



STARK REALITY

Actor Alaya F says women still have a long way to go before they get great opportunities in the film industry

LEISURE

P2



NEW COVID-19 VOI

WHO upgrades Omicron subvariant XBB.1.16 to a Covid-19 'variant of interest' (VOI) due to its 'sustained increase'

INTERNATIONAL

P10



JYOTHI'S GOLDEN DAY

Indian compound archer Jyothi Surekha Vennam grabs individual and mixed team gold medals in the WC Stage 1

SPORTS

P12

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DA CASE

Pradeep Panigrahy chargesheeted by Vig

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: The state Vigilance Saturday submitted a 3,000-page chargesheet against Gopalpur MLA Pradeep Panigrahy and his wife before the special Vigilance court here in connection with a disproportionate asset (DA) case.

The Vigilance claimed in the chargesheet that Panigrahy illegally amassed assets worth Rs 9,18,13,007 beyond his known sources of income.

Following the orders of the Odisha Lokayukta, the anti-corruption wing of state government registered a case (6/2021) under Sections 13(2) and 13(1)(b) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 at the Vigilance cell police station October 4, 2021 on charges of possessing disproportionate assets during his tenure as a public servant.

"During the course of investigation, house searches were conducted and relevant materials, documents and information relating to assets, income and expenditure were collected. After completion of investigation, Panigrahy was found in possession of assets to the tune of Rs 9, 18, 13,007, which he could not explain satisfactorily. His spouse was also found liable for abetting the offence. Accordingly, the investigation report was filed before the Hon'ble Lokayukta 9.06.2022," the Vigilance department claimed in a press note.

Subsequently, the Lokayukta went through the investigation report produced by the Vigilance and April 20, 2023 it asked the Vigilance to submit the chargesheet against Panigrahy and his spouse before the Special Court, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar. The chargesheet reportedly contains detailed evidence collected by the Vigilance against Panigrahy and his wife in the DA case. Panigrahy was earlier arrested by Crime Branch on charges of forgery, criminal conspiracy and various cybercrime related offences December 3, 2020 and lodged in Jharpada special jail.

3 BJB STUDENTS INJURED IN CLASH

Bhubaneswar: At least three Plus III students were injured in a clash over a cricket match at Buxi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar (BJB) Autonomous College here, Saturday. The injured were identified as Soumya Ranjan Pradhan, Umashankar Behera and Ajay Nayak. According to police sources, the incident took place in the morning when some non-students were playing a cricket match at the college ground. "The three, along with a few of their classmates, reached the ground and requested the non-students to vacate the place as the former were about to start a match," an official said. The non-students, however, refused following which a mountain was made out of a molehill and the two groups clashed, leaving the three Plus III students injured.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Shelve off our plan to go international. Outside the country, we can't afford to telecast fake news

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX	37.8°C	36.0°C
	MIN	22.7°C	24.0°C
Humidity	46%	57%	
Rainfall	1.2mm	Nil	
Forecast		Light rain very likely	



EID MUBARAK: People from Muslim community embrace each other on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr at Unit IV mosque in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Paying the price for speaking truth: Rahul

Rahul, who was disqualified as a Lok Sabha MP last month, vacated the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow Saturday as per a court order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Saturday vacated his official bungalow at 12, Tughlaq Lane and said it was the price he paid for speaking the truth.

Gandhi was earlier asked to vacate the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow by April 22.

"I have paid the price for speaking the truth, I am ready to pay any price," he said, adding he would continue to raise issues of price rise and corruption with double the force.

Saturday morning, Gandhi moved out all his belongings from the bungalow where he had been staying for almost two decades.

Gandhi, his mother Sonia Gandhi and sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visited the bungalow in the morning. He handed over keys of the vacated house to officials of the Central Public Works department (CPWD).

He also shook hands with CPWD officials and thanked them.

Talking to reporters while leaving the bungalow, he said, "I have



Rahul hands over the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow's keys to a CPWD official

no problem even if it has been snatched away from me. This house was given to me by the people of India. I will stay with the former Congress president (Sonia Gandhi) at 10, Janpath for some time and then find some other way."

Asked that he could have requested for more time to vacate the bungalow, Gandhi said, "I do not want to stay in this house."

Congress general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said her brother was very courageous and "not scared of anyone and he will continue his struggle".

All this is happening because he spoke the truth about this government, she said.

The Congress said the government may "evict" Gandhi from a house but he occupies a place in the hearts and homes of crores of Indians.

Contd...P4

Hailstorms in state for next 3 days: IMD

The weatherman says heatwave conditions have abated from Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, April 22: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Saturday said most parts of India including Odisha will have a sigh of relief for the next few days from the searing heatwave conditions that had rattled people this week.

The weather office said hailstorms are very likely to occur in parts of Odisha over the next three days, in Bihar for the next two days, and Monday in Vidarbha. Heavy rainfall is expected in parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala Sunday and in Odisha Monday.

This apart, duststorm is very likely to occur at isolated places in south Haryana, northeast Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh Sunday.

Skymet said scattered rainfall is expected in the entire Northeast, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Telangana. Thunderstorms with patchy rain may occur over the western Himalayas, parts of Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, southeast Uttar Pradesh, southeast Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and south-interior Karnataka.

Farmers should use hail nets to protect orchards in sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim and Odisha. The IMD said Saturday

that heatwave conditions abated from Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha.

The IMD has advised farmers should undertake harvesting of matured rice, maize, groundnut and ragi in Andhra Pradesh; rice in Kerala and keep the harvested produce in safer places.

It said a cyclonic circulation lies over northwest Madhya Pradesh and another over interior Tamil Nadu. A trough of relatively low pressure runs from northwest Madhya Pradesh to south Tamil Nadu across Telangana. Private forecaster Skywet Weather added another trough extends from north-east Bihar to Odisha via Jharkhand.

Weather experts say a trough usually brings cloudy conditions and rain, leading to a drop in temperatures.

According to the IMD, several parts of India had been experiencing heatwave conditions for the past few days. High temperatures in the northern and central plains had forced the local administrations to either change the timings or shut the schools until the weather improves. Even in the eastern hills, tea growers complained of relatively high temperatures and prolonged dry spell resulting in crop loss during the on-going flush season.

Tearful adieu to Odia jawan martyred in J&K

Debashish Biswal of Puri Khandayat Sahi was among the five soldiers killed in a terrorist attack in Poonch

PNN&AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 22: The mortal remains of Indian Army jawan Debashish Biswal, who was among the five soldiers killed in a terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch, were consigned to flames with full military honours at his native village in Puri district Saturday.

Thousands of people gathered at the crematorium in Khandayat Sahi of Sakthigopal area as Biswal's elder brother lit the pyre. His body reached Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar on a special Indian Air Force plane. The mortal remains were then taken to Puri in an Army convoy.

Governor Ganeshi Lal and other dignitaries paid their tributes to Biswal at the airport.

'Debashish Amar Rahe' slogans rented the air as the convoy with Biswal's body travelled from



Bhubaneswar to Puri. Chief

Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced an ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh for Biswal's family. He is survived by his wife Sushree Sangeeta and 7-month-old daughter.

Notably, five Army personnel were killed and another was seriously injured Thursday after their vehicle caught fire following the attack near Bata Doriya forests in Poonch. The soldiers were from a Rashtriya Rifles unit deployed for counter-terror operations.

BIDEN TO VISIT INDIA IN SEPT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, April 22: US President Joe Biden is looking forward to travelling to India in September, his administration's point person for South and Central Asia has said, observing that 2024 is going to be a "big year" for the India-US relationship.

India's leadership in the G-20 further broadens its capacity to stand as a force for good in the world, the official said.

"This is gonna be a big year. Of course, India is hosting the G-20. This year, the United States is hosting APEC. Japan is hosting the G7. We have lots of our QUAD members who are taking on leadership roles. And it provides opportunities for all of us to bring our countries closer together," Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, told PTI in an interview Thursday.

"I know our President is looking forward to travelling to India in September. That will be his first trip to India as part of the G-20 Leaders Summit. We're really excited about what's to come in the next few months," he said.

Students outshine ChatGPT in accounting

ALTHOUGH RESEARCHERS TERMED CHATGPT'S PERFORMANCE AS 'IMPRESSIVE', THEY FOUND THAT IT OFTEN PROVIDED EXPLANATIONS FOR ITS ANSWERS, EVEN IF THEY WERE INCORRECT

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 22: Contrary to the popular belief that artificial intelligence (AI) is better than human intelligence, researchers in United States have found that students have scored an overall average of 76.7 per cent as compared to ChatGPT's score of 47.4 per cent in accounting exams.

Researchers, however, said that ChatGPT's performance was "impressive" and that it was a "game changer that will change the way everyone teaches and learns - for the better."

The researchers from Brigham Young University (BYU), US, and 186 other universities wanted to know how OpenAI's technology would fare in accounting exams. They have published their findings in the journal Issues in Accounting Education.



In the researchers' accounting exam, students scored an overall average of 76.7 per cent, as compared to ChatGPT's score of 47.4 per cent.

While in 11.3 per cent of the questions, ChatGPT was found to score higher than the student average, doing particularly well in accounting information systems (AIS) and auditing, the AI bot was found to perform worse on tax, fi-

nancial, and managerial assessments. Researchers think this could possibly be because ChatGPT struggled with the mathematical processes required for the latter type. The AI bot, which uses machine learning to generate natural language text, was further found to do better on true/false questions (68.7 per cent correct) and multiple-choice questions (59.5 per cent), but

- Researchers noted that ChatGPT sometimes made up facts
- For example, when providing a reference, it generated a real-looking reference that was completely fabricated
- The work and sometimes the authors did not even exist

struggled with short-answer questions (between 28.7 and 39.1 per cent).

In general, the researchers said that higher-order questions were harder for ChatGPT to answer. In fact, sometimes ChatGPT was found to provide authoritative written descriptions for incorrect answers, or answer the same question different ways.

They also found that ChatGPT often provided explanations for its answers, even if they were incorrect. Other times, it went on to select the wrong multiple-choice answer, despite providing accurate descriptions.

Researchers importantly noted that ChatGPT sometimes made up facts. For example, when providing a reference, it generated a real-looking reference that was completely fabricated. The work and sometimes the authors did not even exist.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You may find yourself in a precarious position today, says Ganesha. You may feel challenged and swim against the current, which will be counterproductive. Nothing may seem to work out. Taking a break will ease the stress at such a time.

TAURUS

In all probability, it is a favourable day to begin financial planning, says Ganesha. You will focus on your relations and leave no stone unturned to make them prosper. You may yearn for a quiet getaway and end up spending a small fortune to get what you want.

GEMINI

Today, you may resume your quest for spirituality which you had aborted some time back. However, that doesn't mean you are on your way to sainthood. You are just trying to get close to your inner self. Though you will be frugal while spending on yourself, your lavish treatment to your beloved will stump everyone, including him/her, predicts Ganesha.

CANCER

You are likely to be a little over-zealous and over-analytical today, foretells Ganesha. You should not be too forceful or severe on others. This will help you save a few friendships and will make sure that your reputation remains intact. It is best to avoid conflicts and differences with your peers and bosses, suggests Ganesha.

LEO

There are chances of conflict on the home front today. However you will be able to solve these problems owing to your understanding nature. However, these conflicts would likely not have cropped up if you would have paid more attention to your family.

VIRGO

Keep an open mind and give vent to your imagination. You will feel very creative today, and will pursue your innovative ideas. Luck will favour you, and some things on which you took some risk will bear fruits. You will be very energetic and enthusiastic about all the work you do. Ganesha says it is an auspicious day to arrange social gatherings.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that your social status will increase now. Today is an auspicious day for venturing in new business or changing your profession. For those involved in the fields of interior designing, or running beauty parlours, now is an especially bountiful time for making progress in your business.

SCORPIO

A cheerful day lies ahead of you especially for the business community. It's a clincher, as good deals not only come to your door step, but yield good business. Feel, that you are the king of the world; bring out the best in you and you are bound to succeed.

SAGITTARIUS

Murmurs of discontent will reach your ears, especially from those very near. But if you go about pleasing one and all, you may not defuse the bomb completely. Exercise caution, and a lot of patience, says Ganesha. Your tolerance will not only help you overcome the problem, but also help you in addressing dissent in your cadres.

CAPRICORN

Good news for students! If you have been trying your luck for studies abroad, today is an opportune day, says Ganesha. Also, get your priorities straight and see that you achieve them one by one, for only a well-planned move can take you a step closer to your ambition. Those engaged in stock exchange and dealing with shares can expect a fruitful day ahead.

AQUARIUS

Ganesha advises you to make a simple change in your routine and things will work out superbly. You also get recognition and rewards for past achievements. But that does not mean you become complacent, says Ganesha. Get going, as hard work is still the surest way to salvation!

PISCES

Ferdinand the Bull would be the cartoon character that would most aptly describe you today. Calmness will be second nature to you, and wisdom will ooze from your pores. Communal harmony is something dear to your heart, and your amenability will see you achieve it, says Ganesha.

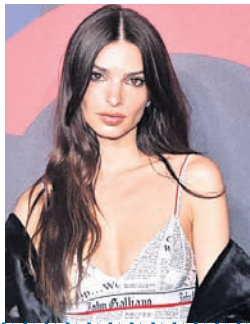


AL PACINO TAKES CREDIT FOR HARRISON FORD'S CAREER

Hollywood legend Al Pacino opened up about turning down the role of Han Solo in *Star Wars* because he didn't understand the script. The iconic role went to Harrison Ford which shaped his career, claimed *The Godfather* actor.

IT'S BIZARRE THAT PEOPLE ARE SO CONCERNED ABOUT MY LOVE LIFE

Supermodel Emily Ratajkowski was pictured kissing the singer Harry Styles in Japan last month and the 31-year-old admitted she finds it bizarre that people care about her love life. She told *Vogue Spain*: "It's very bizarre to have certain experiences and then have the whole world know and comment on them."



Bhumi's massive mission

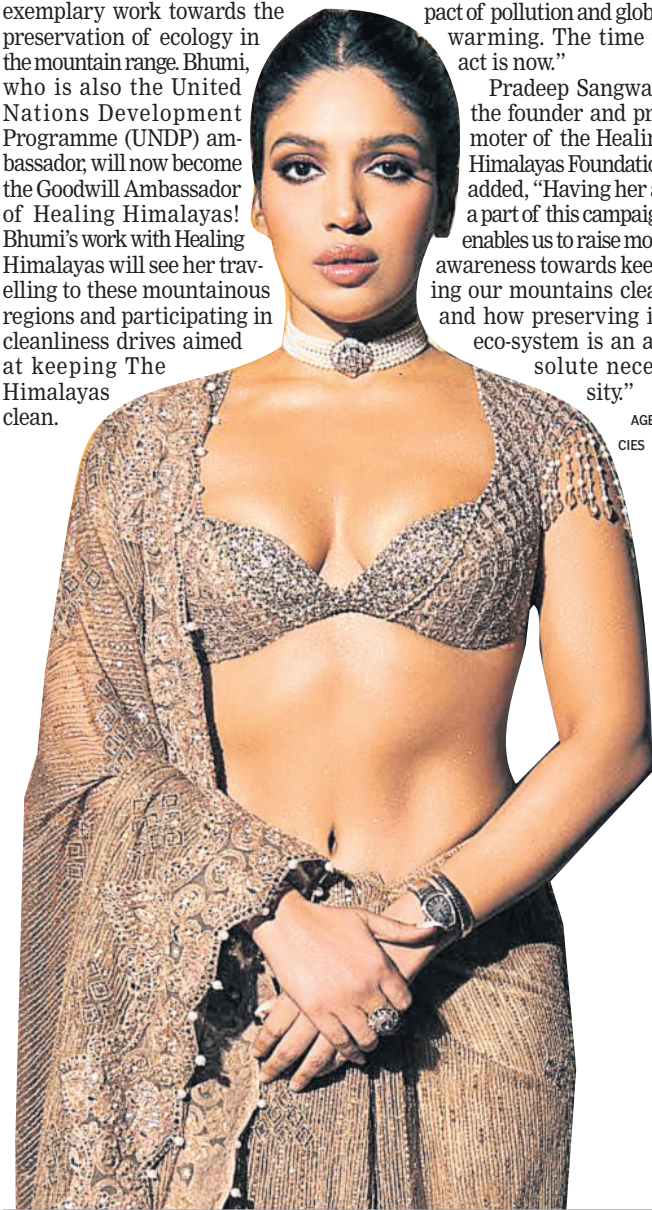
Mumbai: Climate Warrior Bhumi Pednekar is setting herself on a massive mission to clean The Himalayas!

On the occasion of World Earth Day, Bhumi announced that she is partnering with a non-profit, Healing Himalayas, that does extensive and exemplary work towards the preservation of ecology in the mountain range. Bhumi, who is also the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ambassador, will now become the Goodwill Ambassador of Healing Himalayas! Bhumi's work with Healing Himalayas will see her travelling to these mountainous regions and participating in cleanliness drives aimed at keeping The Himalayas clean.

Speaking about this association Bhumi Pednekar said, "The motto of Healing Himalayas 'Don't Wait for Change, Be the Change' truly resonated with me. I believe that each one of us must realise our responsibility towards the planet and actively strive to reduce the impact of pollution and global warming. The time to act is now."

Pradeep Sangwan, the founder and promoter of the Healing Himalayas Foundation added, "Having her as a part of this campaign enables us to raise more awareness towards keeping our mountains clean and how preserving its eco-system is an absolute necessity."

AGENCIES



Loyola hosts Regional Yoga Olympiad

Bhubaneswar: As many as 56 participants from nine schools of Odisha Saturday participated in CISCE Regional Yoga Olympiad organised here by Loyola School of Bhubaneswar.

The event began with the lamp-lighting ceremony and the dignitaries present on the occasion included the members of All Odisha ICSE Schools Association-P Selvi, Principal Co-ordinator, Leena Khurana, President, BK Tripathy, Executive Member- Rector Father Augustine of Loyola School and Father Victor Misquith, Principal and the Joint Co-ordinator of Sports and Games.

In the Olympiad, boys and girls under 14 years of age were



selected for the national level. St. John School was declared the winner of the Under-14 category for boys as well as girls. St.

Vincent School and D. Paul School of Berhampur were the runners-up for girls and boys respectively. Third prize for the

Under-14 girls was bagged by Loyola School of Bhubaneswar and for boys St. Joseph's School became the winner.

PNM

'Women still have a long way to go'

Mumbai: Actress Alaya F is currently seen playing the lead role of Radhika, a reporting intern in the supernatural thriller movie *U-Turn*.

Alaya says she is happy to be part of a cinema with more and more projects being made around female protagonists.

She said: "There is a lot of pressure, it is scary I won't lie but sometimes you need to just jump in. I used to be concerned about this but then you remind yourself that you are working with someone like Ekta Kapoor (producer Ekta Kapoor) Ma'am who has been such a strong and powerful boss lady in this industry."

Gender bias or roles have never affected her personality. It doesn't apply to her."

The actress added further that things are changing in the industry and now-a-days, many films are made with women actors as the protagonist but there is still a long way to travel.

"I definitely enjoy this era of cinema better because it is something which connects with me. I think we still have a long way to go when it comes to women having great opportunities, but we have definitely started off towards incredible beginnings," concluded the 25-year-old actress. AGENCIES



Shaan claps back at trolls

Mumbai: Popular singer Shaan has responded to the trolls who criticised him for wishing Eid with a photograph wearing a skull cap.

Saturday, he shared a picture on Instagram of himself wearing a skull cap, his hands raised in a prayer.

He wrote: "Eid Mubarak to You and Your Family."

However, his comments section was flooded with angry and hateful comments and slammed him for wishing Eid Mubarak despite being Hindu.

Shaan then gave a befitting reply and

mentioned how he was always taught to respect all religions equally. He also mentioned the photo from his music video titled *Karam Karde*, which was out three years ago.

"Usme ye Look Tha .. toh socha it goes with the occasion .. bas itni si baat," he wrote.

