolian reached the final. She notched up a 5-1 win over China's

Xiaojuan Luo in her bronze medal bout.

Reetika too won by a similar margin against Uzbek Svetlana Oknazarova, while Manisha recorded a victory by fall win over Albina Kaingeldinova of Kazakhstan.

Earlier Panghal, who last year became the first Indian woman

wrestler to become U20 world champion, routed the 53kg field, not conceding a single point on the moves of her rivals.

The only point she lost was through a caution received in her semifinal against Uzbekistan's Aktenge Keunimjaeva, whom she outclassed 8-1.

Panghal got on board with a take-down move that she initiated with a left-leg attack. The Uzbeki had the Indian in head lock position a couple of times but on both occasions, not only Panghal wriggled out with consummate ease, she also employed counter attacks at a lightning pace to keep extending her lead.

Panghal had begun her campaign with a dominating 'win by fall' against Singaporean Hsiao Ping Alvina Lim and followed up with a 6-0 victory in the quarterfinal against China's Li Deng.

In the 57kg competition more was expected from Anshu, the 2021 World Championship silver medalist as she struggled to score against Japan's Sae Nanjo, the reigning U-23 World Champion.

Inter return to winning ways, defeat Benfica

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lisbon, April 12: Inter Milan got back to winning when it mattered the most. Benfica's poor run came at the worst time. Inter ended their six-match winless streak with a 2-0 win at Benfica in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals Tuesday, moving into good position to reach the last four of the European competition for the first time in more than a decade.

Nicolo Barella and Romelu Lukaku scored second-half goals for Inter at the Stadium of Light. The second leg will be next week in Milan.

ISSF GOES BACK TO TOKYO FORMAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: The International Shooting Sports Federation (ISSF) has done away with an additional stage in the finals that pitted the two top scorers for gold medal at World Cups and other big-ticket events including the Olympics, and reverted to the old format.

ISSF had introduced the additional stage in the finals to decide the winner in pistol and rifle shooting post the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. Now, it has again gone back to the old elimination system, where the best scorer would get the gold medal. The top two now won't compete separately for gold medal.

The change will come into effect from the ISSF Pistol/Rifle

World Cup in Baku (May 8-15) and will also be followed during the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.

A new scoring pattern had been introduced for the finals after the 2020 Tokyo Olympics to make the sport more spectator-friendly where the two highest-scoring shooters had to again duel it out for gold, rather than follow the simplified elimination process earlier, with the first to reach 16 points being declared the winner, while the second-best got the silver.

This system was in force till the recently-concluded ISSF Pistol/Rifle World Cup in Bhopal. The ISSF has not made any change in the qualification round from where the eight highest-scoring shooters make it to the finals.

By changing the format for the

finals, the ISSF has not just simplified the scoring system but also made it easier for the spectators to follow the proceeding.

As per the latest format, the finals will consist of two series of five match shots each for all eight finalists. This will be followed by 14 single-match shots, where the shooter getting the lowest score among eight finalists will get eliminated after the 12th shot and the process will continue every two shots until the medallists are decided. A total of 24 shots will be fired in the final to decide the winner.

India's rifle coach and high-performance manager Deepak Dubey said, the new rules had been conveyed to the pistol and rifle squad and it will train for the World Cup in Baku keeping them in mind.