



Bhumi's reservation
Bhumi Pednekar hates the term 'female-led projects' that is used to label content which are headlined by women actors in India

LEISURE | P2



Respite for Imran
Pakistan's Imran Khan gets relief as high court suspends 14-year sentence in Toshakhana corruption case

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Tax mop-up jumps
GST collections in March grow by 11.5 per cent to ₹1.78 lakh crore on higher domestic sales

BUSINESS | P11



Sinner shines
Janmik Sinner claims Miami Open title with a facile 6-3, 6-1 victory over Grigor Dimitrov

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SHORT TAKES

Tax raids on BJD leader's assets

Bhubaneswar: Officers of the Income Tax department raided Monday a private coaching centre in Odisha capital, which belongs to BJD leader Subrat Chhatoi. The raid was reportedly carried out over alleged tax evasion. Officials simultaneously raided Chhatoi's residence in the city. The raids commenced early in the morning and officials said in the evening that they have seized various documents, including bank details. In view of the raid, the students of the institute were not allowed to enter it, they added.

Anubhav joins BJP

Bhubaneswar: Actor-turned-politician Anubhav Mohanty who had quit the BJD a couple of days back joined the BJP at the saffron party's office Monday in New Delhi. He was welcomed to the BJP by party's senior leader Vinod Tawde. Anubhav had sent his resignation letter to BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik stating that he was quitting the party for 'personal reasons'. However, he had clarified that he would contest the upcoming polls. He said after joining the BJP that he has been inspired by the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. **PH**



FOUNDATION DAY: Police personnel take part in a parade at the OSAP 6th Battalion Ground in Cuttack, Monday, to mark the 89th Foundation Day of Odisha Police

PHOTO RAJKISHORE MOHANTY

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



They didn't pay me for attending the rally. Instead, I had to pay the party since its bank accounts are frozen

I-T relief for Congress

The Congress had alleged tax terrorism by the govt-run agency after a demand of ₹3,567 crore was issued and said that the BJP is trying to stifle the main opposition party. It had also said that the I-T department had 'illegally' taken away ₹135 crore from its accounts even though the matter was in court and frozen accounts belonging to the party.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 1: In a huge relief for the Congress, the Income Tax department told Monday the Supreme Court that it will not take any coercive action against the opposition party for tax demand notices of ₹3,500 crore approximately in view of Lok Sabha elections.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih recorded the statement of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the IT department that no precipitative action will be taken in the prevailing circumstances till the final adjudication of the matter. "At the commencement of the hearing on this application, the Solicitor General appearing for the respondent department, submitted that there is no dispute that on several dates in the month of March 2024, demands have been raised as against the appellant herein totalling approximately ₹3,500 crore," the bench noted. "It is further submitted (by SG Tushar Mehta) that issues which arise in these appeals are yet to be adjudicated upon but having regard to the situations now, the department does not wish to precipitate the matter as much as no



RAMESH SLAMS MODI OVER EBS

New Delhi: On a day when the Congress got temporary relief in the income tax case, the party launched a fresh attack against Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remarks on the electoral bond scheme (EBS) issue. Modi had said Sunday that those 'dancing' over the electoral bond setback to the government, will repent it. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh attacked Modi over his remarks and said, "Every single day the PM scales new heights of hypocrisy and plumbs new depths of dishonesty. He has fully lied to the nation on the electoral bond scheme."

coercive steps shall be taken by the respondent department with regard to the aforesaid demand of ₹3,500 crore approximately," the bench added and posted the matter for hearing July 24.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Congress party, appreciated the gesture terming it 'gracious' and said that all demand notices were issued in February and March for

different years totalling ₹3,500 crore approximately.

"I am very rarely rendered speechless. By my learned friend's intervention, I have been rendered speechless. Kindly have it (hearing) in July," Singhvi said.

Proceedings had begun with Mehta stating, "The petitioner is a political party. Based upon the 2016 judgement, which is under challenge, we have raised the demand of ₹1,700 crore. Since the election is on the anvil, we would not like any problem to arise for any party and therefore, till the matter is heard after the election, we will not take any action for recovery of ₹1,700 crore."