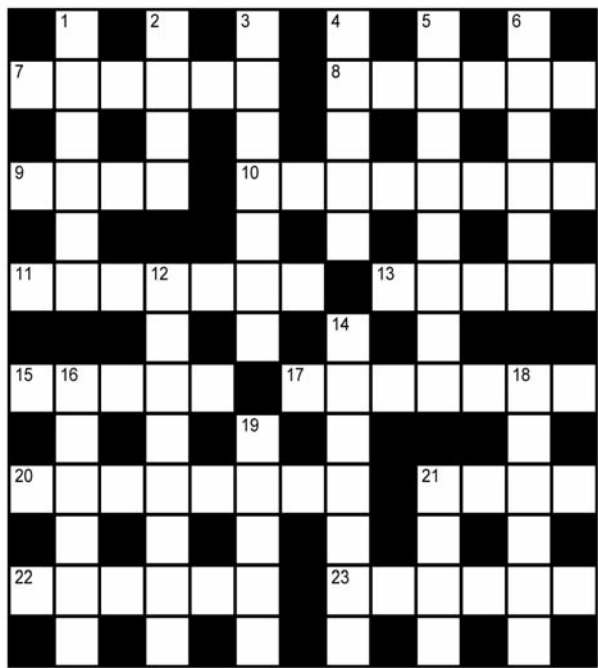
"Since childhood, I was taught to celebrate all festivals and respect every religion. This is what I believe in and this is what every Indian should believe in too. *Baaki aapki soch aapko Mubarak*," the singer mentioned.

IANS



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 7 Farming cultivator
- 8 Needlework
- 9 Scraps of fabric
- 10 Tire pressure?
- 11 Version
- 13 Master of ceremonies
- 15 Coherent
- 17 Resting place

Down

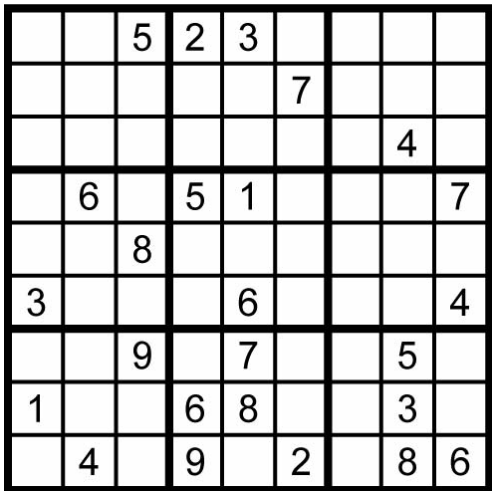
- 20 Contrary argument
- 21 Appointment
- 22 Military unit
- 23 Desert rodent
- 1 Sorcerer
- 2 Handouts
- 3 Lecture
- 4 Literary composition

Across

- 5 Double-crossover (3-5)
- 6 Audience cry, at times
- 12 Panel of judges
- 14 Earth science
- 16 Mismatched
- 18 Beat through cleverness
- 19 Fashion
- 21 Blowgun missile

SUDOKU

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

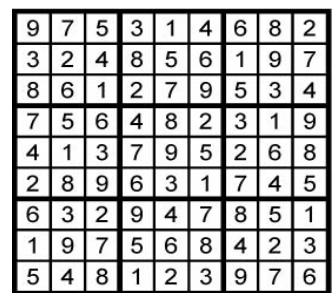


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



3rd Education Working Group Meeting

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KEY HIGHLIGHTS



Future of Work Exhibition will be focusing on Agriculture, Mobility & Healthcare along with Future of Skills while using Immersive Technology, Interactive Walls, Holographic Displays, etc



Metaverse Experience AR/VR based solutions



See displays on Reverse Engineering and Automated Design Solutions



Use of Drone Technology along with Live Demos



Providing Ed-tech solutions while leveraging AR/VR Experiential Learning product demos and 3D models displaying rich heritage, AGVC demos, etc



Showcasing Applied & Action Learning Labs for Industry 4.0 Skills



Vernacular learning based Tech Solutions, Virtual Internship Solutions, Immersive Tech Learning Solutions



Assistive Technology & Tactile Display for inclusion along with live demo of Assistive Technology Innovation



10 Thematic Zones



100+ Exhibitors

Inauguration by
Shri Dharmendra Pradhan
Hon'ble Minister of Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Date: April 23-25 & April 27-28, 2023
(April 26-Open only for Delegates)

Time: 10 AM to 9 PM

PLACE: CSIR-IMMT, ACHARYA VIHAR,
BHUBANESWAR

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IPPP- Innovate, Patent,
Produce, and Prosper."

Narendra Modi



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SAMBALPUR VIOLENCE

BJP missive to Shah seeking NIA probe

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: The Odisha unit of BJP Saturday wrote a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, requesting him to take steps for an inquiry by NIA into the violence in Sambalpur during Hanuman Jayanti celebrations.

In a letter signed by BJP's state unit president Manmohan Samal and several party MPs and MLAs, they urged the Centre to direct the state government to take necessary measures to 'restore law and order in Sambalpur' and ensure 'communal harmony' in the western Odisha city.

"We strongly condemn the heinous act of communal violence and demand an impartial investigation by the NIA to unravel the conspiracy behind the incident, and strict action against the perpetrators," the party said in the letter.

The BJP's state leadership also urged the Centre to ask the state government to take immediate steps to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in Odisha in future.

BJP leaders also alleged that the law and order situation has 'deteriorated' in Sambalpur following clashes 'due to the orchestrated violent attack' on a motorcycle rally two days before the Hanuman Jayanti April 14.

"The coordinated attack on the bike rally April 12 had left several persons, including some policemen, grievously injured. The incident also led to torching of shops, vehicles and private properties in Sambalpur," the letter said.

The western Odisha city had witnessed a clash between two communities during a motorcycle rally in the run-up to Hanuman Jayanti.

As the clash spilled over to the streets, many vehicles were damaged and some shops were set on fire.

Saffron party doesn't want normalcy to return: BJD

Bhubaneswar: Reacting strongly on BJP's letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJD senior vice president Prasanna Acharya said that Odisha BJP leaders never wanted normalcy to return to violence-hit Sambalpur town.

Due to the strong and wholehearted resolve of the people of Sambalpur and resolute efforts of the police and administration, normalcy is returning to Sambalpur. But, unfortunately the Odisha BJP leaders never wanted normalcy and their statements were always aimed at ensuring that this issue simmers, Acharya alleged.

Having failed in their initial attempts, Odisha BJP leaders have been now trying to flare up the issue through various means, he alleged.

Odisha BJP called for a bandh

in this sensitive matter which affected the lives and livelihood of poor people of Odisha. Now they are again trying to affect the lives and livelihood of peace-loving people of Odisha through such activities, said another BJD vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra.

"The people of Odisha are peace-loving and Odisha is a peaceful state but BJP in state has been constantly insulting the people of Odisha by calling them lawless," he said.

The people of Odisha want peace and people of Sambalpur want normalcy which does not fit into the agenda of Odisha BJP. Therefore, they are consistently trying to insult and demean the people of Odisha and 4.5 crore Odias while at the same time using various means to keep the sensitive issue of Sambalpur on the boil, Mishra further alleged.

during the festival, the BJP leaders said in the letter.

"The Odisha Police has miserably failed to follow the advisory issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs for smooth organisation of Hanuman Jayanti processions," the letter said.

As per an FIR lodged by the police, around 200 people of a particular community armed with swords, iron rods and sticks attacked the motorcycle rally April 12. The police have admitted that the communal riot was pre-planned. The attackers also raised certain objectionable and anti-national slogans to incite communal violence, the party said.

"Such sloganeering by the mob is not acceptable and amounts to crime that needs to deal with strict laws," the BJP said in the letter.



STAGE SET: Shankha Bhawan, Biju Janata Dal's newly-built office in Unit-VI area of Bhubaneswar, Saturday. Party supremo Naveen Patnaik will inaugurate the swanky building on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, Sunday

Delegates deliberate on gender equality at C20

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: The Gender Equality and Disability Summit of Civil 20 (C20), one of the official Engagement Groups of the G20, was inaugurated here Saturday with the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) hosting the event.

During the 2-day summit, more than 300 delegates from India and around the world would participate in discussions and workshops that will directly impact policy recommendations.

Addressing the delegates, KIIT founder Achyuta Samanta said, "Gender equality and disability rights are critical issues, and we need to work together to address them. To fully realize gender equality, we have to ensure women and girls have access to the same opportunities as men, but this is easier said than done as discrimination is deeply ingrained in our



societies. We need a holistic approach that addresses all aspects like education, healthcare, and employment that affect vulnerable and marginalized groups."

Troika and Steering Committee Member, C20, and vice chairman of Maa Amritanandamayee Math Amritaswarupananda Puri said, "Without recognizing and accepting women as equal, true freedom, happiness, harmony and coexistence will remain a far cry. Even though the world has become relatively more pro-women, a lot still

needs to change. Men must be compassionate and unchain women from the shackles of their past. Women too must heighten their consciousness to come out of this psychological conditioning that society has forced on them."

In her video message at the inaugural ceremony, C20 chair Amritanandamayee Devi said: "Many nations still treat women as inferior. Despite the world making tremendous progress in last many decades, there still is a great reluctance and mental block in ac-

knowledging women's equality. Among adolescent girls worldwide, one in four is denied education and employment. In the case of boys, this statistic is only one in ten. When women are suppressed, the world loses the productive contribution of 50 percent of its population."

"Even among the girls studying in our college, parents pressure them to get married once they complete their undergraduate degrees. Few are allowed to pursue their PhD. The parents pull them back, saying that by the time they complete their PhD, it will be difficult to find them a husband. If we live in fear that our girls will not be able to get married, can anything be accomplished? If we create the right circumstances, they can definitely bring out their talents and make them useful for society. Right from childhood, boys should be taught to treat women and girls with respect," she added.

Continued from P1

Paying the price for speaking...

The party also launched a 'MeraGharAapkaGhar' campaign on social media with party leaders offering their homes to Gandhi.

The Congress said on its official Twitter handle in Hindi that "this country is the home of Rahul Gandhi. Rahul who resides in the hearts of people."

"Rahul's relation with the public is unbreakable. Some see in him their son, some brother, some their leader... Rahul belongs to everyone and everyone belongs to Rahul. This is the reason why today the country is saying- Rahul ji, my house-your house," the Congress said, using the hashtag "#MeraGharAapkaGhar".

AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said, "They may evict you from a house, but you will always have a place in all our homes and hearts, Rahul ji. We know that such episodes won't deter you from raising the voice of the people and speaking truth to power."

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said Rahul Gandhi is nei-

ther worried about the post nor about the government house. "He did not compromise on his principles even after risking everything," he said.

He also took a swipe at former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who continues to be at his official residence allotted to him as the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, saying Rahul Gandhi is not a "Ghulam".

Another Congress spokesperson, Supriya Shrinete, said, "A house is not made of four walls and a cement roof. Home is a feeling - of peace, of love. And when crores of people open the doors of their hearts and homes for you, then it is even better."

"Rahul ji vacated his official residence today - his goal and destination is much higher than a house, much higher. No one can scare or silence this satyagrahi of truth because he is ready to pay any cost. #MeraGharAapkaGhar A small proof of this country's love for you Rahul ji," Shrinete said on Twitter.

NHRC for ₹3 lakh ex gratia in Keonjhar schoolgirl's death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the Chief Secretary to provide Rs 3 lakh as compensation to the next of kin of a 13-year-old tribal girl, who died owing to 'negligence' of her school authorities in Keonjhar late December 31, 2019 night.

The commission's move came in response to a petition filed by rights activist Himanshu Sekhar Nayak January 17, 2020 - the day this media highlighted the issue.

Nayak had informed the commission that Tapaswini Hembram, a Class-V student of Ramachandrapur Ashram School under Patna police limits in Keonjhar, died December 31, 2019 due to the negligence of the school authorities as they did not provide medical intervention to the minor girl.

Although the girl was down with



diarrhoea, the school authorities asked her family to take her back home instead of arranging medical care for her. With no option in hand, the victim's father Nabin Hembram, a resident of Balipasi under Sadar police limits in Keonjhar, brought her back home, where her condition deteriorated.

"The victim was later rushed to the district headquarters hospital (DHH), where she was declared 'dead on arrival'," said the petitioner, quoting the victim's father.

In February 2020, the commission had directed the School and Mass Education (S&ME) department Principal Secretary as well as the Keonjhar superintendent of police (SP) to file an action-taken report (ATR) in this regard within four weeks.

The SP informed the commission that it was the responsibility of the school headmaster to ensure healthcare facilities to the girl. However, to no avail. "Rs 25,000 has been provided to the deceased's kin from the Keonjhar Red Cross fund," the SP informed the NHRC.

The commission, however, asked the Chief Secretary as to why Rs 3 lakh as compensation should not be granted in the case. In response, the Special Secretary of the ST&SC Development department informed the NHRC that there is no guideline of the state for such compensation.

Observing that the human rights of the schoolgirl has been violated, the apex rights body asked the Chief Secretary to provide Rs 3 lakh as compensation to the next of kin of the girl and submit a compliance report in this regard within six weeks.

NCERT to develop study material in Kui, Desiya

The committee will work in collaboration with the Central University of Odisha, Koraput, to develop learning-teaching material to facilitate the learning process of Kui and Desiya speaking students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has formed a committee to work along with the Central University of Odisha (CUO) to develop study materials in the mother tongue of Kui and Desiya speaking Kandha students from Koraput, Gajapati, Malkangiri, and Kandhamal districts of the state. In a notification, NCERT said, "National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 clearly states that in cases where home language/mother tongue textbook material is not available, the language of transaction between teachers and students will still remain the home language/mother tongue wherever possible."

NCERT informed that as per NEP teachers should be encouraged to use a bilingual approach, including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction. "All languages will be taught with high quality study ma-

terials to all students; a language does not need to be the medium of instruction for it to be taught and learned well," added NCERT notification.

It is in this context, the committee has been constituted for formulating study materials for Kui and Desiya speaking Kandha students, and people broadly, of the Koraput, Gajapati, Malkangiri, Kandhamal to promote learning in their mother tongue.

The committee is headed by BK Panda, project director, Center of Excellence for Studies in Classical Odia, Bhubaneswar. Other members in committee are Amarendra P Behera, joint director,

CIET-NCERT, New Delhi, Rudrani Mohanty, assistant professor, CUO, Koraput, Kapil Khemandu, assistant professor, CUO, Koraput, and educationists and language experts like Rajendra Padhi, Gopabandhu Mohanty, Subrat Prusty, Mahendra Mishra, Dileshwar Rama and Prakash Chandra Agrawal, principal, RIE, Bhubaneswar.

The said committee will work in collaboration with the CUO and develop learning-teaching material to facilitate the learning process of Kui and Desiya speaking students.



CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Tapaswani Bhutia, W/o. Manmath Kumar Bhutia, At-Baruan(k), P.O.-Bamuan, P.S.- Tumusinga, Dist.-Dhenkanal, Pin-759026 declare by this Affidavit No.-819, dated 21.04.23, that now onwards I shall be known as Tapaswini Bhutia for all future purposes.

G20 3rd EdWG meet from today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: Union Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will inaugurate G20 3rd Education Working Group (EdWG) meeting on 'Deep Tech' with a focus on advanced technology in 'Future of Work' at CSIR-IMMT in Acharya Vihar area here, Sunday.

According to official sources, there will be three panel discussions on the inaugural occasion. "The

event will be inaugurated at 9:30am. While the first panel discussion - from 11:45am to 12:45pm - will be on 'India's prospects in global semiconductor ecosystem', the second discussion, which will be from 2pm to 3pm, will be on 'The World of Digitalization'. The third panel discussion, which will be held from 3pm to 4pm, will see deliberations on 'New Age Startups'," an official said.

The event is open from 10am to 9pm till April 28. However, it is open only for delegates April 26.

Bijay Patnaik appointed OPCC campaign committee chairman

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 22: Bureaucrat-turned-politician Bijay Patnaik, who recently joined Congress, has been appointed as chairman of the campaign committee of Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC).

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has appointed Patnaik as the campaign committee chair-

man for Odisha with immediate effect, the party said in a press release.

The party also appointed Patnaik as the member of a newly-formed 27-member political affairs committee.

The appointment of Patnaik, a former Odisha Chief Secretary, is significant as it comes ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections.

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Eid passes off peacefully in violence-hit Sambalpur



SP B Gangadhar supervising security arrangements outside a mosque at Zilla School Square in Sambalpur on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur, April 22: Eid-ul-Fitr passed off peacefully in violence-hit Sambalpur and other parts of Odisha Saturday. Governor Ganeshi Lal and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik greeted people on the occasion. "May the auspicious occasion of Eid spread the spirit of togetherness, harmony and peace for all," Lal tweeted.

Patnaik, in a Twitter post, said, "Warm greetings to everyone on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr: May Allah bring happiness, prosperity & peace in our lives and lead us on the path of compassion and love." Mass prayers were not allowed in Sambalpur this year due to the violence that took place during

Hanuman Jayanti processions April 12 and 14. People offered prayers at 10 different mosques in Sambalpur in smaller batches. Security was tightened, with the deployment of around 1,400 policemen and patrolling was intensified across Sambalpur city to prevent any untoward incident. However, internet services in the city remained suspended till 6am Sunday, Sambalpur District Magistrate Ananya Das said. In Cuttack, a large number of people congregated at the Eidgah Ground near Qadam-e-Rasool Mosque and offered prayers. In Bhubaneswar, thousands of Muslims congregated at small and big mosques. In the backdrop of the Sambalpur violence, security was tightened in other Muslim-inhabited areas such as Cuttack, Balasore, Kendrapara and Bhadrak. Additional forces were deployed near mosques to ensure peace.



COLOURFUL PAINTINGS: Artists paint the boundary wall of Sambalpur Collectorate as part of a beautification drive in Sambalpur, Saturday

OP PHOTO

Sharecroppers shy away from cultivation

SHARECROPPERS IN KENDRAPARA ARE SLOWLY BECOMING AVERSE TO FARMING AS LAND OWNERS CLAIMING THEMSELVES AS FARMERS ARE GRABBING ALL THE BENEFITS OF VARIOUS GOVT SCHEMES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, April 22: Sharecroppers are slowly moving away from cultivation in this district as the benefits of state and Centre-sponsored schemes are not available to them with land owners grabbing all the aid. Reports said the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment distributed ₹877 crore under Kalia scheme to over 43 lakh small and marginal farmers during the Odisha Day celebrations this year. Similarly, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has sanctioned funds for the development of the farming community under state-sponsored Krushak Yojana, Odisha Jackfruit Mission and Odisha Millet Mission. However, the steps taken by the Chief Minister have failed to reach the sharecroppers in Kendrapara district. Sharecroppers are slowly becoming averse to cultivation this

year as the land owners claiming themselves as farmers are grabbing all the benefits of state-sponsored Kalia scheme and Centre-sponsored PM Kishan Yojana. Similarly, banks are not willing to sanction loans to the landless sharecroppers. Moreover, they face problems in selling the harvested crops every year during both kharif and rabi seasons and often resort to distress sale of their produce due to a lack of support mechanisms. Farmer leader Bijay Kumar Parida said 70 per cent of the total farmland in this district is cultivated by sharecroppers. They take the land on lease from the owners for a period of one year for which they contribute half of the harvested paddy and two-fifth of rabi crops to the land owners. Sharecroppers have to take great risks in raising the crops and bear all the brunt starting from natural calamities to distress sale, but the land owners never come to their rescue in their



FILE PHOTO

time of need. They also face a lot of hurdles in getting a bank loan and while selling their harvested crops, he added. Pramod Kumar Sahu, president of Krushak Vikash Samabaya Samiti said only 15 per cent of small and marginal farmers carry out cultivation on their own land while rest of the land in the district

is cultivated by the sharecroppers. The state government is taking various steps for the growth and development of the farmers but it is yet to identify the sharecroppers engaged in cultivation in the district. As a result, they fail to get any bank loan, crop insurance, or the benefits of various welfare schemes aimed at the farmers' welfare, he said.

He said that the state government at first needs to make an enumeration of the sharecroppers so that they do not feel left out in availing the benefits of various welfare schemes. Gayadhar Dhal, president of Kendrapara Zilla Chashi and Shramika Sangha, said that the state government had convened a meeting to identify sharecroppers in 2015. In the meeting, it was discussed to include the sharecroppers in various district-level schemes and other social security schemes. Since then, eight years have passed but no step has been taken yet in this regard. A land owner Trilochan Jena of Indupur village under Kendrapara block said there are some roadblocks in giving legal sanction to the sharecroppers. These are the period of contract between the land owners and sharecroppers and whether the land owners should get money or share

from the harvested crops. These issues need to be discussed threadbare before arriving at any conclusion. Jena said that people will get interested in cultivation only when a law is enacted for the sharecroppers but the right of ownership of the land also needs to be protected. A farmer Satyabrata Senapati of Mahakalapara said that land is a family property which acts as an asset during any emergency. This is the reason for which people purchase land. He said if a law is enacted and land is given on lease to the sharecroppers then it will be difficult for the land owners to sell off the land during any family problem and may give rise to disputes between the family members. Amiya Behera of Dumuka village under Marshaghai block said sharecroppers are not inclined to take up cultivation due to distress sales, failure to get any assistance during natural calamities and lack of government sponsorship.

