

Mahanadi tribunal’s site visit from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 17: The Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal will commence the site visit of Mahanadi river basin in Chhattisgarh from Tuesday. The three judges of the tribunal, the assessors and the registrar will be accompanied by the teams of Odisha and Chhattisgarh during the site visit.

The tribunal will leave Delhi and reach Raipur Tuesday. It will visit Farsiya village, the origination point of Mahanadi, and nearby areas in Sihawa Wednesday. The second day visit will conclude at Sondur, where the team will inspect dam on Sondur river. On day three, Murumsili dam, Ravi Shankar Sagar reservoir and new Rudri barrage would be covered.

P3

Former Karnataka CM joins Congress

AGENCIES

Bangalore, April 17: Senior BJP leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar Monday joined the Congress, dealing a blow to the ruling party ahead of the May 10 Assembly elections.

Lashing out at the BJP for ‘humiliating’ him and not giving him a chance for an ‘honourable exit’, the former State BJP president said he was beginning a ‘new episode’ in his life by joining the Congress.

The decision to part ways with the BJP came after the 67-year old six-time MLA, a former Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, ex-Speaker and a party president in the past, was denied ticket to contest from the Hubli-Dharwad (Central) segment, which he represented in the outgoing Lower House.



DRY RUN: NDRF personnel during a fire safety mock drill at Nexus Esplanade Mall in Rasulgarh area of Bhubaneswar, Monday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

BSE: CLASS X RESULT IN MAY SECOND HALF

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 17: The Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha Monday said that the Class X result will be out in second half of May.

“The evaluation of Class X answer sheets has been completed. And currently the tabulation process is underway. The result will be announced in second half of May,” said BSE president Ramashish Hazra.

About the issues in the Class X

question papers, the BSE president said students need not worry as they will be awarded marks for it. The BSE is committed to ensuring error-free results. And this time too, focus is being given to it, Hazra said.

According to BSE sources, the Summative Assessment-II of the annual High School Certificate (HSC) examination was conducted from March 10 to 20. Over 5 lakh students appeared for the examination at 3,218 centres across the state.

Baripada 4th hottest in world

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: Odisha reeled under intense heat Monday with temperatures soaring past 40 degrees Celsius in at least 21 places. Baripada, which became the hottest place in the state by recording 44.2 degrees Celsius, is the fourth hottest place in the world, according to El Dorado Weather.

The places which recorded 42 degrees Celsius or more are Rourkela (42.2), Sundargarh (42.8), Bolangir (43.0), Angul and Titlagarh (43.1),

6-month ESMA invoked against health workers

PHARMACIST AND NURSE ASSOCIATION CONDEMNS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: In a bid to ensure uninterrupted medical services amid fear of protests, the state government Monday invoked provisions of the Odisha Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), 1988 against health workers for six months.

According to the Home department, ESMA will be applicable to employees, including contractual ones, in all government hospitals and dispensaries of the state.

To make sure services at state-run health facilities are available hassle-free, it is necessary to prohibit strikes by nurses, pharmacists, technicians, and Class-III as well as IV employees, including contractual staffers, the Home department said.

“So, the state government has im-



posed Odisha Essential Services (Maintenance) Act, 1988, prohibiting strikes by them for six months,” the Home department’s order said.

The Act will be applicable for health staffers of district headquarters hospitals, sub-divisional hospitals, community health centres, primary health centres, municipality hospitals, ESI hospitals as well as medical colleges and hospitals run by government and autonomous institutions like Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute of Cancer and Regional

Spinal Injury Centre in Cuttack receiving grant from the state.

Meanwhile, the Pharmacist and Nurse Association condemned the move. According to the association’s president Suchismita Das, it is improper to impose such restrictions on them as they are human beings and have job-related issues as well. The government is yet to regularise the services of contractual employees recruited since 2013, she said.

“We had decided to go on a strike beginning today to press for fulfilment of our 12-point charter of demands. However, the government neither permitted us for the protest, nor held any discussion with us in this regard,” Das said, adding that invoking ESMA is nothing but suppressing their voice.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Killers disguised as journalists! It will further justify his decision not to hold a press conference

LIVE ON THE WILD SIDE OF EXCELLENCE.

PRESENTING THE SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION MERIDIAN UPLAND AND MERIDIAN X.

Meridian UPLAND

Meridian X

• Dual-Pane Panoramic Sunroof • Spacious 3-Row Cabin • Powered & Ventilated Front Seats • 10.1 (25.6cm) Uconnect Infotainment • 360° Camera with ParkSense

Jeep Wave EXCLUSIVE

PREMIUM SERVICE PROGRAM

JEEP. COURTESY EDGE

STARTING AT JUST 90MIN

EXPRESS SERVICE

3 YEAR COMPREHENSIVE WARRANTY

Jeep JEEP. GENIUS

ADVENTURE CONCIERGE

Jeep ADVENTURE DAYS

15TH APRIL - 15TH MAY

Celebrate Jeep Adventure Days

Get unbelievable benefits with on-the-spot bookings, a chance to win a bumper prize of up to ₹ 5,00,000* weekly, and much more.

Visit your nearest Jeep showroom today

Call: 1-800-266-5337 | www.jeep-india.com

Accessories shown and features mentioned may not be a part of standard equipment and are subject to change without prior notice. Actual colour and upholstery might differ. *T&C apply. *Price mentioned is ex-showroom India. Always drive responsibly and obey all the traffic rules. Jeep® is a registered trademark of FCA US LLC.

Jeep

ORISSA: SHREE BHARAT MOTORS LTD, NH 16, PAHAL, BHUBANESWAR 8599011520, 8599011487

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com™
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Today people will actually drag you into altercations, so flash the peace sign if you must. You may face some sort of legal troubles from peace-loving groups. Therefore, Ganesha advises you to meditate, take a walk or just seek out the company of your near and dear ones.

TAURUS

Ganesha sees you in a very romantic mood today. Your thoughts, tender and dreamy, will keep drifting towards someone special; someone of the opposite sex. Come evening and you will, in all likelihood, be sitting closely together, arm in arm, with your spouse or your sweetheart.

GEMINI

Today, you are likely to remain transparent in all your dealings, forecasts Ganesha. You can be optimistic about your chances of success if you choose to propose to that special someone. The day will bring more pleasure than pain.

CANCER

There is something different about today. It is unlike any other day. Just when you will start believing that there is nothing great about the day, it will spring a surprise. There have been days where life has thrown carrots at you; then there have been days when it has hurled brickbats.

LEO

You will be in a light-hearted mood today. Be it at the office or at the home, you will be full of joy and will be looking to pass your time leisurely. You will spend time with family and friends. You will be unable to implement your plans for tackling work today in your current mood, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

The artist, the comedian and the showman in you are all set to take the floor today. Entertain people and set the evening ablaze with your arsenal of jokes and gags, says Ganesha. But save valuable time and energy for other pressing matters and responsibilities too.

LIBRA

It is more than likely, and possible indeed, that you will surpass your own past performances today. All this is on the cards, despite the fact that your peers at work will try to outwit you. But it is your consummate set of skills that shall help you pre-empt all such attempts, says Ganesha. If it is some peace that you are looking for today, expect to find it in meditation.

SCORPIO

You will see every colour of the kaleidoscope today – people with different temperaments and different attitudes, many of whom will surprise you with their reactions. You may be shocked at the way your colleagues or close friends react to your strategies or success. Ganesha advises you to handle people with tact and diplomacy rather than being indifferent or arrogant.

SAGITTARIUS

You may have been experiencing hair loss in the past due to back-breaking stress, but things will begin to clean up today. As complex issues begin to fall in place, you are likely to receive some good news about a promotion or increment.

CAPRICORN

Planning strategic moves will be done with, and all that will remain is execution. But Ganesha says there may be delays in implementing ideas that are crucial to the success of your project, and this may leave you disappointed and dismayed. But the problem will be short-lived and you will have nothing to worry about as you have all it takes to be a winner. So, just sit back and wait for the rewards to come.

AQUARIUS

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

PISCES

Now is the time when the inner circle of friends that you have nurtured over the years will prove their worth, says Ganesha. It is good to know that in times of need you can bank on their support and count on their cooperation. You will be able to luxuriate in the benefits of their friendship today.



DICAPRIO SNAPPED AT COACHELLA WITH IRINA

Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio was spotted enjoying the Coachella celebrity after parties with Bradley Cooper's ex, Irina Shayk. *The Wolf of Wall Street* star, who is a festival regular, was pictured in his inconspicuous black cap and facemask as he joked with friends, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

KIM ACCUSED OF PHOTOSHOP FAIL

Socialite Kim Kardashian took to Instagram to post a new picture of her modelling bikini from her SKIMS swimwear line Saturday. While Kim looked stunning, fans pointed out that her middle finger appeared to be 'missing', prompting them to accuse the star of a Photoshop fail.



Radhika's two cents on plastic surgery

Mumbai: Actor Radhika Apte has always been vocal about being comfortable in her own skin, compared to those going under the surgical knife to enhance their cheekbones and lips. The actress recently talked about how the younger generation all looks alike on the pretext of plastic surgery.

During a promotional event, she said, "Plastic surgery is a big thing. Everybody is doing it, to each own, really. Everybody looks the same, literally. They look like AI, with massive lips and cheekbones. They all look the same, which is strange. But, our filters on Instagram and everything else are the same as well. They make people look quite AI. What I mean is like certain sharp features and like a bit of plastic."

The *Sacred Games* star further added, "Whether it's your career insecurity or how you look, the more you indulge in it, the more it aggravates. It's a myth that, okay, I will succeed and it will go away. Once you jump in it, it's just a downward thing, which is why I am trying to keep myself away from it and safe from it."

Radhika's *Mrs Undercover*, starring alongside Sumeet Vyas and Rajesh Sharma, is currently streaming at ZEE5.

IANIS



Ananya aspires for an all-female lead

Mumbai: Actress Ananya Panday made her acting debut in the Hindi film industry with *SOTY 2*, and since then she has been exploring her forte. She was last seen in *Liger*, starring alongside Vijay Deverakonda. While speaking on the scope of her future projects, she said that she would love to work with Sara Ali Khan and Janhvi Kapoor.

Sharing her aspiration to feature in an all-female-led film, she said, "I think it would be a lot of fun if they cast Sara (Ali Khan), Janhvi (Kapoor) and me in a film because all our energies are so different. I love them as performers and they are my friends as well. I am sure people would love to watch us together on the big screen."

She added, "It is not a new trend in Hindi films to make films about women anymore. However, the number of films that focus on just women is rare." She cited examples of films such as Rhea Kapoor's *Veere Di Wedding* and Farhan Akhtar's latest project, *Jee Le Zaraa*. Ananya will be next seen in the sequel to Ayushmann Khurrana's social comedy *Dream Girl* and *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*.

IANIS

'Being badass is more than just a state of mind'

Mumbai: Pataakha actress Radhika Madan spoke about how her upcoming show *Saas Bahu aur Flamingo* pushed her limits as an actor and gave her the creative freedom to experiment as an artist. She said that the show is all about giving a new dimension to a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship that has not been thought of before.

She said, "Action has fascinated me ever since my first film, *Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota*, wherein I tried my hand at the genre. It is an exhilarating experience to feel the adrenaline rush that comes with action and the world that *Saas Bahu aur Flamingo* creates."

She added, "Being a badass is more than just a state of mind; it means being totally

unapologetic and uninhibited in all the choices in your life. I had a blast doing these action sequences and being a part of this gutsy and authentic mad world. It has truly been an empowering experience."

Produced by Maddock Films, the series is directed by Homi Adajania and stars Dimple Kapadia, Radhika Madan, Angira Dhar, and Isha Talwar in pivotal roles. It is set to release May 5 on Disney+ Hotstar.

AGENCIES



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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

F	A	M	E	S	I	L	E	N	C	E	D
O	O	R	R	N	E	A	S	A	S		
R	U	D	D	E	R	S	R	O	A	S	I
K	E	S	S	E	E	D	C	H			
L	I	L	A	C	A	E	S	A	R		
I		U		T			D	S			
F	A	R	M	E	R	R	E	J	E	C	T
T	O			F		S				U	
S	S	P	O	R	T	A	L	T	E	N	O
S	T	I	T	A	N		U	A	I	G	
T	I	T	A	N		E	X	T	R	E	M
O	E	G	A	N		E	C				
P	A	R	A	S	I	T	E		F	E	R

SUDOKU

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

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

1		2		3		4		5		6
7						8				
9					10					
11	12						13			
						14				
15					16					
						17				
18								19	20	
21							22			

Copyright ©2023 PuzzleJunction.com

Across

- 7 Deep serving dish
8 Like some songs
9 They can be flat
10 Change focus or traffic
11 On a horse
13 Melon or pumpkin

- 15 In trouble; up the ____
16 Brandy glass
18 Military service (3,5)
19 Small rowing boat
21 Spigot
22 Snub, in a way

Down

- 1 Burlap fibre

- 2 Correct to the last detail (6-7)
3 Barge in
4 Avalanche
5 Due for a fall?
6 Menu heading (1,2,5)
12 Continuation of the species
14 Temporary
17 Packing box
20 Scarce

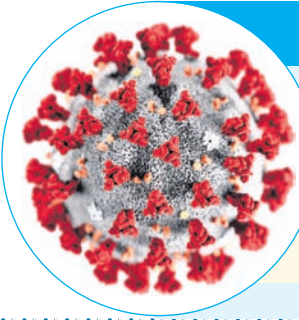
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



BEATING HEAT

Schoolchildren relishing sugarcane juice near Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Monday, amid prevailing heatwave conditions in the state



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,56,95,401	65,84,20,365	68,42,676
India	4,48,27,226	4,42,35,772	5,31,141
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

BIJU BABU, A MAN WAY AHEAD OF HIS TIME: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid rich tributes to former chief minister and his father Biju Patnaik on his 26th death anniversary, Monday.

The Chief Minister tweeted, “Tributes to the son of the soil, great leader of people, prominent freedom fighter and former Chief Minister of Odisha Biju Babu on his death anniversary. His unique contribution to the overall development of the state, the protection of the Odia people and the industrial development of Odisha will always be remembered in the hearts of the people.”

Virtually attending a special programme organised to commemorate the legendary leader, by Information and Public Relations (I&PR) department at Soochana Bhawan, Naveen said that Biju Babu was way ahead of his time in thinking and his life is crucial in the modern Odisha development history.

Biju Patnaik’s political ideals were centered in socialism and federalism.

His strong advocacy for equal resources to all Indian states

those required it, made him a champion of his Odia constituents.

Biju Patnaik was elected chief minister of Odisha June 23, 1961. He held the position until October 2, 1963, when he resigned in accordance with the Kamaraj Plan to revive the Congress party.

The Janata Dal won with a resounding majority in the state Assembly elections of 1990 which resulted in Biju Patnaik serving as chief minister of Odisha for the second time from 1990 to 1995.

Besides, Biju babu had been elected to the Lok Sabha on a few occasions.

He became Union minister for steel and mines during the Morarji Desai and the Charan singh governments.

The visionary statesman is still being remembered for his flying sortie to Java, in his favorite Dakota aircraft, to rescue Indonesian Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir and then Vice-President Mohammad Hatta in 1947 when the Dutch launched a full-fledged attack on Indonesia.

A cardio-respiratory failure caused his unfortunate demise April 17, 1997.



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik virtually addressing his father and former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik’s state-level death anniversary programme at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Monday



BJD leaders including Cuttack Mayor Subhash Singh and former Barabati-Cuttack MLA Debashish Samantary before attending the ‘tarpan’ rituals at Gadahadia Ghat of River Mahanadi in Cuttack, Monday



BJD leader Debi Prasad Mishra lighting the lamp to inaugurate a programme on the occasion of 26th death anniversary of Biju Babu as party leaders Ashok Chandra Panda, Sanjay Das Burma and Pranab Prakash Das look on at BJD office in Bhubaneswar, Monday

Third meeting of G20’s EWG from April 27

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 17: The third meeting of Education Working Group (EWG) will be held in Bhubaneswar from April 27 to 28 and the precursor events to the G20 Education Working Group Meetings would be held from April 23 to 26, secretary to higher education K Sanjay Murthy said here, Monday.

He said that a special exhibition on the theme of “Future of Work” will be organised and will be open to public between April 23 and 25 and then April 27 and 28.

Delegates from G20 countries would be attending these meetings, he said. The programmes under Education Working Group, selection of themes and ensuring reach to the youth of the country are being led by the vision and guidance of the Union Minister for Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan, he added.

In case of Odisha, where the theme is ‘Future of Work’, the activities are based on the vision that there should be widespread deliberations and effective outreach in every district on the emerging skill requirements and the need for continuous skilling reskilling and up-skilling as relevant to the district.

Violent clash in City college; two injured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: A couple of days after a student of Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar (BJB) Autonomous College was attacked by a group of youths, two Plus II students of Maharishi College of Natural Law here were critically injured in a violent clash among the students, Monday. The injured were identified as Sanu and Satyam.

According to sources, around 10 youths including some students of Maharishi College and another college in the City entered the campus and dragged the duo out of the college. Later, the accused youths, who were armed with iron rods, hockey sticks and other weapons, started assaulting the victims.

The accused left the place when the security guard and other students rushed to help the two students. The victims were later taken to Capital Hospital for treatment. The injured students are reportedly out of danger now.