Mehta said that the impugned judgement of the Delhi High Court is of March 23, 2016, and based upon the parameters set by it, a tax demand was raised against the party in 2021.

"They were given an option to pay 20% of that demand but they did not avail. Therefore in 2024, we recovered ₹135 crore of the 2021 demand and now we have issued a demand of ₹1,700 crore," Mehta said.

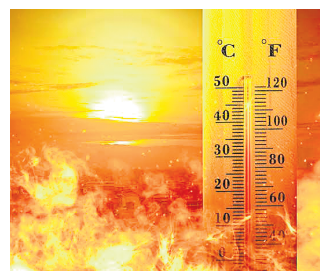
Brace for intense heatwave

AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 1: India is set to experience extreme heat conditions from April to June, with the central and western peninsular parts expected to face the worst impact, the IMD said Monday. The states of Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh are likely to bear the brunt of the heatwave, IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said. He also added that above-normal maximum temperatures are likely to prevail over most parts of India.

Mohapatra informed that usually a heatwave lasts for four to eight days. But from April to June, the heatwave will last for a period of 10-20 days in many parts of the country.

In Odisha, the impact is already being felt with eight districts registering temperatures



of 40 degrees Celsius and above Monday. The districts where temperatures shot up were Baripada, Jharsuguda, Talcher, Bhawanipatna Bolangir, Titilagarh, Nayagarh and Boudh. It is expected that temperatures will rise by two to three degree Celsius all across Odisha in the next few days.

The Odisha government has already implemented various measures to tackle the searing heat. The timings of schools, and courts had been changed earlier. The government announced Monday that Anganwadi cen-

tres will operate from 7.00am to 11.30am Tuesday onwards till further notice.

Keeping in mind that the upcoming Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Odisha will be held in scorching summer, Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu has already asked all district collectors to keep contingency plans ready.

The IMD's Bhubaneswar Regional Centre, in a special bulletin, said the maximum temperature will rise by two to four degrees Celsius in the next two days due to prevailing northwesterly dry air and high solar insolation in many districts of Odisha.

Meanwhile Union Minister for Earth Sciences, Kiren Rijiju reacting to the predictions of the IMD said that all stakeholders need to prepare in advance as the extreme weather conditions will be coinciding with the general elections.

Bhajan legend Shantilata no more

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Veteran Odia bhajan singer Shantilata Barik Chhotray passed away at a private hospital here Monday evening. She was 64. Her husband Basant Chhotray informed that the singer will be cremated Tuesday at the Swargadwar crematorium in Puri.

The popular singer has lent her voice to a large number of popular Odia bhajans, including 'Jagannath Tume Bada Chhalia', 'Thaka Mana Chala Jiba', 'He Chakanayan', 'Mun je Deula Bedha', and 'Kaaliare'. Shantilata has sung more than



2,000 devotional songs.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik lamented the passing away of the eminent singer and added that she will be cremated with full state honours. "I am saddened to learn the demise of popular singer Shantilata Barik. It is an irreparable loss to the cultural world of Odisha," Patnaik said.

Murder accused escapes from hosp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 1: An under-trial prisoner escaped from police custody while he was undergoing treatment at a government-run hospital in Sundargarh district, police said here Monday. The prisoner, identified as 36-year-old Arjun Munda, was admitted to the Bhawani Shankar Hospital for hydrocele surgery, which was conducted March 30 and he was recuperating.

At around 2.00am Monday morning, he managed to escape from the hospital, an officer said. Despite one havildar and four constables being deployed to guard him in the hospital round the clock, Munda managed to give them the slip, he added.

Sundargarh SDPO Himansu Behera said that Munda was booked for the murder of his wife. "He had allegedly murdered his wife December 19 last year and was undergoing trial for it," Behera said.

When asked how the under-trial prisoner could manage to escape despite the deployment of policemen, Behera said, "We are scrutinising the CCTV cameras. We can only find out how he managed to escape after examining the footage. We have also launched a manhunt to nab the accused. We are hoping that he will be arrested soon," he added.