Navy conducts successful trial of BMD interceptor

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 22: India has successfully conducted a maiden flight trial of a sea-based endo-atmospheric interceptor missile off the coast of Odisha. The missile test was conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy, Friday.



The purpose of the trial was to engage and neutralise a hostile ballistic missile threat thereby elevating India into the elite club of nations having Naval BMD capability, the Ministry of Defence said on Saturday. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO, Indian Navy and industry involved in the successful demonstration of ship-based ballistic missile defence (BMD) capabilities.

5 staffers suspended in Bolangir civic body for embezzling old-age pension

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, April 22: The district Collector here has ordered for suspension of five employees of the Bolangir Municipality on charge of swindling old-age pension money meant for senior citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic, a report said Saturday. The embezzlement of old-age pension which remained suppressed for three years has come to light during an audit. However, the executive officer of the civic body instead of taking legal action against the accused employees had only ordered for recovery of the funds from them. Apprised of the development, Bolangir Collector Chanchal Rana ordered for suspension of the five employees. The development has sparked shockwaves in this town. The Collector has also directed to initiate process for their dismissal. As per reports, the accused had misappropriated money to the tune



of ₹12 lakh during the lockdown for Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21 FY. As people were staying in their homes and maintaining social distancing, the civic body employees were asked to make proper distribution of the old-age pension. Some of the employees thought it as an opportunity and gobbled up the pension money. The incident took

place in 2020 but was covered up. Three years later, an audit was conducted which exposed the fraud and found out that ₹12 lakh has been misappropriated. The matter came to the fore after two of the employees were asked by the Municipality authorities to cough up the amount they have swindled. As a result, one Ashish Mohapatra paid ₹1.05 lakh and another employee, Ashok Kumbhar, paid ₹20,600 towards recovery of the old-age pension money embezzled by them. Though the municipality asked them to refund the money, no action was taken against the errant officials. Efforts to contact the municipality executive officer Sami Reddy Jayashree on her phone (9937995835) proved futile as she did not respond to the call. Meanwhile, the municipality authorities are yet to issue any statement in this connection and were unavailable for comments.

Man killed in jumbo attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Anandapur/Kodapada, April 22: An elderly man was killed in an elephant attack at Hasanpur village under Madanpur panchayat of Ghashipura block in Keonjhar district, Saturday. The deceased was identified as Batakushna Pradhan, 65, of the same village. The incident occurred when Pradhan had gone to a nearby forest to attend nature's call and came face to face with two elephants. One of the animals trampled him under its feet. Family members rescued him in critical condition and rushed him to Anandapur hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. On being informed, forest officials and police reached the spot and started tracking the movement of the animals which were found to be hiding in the cashew orchard at Belabahal. Forest officials also gave away ₹40,000 ex-gratia to the deceased's family members and rest financial assistance will be provided after completion of formalities.

Women perform special Eid namaz at Kendrapara mosque



PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, April 22: Muslim women from the Ahel Hadis community, broke the tradition Saturday to offer special prayers (namaz) at Masjid Mohammadi, located at Ranpada-Kacheri road, in celebration of Eid. Special arrangements were made at the Masjid Mohammadi to help the women offer special prayer.

While the Muslim women performed Eid namaz at the mosque, the male members offered their prayer at Idgah located near the Masjid Mohammadi. Except for the women of Ahel-Hadis community, other women of Minority community groups offered their Eid prayers at their houses. "We do not find anything wrong in women coming to mosque and

performing Namaz on Eid. When they were performing Namaz, men were strictly restricted. If women could undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina then they definitely hold the right to offer prayers at a mosque. At this point, we should not oppose the entry of women into mosques. It is a case of empowerment of women," stated Mohammed Sahid, Hafiz of Masjid Mohammadi. Several politicians are also seen paying visit to the Muslim-dominated villages and mohallas to wish Muslim brethren for the festivity. Police arrangements were beefed up in the district to avert any untoward incident during the celebration of Eid in the much communal sensitive district. Kendrapara SP Madkar Sandeep Sampat was seen monitoring the situation Saturday morning. Several Hindus have also visited the houses of the Muslims to wish them on the occasion of Eid.

Facor plant fire: 2nd worker dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 22: Yet another worker, who was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Mumbai after being critically burnt in a fire mishap at Facor plant at Randia area in Bhadrak district, succumbed to his injuries, Friday night. The deceased worker was identified as Bijay Mohapatra of Barpada in Bhadrak district. He was undergoing treatment at the National Burns Centre in Mumbai. The other deceased worker Ratikanta Sutar of Koranta village had died April 16. The two had sustained critical burn injuries while charging the blast furnace at the Facor plant at Randia in Bhadrak district. Sources said that the body will be brought to Bhadrak tomorrow after a post mortem in

Mumbai Saturday. News about the death of the second worker triggered tension at his village as well as at the plant site in Randia. Reports said that Bijay and Ratikanta sustained critical burn injuries after fire sparkles fell on them at the plant April 11. The two were initially rushed to Bhadrak headquarters hospital and later taken to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar. They were airlifted to Mumbai for treatment through a green corridor created to the Bhubaneswar airport after their conditions deteriorated. In view of gravity of the situation following death of the second worker, the district administration has further extended the promulgation of prohibitory orders till 6am of April 25 from 6am of April 22.



FOR MOTHER EARTH: Girls display cloth bags as part of awareness drive on polythene ban organised by Aryabhata Foundation and Prakruti Foundation on the occasion of World Earth Day, in Berhampur, Saturday

OP PHOTO

EAST COAST RAILWAY
(1) E-Tender Notice No. ST-SBP-
TENDER-2023-12, Dt.: 19.04.2023
NAME OF WORK : INDOOR AND OUT
DOOR WORK FOR PROVISION OF
NEW SIDING LINE AT JARAPADA
STATION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Tender Value : ₹ 40,30,159.05, Bid
Security : ₹ 80,600/-


(2) E-Tender Notice No. ST-SBP-
TENDER-2023-13, Dt.: 19.04.2023
NAME OF WORK : ELECTRONIC
INTERLOCKING ALTERATION OF
MEDHA MAKE FOR PROVISION OF
NEW SIDING LINE AT JARAPADA
STATION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.
Tender Value : ₹ 30,02,070.00, Bid
Security : ₹ 60,000/-

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1100
hrs. on 03.05.2023 (for both Tenders).
No manual offers sent by Post/ Courier/
Fax or in person accepted against such
e-tenders. Even if these are submitted
on firm's letter head and receipt in time.
All such manual offers shall be
considered invalid and shall be rejected
summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-
tender documents of the above e-
tender is available in website :
<http://www.ireps.gov.in>
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PR-83/O/23-24 Sambalpur

“

In concentration and silence we must gather strength for the right action.

THE MOTHER



Lack of Optimism

New India is again the world’s most populous nation. Old India was also the most populous place in the world till 1947 so this is in that sense not new. If the idea is that political boundaries do not affect historical nations then India has always been the place with the most people.

But political boundaries are real and the rest is imagined so let us pretend we are here for the first time. Some two decades ago India announced it had crossed 100 crore people and Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the Prime Minister. A randomly selected baby was declared the one billionth child (though on a smaller scale, there was pomp and ceremony about everything then also) and a new era was declared. In those days India used to conduct the census so the outside world was not required to inform us that we have crossed China. Around that same time, APJ Abdul Kalam wrote a book called ‘India 2020’ about how we could and likely would become a developed nation by 2020. It had chapters on how this could be achieved. I went back to it recently and it is striking how innocent it is. As we can see around us, none of the things it foresaw or hoped for happened. We bumble along as we always have though the slogans keep changing. We are in Amritkaal now and if there is a baby declared officially as the one that helped us overtake China then it will need to be given an assessment of where we stand.

The first point is on demographic dividend, which arrives when the majority of the population is of working age. We entered this period a few years ago but have not reaped a dividend. The reason is that there are few jobs for those who are available to work. But those available for work are only 40 per cent of the population over 15. Indian women in particular have fallen out of the workforce in larger numbers proportionally than Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. However, this is not only about gender but the whole population.

A few days ago the Wall Street Journal published an article with the headline ‘India’s population surpasses China’s, shifting the world’s center of gravity’. The article explained that India had “added zero net jobs over the past decade” though over 100 million (10 crore) new people entered the labour force. The total number of Indians employed in 2022 (40.2 crore) was fewer than those with work in 2017 (41.3 crore). Not only have we not added new jobs we have lost some of those we had.

The reason is that Indians are not investing as much as they used to in the future. The Economic Times carried a story in September 2022 headlined ‘India’s investment rate declines to 31% of GDP from 39% peak’. World Bank figures show that India’s private sector share of gross fixed capital formation fell from 31 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 22 per cent in 2022.

We can ask why. The answer is that there is lack of optimism about the future and a lack of confidence. If we ask why this is the case we will be led to answers we will not like, which have to do with social strife and the focus of the government. Large numbers of Indians including those we are bullying and harassing will not invest in a future that they think is bleak. This also explains the record number of millionaires feeling India, and presumably adding to the heat of nationalism from abroad, this time holding their European and American passports.

On 20 April 2023 the Financial Times, the other major global business daily, published an editorial headlined ‘India’s democratic backsliding’. This editorial was also ostensibly about India’s population story but the paper’s editorial board wanted to communicate something else, which our media does not tell us.

The advantage India has, or rather Indian governments have, is that all nations think purely or mostly in self interest when it comes to international relations.

At a time when inflation is high, when there is war in Europe again and China has become the primary threat, India is seen as a counterbalance. It would be nice if India were to reflect the values of pluralism and openness that it claims to hold, but it is fine if doesn’t fully. There is some element of internal pressure on other democracies to tell wayward liberal states to get back in line. However, this has its limits and in a time of global crises the limits have shrunk. We should assume then that, despite the harsh words in the reputable press of the outside world, we can carry along in our reverie of being Vishwaguru in Amritkaal.

Happily it does not require the world to hold a mirror up for us. We can look at ourselves and understand easily if we choose to be honest about where we find ourselves three quarters of a century after Independence. Our Constitution and its values are not at the core of our politics. If anything we are drifting away from that core faster than we ever have been without any inkling of what we are moving towards.

The arrival of this news of being the world’s most populous nation should be seen in the light of this reality.



Aakar Patel

Large numbers of Indians including those we are bullying and harassing will not invest in a future that they think is bleak



Brahma Chellaney

IF TAIWAN WERE TO FALL TO CHINA, THE AUSTRIA-SIZED ARUNACHAL PRADESH COULD BECOME THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT’S NEXT TARGET FOR ‘REUNIFICATION’

Three years after China stealthily began encroaching on India’s territory in the Himalayas, no end is in sight for the two countries’ border standoff. While the rival military buildups and intermittent clashes have received little attention in the West, the escalating border confrontation has set in motion a long-term rivalry that could reshape Asian geopolitics.

By locking horns with China despite the risk of a full-scale war, India has openly challenged Chinese power in a way no other world power, including the United States, has done in this century. Chinese President Xi Jinping’s strategic overreach has caused India to shift away from its previous appeasement policy and accelerate its military buildup, turning a potential partner into an enduring foe, while appearing determined to forestall a Sinocentric Asia.

Similarly, Xi’s muscular revisionism and geopolitical ambitions have forced Japan and Australia to readjust their strategic frameworks and work to counter China’s expansionism in the Indo-Pacific. By drawing up plans to double defense spending by 2027, Japan has effectively abandoned its pacifist postwar national-security policy. Australia, for its part, has renounced its previous hedging approach and joined the AUKUS defense pact with the US and the United Kingdom.

China’s attempt in spring 2020 to occupy hundreds of square kilometers in the icy borderlands of India’s northernmost Ladakh region, at a time when India was enforcing the world’s strictest national lockdown, amounted to a cynical effort to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic to further Xi’s strategic aims. But Xi miscalculated when he assumed that China could force India to accept the new status quo as a fait accompli. Since then, India has more than matched China’s military deployments, fueling the largest-ever military buildup in the Himalayas, one of the world’s most inhospitable regions.

With India refusing to buckle, Xi has sought to overwhelm its

FOCUS SINO-INDIAN RIVALRY

XI’S PREDICAMENT



With the US-China rivalry deepening, the last thing China needed was to make a permanent enemy of its largest neighbour. Ultimately, bringing India and America closer could prove to be Xi’s lasting legacy – an unintended consequence that threatens to undermine his regime’s aggressive irredentism

defenses by opening up a new front in the eastern Himalayas, more than 2,000 kilometers from China’s 2020 land grabs. In December 2022, a Chinese incursion into the strategically crucial border state of Arunachal Pradesh was repelled by Indian forces, reportedly with help from US intelligence.

In an effort to strengthen its territorial claim and provoke India, China has Sinicized the names of sites in Arunachal Pradesh. Calling Arunachal Pradesh “South Tibet,” the Chinese government has asserted that the sprawling state – more than twice the size of Taiwan – is “Chinese territory” and that Sinicizing Indian lands is its “sovereign right.”

All this has given India a stake in Taiwan’s continued autonomous status. If Taiwan were to fall to China, the Austria-sized Arunachal Pradesh could become the Chinese government’s next target for “reunification.” China’s annexation of Tibet in 1951 proved to be one of the most significant geopolitical developments in post-World War II history, giving China common borders with India, Nepal, Bhutan, and northwest Myanmar.

A Chinese takeover of Taiwan could lead to a similar geopolitical reordering, enabling Chinese naval forces to break out of the “first island chain” and easily access the Pacific.

China’s claim that Taiwan has “always been” part of China is historically dubious. Taiwan did not become a Chinese province before the late nineteenth century, and China lost control of the island just eight years later, when the Qing Dynasty ceded it to Japan in perpetuity following its defeat in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War. But in laying claim to Taiwan, Xi is working to complete Mao Zedong’s expansionist vision of a “Greater China.”

Similarly, Tibet is the key to Chinese expansionism in the Himalayas despite the fact that it was a part of China only when China itself was occupied by outsiders like the Mongols and the Manchus. Because it cannot claim any Han-Chinese connection, its territorial claims in the Himalayas rest on alleged Tibetan ecclesial or tutelary links. Even tiny Bhutan has not been spared; China has been nibbling away at its border-

lands.

Against this backdrop, India’s willingness to stand up to China is crimping Xi’s expansionist agenda. As Admiral Michael M. Gilday, the US Navy’s chief of naval operations, put it last year, India presents China with a “two-front” problem. “They [Indians] now force China to not only look east, toward the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, but they now have to be looking over their shoulder at India,” he said.

Moreover, the Sino-Indian rivalry has flared up at a time when China’s economy is running into long-term constraints, including a shrinking and rapidly aging population and slowing productivity growth. By contrast, India, which has one of the world’s youngest populations with a median age of 28.4, is reaping a demographic dividend. While its GDP is still smaller than China’s, it is the world’s fastest-growing major economy.

Given that its military is the world’s most experienced in hybrid mountain warfare, India has an edge in the high-altitude Himalayan environment. Moreover, in contrast to India’s all-volunteer military, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army largely relies on conscripts who ostensibly “volunteer” for two years of service after they reach the age of 18. That helps explain why China has chosen to engage in stealth encroachments rather than direct combat.

The current military stalemate in the Himalayas serves as yet another reminder that Xi has picked a border fight with India that he cannot win. With the US-China rivalry deepening, the last thing China needed was to make a permanent enemy of its largest neighbour. Ultimately, bringing India and America closer could prove to be Xi’s lasting legacy – an unintended consequence that threatens to undermine his regime’s aggressive irredentism.

The writer is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

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SPECTRUM WORLD BOOK & COPYRIGHT DAY

Lost in stacks: Journey through a library



Niranjan Mohapatra

EACH BOOK IS A PORTAL TO ANOTHER WORLD, WAITING TO BE EXPLORED

In the 21st century at a time when technology has revolutionised the way we consume information, books remain an indispensable part of our lives. They serve as a source of inspiration, knowledge, and entertainment, and they continue to be the foundation upon which our intellectual and cultural heritage rests. They provide a medium for storytelling that is unique in its ability to convey the complexities of human experience in a way that transcends time and space. The literary world considers 23 April to be a significant date since it commemorates the deaths of famous authors Inca Garcilaso de la Vega and William Shakespeare. The decision to recognise books and authors globally on this day and to encourage people to value books by reading and accessing them was made by the UNESCO General Conference in 1995, which was held in Paris. Proclamation of 23 April as World Book and Copyright Day.

In a world where the acquisition and dissemination of information was of paramount importance, a citadel of knowledge was

erected, known as the library. The building was a lavish edifice with shelves brimming with books of occult and esoteric knowledge that were guarded by an arrogant staff of librarians who served as the gatekeepers of the written word. Libraries are places of wonder, where knowledge is stored in shelves upon shelves of books, waiting to be discovered. They are places of solitude, where one can escape the noise of the world and get lost in the pages of a good book. But libraries are also places of mystery, where the stacks hold secrets waiting to be uncovered. This is a story of one such journey through the library, a journey of discovery and adventure.

The journey begins with a sense of excitement, as one enters the library. The smell of old books, the sound of footsteps echoing through the halls, and the sight of endless shelves, all combine to create a sense of awe and wonder. The first step is to find a book, and with so many to choose from, the task can seem daunting. But this is where the journey really begins, as one explores the stacks and finds treasures

hidden within. The stacks are filled with books of all kinds, from ancient tomes bound in leather, to modern bestsellers with bright covers. Some are filled with the wisdom of the ages, while others are filled with tales of adventure and excitement. Each book is a portal to another world, waiting to be explored. As one wanders through the stacks, they may come across books that they never knew existed, books that they never would have found if they had not taken this journey.

Along the way, there are also challenges to be faced. Some books are difficult to find, hidden away on high shelves or lost in the labyrinthine maze of stacks. Some books are old and fragile, requiring special care and attention. And some books are simply too big or too heavy to be easily handled, testing the limits of the reader’s strength and determination. But the rewards are great, as one discovers the secrets of the library. They may find books that are long out of print, or books that have been hidden away for years. They may find books that are rare and valuable

able, or books that are simply priceless because of their sentimental value. And they may find books that hold the answers to questions they never even knew they had.

The journey through the library is a journey of discovery, where one learns about the world and oneself. It is a journey of adventure, where one faces challenges and overcomes obstacles. And it is a journey of wonder, where one finds magic and mystery in stacks.

A journey through the library is a journey like no other. It is a journey of discovery, adventure, and wonder, where one can get lost in stacks and find treasures waiting to be uncovered. So grab a book, and start your journey today. It is a special occasion that commemorates the enduring worth that books impart to us. The World Book and Copyright Day is celebrated globally to highlight the significance of books as a crucial connection between our past and future, and as a means of fostering links between generations and cultures.

The writer is a librarian and researcher.

WISDOM CORNER

- “ Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power.”
LAO TZU
- “ If you tell the truth, you don’t have to remember anything.”
MARK TWAIN
- “ It is more difficult to rule yourself than to rule a city.”
JORDAN PETERSON

WORDSWORTH

■ Hebetude

This splendid word deserves to be better known, since it describes one of those eternal human states – dullness or lethargy – for which another good descriptor always comes in handy. It has been around since the seventeenth century in a rather poetical or literary way. It derives from Latin hebet-, the stem of hebes, blunt or dull (so it is unconnected with the Greek goddess Hebe, whose name comes from the Greek word for puberty or adolescence). The Romans used their word for the state of knife blades and the like, but also for somebody who was dull or stupid. In English it has always had this figurative meaning. The noun’s heyday began in the nineteenth century and it is still going strong among those writers who like to extend their readers’ word power. It is also a term in psychology for apathy and emotional dullness. It was a favourite word of Joseph Conrad, as in Nostromo: “From that solitude, full of despair and terror, he was torn out brutally, with kicks and blows, passive, sunk in hebetude”. It made an appearance in August 2001 in the columns of The Washington Post: “Too many Americans slouch toward a terminal funk of hebetude and sloth.” There are several related words, now rare, including the adjective hebetudinous, the abstract noun hebetudinosity, dullness or obtuseness, and the verb hebetate, to make dull or blunt.