The students later told media-persons that one of the accused, a non-student, was allegedly pass-

CAMPUS UNREST

A GANG OF AROUND 10 YOUTHS INCLUDING SOME STUDENTS OF MAHARISHI COLLEGE AND ANOTHER COLLEGE IN THE CITY ENTERED THE CAMPUS AND DRAGGED THE DUO OUT OF THE COLLEGE

LATER, THE ACCUSED YOUTHS, WHO WERE ARMED WITH IRON RODS, HOCKEY STICKS AND OTHER WEAPONS, STARTED ASSAULTING THE VICTIMS

SAHEED NAGAR POLICE SAID THE VICTIMS ARE YET TO LODGE ANY COMPLAINT IN CONNECTION WITH THE ISSUE

ing lewd comments on female students of the college entering the campus Friday. The victim students later complained to the college authorities about the accused.

The accused was holding a grudge against the victims and Monday assaulted them with the help of his friends.

The Saheed Nagar police, on being informed about the inci-

dent, reached the spot and pacified the agitating students by assuring them of stringent action against the culprits.

“The victims are yet to lodge any complaint in connection with the issue. We are trying to contact them over phone, but have not received any response. We will register a case after getting the complaint from the victims,” IIC of Saheed Nagar police station Manoj Kumar Satpathy said.

Notably, an Integrated MBA student of BJB Autonomous College, identified as Shashwat Panda, sustained grievous injuries after some youths including a student of the same college attacked him with a liquor bottle near an Omfed stall Saturday.

The accused allegedly sought money from Panda to buy liquor which the victim denied. The accused got irritated over the refusal and hit Panda’s head with a liquor bottle and also stabbed him with the broken bottle.

Badagada police registered a case on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim and arrested two persons in this connection Sunday.

10 virtual courts ready in 2nd phase: HC to SC

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 17: The Orissa High Court has informed the Supreme Court that 10 more virtual courts covering nine districts of the state were made functional with effect from March 27.

With this, 19 districts have virtual courts from where the advocates can file cases and appear before the High Court through videoconferencing.

According to an affidavit filed through advocate Sibo Sankar Mishra, the Registrar General of the HC submitted that 10 more virtual courts with back offices were made functional covering nine more districts namely Angul, Dhenkanal, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Kendrapara, Kandhamal (at Phulbani), Mayurbhanj (at Baripada), Nayagarh and Sundargarh in the second phase with effect from March 27.

The HC informed the apex court that considering the volume of cases filed from Sundargarh district, second virtual court at Sundargarh in addition to the one at Rourkela was made functional.

The Orissa High Court has also issued the standard operating procedure (SOP) for advocates and guidelines for smooth functioning of the virtual courts established in



these districts, the HC said.

It contended that there may be no need for a virtual court in Cuttack since the High Court is situated there. As regards the remaining 10 districts – Bargarh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Subarnapur, Boudh, Gajapati, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Rayagada – the opening of virtual courts will be done in a phased manner taking into account the number of cases filed in the HC from those districts.

Significantly, 10 virtual courts were inaugurated by the Chief Justice of India in Sambalpur, Ganjam, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kalahandi, Khurda (at Bhubaneswar), Bolangir, Koraput (at Jeypore), Puri and Sundargarh (at Rourkela) February 3.

The choice of the first 10 virtual courts was dictated by the geographical location and the volume of cases filed from the said 10 districts in the High Court, the affidavit said.

Tripathy files papers for Jharsuguda bypoll

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: BJP candidate for the byelection to Jharsuguda Assembly seat Tankadhar Tripathy filed his nomination papers, Monday.

Tripathy came to the office of returning officer and Jharsuguda sub-collector in a grand procession in the presence of BJP state president Mammoohan Samal, senior leader Samir Mohanty, Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari, BJP chief whip Mohan Majhi and a number of senior leaders and party workers.

After submitting his papers, Tripathy termed the bypoll a fight between the common people and a corrupt government.

“I am a common man. This is a fight of the people of Jharsuguda. This is a fight between the people of Jharsuguda and a corrupt government which is ruling the state for 24 years,” he said.

Thousands of people spontaneously joined the procession today, which indicates their anger towards a tainted government, he said.

Alleging that the BJD government has been neglecting the area, he said the people of Jharsuguda will give a fitting reply to the ruling party in the byelection.

On the other hand, BJD senior vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra targeted the BJP raising the murder of two gangsters in Uttar Pradesh, in presence of police.

“If the BJP makes false allegations in the election, we will expose them. Very recently two people have been killed in the presence of police at Prayagraj. They may be criminals, but the incident happened under police custody,” Mishra countered. Congress nominee Tarun Pandey has already filed his nomination earlier while BJD candidate Dipali Das, daughter of Naba Das, is scheduled to file her papers Tuesday.

Dipali had received a party ticket from BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at his residence in Bhubaneswar.

Mahanadi tribunal’s site visit starts today

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 17: The Mahanadi Water Dispute Tribunal will commence the site visit of Mahanadi river basin in Chhattisgarh from Tuesday.

The three judges of the tribunal, the assessors and the registrar will be accompanied by the teams of Odisha and Chhattisgarh during the site visit.

The judges and other members will leave from Delhi to Raipur Tuesday. According to sources, the tribunal will visit Farsiya village, the origination point of Mahanadi, and nearby areas in Sihawa Wednesday. The second day visit will conclude at Sondur, where the team will inspect dam on Sondur river. On day three, Murumsili dam, Ravi Shankar Sagar reservoir and new Rudri barrage would be covered. The tribunal would cover four sites



on day four namely Temari Minor Tank at Dhamdha, Udaypur Minor Tank at Khairagarh, Proposed Siddh Baba Minor Tank at Chhuikhadhan and Pipariya Dam at Chhuikhadhan.

On the last day of Phase I, the tribunal will visit Rajiv Samoda Nisda diversion and Samoda barrage, sources said. The first phase will conclude April 22.

The second visit in lower part of the river in Chhattisgarh will start April 29 and conclude May 3. The second visit would start from Kalma barrage.

After completing the visit in Chhattisgarh, the tribunal will take visit of Mahanadi basin in Odisha.

During the site visit, the tribunal will take stock of various irrigation and power projects running on Mahanadi river basin in Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

WORLD HERITAGE DAY

‘Heritage sites desperately need protection’

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 17: For the World Heritage Day, also known as International Day for Monuments and Sites, which is observed to create awareness about cultural heritage and preserve the present diversity, **Orissa POST** spoke with some experts about the rich cultural heritage of Odisha and what steps the state government needs to take to document, preserve, and advertise this abundant cultural diversity.

In Odisha, there are several heritage sites, like the Srimandir in Puri, Dhauli Shanti Stupa, and Konark Sun temple, that have brought the state global fame. But lack of maintenance and lethargic attitude of government officials have put in doubt the future of many of these sites.

Jitu Mishra, an archaeologist, says, “Odisha has a range of heritage sites consisting of Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries, Jain sites, prehistoric sites, palaces, Islamic architecture and Roman Catholic churches. Besides, there are also secular sites, such as bridges, European cemeteries, forts and other secular buildings.”



However, except for a few Hindu temples and Buddhist sites, most of the heritage sites are not well maintained and advertised, he added. Giving examples, he said, “People hardly know about the Dutch tombs in Balasore, whereas similar European tombs in Tamil Nadu and Kerala are drawing so many tourists round the year. The Potagada Fort in Ganjam has been closed to visitors for more than a year now for restoration work.”

To make these heritage sites accessible to common people, we need to publicise them and conduct heritage walks, Mishra

suggested.

Piyush Ranjan Rout, an urban planner, says, “Recently, Bhubaneswar turned 75 years as Capital of Odisha. Well, there are so many heritage sites inside the City, many of the popular sites are not yet designated as UNESCO World Heritage Site. It’s strange because Bhubaneswar has a solid reason to be in the Heritage City list.”

Deepak Kumar Nayak, a heritage researcher, INTACH, says, “It is necessary to conserve and protect every heritage site of the state as they constitute parts of our identity all over the world. We

EXPERTS SUGGEST STEPS TO MAKE THE HERITAGE SITES ACCESSIBLE TO COMMON PEOPLE AND PUBLISCE THEM THROUGH HERITAGE WALKS

IN ODISHA, THERE ARE SEVERAL HERITAGE SITES, LIKE THE SRIMANDIR IN PURI, DHAULI SHANTI STUPA, AND KONARK SUN TEMPLE, THAT HAVE BROUGHT THE STATE GLOBAL FAME

BUT LACK OF MAINTENANCE AND LETHARGIC ATTITUDE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE PUT IN DOUBT THE FUTURE OF MANY OF THESE SITES

need to preserve them in order to preserve the state’s identity.”

The biggest challenge for preservation is the lack of documentation. We only have around a few hundred monuments identified together by State Archaeology Department and the ASI. In reality, Odisha perhaps has the biggest number of archaeological or cultural sites and monuments which remain absent from the archaeological and cultural report of government agencies, he added.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	59910.75	↓ 520.86
NIFTY	17706.85	↓ 121.15
DOLLAR	81.80	↓ ₹0.22
EURO	88.48	↑ ₹0.40
GOLD	₹60,048	↓ ₹281
SILVER	₹74,725	↓ ₹952

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 39.9°C	41.6°C
	MIN 26.5°C	27.0°C
Humidity	76%	67%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
		Forecast Light to moderate rain

EOW arrests 4th accused in football betting racket



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, April 17: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police has arrested another accused in the online football betting racket, which was operated by cyber scammers from China and Dubai, police said Monday. The police arrested Dileepkumar P (35), a diploma in business management, from Thrissur, Kerala, who is the fourth accused to be arrested in the case. He is the director of Kerala-based shell company Priwest Global Solution Pvt Ltd, which was used to channelize the ill-gotten money of this scam, said Dilip Tripathy, Superintendent of Police, EOW. The investigating agency could trace around ₹19.49 crore which have been routed using the above shell company. Dileepkumar is also the founder of Omana Foundation Public Charitable Trust, Coimbatore, which was used to channelize the proceeds of this scam, he said.

► The agency could trace around ₹19.49 crore which have been routed using a shell company that the accused served as the director of

► Earlier, two directors of a Kolkata-based shell company and one director of another shell company from Rajasthan were arrested by EoW

► The online betting company (www.18football.com) is suspected to have cheated thousands of people of over ₹1,000 crore in the country. So far, the Odisha Police have been able to trace transactions worth ₹525 crore

Based on the complaints of about 800 duped investors of Odisha's Ganjam district, the EOW had registered the case against the online football betting company (www.18football.com). Tripathy said the online betting company (www.18football.com) is suspected to have cheated thou-

sands of people of over ₹1,000 crore in the country, including in Odisha. So far, the Odisha Police have been able to trace out transactions worth ₹525 crore. Earlier, two directors of a Kolkata-based shell company and one director of another shell company of Rajasthan were arrested, he said. Besides, Look Out Circular was issued against Md Saif, a Dubai-based operator and mastermind of this scam, Tripathy said. He further informed that 18football.com, registered in Hong Kong, is a hybrid model of fraud where a ponzi scheme (multi-level marketing) is run online giving a name of football betting/gaming app. As the modus operandi of the fraud racket, investors were promised of giving lucrative benefits like three per cent daily compound return on investment, recharge bonus, referral bonus, extra bonus on the earnings of downline members, salary bonus, daily withdrawal option, etc. The fraud company was also provided a foreigner 'mentor' to assist the investors in betting. These mentors used to communicate through telegram or online only. Extra commission was offered for introducing new members in the app. The scammers used multiple shell companies and their directors to route the ill-gotten money. They also used mule accounts for multi-layering of money transactions to confuse the law enforcement agencies.



PULLING DOWN: An excavator engaged by BDA razing down an illegally constructed house near Nicco Park area in Bhubaneswar, Monday

OP PHOTO

GEM to hold ‘Global Business Carnival’ May 19-29

POST NEW NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: ‘Gupta Event Management Pvt. Ltd’ also known as GEM will be organising the Global Business Carnival-2023, Bhubaneswar from May 19 to 29 at Janata Maidan here, informed the managing director of the company Sujeet Gupta in a press meet held at a City hotel Monday. Sujeet said, “GEM is one of the most promising and inimitable event organising and planning companies. We are associated with MSME and Coir Board. The Global Business Carnival this year will see partici-



pants from 20 states and 12 countries.” The carnival shall feature a wide range of business segments such as, real estate, startup companies, manufacturers, developers, banking, building materials, hardware, furniture, interior, education, home decor, home appliances, electronics, artistic & craft ceramics, elec-

trical, health & wellness, herbal ayurvedics, clinic, hospitals, automobiles, construction equipments, lifestyle, cosmetics, FMCG, food processing machinery, packaging machinery, IT & software, government sectors, tourism and foreign base. A cultural program will be or-

ganised every evening to captivate the crowd present. OOPRE Kitchen & Bar food zone will be set up in the carnival to provide delicious cuisine. GEM director Payal Acharya Gupta said, “We expect more than five lakh consumers to visit throughout the 11 days of the event and avail the opportunity of viewing a wide range of quality products from various sectors at one central location. This will serve as an ideal platform to enhance the business opportunity for both consumers and traders. Our motto is to provide a unique platform to both traders and consumers around the globe.”

Man gets lifer for killing wife

Soon after committing the crime, Bamadeva left the place leaving the duo writhing in pain. The locals informed the deceased's sister who was staying nearby



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: A local court Monday sentenced a person to life imprisonment after holding him guilty of killing his wife over family disputes in 2018. The convict identified as Bamadeva Sahoo was a resident of Kantasahi village under Balipatna police limits. The convict has also been asked to deposit Rs 1 lakh as fine. He has to serve additional jail term for a period of six months if fails to deposit the amount within the stipulated time limit. According to reports, the convict along with the victim, Rinarani and her minor daughter was staying at Kantasahi village. May 12, 2018, Bamadeva and the deceased victim engaged in a heated argument over family related matters. The argument between the couple escalated and an angry Bamadeva assaulted his wife Rinarani with an axe. He hit her

neck and head with the axe several times leaving her bleeding profusely. When their daughter tried to stop Bamadeva from attacking the deceased, her cruel father attacked her too. Soon after committing the crime, Bamadeva left the place leaving the duo writhing in pain. The locals informed the deceased's sister who was staying nearby. Rinarani's sister with the help of locals immediately rushed both the mother and daughter to hospital but former died mid-way. The minor was later discharged from hospital after treatment. On the basis of the complaint lodged by deceased's sister, Balipatna police registered a case (72/18) under sections 302, 307 of the IPC and arrested the accused. The court after examining the statements of 18 witnesses and 21 exhibits pronounced the judgment. Public prosecutor Salil Kumar Pradhan conducted the trial on behalf of the victim.

CP's Security Division starts operation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: The Security Division of twin city police Monday became operational at the head quarters of Commissionerate Police. Speaking to media persons, Police Commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi said, “Today we make functional the security division of Commissionerate Police following the approval of the state government. It will play the role of a nodal agency to streamline and monitor security arrangements for VIP, at vital installations and residence like legislative Assembly, Raj Bhawan etc and emergency response like terrorist attack. This will keep monitor on procurement of modern security related equipments. It will be directly under the commissionerate police and headed by commandant rank officer.” The Division will have VIP Security static and vital installation security, emergency Response Unit and Technical and Logistics Unit. “With the establishment of this Division, Commissionerate Police hopes to develop expertise and ensure a robust security system for vital installations, protected dignitaries and who will be able to respond emergency, security situation more resolutely,” the CP informed in its press note.

Professionals told to finish Mukta projects by December

The H&UD principal secretary directed that by end of December 2023, all 2,055 wards of 115 ULBs must have basic things like park, paved roads, open space and drainage

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: A state-level orientation programme was organised here Monday for Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan (Mukta) coordinators and community organisers, Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) principal secretary G Mathi Vathanan directed the participants to finish all the Mukta projects on time. Vathanan addressed the participants and outlined the way forward, urging them to strive to achieve speed and scale without compromising quality and transparency in the implementation of Mukta projects. He directed that all the 2,055 wards of the 115 urban local bodies (ULBs) must have amenities meeting 5 basic needs like park, gym, paved road, open space and drainage by end of December 2023. “During the last three years, some 52,500 projects have been implemented across the 115 ULB in the state. More than 62 lakh person-days



have been generated, directly benefiting around 6 lakh urban poor and migrant labourers. About 26,455 Mission Shakti groups and slum dweller associations have partnered in Mukta for execution of the projects. So now it is time to expedite the pace of work. If anybody fails to perform will find no place in our team,” Vathanan warned. Municipal Administration director Sangramjit Nayak shared how community organisers in ULBs play a key role in providing techno-managerial support and

extending end-to-end facilitation support to Mission Shakti groups and slum dweller associations for smooth execution of the MUKTA scheme, which in the end benefit urban poor and migrant workers at large in gaining livelihood opportunities at their doorsteps. Joint secretary and nodal officer Sarada Prasad Panda presented the 3 year achievement and future planning and asked the professionals to adapt to with the changed situation and work accordingly. “You must work to achieve the target,” he advised.

Eminent economist Das passes away at 93

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: The teaching community lost a luminary in eminent economist professor Ghanshyam Das who passed away Sunday (April 16) at Baramunda in Bhubaneswar. Das was 93. Born in Cuttack, he was an alumnus of Ravenshaw University and later did his higher studies from London School of Economics as a Commonwealth Scholar. He held important positions like RBI Chair Professor of Economics and subject expert member of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and retired as the DPI - Higher Education for Government of Odisha. He was appointed by the High Court to head the fact finding committee for Chilka Fisheries and submitted a report (1983) to the state government which is widely cited by researchers in their studies around the Chilka fisheries. After his retirement, Das was decorated as a Professor Emeritus in Economics.