Sources meanwhile said that a window adjacent to the bed where Munda was recuperating has been found broken.

Porters a pivotal cog in Arunachal elections

228 POLLING STATIONS ARE IN REMOTE REGIONS AND THE ONLY WAY TO REACH THEM IS ON FOOT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar, April 1: For any election held in India, the most important requirements are the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), poll officials, security officials and a host of other accessories. However, for Arunachal Pradesh, the most important ingredients to conduct smooth polls are porters and donkeys.

A remnant of the British Raj, the Auxiliary Labour Corps (ALCs) are also known as 'porters'. They still act as vital links between election personnel and people in Arunachal Pradesh as they are tasked with carrying polling materials, ration items

and transporting EVMs to remote areas of the mountainous state. In many of the places they carry equipment with the help of donkeys as roads are not accessible by vehicles

Around 3,000 ALCs are being deployed this time to assist polling parties to reach 228 booths in Arunachal Pradesh, that are inaccessible, officials informed here. "We are dependent on them (porters) to transport election materials to inaccessible polling stations where foot march is required," Chief Electoral Officer of the state Pawan Kumar Sain said.

Trekking the rugged and almost inaccessible terrains of



the state, ALCs and their donkeys serve as a bridge between the government and the people and ensure that the polling process goes smoothly, joint Chief Electoral Officer Liken Koyu added.

CHINA CONTINUES AP AGENDA

Beijing: China has released a fourth list of 30 new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh (AP) amid Beijing's stepped-up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian state. India has been rejecting China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and assigning 'invented' names does not alter this reality. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list of standardised geographical names in 'Zangnan', the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh which Beijing claims as part of south Tibet, state-run 'Global Times' reported Sunday. **P10**

The ALCs were first appointed by the British to carry materials during World War II. After Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood in 1987, the regular appointment of ALCs was stopped. They are now recruited temporarily.

In 2019, the election office hired 2,100 ALCs, while 1,400 were deployed during the 2014 polls, the officials informed. "Around 3,000 ALCs will be inducted this time to assist polling personnel as the number of

booths has increased," officials pointed out.

The ALCs are being deployed by the respective district election officers (DEO), depending on the requirement, Koyu informed.

Arunachal Pradesh has 228 remote and almost-inaccessible polling stations, where election officials have to undertake extensive journeys on foot. Of these, 61 will require a two-day walk, while seven will need three-day trekking. They will be looked after by the ALCs who will accompany them.

Arunachal Pradesh will go to simultaneous polls for two Lok Sabha and 60 Assembly constituencies April 19.

leisure



1950s HOLLYWOOD STAR BARBARA RUSH DIES AT 97

Hollywood actress Barbara Rush, who rose to fame in the early 1950s starring in the movie *It Came from Outer Space* and US soap opera *Peyton Place* passed away Sunday. "My wonderful mother passed away peacefully at 5:28 this evening", her daughter Claudia Cowan confirmed.

DOLLY PARTON ONCE TOYED WITH IDEA OF ENDING LIFE

Country music icon Dolly Parton has revealed that she once thought about taking her own life. Parton has enjoyed decades of success but shared that there was a time in the 1990s, when a number of things had left her 'wounded' and she wanted to kill herself.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Career decisions and money matters will keep you busy today. And after all the work, you will want to spend some leisure time and take it easy. A leisure trip may materialise, which will put you in high spirits. Ganesha says indulging in group projects will help you make new friends.

TAURUS
You have a hectic day ahead, says Ganesha. You will be immersed in your work all day long and will love doing so. A lot will get done by the end of the day. Make sure you do not stretch your neck or take unnecessary risks. That will be bad for business. Stick to basics. Do not be innovative or speculative.

GEMINI
An extremely productive and fulfilling day awaits you. Along with your daily routine, you will also concentrate on your household issues. You will feel the need to have someone to call your own. You may find yourself in two minds over things like marriage and partnership.