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, Rasulgari Industrial Estate,
Bhubaneswar-751010

Overuse of smartphones

Sir, The overuse of smartphones has become a growing concern in recent years. With the increasing availability of technology and access to internet, people are becoming more and more dependent on their smartphones for entertainment, communication, and information. While smartphones have undoubtedly made our lives easier and more convenient in many ways, excessive use can have negative consequences. One of the biggest concerns about overuse of smartphones is its impact on mental health. Research has shown that excessive use of smartphones can lead to symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. This is because the constant need to check social media, messages, and notifications can lead to feelings of pressure, distraction, and overwhelm. Another concern is its impact on physical health. Excessive use of smartphones can lead to poor posture, eye strain, and sleep deprivation. Furthermore, the overuse of smartphones can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, which can contribute to obesity and other health problems. In addition, the overuse of smartphones can also have social consequences. When people spend too much time on their phones, they may miss out on important social interactions with friends and family. To address the issue of overuse of smartphones, it is important for individuals to set boundaries and limit their usage. This could include setting specific times of the day for phone use, turning off notifications, or using apps that track and limit screen time.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Cabinet rejig

Sir, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, unlike in his first term, reshuffled his Cabinet only once in July 2021. Generally, expansion of Cabinet is done before crucial elections; there are a few ahead. It is assumed that picking the right men and women from the poll-going states to head key ministries may send a message or two to the electorate before an election apart from regional and caste equations. Modi may not buck this trend although he is known to offer some surprises. Just before a major election, some top leaders are drafted to work for the party, and the PM may not deviate from this trend. But there definitely is no clear policy as regarding the much hyped age policy. As far as the poorly performing ministers are concerned, only the PM should know what is “good performance” and who is what.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

FOREST, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE DEPARTMENT

No. FE-DIV-FLD-0115-2021-8330/FE&CC,
10F (Cons.) 58/2021

Bhubaneswar, Dated the 21.04.2023

ORDER

Sub.: Proposal for non-forestry use of 66.20 ha. forest land (including safety zone area 1.899 ha) under Section-2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect of Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s. Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No. 27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division.

WHEREAS, the Authorized Signatory, M/s. Jindal Stainless Limited, Jajpur, Odisha and applied for diversion of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area 1.899 ha) in respect of Jindal Chromite mines in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No. 27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division, Odisha, AND whereas, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India, New Delhi had accorded 'in-principle' approval for diversion of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area of 1.899 ha) under Section 2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect to Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No. 27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division, subject to fulfillment of certain conditions vide its Letter F. No. 8-68/2000-FC (Pt.) Dtd.29.03.2022 (Annexure - I).

And whereas, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India, New Delhi in consideration of the compliance of the conditions of the 'in-principle' approval, have granted final approval under Section - 2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for non-forestry use of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area safety zone 1.899 ha) in respect of Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No. 27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division vide its letter No. 8-68/2000-FC (Pt.) Dtd. 20.04.2023 subject to conditions as stipulated therein (Annexure - II). Now therefore, the Government of Odisha, do hereby allow non-forestry use of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area safety zone 1.899 ha) in respect of Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No. 27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division, as per approved land scheduled furnished by PCCF & HoFF, Odisha vide their letter No. 14422 Dtd.24.08.2021 subject to fulfillment of the conditions of final forest clearance order as stipulated by the MoEF&CC, Government of India, New Delhi. The details land schedule of forest land as received from PCCF & HoFF, Odisha vide their Letter No. 14422 Dtd.24.08.2021 are appended herewith as Annexure - III (2 Pages).

The Collector, Jajpur and Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division, as the case may be are hereby authorized to handover the forest land coming within their jurisdiction as has been finally diverted after necessary compliance following due procedure of law. Before handing over the diverted forest land to the user agency, it shall be ensured that Net Present Value of the forest land for this project for which approval has been obtained shall be deposited in full, at applicable rates.

The Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division & Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division are also directed to monitor compliance to the conditions stipulated for such diversion in the respective forest/wildlife clearance order and to report violations, if any, to the Nodal Officer, O/o Principal Chief Conservator Forests & HoFF, Odisha and to the Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department.

Execution of project activities will be subject to availability of all other statutory clearances required under relevant Acts/Rules for this mining project, deposit of requisite funds and compliance of Court's order, if any.

By Order of Governor
(Lingaraj Otta)
OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8331/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest & HoFF, Odisha for kind information and necessary follow up action. Appropriate instruction to the Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division, Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division and user agency may be imparted for required follow up action at their end. It may be ensured by the Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division and Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division that Net Present Value of the forest land involved in this project of the user agency is deposited by them in full, at applicable rates in appropriate head. The user agency may also be instructed to furnish compliance to the conditions of forest/wildlife clearance pertaining to the project in every quarter to the Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division and Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division for facilitating monitoring of compliances.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8332/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Asst. Inspector General of Forests, Government of India, MoEF&CC (FC Division), Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh, Aiganj Road, New Delhi, PIN - 110003 / Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), MoEF&CC, Government of India, IRO, A/3, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar for kind information and necessary follow up action in compliance to the order of Hon'ble NGT Dtd.07.11.2012 in Appeal No. 07/2012 communicated by the MoEF, Government of India vide their letter F. No. 7-23/2012-FC Dtd.24.07.2013.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8333/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) & Chief Wildlife Warden, Odisha/Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (FD&NO), FC Act, O/o. PCCF & HoFF, Odisha for information and necessary action.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8334/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Regional Chief Conservator of Forest, Angul Circle/Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division/Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division for information and immediate necessary compliance.

It may be ensured by the Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division that Net Present Value of the forest land involved in this project of the user agency shall be deposited by them in full, at applicable rates in appropriate head before handing over of the forest land to the user agency. Besides, funds, if any, due to be deposited by the user agency for this project shall also be deposited by the project proponent before the forest land is handed over to them. The user agency may also be instructed to furnish compliance to the conditions of forest/wildlife clearance pertaining to the project in every quarter to the Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division and Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division for facilitating monitoring of compliances by them.

The Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division and Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division are also instructed to ensure that the direction given to the user agency are executed immediately.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8335/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to Steel & Mines Department/Revenue & Disaster Management Department/Director, Environment-cum-Special Secretary to Government, FE&CC Department/Member Secretary, SPCB, Odisha/Collector, Jajpur/Collector, Angul for information and necessary follow up action.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8336/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Authorized Signatory, M/s. Jindal Stainless Limited, A/P/O.: Kaliapani, Dist.- Jajpur, Odisha, PIN - 755047 for information and immediate necessary action.

The user agency is asked to take following actions immediately as per orders of Hon'ble National Green Tribunal Dtd.07.11.2012 in Appeal No. 07/2012 communicated by the MoEF, Government of India vide their letter F. No. 7-23/2012-FC Dtd.24.07.2013.

i. They shall publish the entire forest clearance granted in verbatim along with conditions and safeguards imposed by the Central Government in Stage-I/II forest clearance in two widely circulated daily newspapers, one in vernacular language and the other in English language so as to make people aware of the permission granted to the Project for use of forest land for non-forest purposes.

ii. They shall submit the copies of forest clearance orders granted by the Central Government/State Government to the Heads of local bodies, Panchayats and Municipal bodies along with the relevant offices of the State Government, who in turn, shall display the same for 30 days from date of receipt.

iii. Detailed action take in compliance to the above order of State Government shall be intimated to the DFO, Cuttack Forest Division/DFO, Athamalk Forest Division/ RCCF, Angul Circle/PCCF & HoFF, Odisha/Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department for reference.

Besides the above, the user agency is also asked to deposit Net Present Value of forest land for this project in full, if not deposited yet, at applicable rates, Requisite funds due for deposit by the user agency on account of this project shall also be deposited under appropriate head.

The user agency shall furnish compliances to the conditions prescribed in the forest/wildlife clearance order to the Divisional Forest Officer, Cuttack Forest Division/Divisional Forest Officer, Athamalk Forest Division in every quarter, for the purpose of monitoring by him.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8337/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Head, State Portal, I.T. Centre, Odisha Secretariat, Bhubaneswar for information and necessary action. He is requested to upload this order along with its enclosures in the website of Forest, Environment & Climate Change Department immediately for information of all concerned. This is required in compliance to order of Hon'ble National Green Tribunal Dtd.07.11.2012 in Appeal No. 7/2012. Hence this may be done unflinchingly.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Memo No. 8338/FE&CC Date: 21.04.2023

Copy with copy of the Annexures forwarded to the Under Secretary to Government Office Establishment Section, Forest, Environemtn & Climate Change Department for information and necessary action with reference to their letter No. 12939/F&E Dtd.16.07.2016.

OSD-cum-Special Secretary to Government

Government of India

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(Forest Conservation Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bag Road, Aliganj, New Delhi-110003

Dated: 29th March, 2022

To
The Addl. Chief Secretary (Forests)

Department of Forest and Environment,
Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar.

Sub.: Proposal for non-forestry use of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area safety zone 1.899 ha) under Section 2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect to Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No.27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division. - regarding.

Sir/Madam
I am directed to refer to the Government of Odisha's letter No. FE-DIV-FLD-0115- 2021-15632/FE&CC dated 03.09.2021 on the above mentioned subject, seeking prior approval of Central Government under Section-2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, and to say that the said proposal has been examined by the Forest Advisory Committee constituted by the Central Government under Section-3 of the aforesaid Act.

After careful examination of the proposal of the State Government and on the basis of the recommendations of the Forest Advisory Committee, and approval by the competent authority of the MoEF&CC, New Delhi, the Central Government hereby accords approval for 'in-principle' approval under Section - 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area of 1.899 ha) under Section 2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect to Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No.27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division, subject to fulfillment of the following conditions:

A. Conditions which need to be complied prior to handing over of forest land by the State Forest Department and compliance is to be submitted prior to Stage-II approval:

- The cost of compensatory afforestation at the prevailing wage rates as per compensatory afforestation scheme and the cost of survey, demarcation and erection of permanent pillars, if required on the CA land, shall be deposited in advance with the Forest Department by the user agency. The CA will be maintained for 10 years. The scheme may include afforestation of indigenous species with appropriate provision for anticipated cost increase for works scheduled for subsequent years;
- 25% of the CA cost additionally will be spent towards soil and moisture conservation activities in the proposed CA area as per site requirement and deposited in CAF;
- The non-forest land identified for CA shall be transferred and mutated in favour of the State Forest Department and subsequently notified by the State Government as RF under Section - 4 or PF under Section-29 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 or under the relevant Section(s) of the local Forest Act before Stage-I approval. A copy of the final Notification shall be submitted along with the compliance of Stage-I approval;
- The KML files of diverted area, the CA areas, the proposed SMC treatment area and the WLMP area shall be uploaded on the e-Green watch portal with all requisite details prior to Stage II approval;
- The State Government shall levy penal NPV on the user agency w.e.f. 2015 onwards till 2019, in accordance with the concerned provisions made under the FC Act, 1980 on account of mining operations carried out in 66.20 ha without prior approval of Central Government under the FC Act, 1980. Relief, if any, considered by Hon'ble High Court; during the course of future hearing in the matter, for penal NPV stipulated herewith will be dealt as per the direction of Hon'ble High Court; Afforestation of the non-mineralized virgin forest land within the mining area shall be taken up at project cost. All such areas shall be earmarked on a map and KML files of such areas shall be submitted along with detail plan for plantation;
- The User Agency shall transfer online, the Net Present Value (NPV) of the forest land being diverted under this proposal, as per the guidelines issued by this Ministry vide its letters No. 5-3/2011-FC (Vol.) dated 06.01.2022 and 19.01.2022. The requisite funds shall be transferred through online portal into Ad-hoc CAMPAA account of the State Concerned, new NPV guidelines;
- Compensatory levies to be realized from the User Agency under the project shall be transferred/ deposited, through e-challan, in to the account of CAMPAA pertaining to the State concerned through e-portal (https://parivesh.nic.in/);
- The User agency either himself or through the State Forest Department shall undertake gap planting and soil & moisture conservation activities to restock and rejuvenate the degraded open forests (having crown density less than 0.40), if any, located in the area within 100 meter from outer perimeter of the mining lease. The plan for plantation and SMC activities will be prepared and submitted to MoEF&CC before Stage-II Clearance;
- The User Agency shall prepare a list of existing village tanks and other water bodies with GPS co-ordinates located within five km from the mine lease boundary. This list is to be duly verified by the concerned Divisional Forest Officer. The User Agency shall regularly undertake desilting of these village tanks and other water bodies so as to mitigate the impact of siltation of such tanks/water bodies. A detailed approved plan for desilting of identified ponds and water bodies to be prepared in consultation with forest department and shall be submitted to MoEF&CC before Stage-II approval;
- The cost of felling of trees shall be deposited by the User Agency with the State Forest Department;
- State Government shall complete settlement of rights, in term of the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, if any, on the forest land to be diverted and submit the documentary evidence, along with compliance of Stage-I approval, as prescribed by this Ministry's letter No. 11-19/998-FC (Pt.) dated 03.08.2009 read with 05.07.2013, in support thereof;

B. Conditions which need to be complied on field after handing over of forest land to the user agency by the State Forest Department but the compliance in form of undertaking shall be submitted prior to Stage-II approval:-

- Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged;
- An Approved plan for appropriate mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of drains shall be submitted. Observations and recommendation contained in the inspection report of the IRO should be taken into consideration while preparing the plan. Planting of adequate drought hardy plant species and sowing of seeds in the appropriate area within the mining lease area to arrest soil erosion shall be enforced. Construction of check dam, retention wall/toe walls to arrest sliding down of excavated materials along the contours shall be planned;
- Creation and maintenance of alternate habitat for avifauna whose nesting trees have been cleared are to be taken up by user agency;
- The project authority needs to take up works for construction and cleaning of garland drains, stabilizing retaining walls, proper terracing of OB dumps and checking gully formation resulting in soil erosion;
- Plants which are having low translocation factor can be preferred under afforestation on the OB dumps and fruit trees to be avoided in planting during biological stabilization of OB dumps;
- Prevention of fall of wild animals into mining pit by fencing the open pit area to be ensured;
- The angle of repose in OB dumps to be maintained to ensure stability and safety;
- Vetiver grass can be planted at the lower reaches of the dump to bind the soil and prevent soil erosion giving better stability to the dump;
- The Compensatory afforestation over equivalent non-forest land, shall be raised shall be raised by the State Forest Department at the project cost. At least 1000 saplings per ha shall be planted over admissible CA land. If this not possible to plant these many seedlings in the identified NFL, the balance seedlings will be planted in degraded forest land as per the prescription of the Working Plan at the cost of the User Agency. In such cases CA cost will be revised and duly approved by the competent authority and deposited online in the CAF managed by the CAMPAA;
- At the time of payment of the Net Present Value (NPV) at the present rate, the user agency shall furnish an undertaking to pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India;
- Trees should be felled in phased manner as per the requirement in the approved Mining Plan with prior permission of concerned DFO;
- The user agency shall explore the possibility of translocation of maximum number of trees identified to be felled and shall ensure that any tree felling shall be done only when it is unavoidable and that too under strict supervision of the State Forest Department;
- The User Agency shall undertake mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined over area. The concurrent reclamation plan as per the approved mining plan shall be executed by the User Agency from the very first year, and an annual report on implementation thereof shall be submitted to the Nodal Officer, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, in the concerned State Government and the concerned Regional Office of the Ministry. If it is found from the annual report that the activities indicated in the concurrent reclamation plan are not being executed by the User Agency, the Nodal Officer or the concern Addl. Principle Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) may direct that the mining activities shall remain suspended till such time, such reclamation activities area satisfactorily executed;
- Following activities, as per approved plan / schemes, shall be undertaken in the lease area by the User Agency under the supervision of the State Forest Department. Approved scheme/plan shall be submitted to the Ministry along with compliance of Stage-I approval:-
 - Mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of stream shall be implemented within a period of three year with effect from the issue of Stage-II clearance in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department;
 - Planting of adequate drought hardy plant species and sowing of seeds, in the appropriate area within the mining lease to arrest soil erosion in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - Construction of check dams, retention toe walls to arrest sliding down of the excavated material along the contour in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - Stabilize the overburden dumps by appropriate grading/benching, in accordance with the approved scheme, so as to ensure that angles of repose at any given place is less than 28o; and
 - No damage shall be caused to the top-soil and the user agency will follow the top soil management plan;

xv. Safety Zone Management: Following activities, at project cost, shall be undertaken by the user agency for the management of safety zone as per relevant guidelines issued by the Ministry's guidelines:-

- User agency shall ensure demarcation of safety zone (7.5-meter strip all along the inner boundary of the mining lease area), and its fencing, protection and regeneration by erecting adequate number of 6 feet high RCC boundary pillars inscribed with DGPS coordinates with barbed wire fencing and deploying adequate number of watchers under the supervision of the. State Forest Department;
 - Boundary of the safety zone of the mining lease, adjacent to habitation/roads, should be properly fenced by the user agency;
 - Safety zone shall be maintained as green belt around mining lease and to ensure dense canopy in the area, regeneration shall be taken up in this area by the user agency at project cost under the supervision of the State Forest Department;
 - Afforestation on degraded forest land to be selected elsewhere, measuring one and a half times the area under safety zone, shall also be done at the project cost under the supervisions of the State Forest Department. The degraded forest land (DFL) so selected will be informed to the MoEF&CC with shape files before Stage-II approval and afforestation will be done within three years from the date of Stage-II clearance and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department; and
 - The State Government and the user agency shall ensure that safety zone is maintained as per the prescribed norms;
- The User Agency shall comply with the Hon'ble Supreme Court order on re-grassing, and re-grass the mining area and any other areas which may have been disturbed due to mining to restore them to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna, etc. in a timely manner;
- Period of diversion of the said forest land under this approval shall be for a period co-terminus with the period of the mining lease proposed to be granted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended and the Rules framed there-under;
- The User Agency shall obtain the Environment Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if required;
- No labour camp shall be established on the forest land and the User Agency shall provide fuels preferably alternate fuels to the labourers and the staff working at the site so as to avoid any damage and pressure on the nearby forest areas;
- The boundary of the diverted forest land, mining lease and safety zone, as applicable, shall be demarcated on ground at the project cost, by erecting four feet high reinforced cement concrete pillars, each inscribed with its serial number, distance from pillar to pillar and GPS coordinates;
- The layout plan of the mining plan/ proposal shall not be changed without the prior approval of the Central Government and the forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the proposal;
- The forest land proposed to be diverted shall under no circumstances be transferred to any other agency, department or person without prior approval of the Central Government;
- No damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused;
- User agency and the State Forest Department shall create and maintain from funds to be provided by the user agency alternate habitat/ home for the avifauna, whose nesting trees are to be cleared in this project as per the plan duly approved by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and the Chief Wildlife Warden Odisha. Bird nests artificially made out of eco-friendly materials shall be used in the area, including forest area and human settlements, adjoining the forest area being diverted for the project;
- The User Agency shall submit the annual self -compliance report in respect of the above stated conditions to the State Government, concerned Regional Office and to this Ministry by the end of March every year regularly;
- The compliance report shall be uploaded on e-portal (https://parivesh.nic.in/);
- Any other condition that the concerned Regional Office of this Ministry may stipulate with the approval of competent authority in the interest of conservation, protection and development of forests & wildlife;
- The user agency shall comply all the provisions of the all Acts, Rules, Regulations, Guidelines, Hon'ble Court Order (s) and NGT Order (s) pertaining to this project, if any, for the time being in force, as applicable to the project and
- Violation of any of these conditions will amount to violation of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and action would be taken as prescribed in para 1.21 of Chapter 1 of the Handbook of comprehensive guidelines of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 as issued by this Ministry's letter No. 5-2/2017-FC dated 28.03.2019.

After receipt of compliance report on fulfillment of the conditions mentioned above, the proposal shall be considered for final approval under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Transfer of forest land shall not be affected till final approval is granted by the Central Government in this regard.

Yours faithfully,
Sd./- (Sandeep Sharma)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests

Copy to:

- The PCCF (HoFF), State Forest Department, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar
- The PCCF & Nodal Officer (FCA), O/o PCCF, State Forest Department, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar
- The Regional Officer, Integrated Regional Office of MoEF&CC at Bhubaneswar
- User Agency
- Monitoring Cell, FC Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi.