BATS IN JAJPUR VILLAGE DIE OF HEAT STROKE

Bats are dying due to the prevailing heatwave conditions in a village in Odisha's Jajpur district and efforts are on to save the remaining winged mammals there by spraying water on them, a forest department official said Monday. As many as eight bats died due to excessive heat in the past three days at Kabatabandha village under Dharmasala block, which is the habitat of thousands of such species. They are considered a sign of good luck for the locals. “On being informed by the villagers that bats are dying due to the excessive heat wave condition, we went to the spot. We are spraying water on them through sprinklers to save them from the scorching heat for the past couple of days,” local

forester Md Sakir Housen said. The bats are night dwellers and they hang from trees during the day. “As the bats get direct exposure to the heatwave, they fall and die,” he said. Housen said the spraying of water on the bats in Kabatabandha will continue until the weather condition improves. Kabatabandha village, barely eight kilometres away from the Kalinga Nagar industrial complex, has been a safe habitat for the bats where their screech can be heard throughout the day. At least 5,000 bats are found on three big and old trees by the side of the Brahmani river. Villagers have been protecting and preserving the winged mammals for the last two decades.



“We are protecting bats as we consider them sacred. They make our village a rare place in the area,” said Keshab Chandra Sahu, a villager of Kabatabandha.

Meanwhile, Baripada town in north Odisha's Mayurbhanj district becomes the hottest place in the state of the day, recording a maximum temperature of 44.2 degrees Celsius which was 6.1 degrees C more than the normal temperature of the place, the met office said. Baripada was followed by Boudh and Nuapada with 43.5 degrees C each, Jharsuguda (43.4 degrees C), Talcher and Sambalpur (43.2 degrees C each), Titlagarh and Angul (43.1 degrees C) and Bolangir (43 degrees C) respectively.

While Cuttack reeled under 41.6 degrees C, Bhubaneswar's maximum teacher is 39.9 degrees C, IMD said. The prevalence of heat spell was felt in all the regions of the state - western, southern, interior and coastal parts. In a letter to the district collectors of Ganjam, Puri, Jagatsinghpur and Sambalpur, the Special Relief Commissioner said that as per the mid-day bulletin issued by IMD, heat wave condition is very likely to prevail at one or two places over these districts till 8:30am of April 19. However, amid the prevailing heat spell, the IMD has forecast that several places in Odisha will experience thunderstorms in the next five days.

8 panchayat awards to Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, April 17: President Droupadi Murmu Monday conferred eight awards under the National Panchayat Awards-2023 to Odisha during a function at Vigyan Bhawan here. Ganjam Zilla Parishad as well as Hinjilicut block secured the first rank in the country on the basis of the performance of Gram Panchayats (GPs) of the district and the performance of all the panchayats of the block respectively. Both were awarded under the category 'Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchavat Satat Vikash Puraskar'. In addition, six other awards were conferred under various themes to Gram Panchayats of the state. Significantly, the award scheme was

instituted by the Union Panchayati Raj Ministry to recognise the good work being done by Panchayati Rai Institutions as well as to encourage them to perform better. 'National Panchayat Awards' are given to the best performing Panchayats (Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samitis and GPs) in recognition of their good work for improving the delivery services and public goods under various priority sectors for using on nine identified themes under 'localisation' of SDGs LSDGs for achieving the SDGs by 2030. The Nine Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals include poverty free and enhanced livelihoods, healthy, child friendly, water sufficient, clean and green panchayat, socially secured, and good governance.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

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

NABARANGPUR BRIDGE COLLAPSE

NHRC directs CS to pay damages to victims' kin



AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 17: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed the Odisha government to pay compensation of ₹5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased killed in collapse of an under-construction bridge in Nabarangpur district.

The apex rights body also directed the government to pay compensation of ₹1 lakh to the severely injured persons in the mishap.

The under-construction bridge built under Biju Setu Yojana collapsed in Nabarangpur district January 10, 2021 in which one labourer died and 11 other labourers sustained critical injuries.

The NHRC issued the direction last Tuesday and directed the state Chief Secretary to send compliance reports to the Commission within six weeks positively latest by June 2 next.

The direction came in the wake of a petition filed by Human Rights defender Akhand who had alleged that an under-construction bridge collapsed January 10, 2021, due to substandard work and lack of safety measures, killing one labourer and injuring eleven others.

The NHRC earlier had called for a report on the matter within four weeks from the Nabarangpur district Magistrate.

According to the directions issued by the NHRC, the District

Magistrate submitted a report before the Commission stating that the wife of the deceased Mahendra Mali has been provided with ₹1,36,034 and steps for rehabilitation of the family have been taken by the executive engineer of Rural Works Division, Nabarangpur-II, Umerkote.

The NHRC in the past had issued notice to the government to show cause within six weeks as to why the Commission should not recommend compensation of an amount of ₹5 lakh to be paid to the next kin of the deceased and ₹1 lakh each to the injured persons.

The Nabarangpur District Magistrate was also directed to look into the matter personally to ensure that the benefits under various social welfare schemes of the state and Central governments are provided to the families of the deceased and injured persons.

Despite clear direction by the Commission October 17 last year no reply had since been received from the government, the NHRC directed to the Government of Odisha through its Chief Secretary to pay ₹5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and compensation of ₹1 lakh each to the severely injured.

Rotten carcass of jumbo calf found

POST NEWS NETWORK

Morada/Betanoti, April 17: Elephant deaths continue unabated in the state as forest officials Monday recovered a decomposed carcass of a jumbo calf from Asanbani reserved forest near Bhadrashola village under Betanoti forest range and Morada block of Mayurbhanj district.

The animal within one year of age is suspected to have died a week back, forest official said.

Sources said that a 45-member herd of elephants from Jharkhand had unleashed terror in the area for quite some days after straying into Betanoti forest range.

Meanwhile, locals spotted the decomposed carcass lying in the jungle, Monday. On being informed, ACF Rabi Narayan Mohanty, DFO Santosh Joshi, Betanoti forest ranger Ghanashyam Singh, forester Sobhakar Singh rushed to the spot and launched an investigation. Locals questioned how the forest officials could remain unaware of the elephant death when it has been lying dead in the jungle for over a week.



Youth run over by train in Keonjhar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 17: A youth was reportedly run over by a train while crossing the railway tracks near Silisuan brick kiln under Sadar police limits in this district, Saturday night. The deceased was identified as Narahari Mahakur, 22, son of Purna Chandra Mahakur of Bauripada village. The matter came to the fore after the Government Railways Police (GRP) recovered the mutilated body of the youth, Sunday.

Sources said that Mahakur had been to Silisuan to witness a Pala performance Saturday night. It is suspected that he might have died being run over by a train while he was returning home. Locals spotted his body Sunday morning and informed the GRP.

Police have registered a case and send the body for post-mortem to the Keonjhar district headquarters hospital. Police have seized one of the mobile phones which the deceased was carrying. It was found near his body. Family members have informed the police that Mahakur had two cell phones. Police are now trying to locate the missing phone.

Utkal Divas fete in Canada by OSCA



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, April 17: In a remarkable celebration of Odisha's foundation day, the Odisha Social and Cultural Association (OSCA) in Calgary, Canada, hosted an event filled with cultural programs and festivities, April 8 evening. The event started with a welcome speech by OSCA president Jyotsna Rani Debi, followed by a prayer to Lord Jagannath with the lighting of an oil lamp. Dillip Das Mohapatra from Edmonton joined as the chief guest, while Surya Acharya from Lethbridge participated as the chief

speaker of the evening in the presence of OSCA's treasurer Debabrata Rout. The trio enlightened the audiences about the essence of Utkal Divas and how Odisha got united with the merger of divided areas. During the event, Das Mohapatra also revealed the second edition of OSCA's yearly magazine, 'Karabarna'. The child artists from the OSCA family stole the show by participating in song, dance, and debate competitions. The comedy-drama 'Girlfriend's Marriage,' represented by actors Bhagvat, Sumitra, Gouri, Aiswarya, and Ruby also enthralled the audiences. After the cultural programme, OSCA's general secretary Subhadarshini Das and the chief guest awarded the child artists. In the end, OSCA's vice president Bhushan Guddu felicitated everybody for the successful observance of the event.

Prohibitory orders extended for 48 hours around Facor plant as worker succumbs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 17: The district administration has once again extended the prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC as a precautionary measure around the Facor plant at Randia in Bhadrak district. The curbs will remain in force in a 200-meter radius of the plant.

Meanwhile, one of the two critically burnt operators succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at National Burn Centre in Mumbai, Sunday night. The deceased was identified as Ratikanta Sutar, a native of Korant village.

Notably, two persons, both working as charging operators sustained critical burn injuries while charging the blast furnace at the Facor plant in Randia, Tuesday. With no sign of development in the situation, this is the third extension of



the enforcement in a row.

Sources said that the restriction has been extended for another 48 hours and will remain in force in the area from 6am, Monday till 6am, Wednesday. The decision to extend the prohibitory order came after the district Collector Siddheswar Baliram Bondar and Balasore SP Sagarika Nath held talks with the chief executive officer (CEO) of the company.

The Collector said the company's

state



HEAVY RUSH: Gole Bazaar in violence-hit Sambalpur town witnessed heavy footfall of people to buy essentials after the curfew was relaxed from 7am to 11.30am, Monday

3 more held in group clash over border dispute

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak/Bonth, April 17: Bonth police in Bhadrak district Monday arrested three more persons in connection with the group clash over border dispute and renaming of Orali Square on Bhadrak-Anandapur state highway and the fringes of Bhadrak and Keonjhar districts.

The accused identified as Kodandadhar Jena, Prasant Kumar Sahu, and Susant Kumar Sahu were arrested Sunday night and produced in the court, Monday. With the fresh arrests, the total number of arrests has gone up to eight in the case.

Earlier, a case was registered and five persons were arrested in this connection. On the other hand, Nandipada police registered a case over a complaint filed by Bhimasen Jena of Orali village under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district.

Meanwhile, prohibitory order under Section 144 of CrPC has been clamped on 200-metre radius of Orali Square starting from 11am, Sunday till 11am, Tuesday. Police force has been deployed at the spot under the supervision of Bonth IIC Aditya Prasad Jena.

Sambalpur violence: Internet shut till 10am today; 6 more arrested



PNN & AGENCIES

Sambalpur, April 17: The state government has extended the suspension of internet services in violence-hit Sambalpur district for another 24 hours till 10am April 18, officials said Monday.

Following communal tension that erupted during a Hanuman Jayanti rally April 12 evening, the state government has shut down the internet services in the entire Sambalpur district since 10am of April 13.

As violence again took place in the western Odisha town, six police station areas of Sambalpur were

Sambalpur Sadar sub-collector Pravash Chandra Dandasena said the curfew has been relaxed from 7.30am to 11.30am and 3.30pm to 6pm.

The state government has deployed additional chief secretary Satyabrata Sahu to Sambalpur to camp there and monitor the situation. DGP Sunil Bansal is also camping in the violence-hit town since Saturday.

Speaking to reporters Sunday, Bansal had said that the situation is gradually improving in the town. If the situation continues to get better, curfew will be withdrawn in the next one or two days, he stated.

Notably, ahead of the Hanuman Jayanti, a motorcycle procession was organised by Hanuman Jayanti Samanwaya Samiti members and Bajarang Dal workers, April 12 evening. During the rally, there were clashes between two communities in Sambalpur town leaving several people and police personnel injured.

Violence again occurred in the town when Hanuman Jayanti procession was going on in the western Odisha town as a few shops were torched and ransacked April 14 night.

Olive Ridley hatchlings make their way to sea from Rushikulya beach



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, April 17: As dusk descended on the coast near the Rushikulya river mouth in Ganjam district, thousands of baby Olive Ridley sea turtles started to emerge from sandy pits and crawl towards the sea from Saturday night.

Mass hatching of Olive Ridley sea turtles had started in time and was likely to continue for the next four to five days, a forest officer said.

"We are trying our best to ensure the safety of the baby turtles," said Sunny Khokkar, divisional forest officer (DFO) in Berhampur.

An all-time high 6.37 lakh Olive Ridley sea turtles had laid eggs in a three-kilometre-long stretch from Podampeta to Bateswar near the river mouth during the eight-day duration of mass nesting from February 23 to March 3 this year.

"As a record number of Olive Ridley sea turtles laid eggs and the weather condition was good, we expect a sizeable number of baby turtles to emerge from the eggs this time," he said.

Around 100 to 150 eggs are laid by each female turtle during the

mass nesting period.

After laying eggs, the turtles return to the sea without waiting to see the baby turtles.

Local people have teamed up with the forest officials to protect the hatchlings, while the forest officials fenced off the area with mosquito nets.

"We have fenced off the entire area to prevent the entry of predators like wild dogs, jackals, hyenas etc," the DFO said.

Patrolling in the sea beach was also intensified to protect the baby turtles from crows and kites.

He said around 60 forest personnel along with some villagers are in the area to protect the baby turtles.

The volunteers collected some of the hatchlings, who had diverted from their path on the beach, and released them into the sea, the DFO said.

"For the last several years, local volunteers have extended their help to the forest officials to protect the hatchlings," said Rabindra Sahu, secretary of the Rushikulya sea turtle protection committee.

Pied thrush spotted in Panchalingeswar forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nilagiri, April 17: In a first in Odisha, pied thrush, a species of migratory bird, has been spotted in Panchalingeswar reserve forest under this block of Balasore district. Noted ornithologist and Kuldiha guide Manoranjan Das has identified both the male and female birds of the species. With this, another foreign bird has been added to the list of Kuldiha sanctuary.

The scientific name of pied thrush is Geokichla wardii and it is placed in the thrush family. Males of this species grow up to 22 cm and are conspicuously coloured black and white. Mostly black on the upper parts, they have a long white supercilium, and white tips to the wing coverts, tertials, rump and tail. The underparts are white with



black flank spots on the bill and legs are yellow.

Females and young birds have the same basic pattern, but the black is replaced by dark brown, and the white by light brown. The markings



on the underside are scallier. The bill is not as strongly curved.

These birds are found in great numbers in the central Himalayan forests of India and Nepal and in the hill forests of southern India

and Sri Lanka during winter.

Like many other thrushes, they forage on leaf litter below forest undergrowth and fly into trees when disturbed and sit still making them difficult to locate.

The great are strongest when they stand alone. A God-given might of being is their force.

SRI AUROBINDO

Rule of Lawlessness

The irony of the horrific custody killing of Atiq Ahmed, the UP dorn-turned-politician and former Member of Parliament along with his brother Ashraf in the presence of police by three criminals is that the two brothers had sought help from the courts for their security while in custody. What is worse is that the Supreme Court had told Atiq that the “state machinery will take care of you.” This is a poor commentary not only on the country’s judicial system but also on the governance system. Subsequent events leading to the killing of the two brothers put the spotlight on the criminal-politician nexus and the seeming connivance of the state and the police to let the laws of the land be subverted so as to reap political dividends. It may be noted that in reference to Atiq Ahmed and his family, UP CM Yogi Adityanath had earlier said “Iss House mein keh raha hoon. Iss mafia ko mitti mein mila denge,” openly announcing his intention to destroy the family. The most tell-tale evidence of such a system working under the leadership of Yogi Adityanath is the immediate reaction of one of his ministers, Swatantra Dev Singh, who tweeted hours after Atiq Ahmed’s killing that “paap aur punya ka hisaab isi janam mein hota hai” (virtue and sin are accounted for in this very life). Another minister echoed him in almost similar language, terming the turn of events as “a cosmic decision,” the combined effect of stars and planets delivering justice.

The country has witnessed for the past few years how the police engineered fake encounters to finish off accused criminals without caring or allowing the law of the land taking its course. A climate has also been created to drum up support for meting out such instant punishment to criminals through extra-judicial killings. Uttar Pradesh has long been known for perpetuating goonda raj where politicians-criminals-state machinery nexus make sure that the rule of law is made mockery of. Lately, since the BJP came to power some years ago, things have taken a bizarre direction as the state appears to be sponsoring fake encounters and custodial killings as a speedy mode of the system of punishment for crime. It speaks volumes about the state of affairs that only a few days before the murders of the Ahmed brothers, the teenage son of Atiq was killed in police encounter. This was the 183rd such killing since the BJP assumed office in 2017. In fact, the father was so shell-shocked that he did not have the mental strength to attend his son’s funeral.

The dastardly killing of the two brothers brings to the fore a new dimension to fake encounters. The way the murders were executed leaves no one in doubt about the meticulous planning and bigger brains involved in the grisly killing. Even the weapon used in the murder, a banned bore of pistol costing above 7 lac rupees, indicates a very dangerous trend. The security lapses appear to be so deliberate that the complicity of the administration becomes too evident.

Footage from the killing site shows Atiq getting out from the back of a police jeep near a hospital in Prayagraj (Allahabad). He was being helped down by a policeman and his brother Ashraf. As they start walking, surrounded by police constables and local TV reporters, the gunmen disguising themselves as journalists with fake identity cards, boom and camera, accosted them. A second later, a gun was pulled close to his head and he collapsed to the ground. Within seconds his brother was also shot. Two gunmen and another man immediately surrendered to the police. The killing was completed in a minute.