CANCER
An awareness of optimism and idealism will mark your activities this day. You may benefit by traversing from one terrain to another. You will be liberal and generous with ideas; your internal beauty will blossom.

LEO
You are fond of travelling. You will make plans for a trip or a journey and will include your family and friends in your schemes. For those in artistic fields, you will receive critical acclaim. A progressive day awaits, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
It is not the time to rest on your past laurels, and you will have to carry on with your work unabated. You will have to keep your focus steady and remain organised to get the same level of success that you had in the recent past. Ganesha advises you not to neglect your relationships, as they are the cornerstones of your success and tranquillity.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that today you shall make your competitors and enemies envious of your success in business. Beware, as they shall try to hurt or put down your reputation in varied ways. Instead of having a fight with them you should try to be politically correct and take care of matters using your intelligence.

SCORPIO
You are in a dilemma and feel like standing at a crossroads of life. Some important decisions of life need time and that's what you want right now. However, keep personal life and work separate to avoid confusion and disturbance.

SAGITTARIUS
The pressing needs of your loved ones call for extra attention today. You may have a few family friends over for lunch or dinner, and end up chatting a good deal with them. Ganesha says an intimate tête-à-tête with your better half would fare you well.

CAPRICORN
The day will sail smooth, but your mind will wreak havoc by forcing you to act on the spur of the moment, says Ganesha. However, this will not ruin your reputation with bosses and peers. You may also see some of your dreams come true, but don't fly too high; you may climb up the ladder of success but with every step you leave behind there is always one more to go. Concentrate on your work a little more and the goal will certainly seem closer.

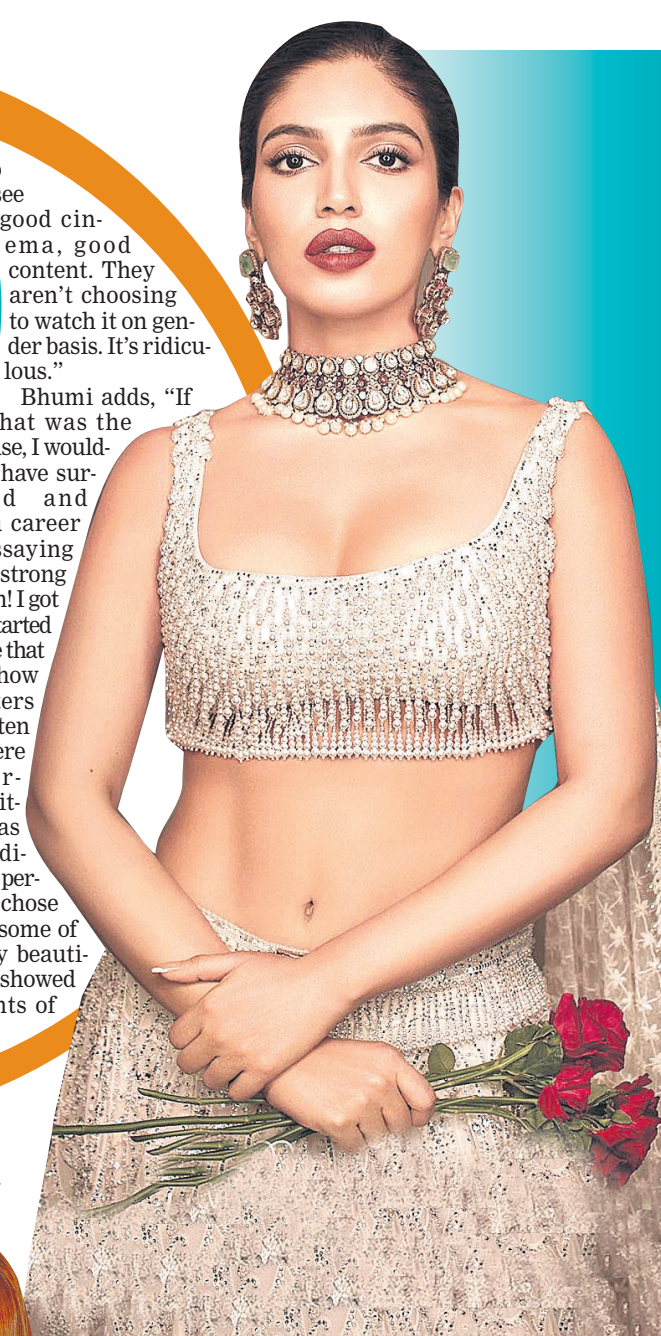
AQUARIUS
Your dream house or car may well be on its way! The stars proclaim that it's a good time to acquire new assets. So bring out those attractive brochures and check out your loan prospects. A perfect way to end an exciting day will be an evening at a quiet temple, says Ganesha.