Government of India

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(Forest Conservation Division)

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj, New Delhi: 110003

Dated: 20th April, 2022

To,
The Additional Chief Secretary (Forests),
Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar.

Sub.: Proposal for non-forestry use of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area 1.899 ha) under Section-2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect to Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No.27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division.

Sir,
I am directed to refer to the Government of Odisha's letter No. FE-DIV-FLD- 0115-2021-15632/ FE&CC dated 03.09.2021 on the above-mentioned subject seeking prior approval of the Central Government under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. After careful examination of the proposal by the Forest Advisory Committee, constituted under Section-3 of the said Act, 'in-principle' approval to the proposal under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 was granted vide this Ministry's letter of even number dated 29.03.2022 subject to fulfillment of certain conditions prescribed therein. The State Government has furnished compliance report in respect of the conditions stipulated in the in-principle approval and has requested the Central Government to grant final approval.

In this connection, I am directed to say that on the basis of the compliance report furnished by the State Government vide letter No. 2204/9F (MG)-377/2019 dated 03.11.2022 and letter dated 11.04.2023, final approval of the Central Government is hereby granted under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for non-forestry use of 66.20 ha forest land (including safety zone area safety zone 1.899 ha) under Section-2 (ii) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 in respect to Jindal Chromite Mines of M/s Jindal Stainless Limited in village Kaliapani and Forest Block No.27 of Mahagiri DPF in Sukinda Tahasil of Jajpur District under Cuttack Forest Division, subject to following conditions:

- Legal status of the diverted forest land shall remain unchanged;
 - Compensatory Afforestation:
 - The State Government shall ensure that compensatory afforestation over the non-forest land equal in extent to the forest land being diverted shall be raised within three years from the date of issue of Stage-II Clearance and maintained thereafter as per approved plan by the State Forest Department at the cost of the User Agency. At least 1000, (63.00 ha x 1000 = 68000 plants) saplings per ha shall be planted over admissible CA land. If this is not possible to plant these many seedlings in the identified NFL, the balance seedlings will be planted in degraded forest land as per the prescription of the Working Plan at the cost of the User Agency. In such cases CA cost will be revised and duly approved by the competent authority and deposited online in the CAF managed by the CAMPAA;
 - 25% of the CA cost additionally will be spent towards soil and moisture conservation activities in the proposed CA area as per site requirement and deposited in CAF.
- Net Present Value:
 - The State Government has realized the NPV of the forest area diverted under this proposal from the User Agency as per the Judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India dated 28.03.2008 & 09.05.2008 in IA No. 566 in WP (C) No. 202/1995 and guidelines issued by this Ministry in this regard. Additional NPV if becomes due as per final order of Hon'ble Supreme Court, shall be paid by the User Agency;
 - The State Government shall levy penal NPV on the user agency w.e.f 2015 onward till 2019, in accordance with the concerned provisions made under the FC Act 1980, on account of mining operations carried out in 66.20 ha without prior approval of Central Government under the FC Act, 1980. Relief if any, considered by Hon'ble High Court, during the course of future hearing in the matter, for penal NPV stipulated herewith will be dealt as per direction of Hon'ble High court;
 - The user agency shall pay the additional amount of NPV, if so determined, as per the final decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.
 - State Government shall ensure that the KML files of diverted area, the CA areas, SMC works area and the WLMP area shall be uploaded on the e-Green watch portal with all requisite details prior to handing over forest land to user Agency;
 - State Government shall ensure that afforestation of the non-mineralized virgin forest land within the mining area shall be taken up at project cost.
 - Compensatory levies for this project, if any to be realized in future from the User Agency, shall be deposited into the account of CAMPAA of the State concerned through e-portal (https://parivesh.nic.in/);
 - The State Govt, shall ensure that user agency either himself or through the State Forest Department shall undertake gap planting and soil & moisture conservation activities to restock and rejuvenate the degraded open forests (having crown density less than 0.40), if any, located in the area within 100 m. from outer perimeter of the mining lease as per scheme submitted along with the compliance report;
 - The State Govt, shall ensure that User Agency shall prepare a list of existing village tanks and other water bodies with GPS co-ordinates located within five km. from the mine lease boundary. This list is to be duly verified by the concerned Divisional Forest Officer. The User Agency shall regularly undertake desilting of these village tanks and other water bodies so as to mitigate the impact of siltation of such tanks/water bodies;
 - The User Agency shall pay towards cost of removal of trees enumerated before commencement of work on Stage-II approval and tree felling should be taken up in phases strictly as per requirement under the supervision of the Divisional Forest Officer, Keonjhar Forest Division.
 - State Government shall ensure that process for settlement of rights, in term of the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, has been completed in accordance with the relevant guidelines prescribed by this Ministry's letter No. 11-9/1998-FC (Pt.) dated 03.08.2009 read with 05.07.2013;
 - The State Govt, shall ensure that user agency either himself or through the State Forest Department shall undertake appropriate mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of drains as per scheme submitted along with the compliance report. Observations and recommendation contained in the inspection report of the IRO should be taken into consideration. Planting of adequate drought hardy plant species and sowing of seeds in the appropriate area within the mining lease area to arrest soil erosion shall be enforced. Construction of check dam, retention wall/ toe walls to arrest sliding down of excavated materials along the contours shall be implemented;
 - State Government shall ensure that creation and maintenance of alternate habitat for avifauna whose nesting trees have been cleared are to be taken up by User agency;
 - State Government shall ensure that the project authority needs to take up works for construction and cleaning of garland drains, stabilizing retaining walls, proper terracing of OB dumps and checking gully formation resulting in soil erosion;
 - Plants which are having low translocation factor can be preferred under afforestation on the OB dumps and fruit trees to be avoided in planting during biological stabilization of OB dumps;
 - State Government shall take necessary measures to prevent the falling of wild animals into mining pit by fencing the open pit area;
 - State Government shall ensure that the angle of repose in OB dumps to be maintained to ensure stability and safety;
 - Vetiver grass can be planted at the lower reaches of the dump to bind the soil and prevent soil erosion giving better stability to the dump;
 - State Government and user agency shall ensure that trees should be felled in phased manner as per requirement in the approved Mining Plan with prior permission of concerned DFO;
 - The State Government shall ensure that the user agency shall explore the possibility of translocation of maximum number of trees identified to be felled and shall ensure that any tree felling shall be done only when it is unavoidable and that too under strict supervision of the State Forest Department;
 - The State Govt, shall ensure that the User Agency shall carry out mining in a phased manner after taking due care for reclamation of the mined over area. The concurrent reclamation plan as per the approved mining plan shall be executed by the User Agency from the very first year, and an annual report on implementation thereof shall be submitted to the Nodal Officer, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, in the concerned State Government and the concerned Regional Office of the Ministry. If it is found from the annual report that the activities indicated in the concurrent reclamation plan are not being executed by the User Agency, the Nodal Officer or the Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) may direct that the mining activities shall remain suspended till such time, such reclamation activities area satisfactorily executed;

- Following activities, as per approved plan / schemes, shall be undertaken by the User Agency at project cost under the supervision of the State Forest Department:
 - Mitigative measures to minimize soil erosion and choking of stream shall be implemented within a period of three year with effect from the issue of Stage-II clearance in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department.
 - Planting of adequate drought hardy plant species and sowing of seeds, in the appropriate area within the mining lease to arrest soil erosion in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - Construction of check dams, retention toe walls to arrest sliding down of the excavated material along the contour in accordance with the approved scheme;
 - Stabilize the overburden dumps by appropriate grading/benching, in accordance with the approved scheme, so as to ensure that angles of repose at any given place is less than 28o; and
 - No damage shall be caused to the top-soil and the user agency will follow the top soil management plan.
- Safety Zone Management: Following activities, at project cost, shall be undertaken by the user agency for the management of safety zone as per relevant guidelines issued by the Ministry's guidelines:
 - User agency shall ensure demarcation of safety zone (7.5-meter strip all along the inner boundary of the mining lease area), and its fencing, protection and regeneration by erecting adequate number of 6 feet high RCC boundary pillars inscribed with DGPS coordinates with barbed wire fencing and deploying adequate number of watchers under the supervision of the. State Forest Department;
 - Boundary of the safety zone of the mining lease, adjacent to habitation/roads, should be properly fenced by the user agency;
 - Safety zone shall be maintained as green belt around mining lease and to ensure dense canopy in the area, regeneration shall be taken up in this area by the user agency at project cost under the supervision of the State Forest Department;
 - Afforestation on degraded forest land to be selected elsewhere, measuring one and a half times the area under safety zone, shall also be done at the project cost under the supervisions of the State Forest Department. The degraded forest land (DFL) so selected will be informed to the MoEF & CC and afforestation will be done within three years from the date of Stage-II clearance and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved Plan in consultation with the State Forest Department; and
 - The State Government and the user agency shall ensure that safety zone is maintained as per the prescribed norms.
- The User Agency shall comply with the Hon'ble Supreme Court order on re-grassing, and re-grass the mining area and any other areas which may have been disturbed due to mining to restore them to a condition which is fit for growth of fodder, flora, fauna, etc. in a timely manner;
- Period of diversion of the said forest land under this approval shall be for a period co-terminus with the period of the mining lease proposed to be granted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended and the Rules framed there-under;
- The User Agency shall obtain the Environment Clearance as per the provisions of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, if required;
- No labour camp shall be established on the forest land and the User Agency shall provide fuels preferably alternate fuels to the labourers and the staff working at the site so as to avoid any damage and pressure on the nearby forest areas;
- The boundary of the diverted forest land, mining lease and safety zone, as applicable, shall be demarcated on ground at the project cost, by erecting four feet high reinforced cement concrete pillars, each inscribed with its serial number, distance from pillar to pillar and GPS coordinates;
- The layout plan of the mining plan/ proposal shall not be changed without the prior approval of the Central Government and the forest land shall not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the proposal;
- The forest land proposed to be diverted shall under no circumstances be transferred to any other agency, department or person without prior approval of the Central Government;
- No damage to the flora and fauna of the adjoining area shall be caused;
- State Government shall ensure that user agency and the State Forest Department shall create and maintain from funds to be provided by the user agency alternate habitat/ home for the avifauna, whose nesting trees are to be cleared in this project as per the plan duly approved by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and the Chief Wildlife Warden Odisha. Bird nests artificially made out of eco-friendly materials shall be used in the area, including forest area and human settlements, adjoining the forest area being diverted for the project



Early warning: First defence in Kerala climate disasters

ELONGATED LIKE A BITTER GOURD AND STRETCHING ACROSS SOUTH-WESTERN INDIA, THE STATE OF KERALA IS AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE REGIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE, INCREASINGLY FACING EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS, BE IT CYCLONES, FLOODS OR HEAT, WITH EACH PASSING YEAR

AGENCIES

Kochi, April 22: For deep sea fishermen Charlene Lenis, Jerome Beji and their 10-person crew, knowing when a cyclone is approaching can spell the difference between life and death.

When Cyclone Tauktae in 2021 was nearing the fishing grounds off the southern coast of India, the weather agency sent out a message about the major storm. The fishermen had been at sea two days and immediately returned to port after getting the satellite phone warning.

“We are gillnet fishers and we always travel as a troupe of boats. At least one boat will have a satellite phone,” said Lenis, who primarily catches tuna, sharks and other big fish.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) as well as the Kerala government have increased infrastructure for cyclone warnings since Cyclone Ockhi in 2017, which killed 245 fishermen out at sea. Just a year later, unprecedented flooding left Kerala reeling with thousands of crores in damage, including in its largest city Kochi.

Ramping up ways to warn people about extreme weather disasters is becoming increasingly important for India — the world’s most populous nation and one of the most vulnerable to climate change.

In a recent visit to India, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the World Meteorological Organisation will invest USD 3.1 billion (approximately Rs 25,000 crore) to set up early warning systems across the world. According to the WMO, nearly half the world’s countries — most of them low-income countries and small island states — do not have any early warning systems.

“Countries with limited early warning coverage have disaster



mortality eight times higher than countries with high coverage,” said Guterres.

Elongated like a bitter gourd and stretching across southwestern India, the state of Kerala is nestled between the biodiversity-rich Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. The state is also among the most vulnerable regions to climate change, increasingly facing extreme weather events, be it cyclones, floods or heat, with each passing year.

From a meteorological perspective, the state occupies a special position too. Arrival of the annual monsoons, critical to the Indian economy and agriculture, is declared on the subcontinent only after the rains make landfall in Kerala, usually in June.

“Kerala is witnessing an increase in extreme weather events and should become fully prepared to deal with it,” said Madhavan Rajeevan, a former secretary with the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Rajeevan was among senior officials in-charge when weather calamities such as Cyclone Ockhi

and the 2018 floods struck Kerala. “While things are better, there is still a lot of scope for improvement, he said. It is important to ramp up communications systems, so the information reaches the people who need it the most. Such as fishers.”

The Cyclone Warning Division of the IMD at its New Delhi headquarters is the beating heart of India’s cyclone forecasting. The division receives data from satellites, local offices, doppler radars and allied agencies such as the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting and the National Centre for Ocean Information Services.

When a storm is approaching, the division resembles a command centre for emergency operations with scientists working around the clock to monitor and relay information to regions likely to be affected.

Based on this information, thousands of people are moved to safer ground and fishers are called back from sea or prevented from going out. Since it was established over two decades ago, the division has been instrumental in saving count-

less Indian lives from extreme weather.

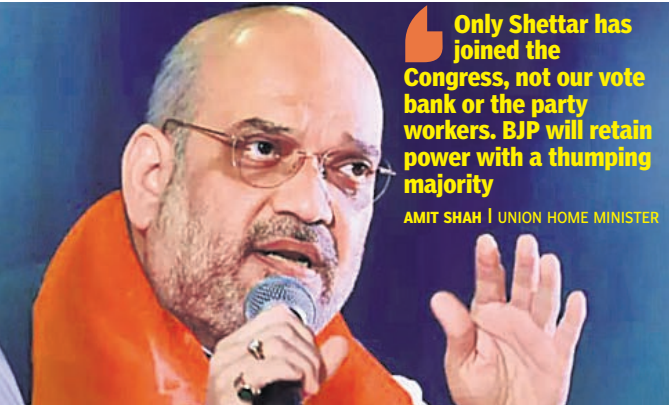
“When there is a cyclone, a bulletin is issued eight times a day, which includes warnings to fishermen, ports, and coastal weather bulletins,” IMD chief Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

Mohapatra earned the moniker “cyclone man of India” after accurately predicting the path of powerful Cyclone Phailin that hit the coast of Odisha in 2013. “We have also increased the frequency of the warnings and make sure the information reaches fishers and others who need it as soon as possible,” he added.

Despite the weather agency’s efforts, the deadly toll of extreme weather is increasing in India. According to a 2022 report by the IMD, more than 2,000 people died in the country due to extreme weather events. Another report found that 2022 was among the warmest years on record for Kerala. The state lost 56 lives to extreme weather last year, according to Kerala government’s Institute for Climate Change Studies.

‘BJP BELIEVES IN CONTINUOUS CHANGE’

Shah clears air on denial of ticket to saffron bigwigs



Only Shettar has joined the Congress, not our vote bank or the party workers. BJP will retain power with a thumping majority

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 22: Reacting to the denial of tickets to state BJP bigwigs in poll-bound Karnataka, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said at a media conclave here Saturday that the BJP believes in a continuous process of change.

Shah also underlined that if Congress thinks that it can come to power in Karnataka with the induction of former BJP leader Jagadish Shettar into the party, it is thinking of the impossible.

“Only Shettar has joined the Congress, not our vote bank or the party workers. BJP will retain power with a thumping majority,” Shah said.

On denial of tickets to senior state BJP leaders, Shah said that various factors are taken into account before preparing the list of candidates.

“The nominees should not be tainted, they should be respectable candidates. Those who have been denied tickets have been convinced about the party’s decision,” the

Home Minister said.

Shah also clarified that one can’t brand all the leaders who were denied tickets as tainted.

To accommodate new faces and the new generation, many sitting MLA were not given tickets, he said, adding that the change infused in Karnataka BJP is minimal.

Former Karnataka Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Shettar recently quit the party and joined the Congress after being denied ticket for the May 10 Assembly elections. Former Deputy CM Laxman Savadi has also jumped ship to the Congress for the same reason.

Shah, who arrived in Bangalore Friday evening, conducted a marathon meeting of party leaders that continued till 3am Saturday, during which he gave them specific tasks to ensure victory of the party. He also advised the party leaders not to be over confident and to shed their negative image.

He also said that the defectors should be taught a lesson in the elections, sources said.

Threat letter ahead of Modi’s visit to Kerala

THE LETTER IN MALAYALAM, PURPORTEDLY WRITTEN BY A KOCHI RESIDENT, WAS RECEIVED AT THE OFFICE OF BJP STATE PRESIDENT K SURENDRAN WHO IN TURN HAD HANDED IT OVER TO THE POLICE LAST WEEK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, April 22: Kerala police and central agencies have launched an investigation into a letter threatening a suicide bomb attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi who will be visiting the state April 24 and 25 to take part in various programmes.

The letter in Malayalam, purportedly written by a Kochi resident, was received at the office of BJP state president K Surendran who in turn had handed it over to the police last week.

The news of the threat letter came out today after a report by ADGP (Intelligence) was telecast in the media. As the news was out, Surendran met the media and said he had handed over the threat letter a week ago to the state police chief.

“Last week, President, BJP state committee, Kerala had received a letter written in Malayalam threatening the life of Hon. Prime



Minister of India by using suicide bomber,” the intelligence report read.

The report also said the veracity of the letter and the person behind it were under investigation.

Surendran alleged that the leak of the intelligence report from the police was a grave mistake and it

should be probed. The 49-page report gives details of the names of the officials on duty, their roles, the detailed programme chart of the Prime Minister among other matters.

Union Minister of State V Muralaeeharan also slammed the alleged leak of the ADGP

(Intelligence) report and said it was a serious matter.

“The Chief Minister should explain how a report on the security detail of the Prime Minister was leaked and going viral on WhatsApp. This means the state home department is in shambles,” Muralaeeharan alleged.

Meanwhile, Kochi resident NJ Johnny, whose name and number were there in the alleged threat letter, Saturday said he was innocent.

“Police have questioned me. I have given them all the details. They crosschecked the handwriting and everything,” he told the media.

His family said they suspect another person from the locality, who has some issues with them over some matter related to a church, behind the letter.

As per the report, nearly 2,000 police personnel have been deployed each in Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi cities.

K'TAKA POLLS

Rahul to celebrate Basava Jayanthi

■ Currently, the Lingayat vote bank is standing with BJP and Congress is making an all-out attempt to reach out to them

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, April 22: Continuing its outreach to Lingayat community ahead of the May 10 Assembly polls, the Congress has roped in Rahul Gandhi to participate in Basava Jayanthi celebrations at Kudala Sangama in Bagalkot district of the state.

Basava Jayanthi is celebrated April 23 as a festival by the Lingayat community across the state.

The Congress, which is upbeat about breaking Lingayat vote bank of BJP after the joining of senior Lingayat leaders from BJP -- Jagadish Shettar and Laxman Savadi --, is all set to woo the com-



munity on the auspicious occasion, sources said here Saturday.

Guru Basavanna’s (12th century social reformer who founded Lingayat religion) samadhi is located in Kudala Sangama. The

Congress wants to send out a signal through the programme that it is with Lingayats.

According to the sources, the programme is organised by an organisation and not by the party.

Congress leaders have visited the spot and made arrangements. KPCC Publicity Campaign President and senior Congress leader MB Patil has taken all the major responsibilities of hosting Rahul Gandhi and organising programmes. The former Congress president will visit Sangameshwara temple and Basavanna’s Ikya Mantapa (samadhi). Later, he is scheduled to participate in the Basava Jayanthi programme organised at the venue.

All Lingayat leaders of Congress will participate in the programme with Rahul Gandhi to send a signal to the community, sources explained.

Currently, the Lingayat vote bank is standing with BJP and Congress is making an all-out attempt to reach out to them.

Water Metro will accelerate Kochi development: Vijayan

AGENCIES

Thiruvananthapuram, April 22: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Saturday termed the Kochi Water Metro, set to be launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi next week, as a dream project of the state that would accelerate the growth and development of Kochi.