The whole operation raises questions about the complicity of the administration. The police custody of Atiq and Ashraf was to end in the next few days. The hospital compound had enough parking space yet the police vehicles reportedly stopped right outside the gate. Atiq and Ashraf were paraded inside. Mediapersons were chasing police cars from the police station itself. It is a mystery how the media came to know about the movement of the high profile accused from the police station to the hospital. Such visits to hospitals are always kept under wraps. Moreover, it goes against the law to let the accused be questioned by the media, since the matter is sub-judice. The media interaction appears to be a ruse to give the killers the opportunity to commit the crime. The killers are reported to be too poor to buy the expensive guns used in the encounter. Their accuracy of operation shows they had been well trained. Questions remain who provided them with the guns and the training.

Eyewitnesses said the killers chanted “Jai Shri Ram” after the killing. This reveals the climate created by Right-wing outfits to take help from criminals using the veneer of religion to accomplish their political designs. The religious identity of the two victims is not a mere coincidence. A message appears to be sought to be given to the rest of the country, especially to states where Assembly polls will be held soon, that extra-judicial killings and fake encounters are effective tools in the hands of Right-wing governments to dispense speedy ‘justice’.

However, two points come to mind. First, were these killings intended to divert public attention from the extremely damaging interviews of former BJP Governor Satya Pal Malik in which he had wholly blamed Prime Minister Modi for the Pulwama blast in which 40 soldiers were killed just before the 2019 election? Second, will these killings not give ideas to the police across the country to slap false cases and murder anyone who is opposed to the dispensation (in power) at that point of time? One is left wondering.

WISDOM CORNER

If you don’t design your own life plan, chances are you’ll fall into someone else’s plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.

Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.

Men are mortal. So are ideas. An idea needs propagation as much as a plant needs watering. Otherwise both will wither and die.

WORDSWORTH

Hat trick

It comes from the English game of cricket and refers to a bowler who takes three wickets with three successive balls. For those more familiar with baseball, this is an impressive achievement, similar to a baseball pitcher striking out three batters in a row, but much less common. It seems to have been the custom in the nineteenth century for such a paragon of the art to be awarded a new hat by his club as a mark of his success. However, it is sometimes also said that the phrase alludes to a distinctly more plebeian reward in which the bowler was permitted to take his hat around the crowd for a collection (not necessarily a bowler hat, of course: that was named after a couple of completely different chaps, Messrs Thomas and William Bowler, hatmakers). Hat trick was first recorded in print in the 1870s, but has since been widened to apply to any sport in which the person competing carries off some feat three times in quick succession, such as scoring three goals in one game of soccer.

LOL

Piloting your plane

An F-111 was flying escort with a B-52 and generally making a nuisance of himself by flying rolls around the lumbering old bomber. The message for the B-52 crew was, “Anything you can do, I can do better.”



Not to be outdone, the bomber pilot announced that he would rise to the challenge. The B-52 continued its flight, straight and level, however. Perplexed, the fighter pilot asked, “So? What did you do?” “We just shut down two engines.”



Shivaji Sarkar

THE TRADE DEFICIT IS BEING DEFENDED BY THE COMMERCE MINISTRY AS IT REFLECTS THE COUNTRY’S GROWING DEMAND DESPITE THE GLOBAL SLUMP

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
B-15, Rasulgarih Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

FOCUS NATION

‘GRAMMAR OF ANARCHY’



The working of the Constitution needs the working of the organs of the State, i.e. the judiciary, the legislature and the executive. But how those organs will work will in turn depend on the people and political parties

people who were deprived and oppressed would blow up the magnificent edifice (of democracy) which the founders had so painstakingly built. His warning came almost twenty years before the first instance of Naxal violence. It has taken another two decades for the State to recognise it as not merely a law-and-order problem, but one of lack of equitable socio-economic development as well. The third danger that Dr. Ambedkar spoke of was the need to protect the sanctity of constitutional methods. We must abandon the methods of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha. This is nothing but the rejection of law and order. He might as well have added extra-constitutional methods like mob lynching and vigilante justice. These methods are nothing but the “Grammar of Anarchy”. If people adopt these methods, then it would be a failure of not just the Constitution, but the State as well. The working of the Constitution needs the working of the organs of the State, i.e. the judiciary, the legislature and the executive. But how those organs will work will in turn depend on the people and political parties.

Four years ago, on December 6, 2019, the death anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, there was the extra-judicial killing of four men ac-

cused in a horrific gangrape and murder of a 26-year-old veterinarian in Hyderabad. The encounter killings earned the cheers of many people across the nation, including Union ministers, leaders of the Opposition, celebrities, and even sports stars. The police were showered with petals of gratitude for having done “justice” to the victim. They became instant heroes in the eyes of a grateful nation. Apparently, the police fired in self-defence. The public jubilation and thirst for instant justice points to a complete loss of faith in the process of law and judiciary. Three years later, a Commission appointed by the Supreme Court headed by Justice VS Sirpurkar found that the encounter was a fake one. The Commission held that the police claim of firing in self-defence was “bizarre” and “unbelievable”. The Commission also found that two of those killed were juveniles at the time of their arrest and death, a fact that had been concealed by the police. This is surely not the first, or the last of the fake encounters in our country. Are people, including the police, losing faith in constitutional methods so earnestly championed by Dr. Ambedkar? What would he have said, had he been alive today?

This past week too, around Ambedkar Jayanti, there were two

killings in Uttar Pradesh, and here too the police said they fired in self-defence. Two days later the gangster-turned politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf while in custody, and stepping hand-cuffed, out of a police vehicle, were killed by three assailants, thirsty for instant justice. The killers were among the reporters and people gathering around the vehicle. Since the killing was on live television in the presence of reporters it is a new benchmark in impunity and disdain for due process. Asking for constitutional methods would be chided as naïve, if not anti-national. After all a gangster was killed, what if hand-cuffed anyway. “Murder of law and order” said the editorial of a national daily. “Art of elimination...” questioned another; Atiq Ahmad had recently petitioned the Supreme Court fearing for his life in police custody. There were more than a hundred criminal cases pending against Ahmad, ranging from kidnapping, extortion, attempt to murder and murder. He was also elected to Parliament once and the State Assembly five times. Having been an elected people’s representative did not save him from vigilante justice.

In such times, one must turn to films for insight. In the movie A Few Good Men, a decorated army Colonel has ordered a violent extrajudicial punishment on a young cadet which leads to his death. When facing trial for his vigilante action, he justifies his actions saying they were in the interest of national security, and expects to be treated as a national hero. He spits out these words to the lawyer questioning him: “you may find me grotesque” but my methods are necessary for society to function. Finally, he is charged with murder, and the message is the supremacy of constitutional methods. Surely Dr. Ambedkar would have approved of the ending of the movie. That is the kind of justice system we need to save us from sinking into the anarchy, one that heeds the prophetic warning of Dr. Ambedkar:

The writer is a noted economist.
©THE BILLION PRESS

SPECTRUM TRADE

Imports from China surge

ful action taken by China.

One of the critical aspects is that of the mobile phone. Apple now triples its production from India to \$7 billion. It makes almost 7% of its phones through expanding its partners in India. As tension between Washington and Beijing escalates, Apple is shifting its bases from China rather fast. The company exported \$5 billion worth products made in India as per the support to all manufacturers assured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Apple might be making one-fourth of its global production in India by 2025.

Imports of electronic goods from China have seen a year-on-year decline of around \$2 billion in 2022-23 (April-February). Import share from China in electronic goods has also declined from 48.1% in 2021-22 (April-February) to 41.9% in 2022-23 (April-February). Imports have been shifted towards Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam.

A significant fall in share from China was seen in imports of fertilizers -- from 21.9% in 2021-22 (April-February) to 13.9% in 2022-23 (April-February) and this accounts for around half a billion fall in imports from China. A major chunk of the demand for fertilizers has shifted toward Russia where im-

port share has increased from 5.21% to 17.2% in 2022-23 (April-February).

The rising trade figures have helped India surge its foreign exchange reserves to \$600 billion after a gap of several months. But global slowdown affected merchandise trade. It has grown just over 6%. This is reflected also in the domestic manufacturing. It is on a saw mode going up marginally with a subsequent fall. Global demand is low and Indian exports do not have a wide range to offer.

The top exports from India are refined petroleum \$49 billion, diamonds \$26.3 billion, packaged medicaments \$19.2 billion, jewellery \$10.7 billion, rice \$10 billion, and exports to the US \$71.2 billion, UAE \$25.4 billion, China \$23.1 billion, Bangladesh \$14.1 billion, and Hong Kong \$11.2 billion.

The present trade deficit is \$122 billion. The country’s trade deficit in 2021-22 was \$83.53 billion. This is being defended by the Commerce Ministry as it reflects the country’s growing demand despite the global slump. Officially it is also stated that India’s import dependence on China has reduced from 15.43% of the total merchandise to 13.79%.

“Based on services exports estimates and actual numbers of goods exports, we have surpassed

our target of \$750 billion to hit \$770.18 billion. Growth is significant as there were recessionary conditions elsewhere, despite global headwinds, we have not only achieved the target, but also surpassed it,” says Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal.

India’s exports have increased substantially to countries like Russia (369.44%), Indonesia (62.8%), Saudi Arabia (23.31%), Singapore (24.43%) and Korea (21.46%).

The rupee trade with 18 countries is stated to be positive though now the logistics are being put in place. According to the government, there are many issues that are being addressed. The rupee has one advantage that it could be exchanged with other currencies. But the countries also want to observe the level of exposure to each other. Russia is one of the oldest partners in rupee trade. But it had earlier faced problems with excess rupee reserves.

India in the course of time hopes to manage its merchandise and other trades more strategically to take a leap in world affairs.

The writer is Professor, Indian Institute of Mass Communication.
©INFA

Rallying point

Sir, Sharad Pawar is in the news for his puzzling stance on Gautam Adani and the way he rushed to meet a few Opposition leaders after their meeting with Nitish Kumar. Pawar, who was a prime ministerial hopeful at a point in time, and has come a long way in politics, has tremendous zeal even at 82. The former Maharashtra Chief Minister and former Union minister is friends with most of the powerful political leaders of the country. Some call it an absence of ideology but many term it clever politics. Prime Minister Modi has showered praises on him. It is common knowledge that Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi look for his advice when it matters. Many Opposition leaders view Pawar as a ‘trouble-shooter’ who would not think twice in assuming responsibilities entrusted upon him. Pawar may be a rallying point for the Opposition to take on the BJP because of all leaders at present he seems to be the most friendly, approachable and agreeable to all.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Shocking revelation

Sir, The staggering revelation made by Satya Pal Malik that Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked him to ‘keep quiet’ and ‘not to tell anyone’ when informed about the failure to provide aircraft to transport CRPF personnel despite intelligence inputs about possible attacks or to effectively sanitise the route they were to travel. It is believed that the Prime Minister may have asked Malik to keep quiet to de-link his government’s ‘incompetence’ from his ‘personal image’. The BJP made the most of the Pulwama attack in 2019 to sway voters in their favour. However, had the Union Home Ministry not committed ‘lapses’, as many as 40 CRPF jawans would not have lost their lives in the attack. The PM’s silence over Malik’s claims has led to deepen the concerns over the government’s handling of the Pulwama attack and its aftermath. If the allegations made by Malik are true, it could tarnish the image of the PM and the BJP government. The government has already been accused of suppressing dissent and curbing freedom of speech, and this revelation could further erode public trust in the government. It is essential for the government to address the issue and provide a clarification to the public.

Bishal Kumar Saha, MURSHIDABAD

of the day quote

Modi ji is giving political speeches in the name of inaugurating roads or flagging off train. He called me a friend...I am his friend and then too he is doing politics to win polls. They got chance to form government and look how constitution and democracy is violated

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM

There is no law and order in Uttar Pradesh. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath claims criminals have left the state whereas they are killing people while sitting in jails. Their (BJP government) claim about making UP crime free are bogus

BHUPESH BAGHEL | CHHATTISGARH CM

When we won elections in Goa and Uttarakhand, Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge reacted by saying these are small states. But he should understand that small states are important parts of the country

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Sisodia's judicial custody extended

New Delhi: A special Delhi court Monday extended the judicial custody of AAP leader Manish Sisodia in the corruption and money laundering cases lodged by the CBI and the ED respectively in the alleged excise scam. Special Judge M K Nagpal extended the custody of Sisodia in CBI case till April 27 and in the ED case till April 29, after he was produced before the court on expiry of his judicial custody granted in the two cases earlier.

TMC MLA arrested

Kolkata/Murshidabad: Trinamool Congress MLA Jiban Krishna Saha was arrested Monday by the CBI from his residence in West Bengal's Murshidabad district in connection with its investigation into the school jobs-for-bribes scam, officials said. Saha, an MLA from the Burwan constituency, was being questioned by the CBI since April 14 in connection with the case as searches went on at his house in connection with the illegal recruitments in state sponsored and aided schools, they said.

Gujarat AAP leader granted bail

Surat: Gujarat Aam Aadmi Party leader Gopal Italia was Monday arrested in connection with a case registered in September last year for allegedly using defamatory words against state Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and was granted bail. The case was lodged in Umra police station in Surat on September 2, 2022 for using allegedly defamatory words against state BJP chief CR Paatil and Gujarat minister Harsh Sanghani.



Just like in the Delhi policy, the AAP government in Punjab created a monopoly in the liquor trade by handing over the entire business to few contractors

SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL | SAD CHIEF

REGISTRATION BEGINS

The registration for the annual Amarnath pilgrimage began Monday with scores of people lining up at designated bank branches across the country to secure a permit. The 62-day pilgrimage to the 3,880-metre-high cave shrine in south Kashmir is scheduled to start July 1 and continue till August 31



Jawan held for killing 4 soldiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh/New Delhi, April 17: An Army jawan has been arrested for allegedly killing four soldiers at the Bathinda Military Station with a stolen assault rifle, an official said Monday.

Gunner Desai Mohan had earlier claimed that he saw two men with a rifle and an axe near the site of the firing at the military base in Punjab, Bathinda Senior Superintendent of Police Gulneet Singh Khurana said. Later, he confessed to killing Sagar Banne, Yogesh Kumar J, Santosh M Nagaral and Kamallesh R with a stolen INSAS weapon on April 12, he said.

An official said Mohan alleged that he was physically abused by these soldiers. Khurana, however, said the motive cannot be disclosed before the media but Mohan had some personal enmity with these soldiers. The Army reported the death of another soldier at the same military base a day after the shooting incident but it said it was not linked to the killings. "The case purportedly seems to be of attempted suicide," the Army had said.

On April 12, Mohan said he saw two unidentified men, their faces and heads covered with cloth, coming out of the barracks after the firing.



The INSAS rifle along with 28 rounds of ammunition -- 20 cartridges and eight rounds of LMG -- went missing from the base two days before the firing incident

After committing the crime, Mohan dumped the weapon and eight live cartridges and a cartridge that got misfired into the pit, SSP Khurana said, adding that the rifle was recovered the same day

However, he kept changing his statements, the SSP said. Speaking to the media in Bathinda, Khurana said Mohan tried to mislead investigators from the beginning. Since one weapon had gone missing, he concocted the story having seen two persons in 'kurta-pyjama' carrying the INSAS rifle.

In a statement, the Army said, "After sustained interrogation, one individual named Gunner Desai Mohan, from the artillery unit where the incident occurred has confessed to his involvement in stealing an INSAS rifle and killing four of his colleagues to the police," the Army said.

The INSAS rifle along with 28 rounds of ammunition -- 20 cartridges and eight rounds of LMG -- went missing from the base two days before the firing incident. During the investigation, it became clear that

an INSAS rifle and cartridges, which were stolen, were used in this incident, Khurana said.

He said in incidents in which an "internal weapon" is used, it raises suspicion on the involvement of an insider. "The statement made by the individual while filing the initial FIR on April 12, mentioning two persons in civil dress with INSAS rifle and axe was an attempt to divert attention of investigating agencies," the Army said.

"Initial investigations indicate that this was apparently due to personal reasons/animosity," the Army said in a statement. "As per his confession, on early morning of April 9, he stole the weapon along with a filled magazine. He then hid the weapon," the Army said.

Mohan then proceeded to throw the weapon into a sewage pit, it said. Police had recovered 19 empty cartridges of the INSAS rifle from the spot.

After committing the crime, Mohan dumped the weapon and eight live cartridges and a cartridge that got misfired into the pit, SSP Khurana said, adding that the rifle was recovered the same day.

"Out of nine cartridges, we recovered seven cartridges. Our joint operation with the Army is underway," he added.



Tourists shield themselves from the sun during their visit to the Taj Mahal in Agra

PTI PHOTO

Heatwave to persist in east India: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: Heatwave conditions are predicted in parts of east India over the next four days and the northwest region of the country over the next two days, the Met office said Monday.

The Gangetic West Bengal and Bihar may see heatwave conditions for four days on the trot. Sikkim, Odisha and Jharkhand may also experience heat wave conditions over the next two to three days. Similar conditions are expected in isolated pockets over Punjab and Haryana on April 17, and western Uttar Pradesh on April 18. Eastern Uttar Pradesh may also be affected on April 18-19, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Heat wave conditions have been prevailing in isolated pockets of the Gangetic West Bengal for the last



six days, coastal Andhra Pradesh for four days and Bihar for three days, it said. The Met office said a western disturbance active in the western Himalayan region will provide some relief from the soaring temperatures in the plains of northwest India starting Tuesday. Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and

Rajasthan are likely to experience isolated to scattered rainfall during April 18-20, it said. Heavy rainfall is anticipated in isolated areas of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh on April 18.

Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are expected to experience heavy rainfall on April

Atiq's killers shifted from Prayagraj jail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 17: A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to probe the killing of Atiq Ahmad and Ashraf, even as the three assailants who shot the two brothers were shifted from the Prayagraj Central Prison to a Pratapgargh jail Monday.

The shifting of the shooters to the Pratapgargh District Jail was done on administrative grounds, officials said. Special Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said the SIT was formed on the instructions of Prayagraj Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma.

"The investigation of the case pertaining to the murder of Atiq Ahmad and his brother Khalid Azim alias Ashraf is being carried out by the SHO of Shahganj police station," said a statement issued by Sharma on Sunday night. "...In order to ensure impartial and qualitative investigation, this investigation will be carried out by a Special Investigation Team," it added.

According to the statement, the SIT will be headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime, Satish Chandra, while it's other two members are Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kotwali police station) Satyendra Prasad Tiwari and Inspector, Investigation Cell of Crime Branch, Om Prakash.

In another statement, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police R K Vishwakarma said a three-member team of supervisors has also been formed to ensure qualitative investigation and time-bound action. This team is headed by the additional director general of police of Prayagraj zone. The other two members are the police commissioner of Prayagraj and the director of the Forensic Science Laboratory, Lucknow, the DGP said.

The three assailants -- Mohit alias Sunny (23) of Hamirpur, Lavlesh Tiwari (22) of Banda and Arun Maurya (18) of Kasganj -- were taken from Prayagraj at 12 noon and reached Pratapgargh at 2.10 pm, the officials said.



The trio were arrested soon after the dramatic shootout outside the Prayagraj hospital where policemen were escorting gangster-politician Ahmad and his brother Ashraf for a medical check-up Saturday night.

Sources said that the police may submit an application in the court

UP Director General of Police said a 3-member team of supervisors has been formed to ensure qualitative investigation and time-bound action

in a day or two seeking remand of the three assailants. On Sunday, the attackers were sent to 14-day judicial custody by the court. Meanwhile, Prayagraj Central Prison officials refuted reports in a section of media regarding the health of Ali, the Atiq Ahmad's son who is currently lodged there, and said that these reports are "not true" and he is

"completely healthy". According to the reports, Ali has been unwell since hearing the news of his father's killing.

Normal activities were yet to resume in Kasari-Masari, the place where Ahmad's ancestral house is located, and adjoining areas of Prayagraj on Monday, a day after the former MP and his brother Ashraf were buried in their native place.

The sensitive places in Allahabad West assembly constituency, which was the stronghold of the former Lok Sabha MP, on Monday continued to witness heavy deployment of police personnel. However, normally returned to other parts of the city, including in and around Civil Line bus depot and Hanuman Temple on Monday. According to the police, the three assailants posted as journalists, carrying video cameras, mike and media identity cards.

Aadhaar-property link: HC seeks reply

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Centre to file reply on a plea seeking linking of immovable and movable property documents of citizens with their Aadhaar numbers to curb corruption, black money generation, and 'benami' transactions. A bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Yashwant Varma granted four weeks to the ministries of Finance, Law, Housing and Urban Affairs and Rural Development to file their responses to the petition. The bench, which orally observed that "it a good matter and let replies come", listed the matter for further hearing on July 18. During the hearing, Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma along with Central government standing counsel Manish Mohan, representing the Centre, termed the issue as an important one.

Tiger terror in U'khand: Curfew imposed in villages

District Magistrate (Pauri) Ashish Chauhan said a curfew has been imposed in 25 villages from 7 pm to 6 am. All schools and Anganwadi centres in the area have also been ordered shut till Tuesday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kotdwar (Uttarakhand), April 17: A 75-year-old man was mauled to death by a tiger in the second such incident within a week in the Rikhnikhil block of Uttarakhand's Pauri district, prompting the authorities to impose a night curfew in two dozen villages.

District Magistrate (Pauri) Ashish Chauhan said a curfew has been imposed in 25 villages from 7 pm to 6 am. All schools and Anganwadi centres in the area

have also been ordered shut till Tuesday. Forest Ranger Mahendra Singh Rawat said the half-eaten body of Ranveer Singh Negi was recovered by villagers on Sunday.

He lived alone at his home in Simli village in the Kalagarh Forest Division close to the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Negi was ostensibly not responding to telephone calls from his relatives in Dehradun since Saturday, Rawat said.

The relatives informed the villagers about the matter and urged them to check up on him. When



some villagers made their way to Negi's home, they found blood stains along the way. After a long search, they recovered the septuagenarian's half-eaten body from the bushes around 150 metres from his home, Rawat said.

This is the second such incident in the area in three days. Birendra Singh (72) was mauled to death by a tiger in the Dalla village, 25 kilometres from Simli, when he had gone to harvest the wheat crop in his field on April 13.

On Monday, a video surfaced in which a tiger is seen moving freely in the fields of Dalla village while cattle graze a few metres away. Rawat, the forest ranger, said the next of kin of those killed in tiger attacks will be given Rs 4 lakh in compensation.

Kotdwar MLA Dilip Singh Kunwar has requested Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to declare the tiger a man-eater. A Forest department official said a cage has been put up in a village to trap the tiger. The villagers have also been advised not to venture into the forests to bring fodder for their livestock. The Animal Husbandry department has been asked to make animal feed available at people's doorsteps for the time being.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
KALAHANDI (R&B) DIVISION, BHAWANIPATNA
E-mail: eekalahandi@gmail.com, FAX No. 06670-230512

E-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. BC KLD- 01/2023-2024
No. 5360

1. No. of the work:	: 05 (Five) numbers of Electric Works and 04 (Four) number Civil Work
2. Estimated cost:	: Rs. 15.00 Lakhs to Rs.43.00 Lakhs
3. Period of completion:	: 01 (One) to 03 (Three) Calendar Months.
4. Date and time of availability of bid document in the portal:	: 11.00 hrs of 20.04.2023 to 17.00 hrs of 01.05.2023
5. Last date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal:	: 17.00 hour of 29.04.2023
6. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid:	: Superintending Engineer, Kalahandi (R&B) Division, Bhawanipatna
7. Date & Venue of Opening of the Single Cover Bid and Technical Bid (Cover 1) of Double cover Bid.	: On 02.05.2023 at 11.00 AM in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Kalahandi (R&B) Division, Bhawanipatna

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

Sd/- (Er. S.K. Naik), Executive Engineer
Kalahandi (R&B) Division

OIPR-34017/11/0002/2324



MP BJP on tenterhooks after negative feedback from people

THERE IS RESENTMENT AMONG THE PEOPLE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LEGISLATORS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, April 17: With just a few months left for the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, the Bharatiya Janata Party is collecting ground feedback, which is not good for many veteran leaders of the state. This is the reason why all the contenders are having sleepless nights.

Also, the formula of Gujarat and Karnataka has increased the concerns of the claimants. The BJP, which has been on alert mode since the 2018 Assembly election results, is not ready to make any blunders in the next elections that could come in the way of its retention of power. Therefore, the party is engaged in gathering feedback from the grassroots level. The ground reports show that in the present situation it is not easy for the party to get a majority in the elections. There is resentment among the people against the government and the legislators. It can't be eliminated but it can be reduced. For this, tough decisions need to be taken. The major concern of the government is regarding education,



agriculture and the labour class. For this reason, a meeting of office bearers of the organisation was held at the Chief Minister's residence with representatives and ministers. According to sources, on the basis of the ground report, the party has decided that new faces should be given place in the upcoming elections as there is resentment against many MLAs. For this, the party is also going to work on the age formula. The party is also deciding that the leaders who have crossed the age of 65 years should be kept away from politics. In the 2018 Assembly elections, the BJP had denied tickets to more than 50 MLAs, including many big names. This time the BJP is working on the strategy of moving for-

ward on the formula of Gujarat and Karnataka as well, due to which it is expected that tickets may be denied to half of the 127 MLAs of the party. The biggest change in the politics of the state may be seen after the election results in Karnataka. On the basis of these results, the party will work on further strategies in Madhya Pradesh. Despite this, it is certain that the BJP has almost made complete preparations to bet on new and young faces in the next election. The churning going on within the party has given sleepless nights to veteran leaders who have won the Assembly elections several times and are trying to stake claim for the next time also.

Why Assam Oppn fears AAP's entry into state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 17: Following the CBI's questioning of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy scam case, the AAP has accelerated its attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP.

While his party leaders are alleging that PM Modi invested crores of rupees in controversial industrialist Gautam Adani's establishments, the opposition parties in Assam, surprisingly are accusing the Delhi Chief Minister of dividing the anti-BJP votes and thus in turn helping the saffron party to win elections.

As a part of his party's national ambition, Kejriwal has targeted Assam for the party expansion. In the last year's local body election, AAP came second in the Guwahati municipal polls, while the Congress was behind them. This further fuelled AAP's aspiration to grow in this state.

Kejriwal recently visited Assam and participated in a rally in Guwahati. Prior to this and after his visit to the state, there were exchanges of words between the Delhi Chief Minister and his Assam counterpart, Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Arvind Kejriwal came down heavily on Sarma on a number of issues, including governance, education, health, and so on. Kejriwal also attacked the Assam Chief Minister for his wife's decision to open a big private school in the state.

The AAP leader said, "I have heard that Assam Chief Minister's wife has opened a private school where lakhs of rupees in fees were



taken. This is very dangerous. If the Chief Minister's wife herself runs private schools, the state education system will soon collapse entirely." Himanta Biswa Sarma sharply reacted to Arvind Kejriwal and warned the Delhi Chief Minister not to lie on the land of Goddess Kamakhya. "How come the Delhi Chief Minister boasts that he has given 12 lakh jobs to unemployed youths in Delhi, when the total number of positions sanctioned under the Delhi government is about 1.5 lakh," Sarma asked. He added, "Since lying is typically

regarded as sinful in the area of Maa Kamakhya, I request the Delhi chief minister not to do so." This was well expected, however, it was surprising that Congress and the AIUDF have also launched fronts against Arvind Kejriwal. Congress leader Debabrata Saikia said, "Arvind Kejriwal has come to Assam to break the Opposition unity. He criticised the Congress party during his recent visit. Instead of unifying the opposition, he was actually trying to help the BJP to win votes. This will make our fight against the BJP weaker." Badruddin Ajmal's party, the All

Congress and AIUDF accuse Arvind Kejriwal of trying to break Opposition unity in the north-eastern state

Drone mapping of one lakh villages to solve land disputes



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asserted that India has taken a huge lead globally in dealing with the issue of property rights, which result in the burdening of the legal system of any country.

While attending the Gauhati High Court's platinum jubilee celebrations, the Prime Minister said that even developed nations are dealing with the issue of unclear property rights.

"Drone mapping of more than one lakh villages in the country along with property card distribution to lakhs of citizens have already been accomplished. This will result in a decline in property-related cases and ease the lives of citizens," the Prime Minister said. Modi also said that there is unlimited scope for technology to modernise the justice delivery system in the country. Praising the work of the Supreme Court's e-committee, the Prime Minister told the gathering about Phase 3 of the e-court mission as

announced in this year's Budget. Modi also mentioned the global efforts to use AI in the judicial system to bring more efficiency. "We should also try to increase efforts to improve ease of justice for the common citizens through AI," he said.

Talking about the Alternative Dispute Resolution System, the Prime Minister touched upon the traditional alternative dispute resolution mechanism of the northeast.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for the government and the judiciary to be sensitive towards those who have been incarcerated for petty crimes for years and do not have the resources or the money. Modi then took note of those whose families are not ready to accept them after the completion of legal processes.

The Prime Minister also gave the example of the abolition of outdated laws.

"We repealed thousands of archaic laws to reduce compliances," he said.

Modi mentioned that about 2,000 such laws and more than 40,000 compliances have been discontinued. This along with the decriminalisation of many provisions of business has reduced the number of cases in the courts, he said.

GI TAG CERTIFICATE FOR ASSAMESE GAMOSA

AGENCIES

Guwahati, April 17: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma received the Geographical Indication Registration Certificate for Asomiya Gamosa.

At a ceremony conducted at Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati, CM Sarma was presented with the certificate by the Controller General of Patent, Designs and Trademarks and Registrar of GI Registry, Dr. Unnat P Pandit.

The GI Registration is for eight Gamosa, namely Uka or Xadharan Gamosa, Phulam Gamosa, Bihuan, Tiani or Pani Gamosa, Anakata Gamosa, Telos Gamosa, Dora Boron or Jor Gamosa, and Gossain Gamosa.

After the GI Registration, others are not allowed to make or market the product. The registration is a legal acknowledgment of the goods



for a certain geographic area or territory. Millions of weavers in the state will be protected due to the GI Tag. Chief Minister Sarma said, "I received the GI Tag for our pride, the Asomiya Gamosa. It is a moment of honour and pride for the people of Assam." "Thanks to this accolade, Assam will be able to legally recognise and maintain the quality and individuality of our pride, Asomiya Gamosa. It will guarantee the defence of our weavers' interests," he continued.

COMMUNAL TENSION IN MP'S KHANDWA



AGENCIES

Bhopal, April 17: Police have imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa city, to bar the assembly of four or more people, after stone-pelting following an incident of kidnapping, officials said Monday.

Tension prevailed after a group of people staged a protest at Moghat police station, besides the stone-pelting incident in Gandhi Nagar area Sunday, they said.

Some people tried to create communal tension, but the situation is now peaceful, a senior official said.

A girl was sitting with two men in a cafe in Anand Nagar area on Sunday when a group of people

allegedly abducted the two men, as per police sources.

After getting information on Sunday afternoon that two men were abducted from a cafe, police rescued them, Moghat police station in-charge Brijbhushan Hirve said.

The police registered a case on charges of thrashing and kidnapping against four named persons after a complaint by the two men, he said.

Also, based a complaint by the girl, another FIR was registered in connection with the same incident, the official said.

Following the two cases, two persons named in the FIR were detained and search was on for the other accused, he said.

This fresh round of communal tension in Madhya Pradesh was witnessed just one year after a massive riot broke out April 10 last year in Khargone

Later, a corporator along with some people reached Moghat police station in protest against the registration of the case, which further fuelled tension, as per sources.

Superintendent of Police Satyendra Shukla said after the incident of kidnapping, four people were named in the FIR and two of them were detained, following which a group created ruckus at the police station and an incident of stone-pelting took place in a nearby area.

He said CrPC Section 144 was imposed in the city till further orders as some people tried to create communal tension, he said.

The situation is now peaceful, he added. This fresh round of communal tension in Madhya Pradesh was witnessed just one year after a massive riot broke out April 10 last year in Khargone.

Sarma reviews Kaziranga security after rhino poaching



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, April 17: Following the first rhino poaching case of the year at the Kaziranga National Park, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma took stock of the situation to avert such cases in the future, officials said Monday. Sarma Sunday visited the vulnerable areas in Kaziranga National Park on the banks of river Brahmaputra and had an interaction with the forest guards.

He assessed the security measures at different camps in Kaziranga to put a stop to poaching.

The Chief Minister's visit came two days after the body of an alleged rhino poacher who had earlier fled

from police custody was found in the Brahmaputra.

Four rhino poachers were the target of an operation April 14 by the Special Task Force (STF) of the Assam Police in the Batadrava neighbourhood of Nagaon. While the other three escaped the area, the task team caught one poacher during the operation.

He was identified as Saidul Islam, and a rhino horn weighing 750 grams was recovered from him.

While being taken to the Bagori region of the Kaziranga National Park to find the rhino carcass, Saidul Islam escaped from police custody. He was a resident of Lahorighat in Nagaon district. There was no additional information of him.

Cheetah strays out of KNP for second time

OBAN, ONE OF THE EIGHT CHEETAHS THAT WERE BROUGHT FROM NAMIBIA SEPTEMBER 17 LAST YEAR, HAD STRAYED OUT OF KNP APRIL 2, AND WAS RESCUED FROM BAIRAD IN SHIVPURI APRIL 6

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, April 17: Male cheetah Oban has once again strayed out of Kuno National Park in Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh, officials said Monday, the development coming days after it had ventured out of the facility and was brought back post tranquilisation.

Five-year-old Oban is out of KNP, which has a core area of 748 square kilometres, and its surrounding 487 square kilometre buffer zone since Sunday and is in neighbouring Shivpuri forest division, an official told PTI on the



condition of anonymity.

"It does not pose a threat to humans, nor do humans pose a threat to it. So there is no need for tranquilisation to bring it back. A close eye is being kept on its movement," he added.

Oban is safe and secure, KNP Director Uttam Sharma told PTI, but refused to share details of

its current location.

Oban, one of the eight cheetahs that were brought from Namibia September 17 last year, had strayed out of KNP April 2, and was rescued from Bairad in Shivpuri April 6.

When asked whether this movement by Oban hinted at lack of space for these animals in KNP, Sharma said, "Nobody exactly

knows how much space a cheetah needs given the fact that they went extinct more than seven decades ago. In fact, we are learning about them after their translocation (to KNP) from Namibia and South Africa."

Brushing aside comments by some experts on the space needed by cheetahs to lead a fulfilling life

in the wild, Sharma said "experts had claimed cheetahs can't breed in captivity but they were proved wrong as Siyaya gave birth to four cubs in March in KNP."

Deshdeep Saxena, wildlife expert and author of 'Breathless: Hunted and Hounded, the Tiger Runs for Its Life', however, said there was immediate need to develop 4000 square kilometres of landscape attached to KNP for cheetahs to move about.

"We are seeing the trait of cheetahs venturing out of the park when just four of them have been released into the wild. What will happen when the rest (15) will also be set free? These animals were raised in fenced game reserves in South Africa and Namibia and their outings pose a threat of man-animal conflict," Saxena opined.