PISCES
A good day awaits you. You will finish your work and beat your deadlines by miles on account of the luck favouring you. There are chances that a family holiday, which has been in the planning for a long time, will eventually come to fruition today, says Ganesha.

Bhumi hates the term 'female-led projects'

Mumbai: Bhumi Pednekar is regarded as one of the most talented actors in Indian cinema today. However, she hates the term 'female-led projects' that is used to label content which are headlined by women actors in India because no one uses the term 'men-led projects' to describe otherwise. Bhumi says, "There is a misconception that people are not immediately drawn to watch films or content headlined by women. Such projects are immediately bracketed as 'female-led projects'. This is an annoying term and I hate it from my gut. Gender doesn't define people's watching preference. The audience wants to see good cinema, good content. They aren't choosing to watch it on gender basis. It's ridiculous."

Bhumi adds, "If that was the case, I wouldn't have survived and built a career out of essaying remarkably strong women on screen! I got lucky because I started working at a time that coincided with how female characters were being written for cinema. There were author-backed roles written for me. I was fortunate that directors liked my performances and chose me to headline some of these incredibly beautiful projects that showed women as agents of change."



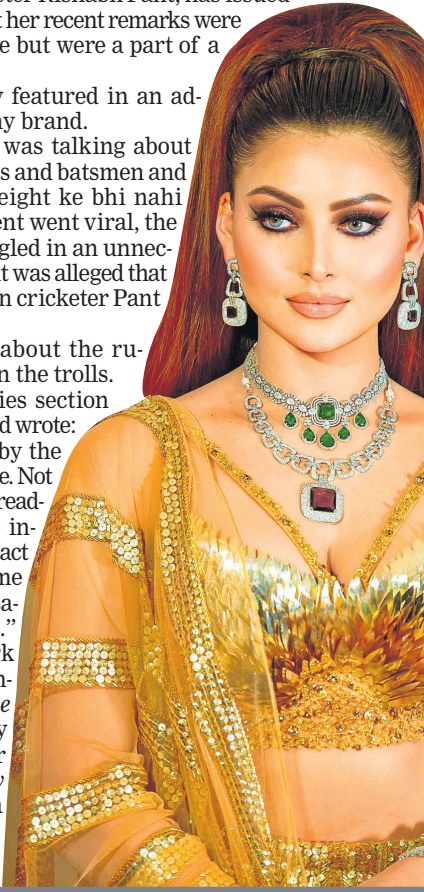
Urvashi clarifies on Pant controversy

Mumbai: Actress Urvashi Rautela, who recently got embroiled in a controversy surrounding cricketer Rishabh Pant, has issued a clarification expressing that her recent remarks were not directed towards anyone but were a part of a script.

The actress was recently featured in an advertisement for a matrimony brand. In the video, the actress was talking about actors, businessmen, singers and batsmen and said "Kuch log toh meri height ke bhi nahin hai." While the advertisement went viral, the actress found herself entangled in an unnecessary controversy in which it was alleged that she indirectly mocked Indian cricketer Pant in the video.

She has now explained about the rumours in order to shut down the trolls. Urvashi took to the Stories section of her Instagram, Monday and wrote: "It's a generic script given by the brand and it's their prerogative. Not directed towards anyone, #spread-positivity. As a responsible individual, I understand the impact individuals can have from me as the brand's basic ambassador #hope #inspirekindness."