Sources in the Chief Minister’s Office (CMO) said PM Modi would launch the Kochi Water Metro service in a function here April 25.

With the launching of the flagship project set up at a cost of Rs 1,136.83 crore in the port city, one more assurance given to the people of the state by the LDF government is being fulfilled, Vijayan said in a Facebook post.

In a tweet, he said exciting times are ahead for the southern state’s transport and tourism sectors.

“The world-class #KochiWaterMetro is setting sail! It is Kerala’s dream project connecting 10 islands in and around Kochi. KWM with 78 electric boats



& 38 terminals cost 1,136.83 crores, funded by GoK & KfW,” he tweeted. KfW is a German funding agency. As a first phase of the project, service would begin soon from High Court-Vypin terminals to Vyttila-Kakkanad terminals, the Chief Minister said in his Facebook post.

The cost-effective and secure journey in air-conditioned boats would help people to reach their respective destinations without being stuck in traffic snarls, he said.

Passengers can travel in both Kochi metro and water metro using the Kochi 1 card. They can also book the tickets digitally, the CM added.

Eid-ul-Fitr celebrated with religious fervour in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 22: Marking the culmination of the one month-long fasting, Muslims in Kerala Saturday celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr with religious fervour and festivities.

Cutting across age and economic barriers, hundreds of faithfuls thronged mosques and specially arranged Eidgahs across the southern state in the morning to offer prayers.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly VD Satheesan were among those who extended Eid greetings to people.

Khan joined several devotees who had gathered at the Eidgah in Kollam district to offer prayers, the Kerala Raj Bhavan said in an official release.

CM Vijayan tweeted, “May Eid-ul-Fitr bring us all together, transcending the boundaries of culture and religion. Let’s cherish this special occasion by spreading love and compassion to everyone



Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan (right extreme) offers Eid-ul-Fitr prayers marking the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan, in Thiruvananthapuram, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

around us. Wishing everyone a beautiful celebration filled with gratitude and togetherness. #EidMubarak.”

During the sermons at the

mosques in the state, religious leaders urged devotees to uphold values of compassion, fraternity and social harmony and live a life adhering to the values of Islam.

In his address at the famed Palayam Juma Masjid here, Imam VP Suhaib Maulavi made it clear that Islam does not support or propagate any kind of violence.

The Kerala government had declared public holiday for all state-run offices and educational institutions Saturday

Irrespective of their age, people could be seen hugging each other and exchange pleasantries after the prayers in the mosques. “Eid is also an occasion to strengthen our relationships with family members, friends and neighbours. We used to visit our near and distant family members on this day. We also do charity without any fail during the Perunnal (Eid) day,” an elderly Muslim man said at the Palayam mosque ground here.

Traditional feasts were prepared in Muslim houses with an array of ethnic delicacies.

The Kerala government had declared public holiday for all state-run offices and educational institutions Saturday.

of the day quote

The state BJP is determined to "gift two lotuses" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in next year's Lok Sabha elections

MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

India overtaking China as the world's most populous country has evoked much comment. But what hasn't is how the pioneering states in family planning-mostly southern-will end up losing seats in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

The Delhi University is a great institution and India has been "very profoundly influenced" by its work

HARDEEP SINGH PURI | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Woman beaten to death in UP

Deoria (UP): A woman was beaten to death with an iron rod in a village here while trying to save her brother from a mob, police said Saturday. The incident took place in Kurmouta Thakur village on Friday when Shailesh Sahni was attacked by a group of people with whom his family had an old enmity, they said. After getting information about the incident, Alka Sahni (25) rushed to her brother's rescue and the group including Jitendra Singh and Raju Singh attacked with an iron rod, SP Sankalp Sharma said. Alka died on the spot, he said. The SP said Saini's family had an old enmity regarding land with Jitendra Singh and Raju Singh.

Trader found dead

Patna: A trader was found hanging under mysterious circumstances at his residence in Qila Maidan in Patna, a police official said Saturday. Trader Nikhil Jalan (41), having shops in upscale Heera Palace market near Dak Bunglow Chowk, had last interacted with his daughter who is studying in Bangalore over phone. "We are registering the statements of Jalan's family members. The reason is yet to be ascertained. No suicide note has been recovered," said Gaurishankar Gupta, SHO of Chowk police station. "We have sent the body for post-mortem in PMCH Patna," Gupta said.

Man arrested

New Delhi: On the basis of a complaint made by a woman in the national capital, a 25-year-old man was arrested in Ludhiana for stalking women and posting morphed pictures of the victims online, a Delhi Police official said Saturday. The accused has been identified as Kuldeep. The official said that he made a social media profile in the name of a woman and used to send requests to others, in order to get friendly with them and later used to post morphed photographs of the victim to harass them.

Heroin seized

Diphu: A huge consignment of heroin, estimated to be worth nearly ₹8 crore has been seized and two persons were arrested in Assam's Karbi Anglong district on Saturday, police said. Acting on a tip-off, security forces comprising state police and CRPF launched an operation in the Lahorijan area of the district on Friday night. A truck coming from Manipur was intercepted early on Saturday and following a search operation, 116 soap boxes containing 1.3 kg of heroin were seized.



Security forces should not harass innocent people during their operation against the perpetrators of the Poonch terror attack that killed five Indian Army soldiers

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

7,000 DOGS STERILISED

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi sterilised nearly 7,000 stray dogs in January and February and more dogs are being picked daily for sterilisation and then released back to the same area, officials said Saturday



Malik, Khap leaders stage protest at Delhi police stn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: Former governor Satya Pal Malik, who has been called by the CBI over an alleged insurance 'scam' in Jammu and Kashmir, and some Khap leaders staged a protest at a police station here on Saturday after not being allowed to hold a meeting at a south Delhi park as they lacked requisite permission, officials said, but rejected reports they were detained or arrested.

Sagar Preet Hooda, Special Commissioner of Police (Law & Order-Zone II), however, said 24 people who refused to leave the park were detained, but released around 3 pm. Questioning the police action, Malik said he and his supporters had gone to the R K Puram Police Station to protest as he was stopped from giving food to Khap leaders at the park. According to police, they all left the police station around 2.30 pm.

Senior Haryana-based farmer leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni said the meeting was called by Malik and a group of Khap leaders, but nobody was scheduled to speak at the venue. "Where is violation of rules in this?" he asked.

Hooda, the Special Commissioner of Police, said the local police received information about 10 am that an "unknown tent" has been installed at the MCD Public Park, Sector 12, RK Puram. "SHO, RK Puram, along with staff reached the spot and enquired, wherein it was revealed that a gathering/ protest under the leadership of Sh. Satya Pal Malik, for-



Sagar Preet Hooda, Special Commissioner of Police (Law & Order-Zone II) said 24 people who refused to leave the park were detained, but released around 3 pm

Another senior police official said after the former Jammu and Kashmir governor was informed that the meeting could not be held at the park, he and his supporters left the place and arrived at the R K Puram police station

mer Governor, was likely to be held," he said in a statement.

He said this was a public park in a residential area near the DPS R K Puram. "This is not a place for protests and they were further advised to organise such protest at Jantar Mantar, which is the designated site for such activities," Hooda said. They had not given any application or intimation to the local police or the land-owning

agency in this regard, he said.

"Local Police tried to persuade the organisers and participants to leave the park. But, they refused to leave the park. After which 24 persons, who were refusing to leave the site, were detained and sent to PS Jafarpur Kalan," the IPS officer said.

He said Malik came to the park later and he was also informed about the same. "After which, he on his own volition reached Police Station RK Puram, along with 20 supporters, at around 12:30 pm. He remained there for about 2 hours and then left PS. Around 3 pm his 24 supporters were also released from PS Jafarpur Kalan," Hooda said.

"Shri Satya Pal Malik, former Governor was neither arrested nor detained by Delhi Police," he added. Another senior police official said after the former Jammu and Kashmir governor was informed that the meeting could not be held at the park, he and his supporters left the place and arrived at the R K Puram police station.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Manoj C said in a statement, "We have not detained former governor Satya Pal Malik. He came on his own volition, along with his supporters, to the R K Puram police station and we have informed him that he can leave at his own will."

Speaking to the mediapersons before going to the police station, Malik said he wanted to give food to the Khap leaders who were at the park.

Violence in Bengal over 'rape, murder'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Raiganj/ Kaliachak, April 22: A 20-year-old man was arrested Saturday in connection with the alleged rape and murder of a teenage girl in West Bengal's North Dinajpur district that triggered violent protests, police said.

The 17-year-old girl, whose body was found in a canal in Kaliachak police station area on Friday, knew the man, Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Sana Akhtar said, identifying him as the prime accused.

A case has been filed under IPC section 302 (murder) and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act based on the complaint filed by the girl's mother, he said.

The preliminary post-mortem report revealed no injury to the body, Akhtar said, adding that a bottle of poison was found near

the body. "We are investigating the case from all angles," he said.

Violence rocked Kaliachak, around 18 km from the Bangladesh border and 320 km north of Kolkata, as locals protested against the incident, prompting the police to use tear gas shells and charge batons to bring the situation under control, officials said. Several shops and e-rickshaws were set on fire by the mob, which demanded the arrest of those behind the incident. Roads were also blocked and stones were hurled at the police, they said.

The RSS-backed ABVP gheraoed the Kalianganj police station, while BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar sat on a dharna outside the SP office in Raiganj, demanding justice for the victim's family. Rapid Action Force (RAF) was deployed to bring the situation under control, police said, adding that a few protestors were also detained.

POONCH TERROR ATTACK

Search operation intensified

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Poonch/Jammu/Chandigarh, April 22: Top security officials Saturday visited the site of the April 20 terrorist attack on an army truck in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch and reviewed the major search and cordon operation launched in the area as any breakthrough eluded the forces for the second day.

Thousands of mourners including local MPs and MLAs gathered as the five jawans, who were killed when their truck was ambushed while carrying fruits and other items to a border village for Iftar to be hosted by the Rashtriya Rifles unit on Thursday evening were cremated with full military



Parents and other family members mourn near the mortal remains of Sewak Singh, who was martyred in a terrorist attack in Poonch, during his funeral at his native village Bagha, in Bathinda

PTI PHOTO

honours in their native villages.

Northern Army Commander Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi, BSF Director General S L Thaosan and ADGP Mukesh

Singh, besides an NSG team visited the attack site at Bhata Dhurian, an area that has remained a preferred infiltration route for terrorists from across the Line of Control because of its topography, dense forest cover and natural caves.

Dwivedi reviewed the security in the border area and the ongoing combing operation to track down the terrorists. The Northern Command said in a tweet that he was briefed on the actions undertaken so far and exhorted the troops to be steadfast in their resolve.

A high alert has been sounded in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch and traffic has been suspended on the Rajouri-Poonch Highway, officials said.

AAP MP SANJAY SENDS LEGAL NOTICE TO ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: AAP MP Sanjay Singh sent a legal notice to the Enforcement Directorate on Saturday asking it to issue an apology or else face civil and criminal proceedings for allegedly making false and derogatory claims about him in the Delhi excise policy case.

According to a statement issued by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the legal notice stated that the agency's associates, agents and employees have attempted to tarnish and mutilate the leader's public image by popularising "a perverse, false, motivated, wild, malicious and baseless campaign" against his alleged involvement in Delhi excise policy case.

The officials have "knowingly and intentionally" made certain "untrue, defamatory, and incriminating statements" against Singh in the Delhi excise policy prosecution complaint, the legal notice, addressed to ED Director Sanjay Kumar Mishra and Additional Director Jogender, charged.

"In the conspiracy to defame...Sanjay Singh, the ED has deliberately and maliciously defamed him by imputing his involvement in some liquor policy on the basis of an alleged statement of Dinesh Arora recorded under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act on October 1, 2022," the legal notice stated. The notice called upon the ED to "immediately" issue an open and public apology within 48 hours of its receipt for "the mental agony and harassment" faced by the Rajya Sabha member.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 22: Assam Youth Congress president Angkita Dutta was expelled from the primary membership of the Congress for six years on Saturday for anti-party activities.

Dutta had accused Indian Youth Congress chief Srinivas B V of causing mental agony to her after she levelled sexual harassment charges against former IYC president Keshav Kumar.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) slammed the Congress over the move, saying this is its model of women empowerment and its slogan of "ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon, lad sakti hoon" (I am a woman and I can fight) is hollow.

"Congress president has expelled Dr Angkita Dutta, president, Assam Pradesh Youth Congress, from the primary membership of the party, for six years for her anti-party activities with immediate effect," Tariq Anwar, member-secretary of the Disciplinary Action Committee of the Congress, said in an order.

Hitting out at the Congress, BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya tweeted: "This is Congress's model of women empowerment!" "Sack the woman who alleged harassment instead of providing a platform to hear her grievances. The manner in



which Angkita Dutta has been removed from the Congress is uninspiring for women," he said.

Malviya also said, "Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon is a hollow slogan." The Congress had come up with the slogan in the run-up to last year's Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls. Dutta had tweeted:

"When previous IYC president Keshav Kumar had sexually harassed and because of #MeToo came out. He was compelled to remove. Now despite being mentally harassed and discriminated by B V Srinivas for 6 months. I have been told to keep mum and no enquiry is initiated."

"Honestly I am aware this could lead to an end of my political career. If this is the price I have to pay, so be it. About me meeting some BJP leader, one is welcome to check CCTV footage of home and office where you will probably see me reading trolls my colleagues are spreading," she tweeted on Friday.

PSLV-C55 places two satellites into orbit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sriharikota, (AP), April 22: ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle Saturday successfully placed two Singapore satellites into the intended orbit, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said.

The satellites are part of the order secured by NewSpace India Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO. At the end of a 22.5 hour countdown, the 44.4 metre tall rocket lifted off majestically from the first launch pad at the pre-fixed 2.19 pm at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre



here, located about 135 km from Chennai.

ISRO Chief S Somanath said PSLV placed both satellites into the intended orbit. "The PSLV in its 57th mission has once again demonstrated its high reliability and its suitability for commercial missions of such class," a beaming Somanath

said from the Mission Control Center.

"In this mission, we had a core alone configuration of the PSLV which has many specialities and improvements that we made to bring down the cost of the rocket as well as its integration time. And this is the goal-to have increased production and launches of PSLV in the times to come..." Somanath, also Secretary, Department of Space, added. Mission Director S R Biju said the "totally dedicated commercial mission" was carried out with "utmost precision."

Similar scenes were witnessed in Jharkhand's Ranchi and Jamshedpur. Large gatherings were seen at Harmu Idgah, Upper Bazar Jama Masjid, Doranda Idgah, Kadru Idgah and Iqra Masjid in the state capital.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren extended his wishes on the occasion. "This is a festival of peace, unity, joy, gaiety and enthusiasm. I pray that this festival may bring happiness and prosperity in every one's life," he said. Governor CP Radhakrishnan tweeted, "My heartfelt greetings to everyone on Eid-ul-Fitr: Eid Mubarak!"

INDIA CELEBRATES EID WITH FERVOUR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22: India celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr on Saturday with people, dressed in traditional finery, offering prayers at mosques and Eidgahs, and families coming together for feasts.

Eid-ul-Fitr marks the end of the fasting month of Ramzan. In Delhi, a large number of people congregated at the historical Jama Masjid around 6:30 am to offer namaz. The special Eid prayers at Fatehpuri Masjid, Eidgah and Sunehri Masjid also drew large crowds.

People greeted each other after the prayers and took part in the festivities. Shops in the city's main markets, especially those around Jama Masjid and Chandni Chowk, did brisk business as people

shopped for the festival.

While the festive spirit was palpable elsewhere in Jammu and Kashmir, residents of Sangote village skipped the pomp and show as they grieved the death of five Army soldiers in a terrorist attack in Poonch.

In Kashmir, the largest congregation of devotees was witnessed at the Hazratbal shrine on the banks of the Dal Lake where former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah was among the notable persons to offer prayers.

However, authorities did not allow Eid prayers at the historic Jamia Masjid in the old city, a day after allowing Friday congregational prayers. The biggest congregation in Jammu took place at Eidgah and Macca Masjid where



hundreds of devotees performed Namaz-e-Eid and prayed for peace, development and prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir as well as the country.

In Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow, a

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav were among the prominent faces who visited the Eidgah.

On the occasion of Eid, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath urged people to celebrate the festival while taking all precautions against COVID-19. Security was tightened across Uttar Pradesh and prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) were imposed across districts after gangster-politician Atiq Ahmad and his brother Ashraf were shot dead in Prayagraj on April 15 by three men posing as journalists.

In Mumbai, thousands offered prayers at mosques at places like Mohammad Ali Road, Bandra, Govandi and Kurla which have a sizeable population of Muslims. After offering namaz, people vis-



We are on track to issue more than a million visas this year. This is a record for us along with a record number of student visas and immigrant visas
DONALD LU | ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA, US

FINLAND BIRTH RATE DIPS TO LOWEST SINCE 1776

Finland's registered 1.32 births per woman in 2022, the lowest level since record keeping started in 1776, according to official data. Statistics Finland said the figure in 2021 was 1.46, reports Xinhua news agency. In 2022, 44,951 children were born in Finland



of the day quote

Technologies allow traditional and modern artillery to be more accurate, and they help save the lives of our soldiers. In this technology war we will surely win

MYKHAILO FEDOROV | MINISTER OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, UKRAINE

Serbian-Hungarian relations are at the highest level in the history of our countries

ALEKSANDAR VUCIC | PRESIDENT, SERBIA

We do not want intervention, we do not want help from anyone, it has cost us a lot to assert our sovereignty these are matters that only correspond to Mexicans

ANDRES MANUEL LOPEZ OBRADOR | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

SHORT TAKES

Dowden named UK Deputy PM

London: The British government named Oliver Dowden deputy prime minister Friday, replacing Dominic Raab who resigned earlier in the day following a report into claims he bullied colleagues. As deputy prime minister, Dominic Raab had no formal powers but stepped in for the prime minister if he was away from parliament or incapacitated. Oliver Dowden currently serves as cabinet office minister in Rishi Sunak's government. He was previously chairman of Rishi Sunak's Conservative Party but resigned from that post last June after two crushing by-election defeats for the party.

China, Philippines to work together

Manila: China's foreign minister said Saturday his country is willing to work with the Philippines to resolve their differences, as tensions rise over Beijing's behaviour in the disputed South China Sea and Manila's deepening military cooperation with the US. Foreign Minister Qin Gang held talks in Manila with his Philippine counterpart, Enrique Manalo, and was scheduled to meet with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr just days before he travels to Washington for a meeting with President Joe Biden. China has warned that a deepening security alliance between the United States and the Philippines should not harm its security and territorial interests and interfere in long-simmering territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

Australia eases citizenship for NZ

Sydney: Australia announced Saturday a direct pathway to citizenship for New Zealanders living in the country, reversing controversial visa rules a day before a visit by New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins. Hipkins, set to visit Queensland state's capital Brisbane Sunday, hailed the move as "the biggest improvement in the rights of New Zealanders living in Australia in a generation". The changes, effective from July, meant New Zealand citizens living in Australia for four years or more could apply for citizenship without having to become permanent residents first, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

Tornado kills 8

Bangkok: A tornado that tore through two villages in central Myanmar near the capital Naypyitaw killed eight people and destroyed more than 200 houses, a rescue worker said Saturday.



People protest during the Extinction Rebellion's 'The Big One' event, in London

EARTH DAY

Avoid dystopian future: Activists

Average global temperatures could hit all-time highs in 2023 or 2024, climate scientists have warned

REUTERS

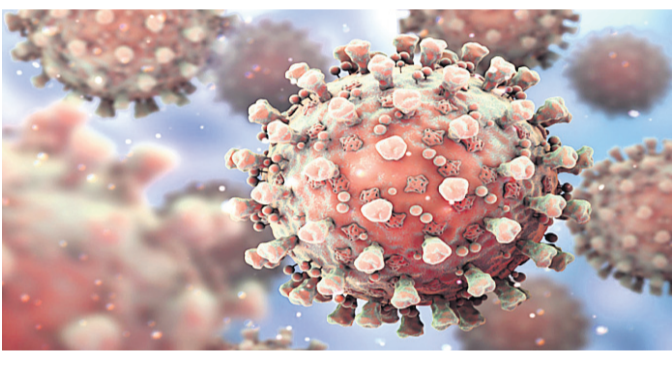
London, April 22: Climate change campaigners gathered outside Britain's parliament building ahead of Earth Day to urge action on global warming, while volunteers worldwide geared up to plant trees and clear trash to mark the 54th annual celebration of the environment. Earth Day this year, officially Saturday, follows weeks of extreme weather with temperatures soaring to record highs in Thailand and a punishing heatwave in India, where at least 13 people died of heatstroke at a ceremony last weekend. "Climate impacts are here," Areeba Hamid, co-executive director of Greenpeace UK, said Friday as climate change activists

walked down the street outside parliament, some dressed in green costumes and green paint. Hamid said when she now visits her hometown of Delhi, it feels like "putting your head in the oven" and that London's 2022 heatwave was like "a dystopian film". "We can't afford that anymore." Activists led by the Extinction Rebellion group have gathered in London to kick off a four-day action, billed "The Big One", to coincide with Earth Day. About 30,000 people have signed up for family-friendly rallies and marches, marking a change in strategy for a group known for its disruptive tactics, including blocking roads, throwing paint and smashing windows.