While the eight cheetahs from Namibia were brought to KNP September 17, a set of 12 were brought from South Africa February 18 this year. One of them died due to renal problem.

The country's last cheetah died in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh in 1947 and the species was declared extinct in 1952.

of the day quote

I believe that individuals like Kejriwal and his associates who face serious corruption charges should not be shown any sympathy or support

AJAY MAKEN | FORMER DELHI CONGRESS CHIEF

Modi ji's 'Mehul Bhai' has been enjoying abroad for many years with the money looted from our banks. Earlier his red corner notice was cancelled, now this decision of the court has come. All this has happened because of the negligence of the Modi government. It is clear from the repeated negligence that this is being done intentionally

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

Aam Aadmi Party used activist Anna Hazare to capture power in the name of corruption

KIREN RIJUJU | LAW MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Nine injured

New Delhi: Nine people, including four children, were injured after two houses collapsed in the wee hours of Monday due to a cylinder blast in outer Delhi's Kunwar Singh Nagar area. The injured have been identified as Ajay Kumar (50), his son Mannu (16), Vikas (35), Parmod (35), Tushar alias Kushal (5), Poonam (35), Simar alias Darshna (32), Bhumi (six months) and Anna alias Tusti (5).

Shops gutted

New Delhi: A row of shops caught fire in Delhi's Sadar Bazar area on Monday, an official said, adding that there were no casualties reported. According to fire department officials, as soon as the authorities were alerted regarding fire in shops located in Gali No 2, Faiz Ganj, Bahadurgarh road, Sadar Bazar at around 11:30 a.m., a total of 11 fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the location to bring the blaze under control. Fortunately, there have been no reports of casualties or injuries so far.

Fake IAS officer held in Kolkata

Kolkata: A man who allegedly duped several people by impersonating as an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer has been arrested, Kolkata police informed Monday. Shanta Kumar was arrested late on Sunday night by the cops of Burtolla Police station under the north & north suburban division of Kolkata Police.



The winds of change are blowing in favour of the Congress. The BJP is totally in tatters. There is no unity and solidarity in the rank and file of the BJP and many of them are quitting after being denied tickets and seeking shelter under the Congress or some other party

M VEERAPPA MOILY | CONGRESS LEADER

MUMBAI METRO FINED

Observing that the Mumbai Metro has made an attempt to overreach the court's jurisdiction, the Supreme Court Monday directed it to pay Rs 10 lakh fine within two weeks for felling of trees in Aarey forest beyond permission



Oppn raises pitch for caste-based census

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: Several opposition parties Monday raised the pitch for a caste-based census in the country and giving reservation according to the population of ST, SC and OBC communities, with the Congress accusing the central government of resisting it while playing politics on the issue.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that the underprivileged need economic and political power and not empty words as he again called for removing the 50 per cent ceiling on quota and demanded reservations for Dalits and tribals based on their population. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has also written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding an up-to-date caste census, saying meaningful social justice and empowerment programmes are incomplete without such data.

Supporting the Congress demand, Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar said such a census would be beneficial for all sections of society. The BJP unit in Bihar had supported a resolution at an all-party meeting convened by Nitish Kumar and later a unanimous resolution was passed in the Bihar Assembly on caste census. However, the BJP's central leadership is yet to respond to the demand



Prime Minister ji, the underprivileged need political and economic power, not empty words

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

for a socio-economic and caste census raised now by the Congress and other opposition parties.

"Prime Minister ji, the underprivileged need political and economic power, not empty words," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. "Take these three steps: Make the 2011 census figures public, tell how many OBCs are there in the country and remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations. Give reservation to Dalits, tribals according to their population," he said. Besides the Congress, JD(U) and the RJD, which are part of the ruling Mahagathbandhan alliance in Bihar, the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have also been vociferously demanding caste-based census.

Early this month, DMK supremo and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M

K Stalin lent support to the demand along with other opposition parties during a conference convened by his party on social justice. "There should be a caste census, this is the demand of the whole country. There is a demand in Tamil Nadu, there is a demand in Bihar. Why is the BJP running away?" Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh said Monday.

BJP ally Rashtriya Lok Janshakti Party, meanwhile, also demanded an increase in the reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. "The population share of SCs and STs has been increasing but their reservation share remains the same which is not justified. It is requested to the central government that the share should be increased in line with the population ratio of the castes which have been included in these cate-

TEACHERS' RECRUITMENT 'SCAM'

CBI summons TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: The CBI hand-delivered a summons to TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee for questioning in connection with the teachers' recruitment scam case on Monday, allegedly over two hours after the Supreme Court had stayed a high court order for his interrogation.

An agency official said the notice was prepared Sunday and delivered Monday. Terming the action of the agency "contempt of court", Banerjee tweeted, "SC stayed the Calcutta HC's order in the morning that granted permission to the central agencies to summon me. Yet, the 'SUMMON' was HAND-DELIVERED today at 1:45 pm Grave State of affairs!"

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala, which decided to hear the plea on April 24, had stayed the direction of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay of the High Court that TMC leader Banerjee and Kuntal Ghosh, an accused in the case, can be questioned by the ED and the CBI, and such "interrogation should be made soon."

The stay was granted at around 11.15 AM. "The petition was in the mentioning list. Dr A M Singhvi has adverted to the contents of the order and the directions passed by which the ED and CBI have been directed to file a report with respect to a probe in connection with a public speech by Abhishek Banerjee. List on April 24, 2023. Till the next date of listing, there shall be stay on all action against petitioner in relation to the directions passed in impugned order," the apex court ordered.

The Calcutta High Court April 13 had passed a slew of directions, asking the police not to lodge FIRs on complaints against officers of the CBI or the ED who are investigating the educational recruitment scam of the West Bengal Central School Service Commission and the West Bengal Board of Primary Education without its permission.

It had asked the central agencies to probe the role of state TMC leaders in the case. The apex court also stayed the order of Justice Gangopadhyay's April 13 order directing the West Bengal police not to lodge any FIR against CBI and Enforcement Directorate officers probing the school jobs-for-bribes scam.



Children take bath to get respite from heat in Dehradun

PTI PHOTO

SUNSTROKE DEATH TOLL RISES TO 13

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 17: The death toll due to sunstroke at the 'Maharashtra Bhushan' award event in Navi Mumbai rose to 13 after the death of a 55-year-old man while eight patients are undergoing treatment, a civic official said Monday.

The deceased included nine women and four men. The award

ceremony was held in the open ground in Kharghar area of Navi Mumbai on Sunday morning, which was attended by several lakh people, most of them followers of social worker Appasaheb Dharmadhikari who was conferred with Maharashtra's top civilian award by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"All bodies have been identified and their postmortem was

performed. The bodies were handed over to their relatives," said Panvel Municipal Corporation (PMC) commissioner Ganesh Deshmukh. PMC deputy commissioner Vitthal Dake said eight patients are undergoing treatment at a hospital in Kamothe in Navi Mumbai, while 16 others were discharged. "The condition of the eight hospitalised patients is stable," he added.

436 cases of XBB1.16.1 found in India: INSACOG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: Amid rising Covid cases in India, 436 cases of XBB1.16.1 mutated sub-variant have been detected in the country till now, revealed Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) data on Monday.

XBB1.16.1 is a mutation of Omicron's infectious XBB1.16 variant. The XBB 1.16 variant was first found in January when two samples tested positive for the variant. Till now, 436 cases of the sub-variant have been found across 18 states and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, and Haryana, according to INSACOG data accessed by PTI.

The INSACOG data has shown that 2,735 cases of the XBB1.16 variant have been found in a total of 24 states and Union Territories. India has recorded 9,111 new coronavirus infections, while active cases have increased to 60,313, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

The INSACOG bulletin of March 27 said an increase in infection rate has been observed, especially in western, southern, and northern parts of India. Among the samples collected till the third week of March, XBB continued to be the most commonly circulating Omicron sub-lineages, the bulletin said. The INSACOG reports genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 by whole genome sequencing of samples from sentinel sites across the country and international passengers arriving in India.

Gandhinagar a shadow of its Gandhian self

Gandhinagar was conceived in answer to Gujarat's passionate yearning for a showpiece state capital in 1960 and named after its most prodigious son, Mahatma Gandhi. Gujarat came into being on May 1, 1960 and the first stone for the new state capital was laid August 2, 1965. Planned and implemented by H. K. Mewada and P.M. Apte over the next five years, the new blossom was visualised as a verdant green designed to mirror the best of Gujarat's rich heritage in traditional town planning married to a modern outlook yet reflecting the principles of the Mahatma whose historic ashram was rooted south of the emerging contours of the new capital.

Gandhinagar was divided into 30 sectors each of size one km by one three-fourth km. The government building (secretariat-Vidhan Sabha) was placed in the heart of the city in Sector 10. Majority of the sectors were residential in terms of land use, each complete with all basic residential facilities such as schools, shopping, gardens etc. The main pattern

of road had grid with defence establishments on the eastern bank of the river Sabarmati. Private housing had been provided along with government housing thus seeking to exclude exclusive government colonies by-en-large.

Most importantly the growth around the capital was regulated by a Gujarat New Capital (periphery) Control Act 1960. This Act restricted the growth around 8kms of the Gandhinagar Notified Area (GNA). The Act was repealed after the BJP came to power in the state. Apte had expressed his angst in a written concern in 2011 aptly titled "Gandhinagar Endangered; a Capital's Plan Dismantled".

He is forthright in pointing out that the re-planning of Gandhinagar has obliterated its identity as a capital city, it's consciously designed and planned axial plan and egalitarian, Gandhian ethos has been dismantled. The juggernaut of unbridled capitalism has led to its debasement and inorganic extension in Gandhinagar becoming just another suburb of Ahmedabad. Planning has been turned round on its



Gujarat files
RK MISRA

head and the state's capital is moving southwards as the market value of land between the two cities has soared with private land developers making a killing. The southward expansion driven purely by profit motives will destroy Gandhinagar and turn it into a suburb of Ahmedabad, it pointed out.

Narendra Modi became Chief Minister in 2001. A decisive majority in the December 2002 state assembly elections that followed the communal turmoil, provided him the necessary heft in decision-making. In February 2003 the Gujarat Vidhan Sabha passed the Periphery Control (repeal) Bill designed to open up

the surrounding areas for 'development'. Two decades later the safeguarded green cover around the new capital had disappeared yielding place to a jungle of concrete. The founding-planners were very particular about safeguarding the distinct character of Gandhinagar from the overwhelmingly aggressive advances of Ahmedabad. The repeal of the Act opened the floodgates and the ogres of real estate have devoured the distinction.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pet project-Gujarat International Finance Tech(GIFT) city with 886 acres worth Rs78,000 crores(in 2015) nestling in the armpit of Gandhinagar and being projected as a better business hub than Mumbai and one to rival Dubai and Singapore also marks the erasure of the city's Gandhian identity.

Interestingly there was little progress in this project for the better part of Modi's stint in Gujarat but sunshine days dawned after he took charge in Delhi. Companies which were reluctant to move in, developed a new found love and 12 banks

shifted backroom operations soon after. Within a year GIFT city had sold rights to 12.5 million sq. ft space though its target was only ten million. By 2015, two 30-storeyed towers 123 metres high were spiralling out of the city aiming for the sky, the tallest in Gujarat.

Critics aver that instead of 'disfiguring' the state capital, this emerging hub could very well have been made a part of Dholera, the dream city scripted by Chief Minister Modi, 100kms from Ahmedabad with an international airport and port, industrial parks and all - now being pushed speedily into a reality with central approvals and assurances.

As Chief Minister, Narendra Modi had little patience for the soft, green, relaxed ambience of the state capital. The man, perennially in a hurry, has unknowingly re-drafted the capital upon himself - one that is moving at a frenetic pace in a hurry to reach everywhere. An island, a GIFT, dwarfed by overawing high rises is now reduced to a pale shadow of its Gandhian self.

of the day quote

PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif will return from London as soon as the electoral preparations for the general elections begin

RANA SANAUULLAH | PAK'S INTERIOR MINISTER

Why don't we seek what we leaders want without chaos, no destruction of property, so that we can attend to the citizens' demands, while we discuss what we want?

WILLIAM RUTO | KENYA'S PRESIDENT

Slovakia has delivered the remaining nine of the 13 Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter jets that it promised to ukraine

JAROSLAV NAD | MINISTER OF DEFENCE OF SLOVAKIA

SHORT TAKES

Highest honour for Angela Merkel

Berlin: Former Chancellor Angela Merkel is to be decorated with Germany's highest possible honour Monday in recognition of her near-record 16 years at the helm of the country. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier plans to bestow the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit for special achievement on the four-term chancellor, who will become only the third ex-leader to receive that level of distinction. The other two were Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first leader, and Helmut Kohl, who led Germany to reunification.

PIO killed in SL road accident

Colombo: A 68 year-old Indian-origin woman from Australia was killed and her daughter injured when a car in which they were travelling fell off a cliff in Sri Lanka, police said. Prakash Sharita Devi from Sydney was rushed to the Gampola General Hospital where she succumbed to her injuries.

Indian climber goes missing

Kathmandu: An Indian climber went missing below the Camp III of Mount Annapurna in Nepal after he fell into a crevasse while returning from Camp IV this afternoon, an official of his expedition organiser confirmed to the IANS. Mingma Sherpa, Chairman of Seven Summit Treks told Himalayan Times that Anurag Maloo, 34, from Kishangargh of Rajasthan, India, went missing after he fell down from around 6,000m while descending from Camp III.

HK bishop visits Beijing

Hong Kong: Hong Kong's Roman Catholic bishop arrived in Beijing Monday, marking the first visit to the Chinese capital by the city's bishop in nearly three decades, despite signs of Sino-Vatican strains. The five-day trip by Bishop Stephen Chow began about two weeks after Vatican News, the news portal of the Holy See, reported that China had unilaterally appointed a new bishop to Shanghai.

Query continues in Alabama shooting

Dadeville (US): Alabama officials are identifying the four people who were killed in a weekend shooting at a teenager's birthday party that also injured 28. Victims include Marsiah Emmanuel "Siah" Collins, 19, of Opelika; Corbin Dahmontrey Holston, 23, of Dadeville; Philstavious "Phil" Dowdell, 18, of Camp Hill and Shaunkivia Nicole "Keke" Smith, 17, of Dadeville, Tallapoosa County Coroner Mike Knox told *The Associated Press* Monday.

Sudan battles intensify on 3rd day

Sudan's army chief Monday branded the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces a rebellious group and ordered it be dissolved, as the faction battled the army in deadly violence that derailed a shift to civilian rule and prompted US calls for a ceasefire

AGENCIES

Khartoum (Sudan), April 17: Sudan's embattled capital awoke Monday to a third day of heavy fighting between the army and a powerful rival force for control of the country, as the weekend's civilian death toll rose to 97.

Airstrikes and shelling intensified in parts of Khartoum and the adjoining city of Omdurman. Rapid, sustained firing was heard near the military headquarters, with white smoke rising from the area. Residents hunkering down in their homes reported power outages and incidents of looting. "Gunfire and shelling are everywhere," Awadeya Mahmoud Koko, head of a union for thousands of tea vendors and other food workers, said from her home in Khartoum.

She said a shell struck a neighbour's house Sunday, killing at least three people. "We couldn't take them to a hospital or bury them." The clashes are part of a power struggle between Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the commander of the armed forces, and Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, the head of the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group. The two generals are for-



Smoke rises from the tarmac of Khartoum International Airport as a fire burns, in Khartoum

- Medics say nearly 100 civilian deaths recorded
- US top diplomat expresses 'deep concern' over fighting
- Army has used air strikes to hit rivals' camps
- Violence began amid push to restore civilian rule

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken renewed his call for a truce and a return to negotiations during a meeting of the Group of Seven wealthy nations in Japan Monday

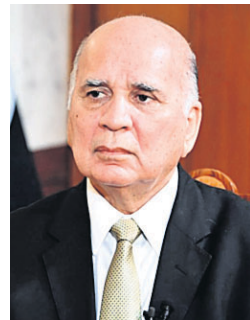
mer allies who jointly orchestrated an October 2021 military coup that derailed Sudan's short-lived transition to democracy. Both men have dug in, saying they would not negotiate a truce, instead engaging in verbal attacks and demanding the other's surrender.

On Monday, Dagalo, whose forces grew out of the notorious Janjaweed militias in Sudan's Darfur region, portrayed himself in a statement on Twitter as a defender of democracy and branded Burhan as the aggressor and a "radical Islamist".

Pro-democracy activists have noted that both generals have a long history of human rights abuses. At the same time, both men have powerful foreign backers, making them potentially susceptible to mounting diplomatic pressure

We always strive to be a part of the solution. Wars end with negotiation and dialogue; that's why we believe in the language of dialogue

FUAD HUSSEIN | IRAQ'S FOREIGN MINISTER



PRISONERS SWAP

A Saudi-led military coalition on Monday freed 104 more prisoners captured in Yemen's war, a unilateral release that followed an organised prisoner swap amid renewed diplomatic efforts to halt the conflict



Kremlin critic jailed in treason case for 25 yrs

It was the latest move in the Kremlin's relentless crackdown on anyone who dares to criticise the invasion



AGENCIES

Moscow, April 17: A Russian court convicted a top opposition activist of treason Monday for publicly denouncing Moscow's war in Ukraine and sentenced him to 25 years in prison.