Meanwhile, on the work front, Urvashi is currently enjoying the success of *Love Dose 2.0* with Yo Yo Honey Singh, and gearing up for *Jahangir National University (JNU)* where she is playing a college politician.



Sunil all praise for Adah

New Delhi: Comedian Sunil Grover, who plays the lead in the black comedy *Sunflower*, has opened up on his co-star Adah Sharma, saying she is very serious about her work.

The season two of the show stars Adah as Rosie, a bar dancer. Speaking about *The Kerala Story* actress, Sunil said: "She has beautifully played the character. She is a professional artist, who is deeply immersed in her work."

The *Bharat* actor added, "She is very serious about her work, and the hard work and efforts she puts behind her work cannot be seen, it's done in a very natural manner."

Apart from *Sunflower*, Sunil has been a part of streaming shows like *United Kacche*, and *Tandav*.

Pari's criteria of picking up works

Mumbai: At a time when actors are moving towards doing pan-India films and trying their hand at long storytelling formats, Parineeti Chopra is in no rush. The actress, who has refrained herself from falling into the rut, shared that it is the roles and nothing else that attract her to take up a project.

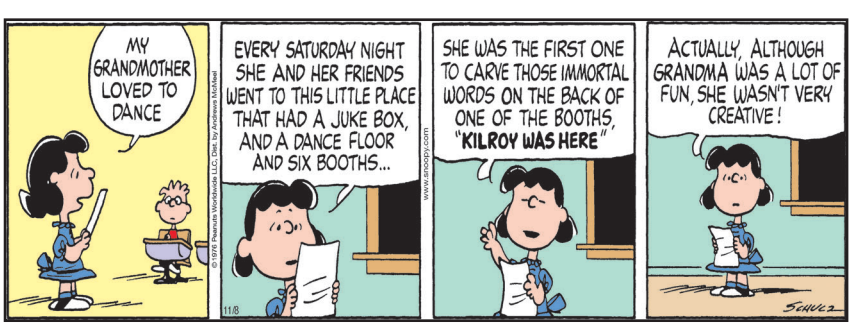
She says, "For me, there are no rules. I am open to doing everything. Anything that is exciting, unique and different, I will do it. And I do it for my happiness and I do it because I want to get into the role."

The actress who was recently seen in films like *Uunchai* and *Mission Raniganj* adds that her choice of projects depends on her mood.

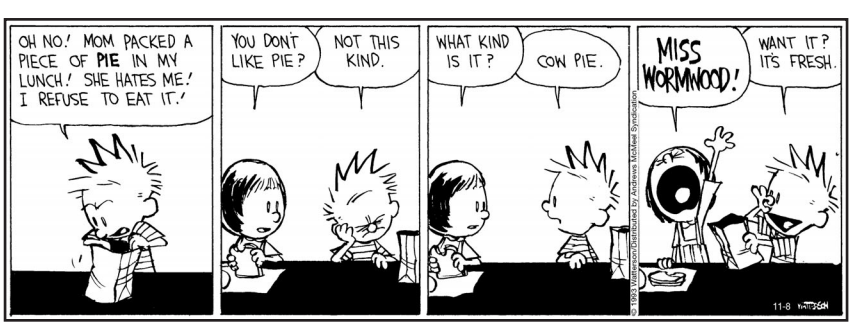
She said, "If there is a project where I am getting an opportunity to explore something that I want to, then I would grab the project. If I feel like dancing, I will do a dance film. If I feel like doing a biopic then I will do a biopic. If I feel like I want to do one project a year then I will do that or maybe I will pick up a web show. It honestly depends on my mood and my state of mind and what you feel like doing as a person and as an actor."