Governments have fallen far short of pledges in the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit heating of the climate by shifting off fossil fuels, amid crises including Covid-19, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, food shortages and strained ties between China and the US, the top two greenhouse gas emitters. A report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says the planet is on track to warm beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times - a key threshold for even more damaging impacts - between 2030 and 2035. "There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all," the IPCC has said. "The choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts now and for thousands of years."

XBB.1.16 now a Covid-19 'variant of interest': WHO

EXPERTS NOTED THAT XBB.1.16 HAS SHOWN "GROWTH ADVANTAGE AND IMMUNE ESCAPE"



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, April 22: The World Health Organization (WHO) has upgraded Omicron subvariant XBB.1.16 to a Covid-19 "variant of interest" (VOI) due to its "sustained increase" and "growth advantage" reported from several countries.

XBB.1.16 is a descendant lineage of XBB, a recombinant of two BA.2 descendant lineages. XBB.1.16 was first reported January 9, this year and designated a variant under monitoring (VUM) March 22.

So far, 3,648 sequences of the Omicron XBB.1.16 variant have been reported from 33 countries, including India, on open research platform GISAID, the global health body, said.

"Following a sustained increase in the prevalence of XBB.1.16 and growth advantage reported from several countries, WHO classifies XBB.1.16 as a VOI," said Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead for Covid-19 response at WHO Friday.

While "no changes in severity have been reported, it can cause full range of disease", she said, adding for the need to "be vigilant".

The WHO noted that although there has been a "slight increase" in XBB.1.16-related hospitalisation in India and Indonesia, the levels are "much lower than seen in previous variant waves".

Driven by XBB.1.16, India Saturday recorded 12,193 fresh Covid-19 cases in a span of 24 hours, with the number of active cases of the infection going up to 67,556

Further, "available information does not suggest that XBB.1.16 has additional public health risk relative to XBB.1.5 and the other currently circulating Omicron descendant lineages," the WHO said. "However, XBB.1.16 may become dominant in some countries and cause a rise in case incidence due to its growth advantage and immune escape characteristics," it added.

Meanwhile, some experts nicknamed XBB.1.16 as Arcturus, after the brightest star in the northern celestial hemisphere. However, the WHO has not named it yet. WHO assigns Greek labels only for variants of concern (VOC), and not for VOIs.

"We are not using nicknames for these sub variants, and I would kindly encourage you not to. Please," Van Kerkhove said.

US apex court upholds access to abortion pill

Polls repeatedly show a clear majority of Americans support continued access to safe abortion, even as conservative groups push to limit the procedure -- or ban it outright

REUTERS

Washington, April 22: The US Supreme Court Friday temporarily preserved access to a widely used abortion pill, freezing rulings by lower courts that would have banned or severely restricted availability of the drug.

Two conservative justices disagreed with the decision in the most significant abortion case to reach the nine-member court since it overturned the constitutional right to the procedure 10 months ago. Without commenting on the merits of the case, the decision by the nation's highest court means that mifepristone, which accounts for more than half of the abortions in the United States, will remain available while the case plays out in an appeals court.

The Justice Department of President Joe Biden had filed an emergency appeal asking the Supreme Court to block the lower court rulings that would have banned or limited use of mifepristone.

The case stems from a ruling by a US District Court judge in Texas, in a lawsuit brought by anti-abortion groups, that would have banned mifepristone, which was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2000.

An appeals court blocked a ban on the pill, but imposed tough restrictions on access, after which the



- CASE RETURNS TO LOWER COURT, WITH ARGUMENTS SET FOR MAY 17
- BIDEN DECRIES "POLITICALLY DRIVEN ATTACKS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH"
- CONSERVATIVES ALITO AND THOMAS DISSENT FROM COURT'S ACTION

baton was handed to the Supreme Court, where conservatives wield a 6-3 majority.

The Supreme Court decision effectively freezes the lower court rulings pending an appellate court hearing of the appeal from the Justice Department and mifepristone manufacturer Danco Laboratories.

Reacting to the Supreme Court move, Biden said the lower court decisions "would have undermined FDA's medical judgment and put women's health at risk."

"As a result of the Supreme Court's stay, mifepristone remains available and approved for safe and effective use while we continue this fight in the courts," Biden said in a statement. "I will continue to fight politically-driven attacks on women's health."

"Deeply misguided" Since the Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe v Wade ruling that enshrined the constitutional right to abortion for half

a century, 13 states have banned abortion and it has been severely restricted in others.

Opposition to the legal assault on the abortion pill is being spearheaded by the Justice Department, which argued that the initial ruling by the federal judge in Texas was based on a "deeply misguided assessment" of the pill's safety.

Mifepristone is one component of a two-drug regimen that can be used through the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. It has a long safety record, and the FDA estimates 5.6 million Americans have used it to terminate pregnancies since it was approved.

Since last year's Supreme Court decision, 12 US states have put in place outright bans while many others prohibit abortion after a certain length of pregnancy. The latest Republican-led move came in Florida, where Governor Ron DeSantis April 13 signed a law banning most abortions after six weeks of pregnancy.

Russia crosses new lines to crush Putin's enemies

Putin's position is not now under threat but history is not short of examples of former political detainees - from Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia and Nelson Mandela in South Africa to Chile's Michelle Bachelet - who have swapped prison for the presidency

REUTERS

London, April 22: With virtually all the Kremlin's opponents already jailed or in exile, and liberal press outlets and human rights groups forced to shut down, it might have appeared that years of repression in Russia had achieved their objective.

But in the space of just three weeks, Russia's security services and courts have crossed several new thresholds in their campaign to destroy perceived enemies, spies and traitors.

The March 29 arrest of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich sent a chilling warning to the few remaining Western journalists in Russia to source the risks of travelling, talking to sources and simply doing their jobs. The last time Moscow had held an American journalist for alleged espionage - a charge that Gershkovich, his



paper and the US government all strongly reject - was 1986, when the country was still under Soviet communist rule.

Then Monday, opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza was jailed for treason and spreading "false information" about Russia's war in Ukraine. His 25-year sentence was three times longer than any previously imposed for speaking out against the Russian invasion.

The following day, supporters

of Alexei Navalny, the most prominent critic of President Vladimir Putin who is serving 11-1/2 years for alleged fraud and contempt of court, said he had been beaten by prison guards for the first time and faced new charges carrying five more years for thwarting prison authorities.

The Kremlin says it has no say over court decisions and Navalny's treatment is a matter for the prison service. Putin has told Russians that the West is seeking to use traitors as a "fifth column" to sow discord and ultimately destroy Russia.

Since mid-March, Russia's parliament has also broadened censorship laws on what people can say about its armed forces and voted to extend the punishment for treason to life imprisonment instead of 20 years.

This week another opposition politician, Ilya Yashin, lost his appeal against an 8-1/2 year sentence

for spreading "false information" about the armed forces.

"There is a move towards a real kind of totalitarian regime. It was perceivable already one year and a half ago but now it's become full-scale," said Nicolas Tenzer, senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis and a personal friend of Kara-Murza.

ARREST WARRANT

The trend has accelerated since March 17, when Putin was accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court. Though dismissed by Russia as legally void, given it is not a member of the ICC, the arrest warrant highlighted the fact that Putin has no way back - and therefore nothing to lose - when it comes to relations with the West.

"It seems that Putin really doesn't care about what the West is thinking... He just wants to go all-out in his repression and in his war," Tenzer said.

New Zealand exports its last livestock as ban takes effect

The ban comes after the sinking of livestock carrier Gulf Livestock 1 in 2020, carrying over 6,000 cattle bound for China, resulting in the death of all animals on board

REUTERS

Wellington, April 22: New Zealand's last exports of livestock by sea have been completed and live exports have ceased, its agriculture minister said Friday, as it fully implemented a ban on export shipments of animals on the grounds of their welfare.

The government announced in 2021 that shipping animals offshore, largely for building herds in trading partners like China, would be halted but farmers would be given two years to transition out of the profitable export business.

"Our position on the map means that the journey to northern hemisphere markets will always be a long one and this brings unavoidable animal welfare challenges,"



Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said in a statement announcing that live exports had ceased.

Live exports by sea have contributed about 0.32% of New Zealand's primary sector export revenue, which includes farming and mining, since 2015. The total value of live animal exports in 2022 was NZ\$524 million (\$322.78 million).

New Zealand said in 2020 it was reviewing live exports when it introduced interim measures following the capsizing of a ship bound for China that killed nearly 6,000 cows and 41 of the 43 crew members.

of the day quote

The residential market in India saw significant growth in Q1 2023. Market resurrection has been brought about by the recovery trend since last year, with quarterly sales surpassing the new launches in this quarter by 32 per cent

SAMIR JASUA | FOUNDER AND MD, PROPEQUITY

Reliance's initiatives in digital connectivity and organised retail are driving greater efficiencies in the economy and contributing to India's emergence as one of the fastest growing economies in the world

MUKESH AMBANI | CHAIRMAN AND MD, RELIANCE INDUSTRIES

All signs are pointing towards the trend that the Indian creator economy will become the most significant growth contributor to the global creator economy in the next couple of years

DEVDATTA POTNIS | CEO, ANIMETA

SHORT TAKES

ICICI Bank profit jumps 27% in Q4

Mumbai: ICICI Bank Saturday reported a 27 per cent jump in its March quarter net profit on a consolidated basis to ₹9,852.7 crore on handsome growth in core earnings boosted mainly by lending rate hikes. On a standalone basis, the largest private sector lender reported a nearly 30 per cent jump in its standalone net to ₹9,121.87 crore, its highest ever for a three-month period. Powering the profit was the best growth in the core net interest income (NII) at 40 per cent to ₹17,667 crore, driven by a widening of the net interest margin to 4.90 per cent as against 4 per cent in the year-ago period, and a nearly 19 per cent jump in advances. Its executive director Sandeep Batra told reporters that nearly half of its loans are linked to the repo rate, and get automatically repriced with every rate hike by the Reserve Bank, whereas the deposit rates increase with a lag, which helped the margins. Batra said the NIMs are near the peak and there will be a downward bias on the same, as the deposit rates in the system catch up. Its total income moved up to ₹36,108.88 crore in the reporting quarter, as against ₹27,412.32 crore in the year-ago period, while the overall expenses moved up to ₹22,282.50 crore from ₹17,119.38 crore in the year-ago period

Yes Bank Q4 net profit drops 45%

Mumbai: Doubling of provisions led private sector lender Yes Bank Saturday to post a 45 per cent decline in its March quarter net at ₹202 crore. For the entire fiscal FY23, the bank witnessed a 32.7 per cent decline in its net profit at ₹17.17 crore, it informed the stock exchanges. The bank's core net interest income grew 15.4 per cent in the March quarter to ₹2,105 crore on the back of a 0.30 per cent expansion in the net interest margin to 2.8 per cent and an over 12 per cent credit growth. The overall deposits grew by over 10 per cent. The non-interest income was up 22.8 per cent to ₹1,082 crore, and was led by core fee income, especially the one coming from retail side. Its overall provisions in the reporting quarter were up 127 per cent to ₹618 crore, which dented the bottom line and was one of the prime reasons for the drop in profits. Provisions for non-performing advances shot up to ₹1,311 crore, as against ₹227 crore in the year-ago period.



India has increasingly been in the spotlight for being amongst the fastest growing major economies helped by a strong consumption story

DEEPAK PAREKH | CHAIRMAN, HDFC LTD

US BEGINS PLANNING FOR 6G

The US government is drawing up plans for the eventual use of 6G networks, hoping to give Washington a technological edge in the future amid concerns over Beijings rapid advances in the telecommunications sector



Int'l trade in ₹ soon

Promoting international trade in the domestic currency will help in protecting the rupee from volatility and reduce cost of doing business in the global markets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajkot, April 22: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal Saturday expressed hope that traders will soon be able to settle foreign trade in the rupee currency as several banks from different countries are opening special Vostro accounts with Indian banks.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved 60 requests to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) of correspondent banks from 18 countries, including the UK, Singapore, and New Zealand.

The RBI, he said, is in discussion with the central banks of other countries on the matter. "We will soon start seeing operationalisation of this rupee trading in international trade with several countries," Goyal told reporters here.

He also said that negotiations for free trade agreements (FTAs) with developed regions like the European Union, the UK, and Canada are in "advanced" stages.

Groups including European Free Trade Association Free Trade Agreement (EFTA), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are also keen to start talks for similar pacts with India.

"The whole world wants to have a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with India," the minister said.

On the second phase of the production-linked incentive scheme for the textiles sector, he said that extensive stakeholder discussions have happened on the subject. "I am quite confident that very soon we will be able to finalise the contours of the scheme and take it up for approval at the highest level," he



RBI has approved 60 requests to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts of correspondent banks from 18 countries, including the UK, Singapore, and NZ

added.

Goyal said that Indian textile exporters were earlier facing customs duty disadvantages in developed markets vis-a-vis countries like Bangladesh, but as the government is inking trade pacts with regions like the UAE and Australia, domestic exporters would be able to push shipments.

On promoting sustainability in the textiles sector, Goyal said that the textiles ministry has decided to set up an ESG (environmental, social, and governance commitments) task force.

The task force will come up with suggestions to make the sector more environment-friendly and sustainable.

The textiles ministry has also launched a portal to promote the sale of handicrafts and handloom products.

On the National Textiles Corporation, he said that viability and other issues of its units have been discussed with the Finance Ministry but no final decision has been taken yet.

On pink worms affecting cotton crops in certain places, the minister said that they are in discussion with the agri ministry and scientists to develop pink worm-resistant varieties.

On exports, Goyal said expressed confidence that the \$100-billion target for the textiles sector would be achieved. He also said working with industry would help take the industry's combined domestic and international economic value to \$250 billion. "It is possible. We will definitely achieve that," he added.

Goyal was here as part of the Saurashtra Tamil Sangamam which is being conducted under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' Initiative in Gujarat in Rajkot.

Pichai reaps over \$200mn in 2022 amid cost-cutting

AGENCIES

Washington, April 22: Alphabet Inc Chief Executive Sundar Pichai received total compensation of about \$226 million in 2022, more than 800 times the median employee's pay, the company said in a securities filing Friday.

Pichai's compensation included stock awards of about \$218 million, the filing showed. His salary, however, has remained steady at \$2 million for the past three years, according to reports.

The pay disparity comes at a time when Alphabet, the parent company of Google, has been cutting jobs globally. The Mountain View, California-based company announced plans to cut 12,000 jobs around the world in January, equivalent to 6% of its global workforce.

Early this month, hundreds of Google employees staged a walkout at the company's London offices following a dispute over layoffs.

On January 20, Google CEO confirmed in a letter to employees that about 12,000 people will be laid off globally, accounting for more than 6 per cent of the total workforce.

Amid layoffs, tech giant Google is also creating several cost-cutting measures such as cutting down on free snacks and workout classes for its existing employees, the media reported.

The company's micro kitchen that provides free snacks like cereal, espresso, and seltzer water have been closed on days that typically have a significantly lower volume. The company also discontinued spending on personal equipment like laptops, according to an internal memo.

Google India terminated more than 400 employees and some of the impacted workers took to LinkedIn to share their plight.

India's GDP to grow at 6.2% in FY24, RBI to cut rate in Q1 '24'

The report also said the inflation in India is likely to be below 5 per cent in the second quarter of calendar year 2024

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, April 22: The full reopening of the economy last year, cyclical recovery in consumption, increased private sector capex, and acceleration on government spending will contribute for 6.2 per cent growth in India's gross domestic product (GDP) in FY24, said Morgan Stanley in a report.

According to Morgan Stanley, the key for sustained domestic demand is a pickup in capex, which will help create more jobs, thus leading to a virtuous cycle of more jobs-to-higher income-higher savings-higher investment.

The headline consumer price index (CPI) print for March was in line with expectations.



"We expect inflation to decelerate more decisively in the quarter ending June, to below 5 per cent, supported by favourable base effect and moderating commodity prices. Inflation for April is currently tracking at 4.7 per cent YoY. We expect inflation to average around 5.5 per cent in F2024. With risks skewed to the downside from lower commodity prices," Morgan Stanley said.

On the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) action on repo rate, it expects the rates to be on hold in calendar year 2023 as inflation will remain below the 6 per cent mark decisively and cuts to happen in the first quarter of 2024.

"Indeed, we expect inflation to track below 5 per cent in QE June and see downside risks to our forecast of inflation averaging 5.5 per cent in F24. While in our base case we expect a shallow rate cut cycle to start from 1Q24, we see risks of the same starting earlier based on an improving inflation outlook," the report notes.

CHAOS AT SPACEX, TESLA, TWITTER

Musk's wealth nosedives \$12.6 billion

Musk's fortune once sat as high as \$320 billion in late 2021. Later, he became the first person in history to lose over \$200 billion

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

San Francisco, April 22: Elon Musk saw his wealth plummet by more than \$12 billion in just a day as he faced chaos and disappointing news from across his companies - SpaceX, Twitter and Tesla.

According to Bloomberg's Billionaires Index, this was the biggest drop in Musk's wealth so far this year.

Tesla's share price fell by 9.8 per cent after disappointing first quarter results.

Tesla's operating income decreased 24 per cent to \$2.7 billion in Q1 2023 as the Elon Musk-run EV maker continues to cut prices of its vehicles.

On the same day, SpaceX's integrated Starship spacecraft experienced a "rapid unscheduled disassembly" four minutes into its first test flight.



SpaceX's giant Starship rocket exploded after its launch from the US state of Texas Thursday.

The rocket got off the launch pad in SpaceX's Starbase in South Texas but exploded minutes later. The spacecraft failed to reach orbit.

Twitter also went into chaos after Musk removed legacy Blue check marks, leaving hundreds of celebrities in the doldrum.

Musk still remains the world's second-richest person despite this latest tumble in net worth, behind French tycoon Bernard Arnault, reports The Verge.

Musk's fortune once sat as high as \$320 billion in late 2021. Later, he became the first person in history to lose over \$200 billion.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 22: Sales of jewellery and gold items remained sluggish on the auspicious Akshaya Tritiya day Saturday despite heavy footfalls at stores as high prices of the precious metal dampened the festive demand, according to jewellers.

Jewellers are expecting a nearly 10 per cent decline in sales volume on Akshaya Tritiya this year compared to last year as gold prices have zoomed around 20 per cent since last year and customers are either making token purchases or going for lightweight jewellery. Akshaya Tritiya day is considered auspicious for buying gold, jewellery and valuables.

However, as the auspicious occasion is spread over two days this year, jewellers are hopeful that sales will revive Sunday.

There have been steady footfalls since morning in jewellery retail



stores, however, consumers are mainly going in for lightweight jewellery or 1-2 grams of gold coins as a token purchase to celebrate the festive occasion, jewellers said.

"We have been getting positive responses on consumer footfalls this year. In fact, reports from the southern region have been encouraging and people are been going in for light-weight jewellery items ranging from 2-8 grams. Hallmarking has also been a positive boost to sales," All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) chairman Sayam Mehra told PTI. However, due to the high gold prices, there is likely to be a decline in sales of about 5-7 per cent in terms of volume from last year, he added.

World Gold Council Managing Director, India, Somasundaram PR said footfalls have been very good and token purchases happened true to the spirit of the festive

ity though high prices continue to act as a dampener for volumes.