It was the latest move in the Kremlin's relentless crackdown on anyone who dares to criticise the invasion. Vladimir Kara-Murza, Jr., an activist and journalist who twice survived poisonings he blamed on the Kremlin, has rejected the charges against him as punishment for standing up to Russian President Vladimir Putin and likened the proceedings to the show trials during the rule of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

Human rights organisations and Western governments denounced the verdict and demanded his release. Amnesty International declared the 41-year-old a prisoner of conscience. The charges against Kara-Murza, who has been behind bars since his arrest a year ago, stem from a March 2022 speech to the

- Politician Kara-Murza was accused of treason
- Denied wrongdoing, said he stood by his actions
- Spoke out strongly against the Ukraine war and Putin
- Lobbied the West to impose sanctions on Russia
- London and Washington demand his release

Arizona House of Representatives in which he denounced Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other speeches abroad. Days after that invasion, the country adopted a law criminalising spreading "false information" about its military. Authorities have used the law to stifle criticism of what the Kremlin calls "a special military operation." The sweeping campaign of repression is unprecedented since the Soviet era, effectively criminalising independent reporting on the conflict and any public criticism of the war.

Last month, a Russian court convicted a father over social media posts critical of the war and sentenced him to two years in prison. His 13-year-old daughter was sent to an orphanage. Days later, Russia's security service arrested Evan Gershkovich, an American reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, on espionage charges. In a statement at the end of his trial, Kara-Murza said that he was jailed for "many years of struggle against Putin's dictatorship."

Kara-Murza was an associate of Russian opposition leader and fierce Putin critic Boris Nemtsov, who was assassinated near the Kremlin in 2015.

SpaceX calls off 1st launch attempt of its Starship rocket

KASSOCIATED PRESS

South Padre Island, April 17: SpaceX called off its first launch attempt of its giant rocket Monday after a problem cropped up during fuelling.

Elon Musk's company had planned to fly the nearly 400-foot Starship rocket from the southern tip of Texas, near the Mexican border. The countdown was halted at the 40-second mark because of a stuck valve in the first-stage booster. Launch controllers couldn't fix the frozen valve in time, and cancelled the attempt.

The countdown continued, and fuelling was completed, as a dress rehearsal. No people or satellites were aboard. There won't be another try until at least Wednesday. "Learned a lot today," Musk tweeted after the flight was postponed.

The company plans to use Starship to send people and cargo to the moon and, ultimately, Mars.



Rishi Sunak faces Parl investigation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, April 17: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is facing a watchdog inquiry under his parliamentary declaration of interest obligations related to a Budget policy that could benefit his wife, Akshata Murty, through her business interest in a childcare firm, it emerged Monday.

The inquiry has been opened by the UK's Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, an independent officer of the House of Commons in charge of looking at evidence if individual British members of Parliament are feared to have broken a rule under the 'Code of Conduct'.

The active inquiries on the watchdog's list include one opened on

Sunak, 42, last Thursday under Paragraph 6 of the rules of conduct, as Downing Street said ministerial interests were "transparently declared". "Members must always be open and frank in declaring any relevant interest in any proceeding of the House or its Committees, and in any communications with Ministers, Members, public officials or public office holders," states Paragraph 6.

According to the BBC, the inquiry relates to the British Indian leader's wife's interest in Koru Kids Ltd, which is likely to benefit from a new pilot scheme announced in the Spring Budget last month to incentivise people to become childminders.

Akshata Murty, the daughter of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, is listed on the UK's Companies House register as a shareholder in Koru Kids – one of six childminder agencies in England listed on the government's website with contact details.

The Opposition had flagged this fact last month and called for further explanations at a hearing of the Liaison Committee – made up of all House of Commons committee chairs. Labour MP Catherine McKinnell had asked Sunak if he had any interest to declare in relation to the new childcare policy.



A girl looks from behind the door of the Volodymyrsky Cathedral during a service on Orthodox Easter in Kyiv, Ukraine

Airbus, Air France face verdict over 2009 Rio-Paris crash

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, April 17: A French court Monday acquitted Airbus and Air France of manslaughter charges over the 2009 crash of Flight 447 from Rio to Paris, which killed 228 people and led to lasting changes in aircraft safety measures.

Sobs broke out in the courtroom as the presiding judge read out the decision, a devastating defeat for

victims' families who fought for 13 years to see the case reach court.

The three-judge panel ruled that there wasn't enough evidence of a direct link between decisions by the companies and the crash. The official investigation found that multiple factors contributed to the disaster, including pilot error and the icing over of external sensors called pitot tubes. The two-month trial left fami-

lies wracked with anger and disappointment. Unusually, even state prosecutors argued for acquittal, saying that the proceedings didn't produce enough proof of criminal wrongdoing by the companies. Prosecutors laid the responsibility primarily with the pilots, who died in the crash. Airbus lawyers also blamed pilot error, and Air France said the full reasons for the crash will never be known.

Firefighters battle France's 1st major forest blaze of 2023

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, Apr 11: France's government sounded the alarm Monday about the growing risk of forest fires because of climate change, as hundreds of firefighters in the country's parched south wrestled with their biggest woodland-destroying blaze so far this year.

The fire erupted Sunday and burned on more than 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) of land along the Mediterranean coast, and spread across the border into northeastern Spain.

On a visit Monday to the zone, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said: "The fire season is starting early because of climate warming." Forest fires have long

regularly afflicted France but generally used to start later in the year. However, major wildfires in Europe are now starting earlier in the year, becoming more frequent and harder to stop, and doing more damage.

Scientists say they'll likely get worse as climate change intensifies. The Mediterranean region is warming faster than the global average. "We're in April. We have already seen the start of several important fires, notably in the south of France," Darmanin said.

Droughts that hit France last year have been compounded by shortages of rain this past winter, leaving already tinder-dry woodlands at even greater risk. French authorities are urging home own-



A plane drops fire retardant over a forest fire on a hill near the village of Banyuls-sur-Mer, southwestern France

ers to chop back and thin out trees and scrublands around their properties and appealing for people to take extra care not to discard cigarettes or otherwise start fires in-

advertently.

Hundreds of firefighters backed by water-bombing planes were deployed to tackle Sunday's forest fire between Banyuls-sur-Mer and

Cerbere in southern France that also spilled into Spain. French rescue services spokesman Arnaud Wilm

The fire erupted Sunday and burned on more than 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) of land along the Mediterranean coast, and spread across the border into northeastern Spain

told broadcaster FranceInfo Monday morning that the blaze is being

successfully contained and that its biggest flames have been extinguished but fire crews were still working to completely stop its spread and put it out.

On the Spanish side, firefighters said the flames that spread close to the town of Portbou were still active but had been stabilised and were no longer spreading. They said two border roads remained closed to traffic and the train service linking Portbou to Cerbere was halted.

Spanish national television said some 50 people were temporarily evacuated from their houses near the town while around 20 French people unable to cross the border were given accommodation overnight in the town.

of the day quote

Wheat procurement has reached 41 lakh tonne till April 16 of the current marketing year, slightly lower than 50 lakh tonne in the year-ago period

ASHOK K MEENA | CHAIRMAN AND MD, FCI

Gujarat attracts one of the highest foreign direct investments in India and is currently turning into an EV battery manufacturing and assembly centre

ABHIJIT MALKANI | CEO, ESR INDIA

We remain committed to introducing a new electric model every year and we are on a good trajectory of achieving our aim of going all electric by 2030

JYOTI MALHOTRA | MD, VOLVO CAR

SHORT TAKES

Diesel sales jump

New Delhi: Diesel sales in India jumped up sharply in the first half of April as agricultural activity pick-up and trucking increased to meet industrial demand, preliminary industry data showed Monday. Demand for diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country accounting for about two-fifths of the demand, soared over 15 per cent to 3.45 million tonnes in the first half of April when compared to a year ago. Month-on-month sales rose 8.4 per cent when compared with 3.19 million tonne of diesel consumed in the first half of March that had witnessed seasonal slowdown. Petrol sales rose about 2 per cent to 1.14 million tonne during April 1 to 15 when compared with the same period of last year. Sales however fell 6.6 per cent month-on-month.

Adani-Total's LNG plant to start soon

New Delhi: Adani Group and French company TotalEnergies' newly built ₹6,000 crore facility to import LNG at Dhamra on the Odisha coast will start commercial operations at the end of May, the French firm said Monday. The 5 million tonne a year capacity terminal received its first ever shipment of liquefied natural gas - a fuel that will be used to make steel, produce fertilizers and turned into CNG and cooking gas - April 1. Qatari ship 'Milaha Ras Laffan' docked at Dhamra port April 1 morning, bringing in 2.6 trillion British thermal units of natural gas in its frozen form (LNG) which will be used to commission the facility.

Gold ETFs inflow dips 74% in FY23

New Delhi: Inflow in gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) dropped 74 per cent year-on-year to ₹653 crore in 2022-23, mainly due to profit booking in this asset class and investors' preference for equities. According to data available from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi), 14-gold linked ETFs have seen an inflow of ₹653 crore in the fiscal year that ended March 31 this year. This was way below than ₹2,541 crore inflow seen in the segment in 2021-22 and ₹1,614 crore in 2019-20.

Vedanta inks pacts with 20 Korean cos

New Delhi: Vedanta Group Monday said it has signed agreements with 20 Korean companies from the display glass industry for the development of an electronics manufacturing hub in India. Vedanta was invited to a roadshow at the recently-concluded Korea Biz-Trade Show 2023 organised by Korean government-funded trade and investment promotion organisation KOTRA.

BOOSTING RELATIONS

The FTA talks mark a step-up in economic relations between the two countries despite calls from Western countries for India to gradually distance itself from its dominant weapons supplier, Russia, over its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 17: India and Russia are discussing a free trade agreement (FTA), the Russian trade minister said Monday, an announcement that could deepen bilateral commercial ties that have flourished since war broke out in Ukraine.

"We pay special attention to the issues of mutual access of production to the markets of our countries," Russian Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov, who is also the trade minister, told an event in New Delhi. "Together with the Eurasian Economic Commission, we are looking forward to intensifying negotiations on a free trade agreement with India."

Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said the Covid pandemic had disrupted discussions on an FTA between India and the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union, and that he hoped "our colleagues will pick up on this ... because we do believe it will make a real difference to our trade relationship".

"You can see that there are big changes going on like 'Make in India'. We are determined to make India a global manufacturing hub. I want to emphasise on the opportunity of 'Make in India'," he added. Manturov said road construction material and equipment and chemicals and pharmaceutical products were in demand in Russia and "I am sure that this will create opportunities for Indian companies to



I am sure we will be able to supply 20 per cent ethanol blended petrol by next (fiscal) year. We also advanced the availability of E20 blended petrol to 2025, five years from earlier planned in 2030

HARDEEP SINGH PURI | OIL MINISTER



There are understandable concerns about trade imbalance and we need to work with our Russian counterparts to address this imbalance. We should be honest about short and medium-term challenges. There could be over-compliance

S JAISHANKAR | FOREIGN MINISTER, INDIA

Because of a lack of imports from India, it's not enough to use Rupee. We need to boost trade from India. In this case we are looking at balance, like for example, we have with China - we have 200 billion dollars trade with China and it's balanced

DENIS MANTUROV | DEPUTY PM, RUSSIA

increase their supplies to Russia".

Reuters reported in November that Russia was potentially seeking to import more than 500 products from India for key sectors including cars, aircraft and trains, given that Western sanctions imposed over Russia's military action in Ukraine have undermined its ability to keep core industries operating.

Manturov also said Russia would consider widening the use of "na-

tional currencies and currencies of friendly countries". India has been keen on increasing the use of its rupee currency for trade with Russia.

Russia describes its campaign in Ukraine as a "special military operation" against security threats, while pro-Western Ukraine calls it an unprovoked war of conquest.

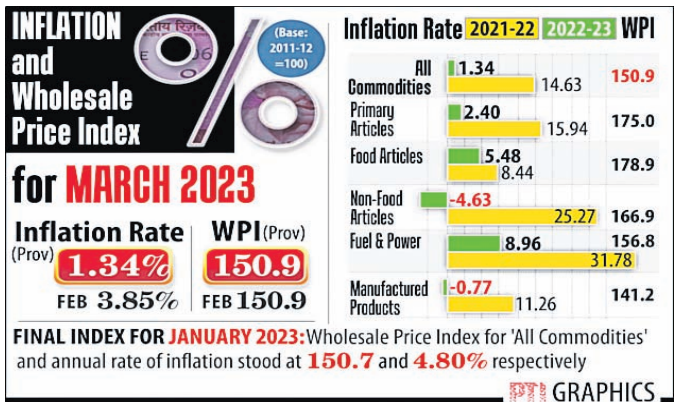
New Delhi has not explicitly criticised the Russian invasion and has called for a peaceful reso-

WADIA MAY EXIT GO FIRST

Indian conglomerate Wadia Group is in talks with strategic partners to either sell a majority stake in loss-making budget airline Go First or completely exit it, reports said. Go First posted its biggest annual loss in fiscal 2022 and has been facing operational problems in the last few months as half of its aircraft were grounded due to supply chain disruptions related to Pratt & Whitney jet engines



WPI inflation eases to 29-month low in March



March is the 10th straight month when wholesale price index based inflation has declined

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: The wholesale price-based inflation eased to a 29-month low of 1.34 per cent in March on easing prices of manufactured products and fuel items, even though food articles turned expensive.

The inflation was 3.85 per cent in February and 14.63 per cent in March 2022.

"Decline in the rate of inflation in March 2023 is primarily contributed by fall in prices of basic metals, food products, textiles, non-food articles, minerals, rubber & plastic products, crude petroleum & natural gas and paper and paper products," the commerce and industry ministry said on Monday.

The headline wholesale price index (WPI) inflation for March eased to its lowest level since October 2020, when the rate of price

rise was 1.31 per cent. Last month, inflation in food articles rose to 5.48 per cent as against 3.81 per cent in February.

Among food items, although inflation in vegetables, onion and potato remained in negative, the rate of price rise was higher than that in February.

In case of vegetables, it was at (-)2.22 per cent in March, higher than (-)21.53 per cent in February. In onion, inflation was (-)36.83 per cent in March, higher than (-)40.14 per cent in the previous month. Inflation in wheat and pulses was 9.16 per cent and 3.03 per cent, respectively, while in oilseeds it was (-)15.05 per cent in March 2023.

As per the government data, fuel and power basket inflation eased to 8.96 per cent in March from 14.82 per cent in February. In manufactured products, inflation was (-)0.77 per cent as against 1.94 per cent. The deceleration in WPI comes in line with the easing of March retail inflation.

UPI LEADS

India witnessed 88bn payment transactions worth ₹150tn in '22

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 17: Led by Unified payments interface (UPI), payment modes like debit and credit cards, prepaid payment instruments - mobile and prepaid cards processed 87.92 billion transactions worth ₹149.5 trillion in 2022, a report showed Monday.

The UPI Person-to-Merchant (P2M) and Person-to-Person (P2P) are the most preferred payment modes among consumers with a market share of 40 per cent and 44 per cent, respectively, in terms of transaction volume (UPI was 84 per cent in total).

In 2022, UPI clocked over 74.05 billion transactions in volume and ₹126 trillion in terms of value, according to the report by Worldline, a global leader in payment services.

For UPI, the transaction volume and value almost doubled since last year as it recorded a 91 per cent increase in volume and over 76 per cent increase in value in 2022 as compared to 2021.

As of December 2022, the total number of POS terminals deployed by merchant acquiring banks crossed the 7.55 million mark - a 37 per cent YoY growth.

RIDING IN FAST LANE

Passenger vehicle exports from India up 15% in FY23

MARUTI SUZUKI LED THE EXPORTS LAST FISCAL IN THE PASSENGER VEHICLE SEGMENT. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY HYUNDAI MOTOR INDIA AND KIA INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: Passenger vehicle exports from India rose 15 per cent in FY23 with Maruti Suzuki India leading the segment with dispatches of over 2.5 lakh units, as per the latest data by industry body SIAM.

The total passenger vehicle (PV) exports stood at 6,62,891 units in the 2022-23 fiscal as compared to 5,77,875 units in 2021-22.

Passenger car shipments saw a 10 per cent growth at 4,13,787 units, while utility vehicle exports rose 23 per cent at 2,47,493 units during the last fiscal, the data by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) showed. Exports of vans, however, de-

clined to 1,611 units last fiscal, from 1,853 units in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI), the country's largest carmaker, exported 2,55,439 PVs last fiscal, an 8 per cent increase as compared to 2,35,670 units in the 2020-21 fiscal year. The carmaker exports to various markets, including Latin America, ASEAN, Africa, the Middle East and neighbouring regions.

Hyundai Motor India's overseas despatches stood at 1,53,019 units last fiscal, up 18 per cent from 1,29,260 units in 2021-22.

Honda Cars India exported 22,710 units, while Mahindra & Mahindra chipped in with 10,622 units in the 2022-23 fiscal.

Overall automobile exports from India last fiscal stood at 47,61,487 units, down 15 per cent from 56,17,359 units in 2021-22.



FOREIGN FIRMS FLOCKING

AGENCIES

Mumbai, April 17: Apple's chief executive Tim Cook is likely to welcome customers to the iPhone maker's first store in India, which is scheduled to open at the BKC business district here Tuesday, company executives said Monday.

Store openings for the iconic brand world over have witnessed fans queuing up to become the first customer, and it remains to be seen how the people of Mumbai welcome the store on a working day. On the eve of opening for customers, a media preview was held at the store which is spread over a 20,000 square feet area.

"India has such a beautiful culture and an incredible energy, and we're excited to build on our long-standing history - supporting our customers, investing in local communities, and working together to build a better future with innovations that serve humanity," Cook said in a statement.

The company's senior vice president for retail Deirdre O'Brien told reporters that a lot of attention has been given to Apple's key beliefs of sustainability and inclusivity, and pointed out that the 100-strong team which will be on the floor will be speaking 18 Indian languages.

The company employs 2,500 people in the country and has indirectly helped create 10 lakh jobs through its app ecosystem, she said.

The two-storey store occupies prime real estate at the corner of a sprawling mall which also houses brands like Diesel, Michael Kors, Kate Spade and Swarovski.

Apple's maiden retail store in the country has been a subject of great speculation since at least 2019, when the Indian policymakers warmed up to the idea of welcoming foreign direct investment in single brand retail. The permissions to allow such stores have come with riders like mandates on local sourcing in the final finished goods. The company has leased out

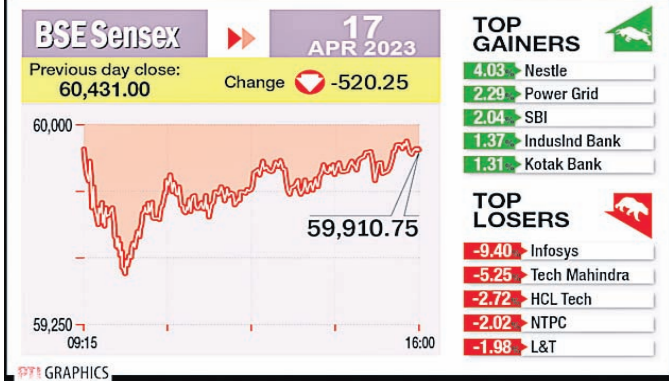
Mumbai, April 17: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure after nine-session rally Monday, as massive sell-off in IT, tech and telecom counters unnerved investors.

Intense selling in Infosys, which fell over 9 per cent after lower-than-expected revenue guidance for FY24, and HDFC twins also pulled the benchmarks down.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 520.25 points or 0.86 per cent to settle at 59,910.75. During the day, it plunged 988.53 points or 1.63 per cent to 59,442.47. The broader NSE Nifty fell 121.15 points or 0.68 per cent to finish at 17,706.85.

"The market responded negatively to the weak start of the earnings season by IT bellwether and their cautious outlook. On the global front, the US 10-year bond yield rose as solid US job data raised concerns over further rate hikes by the Fed," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Among the Sensex firms, Infosys emerged as the biggest laggard, falling over 9 per cent after the company reported lower-than-expected growth in the fourth quarter net profit and gave a weak 4-7



per cent revenue growth guidance for FY24 amid the tightening of IT budgets by clients following a turmoil in the US banking sector.

Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Larsen & Toubro, NTPC, Wipro, HDFC, Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank were the other laggards.

The rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 82.01 against the US currency Monday.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.31 per cent to \$86.04 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned net sellers in the capital markets as they sold shares worth Rs 533.20 crore.

Cook to welcome customers at Apple's first store in India

APPLE'S FIRST STORE IS BEING LAUNCHED AS THE COMPANY MARKS 25 YEARS IN INDIA



Apple sales at new zenith

Apple Inc's sales in India hit a new high of almost \$6 billion in the year through March, highlighting the market's increasing importance for the iPhone maker as chief executive officer Tim Cook arrives in the country to open its first local stores. Revenue in India grew by nearly 50%, from \$4.1 billion a year earlier, according to sources. Around \$9 billion worth of smartphones were exported from India between April 2022 and February this year and iPhones accounted for more than 50% of that, data shows. Apple is scheduled to post quarterly earnings May 4 and has signaled it expects total global revenue to decline.

the space in Jio World Drive mall for 11 years, and has been successful

in negotiating for barring 22 competing brands, including Amazon,

Now Nike, Adidas making in India

A subsidiary of the world's largest maker of branded sports footwear Pou Chen will invest ₹23.02 billion to set up a manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu, the state government said Monday. The Taiwanese footwear maker for brands like Nike, Adidas, New Balance, and Timberland manufactured and shipped over 272 million pairs of shoes in the financial year 2022 globally, up nearly 14% from a year earlier. It already has plants in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. "We hope this would be the first of many investments to come (in India)," Pou Chen Vice President George Liu said in a meeting streamed online with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin. The investment comes nearly a year after Taiwanese peer Hong Fu Group signed a deal to invest ₹10 billion to make footwear in the southern state. Tamil Nadu made 45% of India's footwear exports over the last five years with many brands, including Giorgio Armani and Gucci, making their products or sourcing raw materials from the state. Other global names like Apple suppliers Foxconn, Salcomp and Pegatron have also been ramping up their production in Tamil Nadu and the broader country, as they look to diversify their manufacturing footprint away from China and Taiwan.

Facebook, Google LG, Microsoft, Sony and others, from occupying space or advertising in close vicinity. At present, Apple has a 3 per cent share in the highly competitive Indian smartphone market which is ruled by Chinese and South

Korean brands. Lately, the company has upped its reliance on manufacturing in India, which is increasingly being seen as an alternative for China ever since the supply chain disruptions during the Covid pandemic.

CSK prevail over RCB

MI look to keep momentum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 17: Chennai Super Kings got their act together in the nick of time to eke out an eight-run win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in an IPL match that produced 444 runs here Monday.

Devon Conway slammed 83 (45b, 6x4, 6x6) while Shivam Dube blazed away to a 27-ball 52 (2x4, 5x6) as CSK posted an imposing 226/6 after asked to bat first. In reply, RCB ended at 218/8.

RCB skipper Faf du Plessis (62, 33b, 5x4, 4x6) and Glenn Maxwell (76, 36b, 3x4, 8x6) gave a scare to CSK till they were at the crease, sharing 126 runs for the third wicket to raise hopes of a famous win.

RCB endured a horrible start as they lost Virat Kohli who played on to an Akash Singh delivery. There could have been more success for Akash had Maheesh Theekshana not dropped a skier from Mahipal Lomror at mid-off.

Lomror though didn't last long and departed after being caught by Rituraj Gaikwad at cover point. Maxwell meant business as he smashed Akash for two sixes in the next over, even as Du Plessis hit Despande for two fours and a six.

Du Plessis displayed his array of strokes and Akash bore the brunt of his wrath in the next over, conceding two boundaries and a six. Du Plessis and Maxwell were at their brutal best and didn't spare any CSK bowler, finding the fours and sixes at will.

While Du Plessis raised his fifty off just 23 balls, Maxwell's half-century came up in 24 balls as RCB raced to 121/2 in 10 overs. Theekshana had the last laugh as he outfoxed Maxwell to break the dangerous partnership. To make



DEVON CONWAY

matters worse for RCB, Du Plessis departed in the next over, handing MS Dhoni a skier off Moeen Ali.

Needing 58 off the last five overs, veteran Dinesh Karthik kept RCB in the hunt with some cheeky boundaries and was also handed a life by Gaikwad off Deshpande in the 17th over. But Karthik was then dismissed by Deshpande (3/45) to end RCB hopes.

Earlier, it was a struggle for RCB's bowling attack as the CSK batters went hammer and tongs from the onset. CSK started on a bright note thanks to Conway who first whipped Wayne Parnell to the mid wicket boundary in the second over and, three balls later, lifted the South African over the fine leg fence.

Gaikwad struggled as he departed in the third over, finding

Parnell in the outfield from a Mohammed Siraj delivery. Conway was unperturbed as he went about his business in style, scooping Vijaykumar Vyshak over the keeper for a four, and a ball later, Rahane (37) executed a perfect hook shot to send the ball into the stands.

Introduced into the attack in the seventh over, Maxwell was hit out of the park by Conway. The duo looked in ominous form as they gathered a boundary or a six in all most every over of their partnership.

Conway was at his best as he smoked Wanindu Hasaranga over midwicket for a huge six in the 10th over, before the Lankan spinner broke the dangerous-looking partnership by cleaning up Rahane. Conway brought up his second fifty on the trot.

CSK reached 97/2 at the halfway stage. Dube marked his arrival at the crease with a huge six off Maxwell, while Conway continued his onslaught and smashed rookie Vijaykumar for back-to-back fours.

Dube was not to be left behind as he slammed Harshal Patel over long on for another six. The Indian batter carried on and carted Siraj over midwicket for a four and then hooked a slower bouncer from the bowler over square leg for a maximum.

BRIEF SCORES: CSK 226/6 (Devon Conway 83, Shivam Dube 52, Ajinkya Rahane 37; Wanindu Hasaranga 1/21, Glenn Maxwell 1/28) beat RCB 218/8 (Glenn Maxwell 76, Faf du Plessis 62; Tushar Deshpande 3/45, Matheesa Pathirana 2/42) by 8 runs.

Contrasting results for Bhagat at Brazil tourney



Pramod Bhagat

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



G Dillaswar Rao

Sivakumar clinched bronze in SL3-SL4 category after losing the semi-final to Koreans Dongjae and Shin.

Talking about the same Pramod Bhagat said, "I am happy with my performance, but there is still scope for improvement. I had a bad day in singles, and I would like to congratulate Nitesh for playing exceptionally well."

On the other hand, Sukant secured a bronze in his singles SL4 category. Talking about the same Sukant said, "I am happy with my double's performance, but I need to work harder on my singles game. I have identified my mistakes in this tournament and will work hard on them and not repeat them."

Talking about the same Pramod and Sukant's coach Shiba Prasad Das said, "Both Pramod and Sukant played well, but there is a lot of scope for improvement. I have spoken to them and told them about the mistakes they committed. We will head back to India and immediately start working on them and prepare for our next tournament."

Mongia, Dhar join Odisha teams

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 17: Former India cricketers Dinesh Mongia and Rumeli Dhar, Monday, have been appointed as the head coaches of Odisha men's and women's teams, respectively.

The decision was taken at the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, which took place Monday at the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA) office pertaining to the appointment of Support Staff for Odisha teams for the BCCI Domestic Season 2023-24.

OCA had received CVs of various candidates for the post of head coach positions as well as the member of selection committees for senior men, junior men and women basing on the employment advertisement placed in the OCA's website.

All the candidates went through



RUMELI DHAR

the interview process done by CAC. After discussions, the CAC decided to go with Mongia and Dhar as the head coach positions due to their coaching experience, expertise and credentials.

SENIOR MEN SELECTION COMMITTEE: Amiya Ray (Chairman), Sourajit Mohapatra and Subit Biswal (Both members);



DINESH MONGIA

JUNIOR MEN SELECTION COMMITTEE: Pravanjan Mullick (Chairman), Niranjan Behera and Subhrajit Sahoo (Both members);

WOMEN'S SELECTION COMMITTEE: Rashmita Mohapatra (Chairperson), Sasmita Pattnaik, Madhusmita Mohapatra, Gangotri Behera and Sudhanshubala Sahoo (All members).

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 17: Odisha FC Monday marched into the semi-finals of the Super Cup after coming from a goal down to beat Hyderabad FC 2-1.

The match between Hyderabad FC and Odisha FC saw a shift in momentum as Odisha took control in the second half after Nizam's lead in the first half by Javier Siverio. Diego Mauricio was the hero for Odisha, scoring the equaliser after a scramble in the box during a corner, and setting up Victor Rodrigues for the winning goal.

Early in the 11th minute of the game, Siverio made Hyderabad one foot in the semis as the Spanish striker headed in another threatening cross by Poojary from close range, beating an Odisha defender in an aerial duel to score with a beautiful header.

In the 17th minute of the game, Odisha put pressure on their opponents through the right wing, but Diego Mauricio's attempt to deliver a final cross was blocked, resulting in a corner.

In the 24th minute of the game, a nice duel was observed on the left flank between Odisha's Nandhakumar and Nikhil Poojary. After being played free, Nandhakumar tried to create some space, but Poojary kept the pressure on him, leading to Nandhakumar shooting wide. Despite the missed opportunity, it was a nice defensive effort by Poojary to prevent Odisha from scoring.

Siverio reached for another header from a corner, but this time he couldn't connect well with the ball, causing it to roll to the left of the goal before Amrinder was able



to reach it in the 44th minute of the game.

In the 55th minute of the game, Mauricio sneaked the ball into the goal following a scurry inside the box after a corner, putting Odisha back in the game and making them the favorites to advance to the semis.

India boxers leave for pre-tourney camp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 17: A 19-member Indian men's boxing team Monday left for Tashkent to take part in a multi-nation training camp ahead of the World Championship scheduled to be held from April 30 to May 14.

Six-time Asian Championships medallist Shiva Thapa and 2019 Asian Championships silver medallist Deepak Bhorla will headline the Indian squad for the showpiece event.

The gold medallists will walk away with a prize money of USD 200,000. The silver medallists will be given USD 100,000, and both bronze-medallists will be awarded USD 50,000 each.

There are 13 men, who will be taking part in the marquee event. However another six boxers have

been added for the 'Multi-Nation Training Camp', which includes 2018 Asian Games gold medallist Amit Panghal.

The Tashkent Championships have already seen a registration of around 640 boxers from 104 countries, including seven defending World Champions like Sofiane Oumiha from France, Japan's Tomoya Tsuboi and Sewonrets Okazawa, Loren Alfonso from Azerbaijan, Saken Bibossinov from Kazakhstan and Cuba's Yoenlis Hernandez Martinez and Julio La Cruz.

In six weight categories - 51kg, 57kg, 63.5kg, 71kg, 80kg and 92kg, two Indian boxers each will participate in the training camp as reserve boxers are also accompanying the main team.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS SQUAD

Govind Sahani (48kg), Deepak

Bhorla (51kg), Sachin Siwach (54kg), Mohammad Hussamuddin (57kg), Varinder Singh (60kg), Shiva Thapa (63.5kg), Akash Sangwan (67kg), Nishant Dev (71kg), Sumit Kundu (75kg), Ashish Chaudhary (80kg), Harsh Choudhary (86kg), Naveen Kumar (92kg) and Narender Berwal (92+kg).

SQUAD FOR TRAINING CAMP

Govind Sahani (48kg), Deepak Bhorla (51kg), Amit Panghal (51kg), Sachin Siwach (54kg), Mohammad Hussamuddin (57kg), Sachin (57kg), Varinder Singh (60kg), Shiva Thapa (63.5kg), Vanshaj (63.5kg), Akash Sangwan (67kg), Nishant Dev (71kg), Hemant Yadav (71kg), Sumit Kundu (75kg), Ashish Chaudhary (80kg), Sanjay (80kg), Harsh Choudhary (86kg), Naveen Kumar (92kg), Sanjeet (92kg) and Narender Berwal (92+kg).



day. Arjun Tendulkar and Duan Jansen too were handed IPL debuts on Sunday and it remains to be seen if MI persist with the duo.

Sunrisers, on the other hand, found new heroes in Harry Brook and Abhishek Tripathi to record two victories in their last two matches.

While Brook finally lived up to



the expectations with a 55-ball 100 against KKR, Tripathi had slammed a 48-ball 74 to take the team home against Punjab Kings.

Captain Aiden Markram's contribution in both the matches has been immense as he held the other end with scores of 50 and 37 in the last two matches. However, Mayank Agarwal has stuck out like a sore thumb with his lack of runs at the top.

Among the bowlers, spinner Mayank Markande has been SRH's highest wicket-taker with six wickets, while Umran Malik, Marco Jansen and Bhubneshwar Kumar too have troubled the opposition.

Tuesday's match could also be a clash between twin Jansen brothers - Duan and Marco - if both are picked in their respective team's playing XI.

Chennai to host Asian Champions Trophy hockey

INDO ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, April 17: In a bid to take international hockey events to different cities across the country, Hockey India announced Chennai, Tamil Nadu as the venue for the forthcoming Asian Champions Trophy 2023.

This will be the seventh edition of the coveted tournament and it is scheduled to be held from August 3 to August 12, 2023 serving as a precursor to the Hangzhou Asian Games in September where teams will vie to win Gold and qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

Chennai last hosted an international hockey event in 2007 when the prestigious Asia Cup was held and the venue proved to be lucky for the home team who clinched the title beating Korea 7-2 in the Final.

The Indian men's team had won this title in the inaugural edition held in 2011 and beat Pakistan in the Final to win the Title in 2016. In the following edition in 2018, India were joint winners with Pakistan after rain affected the proceedings of the final held in Muscat.

Welcoming the participating teams to Tamil Nadu, Minister of Youth Welfare and Sports Development Thiru Udhayanidhi Stalin said, "It is indeed a great pleasure and honour to host the Hero Asian Champions Trophy Chennai 2023 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu which was once the capital of hockey in South India with many reputed domestic and international events being held here."

"I am very delighted to see the sport being revived in the state with many youngsters coming up the ranks including recent sensation in the Indian team S Karthi who is from Tamil Nadu. I believe hosting the Hero Asian Champions Trophy Chennai 2023 here will further revive the sport in the region and watching top teams in Asia will also inspire the younger generation to take up hockey as a career."

Meanwhile, Padma Shri Dilip Tirkey, president of Hockey India said, "On behalf of Hockey India, I thank Mr Udhayanidhi Stalin for his support in hosting this prestigious tournament in Chennai. I had the honour of interacting with him during the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar-Rourkela and it was very encouraging to see his enthusiasm and passion for hockey."

"I also thank AHF for this opportunity. It has been a while since we had all the top teams in Asia come to India and participate here. I have very fond memories of playing in Chennai and we hope they will all turn up in large numbers to support the participating teams."