"Footfalls are very good and token purchases happen true to the spirit of the festivity though high prices continue to act as a dampener for volumes. There are pockets which are reporting a surge in sales as the wedding season looms. Some jewellers feel consumers are slowly awakening to the potential for further price rise," he noted.

PNG Jewellers Chairman and Managing Director Saurabh Gadgil said, being a weekend has been very encouraging and jewellery retailers are expecting good business this Akshaya Tritiya.

"People are basically going for weddings as well as lightweight jewellery items or everyday wear. We expect the footfalls to remain steady till tomorrow. This year we are seeing a lot of interest in jewellery, especially the lightweight items," he added.

Russian billionaires' wealth rise to over half a trillion dollars

RUSSIA'S ECONOMY SHRANK 2.1% IN 2022 UNDER THE PRESSURE OF WESTERN SANCTIONS, BUT IT WAS ABLE TO SELL OIL, METALS AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES TO GLOBAL MARKETS, IN PARTICULAR TO CHINA, INDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

REUTERS

Moscow, April 22: Russia's richest people added \$152 billion to their wealth over the past year, buoyed by high prices for natural resources and rebounding from the huge loss of fortunes they experienced just after the Ukraine war began, Forbes Russia said.

Russia has 110 official billionaires in the list, up 22 from last year, according to Forbes' Russian edition, which said their total wealth increased to \$505 billion from \$353 billion when the 2022 list was announced.

The list would have been longer had not five billionaires - DST

Global founder Yuri Milner, Revolut founder Nikolay Storonsky, Freedom Finance founder Timur Turlov, and JetBrains co-founders Sergei Dmitriev and Valentin Kipyatkov - renounced their Russian citizenship, Forbes said.

"Last year's rating results were also influenced by apocalyptic predictions about the Russian economy," Forbes said, adding that the total wealth of Russia's billionaires was \$606 billion in 2021, before the war began.

After President Vladimir Putin ordered troops into Ukraine February 24 last year, the West imposed what it casts as the most severe sanctions in modern history



on Russia's economy - and some of its richest people - in an attempt to punish Putin for the war.

Putin said the West was trying to destroy Russia and has repeatedly touted the failure of Western sanctions to destroy the Russian economy or even stop Western luxury goods - let alone basic parts - from ending up in Russia.

The International Monetary

Fund this month raised its forecast for Russian growth in 2023 to 0.7% from 0.3%, but lowered its 2024 forecast to 1.3% from 2.1%, saying it also expected labour shortages and the exodus of Western companies to harm the country's economy.

The price of Urals oil, the lifeblood of the Russian economy, averaged \$76.09 per barrel in 2022, up from \$69 in 2021. Fertiliser prices were also high last year.

Andrei Melnichenko, who made a fortune in fertilisers, was listed as Russia's richest man by Forbes with an estimated worth of \$25.2 billion, more than double what he was estimated to be worth last year.

Melnichenko could not be reached for immediate comment on the Forbes ranking.

Vladimir Potanin, president and biggest shareholder of Nor Nickel, the world's largest producer of palladium and refined nickel, was ranked as second richest in Russia with a fortune of \$23.7 billion.

Potanin could not immediately be reached for comment on the Forbes ranking.

Vladimir Lisin, who controls steelmaker NLMK and was ranked last year as Russia's richest man, was placed third in the Forbes Russia list with a fortune of \$22.1 billion.

Building fortunes as the Soviet Union crumbled, a small group of tycoons known as the oligarchs persuaded the Kremlin under late President Boris Yeltsin to give them control over some of the biggest oil and metals companies in the world.

The privatisation deals often propelled the tycoons into the league of the world's super rich, earning them the enduring dislike of millions of impoverished Russians.

But under Putin, some of the original oligarchs, such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Boris Berezovsky, were stripped of their assets, which eventually ended up under the sway of state companies often run by former spies.

New Russian names in the Forbes list include billionaires who made their money in snacks, supermarkets, chemicals, building and pharmaceuticals, indicating that Russian domestic demand has remained strong despite the sanctions.

Rahul approach sinks LSG



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 22: Skipper KL Rahul (68, 61b, 8x4) managed to snatch defeat from jaws of victory with a baffling batting approach as defending champions Gujarat Titans beat Lucknow Super Giants by seven runs in a low-scoring IPL thriller, here Saturday.

Chasing target of 136 on a sluggish pitch, LSG were cruising along at 105/1 after 14 overs with 31 needed off 36 deliveries but ended at 128/7 at the end of 20 overs.

Veteran Mohit Sharma (2/17 in 3 overs) required to defend only 12 off the final over and he removed Rahul and kept hitting the blockhole length to concede only five runs in the end with another three wickets lost in the process.

But the entire blame falls on the captain, who got 50 off 33 balls and then consumed another 28 deliveries for his 18. There were two 50 plus stands with Kyle Mayers (24) and Krunal Pandya (23) but in the end even the biggest Titans fans would agree that 136 was difficult to defend.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Noor Ahmad (2/18) bowled two brilliant overs, while Mohammed Shami conceded just 5 in the penultimate over, leaving Mohit with a tricky assignment which he completed with elan.

LSG lost the game in the last five overs with Noor triggering the turnaround keeping Rahul in check. With the win, GT reached the fourth spot with 8 points in the IPL standing, while LSG remained

at the second spot with same points but with better net run-rate.

LSG raced to 53 for 0 in the first six overs. Rashid broke the stand dismissing Mayers with a quicker delivery in the seventh over: Krunal, who survived an LBW call and was then dropped by Abhinav Manohar off Rashid, build a fine partnership with the duo finding the boundary once every over to keep their chase on track.

However, Noor struck twice, removing Krishnamachari Gurusamy (1) and Nicholas Pooran (1) and after a string of dot balls, things became tight for LSG.

Needing 23 off 18, Badoni joined Rahul but Mohit Sharma and Shami conceded just 5 runs each in the next two overs, leaving LSG 13 to get in the last six balls which they failed to get.

Earlier, with the pitch being a tad slow, spinner Krunal emerged Lucknow's best bowler (2/16). With pacer Naveen-ul-Haq (1/19) and Stoinis (2/20) also doing their job, Lucknow restricted Gujarat to 135/6.

In fact, it could have been far worse but Ravi Bishnoi had a forgettable outing, bleeding 49 in his quota of four overs. It was the 19 runs conceded by the spinner in the 18th over that lifted GT in the end.

When GT batted, Wriddhiman Saha made 47 off 37 balls to lay the foundation but Hardik couldn't get going although he somewhat made up for the slow batting with some big hits in the end.

Krunal drew first blood, dismissing Shubhman Gill for a duck in just his second delivery with the opener holing out to Bishnoi at long-off. GT scored 40/1 in the Powerplay overs.

Hardik finally broke free, sending Bishnoi across extra cover to bring up the 50-run partnership and then depositing him over long-off to rack up 14 runs in the 9th over.

Krunal returned to deceive a well-set Saha with his flight. Soon it was 77/3 as Amit Mishra set up Abhinav Manohar (3) with a loopy ball outside off and Naveen-ul-Haq took a stunning catch at deep cover with a full stretch dive.

Pandya and new man Vijay Shankar couldn't push the score and Naveen-ul-Haq returned to clean up the latter as GT reached 92/4 in 15 overs and last five overs yielded 43 runs.

BRIEF SCORES: GT 135/6 (Hardik Pandya 66, Wriddhiman Saha 47; Krunal Pandya 2/16, Marcus Stoinis 2/20) beat LSG 128/7 (KL Rahul 68, Kyle Mayers 24, Krunal Pandya 23; Mohit Sharma 2/17, Noor Ahmad 2/18) by 7 runs.

Curran, Arshdeep lift PBKS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 22: Death overs specialist Arshdeep Singh (4/29) shattered stumps at will in a tense final over as Punjab Kings were back to winning ways with a 13-run victory over Mumbai Indians in a high-scoring entertainer in IPL, here Saturday.

After Sam Curran's 29-ball 55 (5x4, 4x6) led Punjab Kings to a massive 214/8, Mumbai took the game into the final over due to fine counter-attack from Cameron Green (67, 43b, 6x4, 3x6) and Suryakumar Yadav (57, 26b, 7x4, 3x6). The duo added 75 off only 36 balls.

Arshdeep struck a decisive blow in the 18th over to dismiss an on-song Suryakumar with Mumbai needing another 33 from 15 balls, and bowled an impressive final over while accounting for Tilak Varma (3) and Nehal Wadhwa (0) as the hosts only managed 201/6.

Mumbai Indians would agree that Jitesh Sharma's 7-ball-25 towards the end did become the difference

although 82 runs conceded by MI bowlers between overs 15-18 was another turning point.

MI did fight well after conceding 117 runs in the last seven overs, but their effort with the bat was not enough to avert a defeat in a game wherein more than 400 runs scored here at the Wankhede Stadium. For MI, the biggest gain would be Suryakumar's return to form.

Mumbai were also rocked early by Arshdeep, who had his India teammate Ishan Kishan (1) caught by Matthew Short for his 50th IPL wicket. Rohit Sharma (44, 27b, 4x4, 3x6) and Green fuelled MI's charge in the remainder of the powerplay, taking them to 54/1 after six overs taking their association to a 76-run stand for the second wicket, coming off 50 balls. Rohit fell to Liam Livingstone in the 10th over.

Earlier, Curran justified his top billing with a splendid knock as Kings lifted themselves from a precarious position to post a commendable 214/8. A 92-run stand for the eighth wicket with Harpreet

Singh (41, 28b, 4x4, 2x6) changed the course of the game with 131 runs coming in the back-10.

Arjun Tendulkar (1/48) had a good opening spell but went for 31 in his third over as 69 runs were yielded between overs 16-18. Jofra Archer and Green went for 13 and 25 respectively in the 17th and 18th over.

But the hero undoubtedly was Curran, who added 92 runs from 50 balls for the fifth wicket to power Kings to a daunting total. This was after MI bowlers strangled their middle-order post a promising start.

Punjab Kings were 97/4 after 13 overs but courtesy brilliant efforts from Curran, Harpreet and Jitesh, they added 117 runs in the last seven overs, with 96 runs coming on the last 30 balls.

BRIEF SCORES: PBKS 218/8 (Sam Curran 55, Harpreet Singh 41; Piyush Chawla 2/15, Cameron Green 2/41) beat MI 201/6 (Cameron Green 67, Suryakumar Yadav 57, Rohit Sharma 44, Arshdeep Singh 4/29) by 13 runs.

KKR desperate to arrest slide versus Super Kings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 22: On a downward spiral, Kolkata Knight Riders would be desperate to press the reset button and snap their three-match losing streak, when they face Chennai Super Kings in the IPL here Sunday.

The Nitish Rana-led side, which showed a lot of promise with two wins against Royal Challengers Bangalore and Gujarat Titans, suddenly seem to have lost the plot.

KKR (four points in six matches) now find themselves in eighth spot in the standings, with only Sunrisers Hyderabad (4) and Delhi Capitals (2) below them.

KKR's losing streak began at home, going down to SRH before they endured successive away defeats to Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals, to lose all their matches on the road so far this season.

All their losses have come against sides who are struggling this season (SRH and MI). Two reverses may have led KKR to press the panic button as they rung in four changes against DC. As it turned out, Delhi went on to secure their first win of the season after five losses on the trot. The common thing in all the three losses has been the KKR batters' collective failure, while the bowling unit has performed better.

Approaching the halfway stage of the season, it's time for KKR to



go back to the drawing board and address the issues, instead of just chopping and changing their XI.

It will also be the biggest test for KKR's skipper Rana as emotions will sway in favour of CSK talisman MS Dhoni in what could potentially be his last appearance at the iconic Eden Gardens.

A sea of yellow fans, sporting the signature No.7 Dhoni jersey, is likely to flood the Eden Gardens Sunday evening. Such has been the demand that tickets for this marquee match have been sold out in advance. And the ones available in the black market are being sold at an extremely inflated price.

It has been a typical CSK show by the four-time champions as they are ticking all the boxes after starting off with a loss against Gujarat Titans in the season opener. The sense of calmness and clarity in the Dhoni-led side's changing room is evident.

Odisha FC set up title date with BFC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Manjeri, April 22: Odisha FC came back strongly after being a goal down to beat NorthEast United FC 3-1 in the Super Cup semifinals Saturday and set up a summit clash against Bengaluru FC (BFC) here.

A double strike by Nandhakumar Sekar and a goal from Diego Mauricio were enough for Odisha to register a smooth win despite trailing by an early goal scored by NEUFC's prolific goal-getter and Colombian striker Wilmar Jordan.

In the summit clash on Tuesday, Odisha FC's rivals will be formidable Bengaluru FC, who have made their third final of the season.

The clash between Odisha and NEUFC was their third of the season. Odisha FC won on both occasions earlier and played well enough to make it the third in a row. NEUFC, however, showed early promise and struck in the very second minute when winger Rochharzela from the right crossed the ball in the box for Jordan to slam in, leaving Amrinder Singh under the Odisha FC bar with no time to react.

But then, Odisha didn't take much time to come back and find the equaliser: Spanish midfielder Victor Rodriguez Romero released a well-timed through pass down the right flank to Jerry Mawihmingthanga.



Nandhakumar Sekar (L) was in a jolly mood after scoring his second of the night against NEUFC, Saturday

NEUFC wing back Ngasepam Tondonba Singh was beaten as Jerry whipped in a low cross inside the penalty box and striker Nandha was quick to beat Mirshad Koottappunna with a fine header.

Odisha FC midfielder Princetone Rebello also deserves credit in the build-up play, as he was the one who won the loose ball in midfield and started the attack.

Odisha started the second half with lots of determination as they maintained the upper hand in the attacking half. Clifford Miranda men found the lead in the 64th minute when Nandha and Victor played a few passes between them inside the penalty area before the Spanish midfielder left it for Nandha to do the needful.

NEUFC kept knocking at the

Odisha goal to get the equaliser but were not able to convert their chances. On the other hand, Brazilian forward Diego Mauricio further widened the lead before the full-time whistle. The forward, who was a consistent scorer in the Indian Super League, made it 3-1 with a low shot into the bottom corner, beating Mirshad hands down.

Djoko loses to a Serb for 1st time in 11 yrs

Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Novak Djokovic lost to a Serb countryman for the first time in 11 years in the quarterfinals of the Srpska Open. Dusan Lajovic won 6-4, 7-6(8-6) to down a World No.1-ranked player for the first time Friday. "It is the biggest win of my career," Lajovic said on court. "The emotions are very mixed because I'm playing here in front of the home town and I'm also playing against Nole, who is a good friend and he's a hero of our country. Beating him, it's something that I didn't even think is going to be possible, but it happened."

Djokovic converted only one of 16 break chances, and missed three set points in the tiebreaker. His previous loss to a fellow Serb was in 2012 to Janko Tipsarevic in Madrid. Following his third loss of the year, Djokovic moves on to the Madrid Open next week.

Arsenal stumble again in comeback stalemate

London: After throwing away 2-0 leads in their last two games, Arsenal came from two goals down just to draw last-placed Southampton 3-3. Their grip on the lead in the English Premier League loosened further. Late goals from Martin Odegaard and Bukayo Saka Friday rescued a point for Arsenal at the Emirates but the hosts couldn't complete the comeback when Leandro Trossard hit the crossbar in injury time. A third straight draw for Mikel Arteta's team after letting two-goal leads slip away at Liverpool and West Ham handed Manchester City the advantage in the title race. Arsenal still lead by five points but City has two games in hand and the Gunners need a win against Pep Guardiola's team at the Etihad on Wednesday to stay in control of their own fate.

Double delight for Jyothi in archery WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Antalya, April 22: Indian compound archer Jyothi Surekha Vennam displayed some flawless shooting as she grabbed individual and mixed team gold medals in the World Cup Stage 1 here Saturday.

Jyothi and her debutant partner Ojas Deotale narrowly missed a world record when they tamed Chinese Taipei 159-154 in the compound mixed team final to open India's account with a gold in the morning session. While Jyothi had all perfect 10s in her eight arrows, the 20-year-old Deotale missed the centre once, in the final end when he shot a 9. The Indian duo missed the world record score of 160/160 by just one point.

This was also India's second ever World Cup gold medal in the mixed compound team event. Jyothi and veteran Abhishek Verma had clinched their maiden gold in World Cup 3 in Paris last year.

Returning in the afternoon session, the 2021 World Championship silver medallist Jyothi clinched her maiden individual gold at the showpiece with a lopsided 149-146 win over Sara Lopez of Colombia. The win avenged Jyothi's Yankton



World Championship 2021 defeat when she lost to the Colombian opponent in the final 144-146.

PERFECT CHEMISTRY

The new-look Indian pair hardly looked short on experience and hit the centre an incredible 15 times from 16 arrows to defeat their 12th-seeded rivals in a lopsided final. The second seeded Indian duo drilled 15 perfect 10s, of which 12 times they hit the X (closer to the centre).

The second end was a fairytale affair as the Indians hit the X on all

their four attempts to make it 80-76 in favour of them.

There was no stopping Jyothi and Deotale who continued their perfect shooting to race to a 120-116 lead in the penultimate end. It was just in the final end Deotale capped a 9 to miss a world record by a solitary point.

ANOTHER MILESTONE

Having topped the qualification with a world record-equalling score, the World No.11 Jyothi carried her incredible shooting to individual

compound section to bag her maiden gold. While she had a flawless run in the mixed team final, the 26-year-old from Vijayawada dropped just three points in the semifinal and final.

A silver medallist at the Paris World Cup Stage 3 last year, Jyothi eliminated reigning World No.1 Ella Gibson of Britain 148-146 in a tight semifinal finish that went till the fifth and final end.

Jyothi and Ella were 118-11 all till the penultimate end. In the decider, the Indian held her nerves to seal the issue with three 10s, as her rival cracked under pressure by dropping two points.

Then in a repeat of the 2021 World Championship final, Jyothi and Sara were locked 30-all after both of them hit three 10s to begin with. The Indian stepped up in the second end when she totalled 30 with two Xs (closer to centre) to take a slender one-point lead as Sara managed 29.

Jyothi extended her lead by two points (119-117) with three more 10s in the fourth end, where Sara once again dropped one point. Maintaining her consistency, Jyothi wrapped up the issue with yet another perfect round to exact a sweet revenge on Sara.

Indian swimmer Aryan equals WR at Sea of Galilee

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, April 22: Indian swimmer, Aryan Singh Dadiala, Friday, equalled the existing world record of the fastest male swimmer to swim the Sea of Galilee, braving extreme weather conditions.

Sea of Galilee is the second lowest water body in the world, approximately 214 metres below sea level, and poses multiple challenges such as whirlpools and indefinite wind storms.

Dadiala, 21, who set a world record in November 2022 in Goa finishing 32 km open water sea swimming in 5 hours 36 minutes, is the first Asian swimmer to swim the Sea of Galilee. He started his swim at 5.18 am Friday when it was pitch dark and extremely cold and finished the challenging swim at 11:33 am, equalling an existing world record of the fastest male swimmer to swim the Sea of Galilee in his very first attempt.

The record for the fastest one-way swim was set by Guy Cohen in 2017 in his seventh attempt, as per records shared with PTI by Aryan's



father, Surjeet Dadiala.

The event was observed and certified by Galilee Marathon Swimming Association, Israel and flagged off by Indian diplomat Pawan K Pal, who leads the public diplomacy division at the Indian embassy in Tel Aviv.

"Aryan Singh Dadiala, a 21 yr old Indian swimmer breaks barriers and swam across the #SeaofGalilee (20.5 km length) in 6hrs 15 mins," a tweet from the Indian mission said.

Aryan said that he took up the challenge in order to "strengthen India and Israel relationship". He said that he is "extremely impressed" with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's - the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel in 2017.

Mbappe, Messi inspire PSG win against Angers

Angers: Kylian Mbappe netted twice, while Lionel Messi involved in both the goals, to help leader PSG take another step toward a record 11th French title after winning at bottom side Angers 2-1 Friday. PSG moved 11 points ahead of Marseille and 12 above Lens. They play Rennes and Monaco respectively this weekend. With just six rounds remaining after this weekend, Angers could be relegated Sunday if 16th-placed Brest wins at Ajaccio. Mbappe got PSG going in the ninth minute. He initially miskicked a pass from Juan Bernat, who had been released by Lionel Messi, before managing to take control of the ball again and firing it home. Mbappe doubled his and PSG's tally in the 26th minute after being set up by Messi. Sada Thioub reduced the deficit three minutes from time.