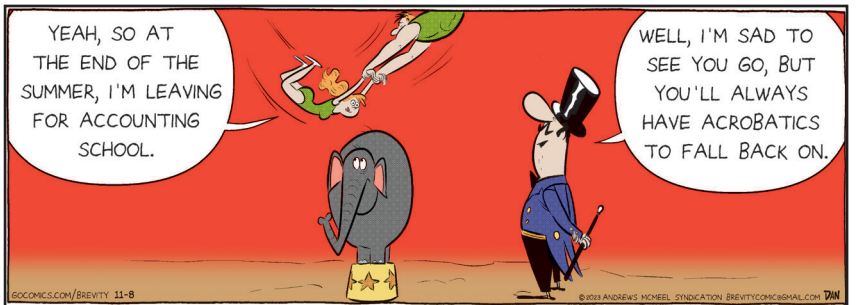
PEANUTS



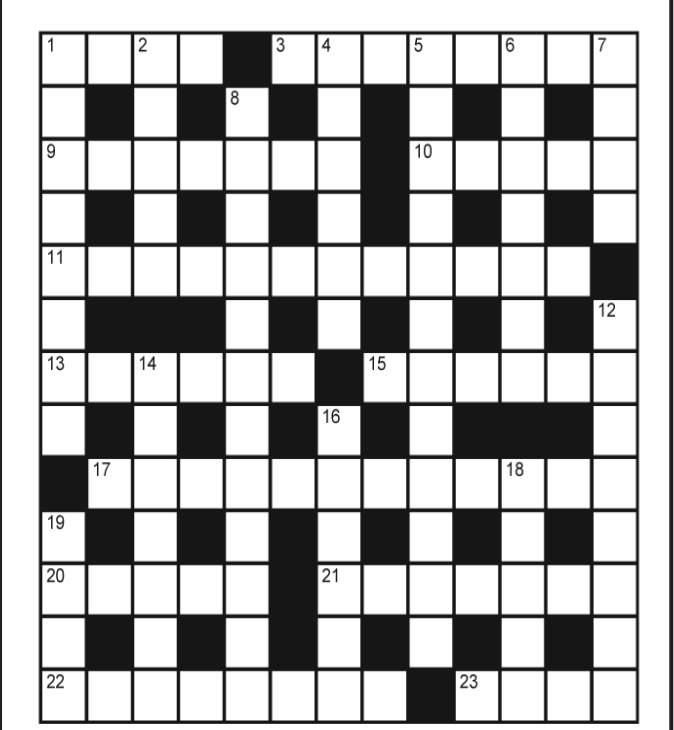
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



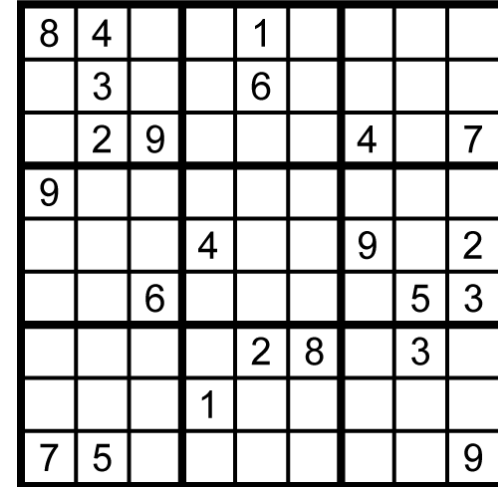
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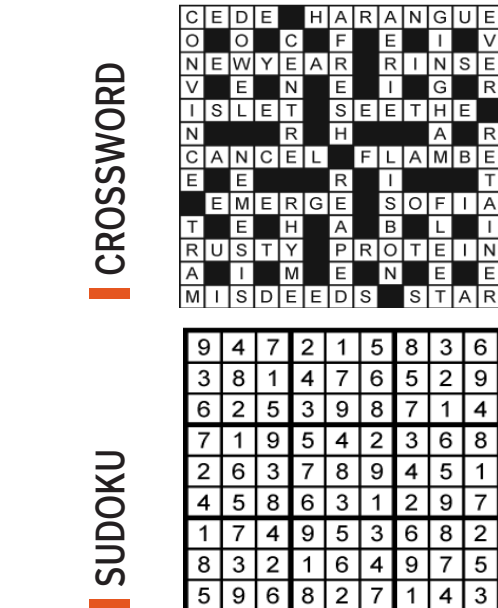
- Across**
- 1 Misprint
 - 3 Train depots
 - 9 Alarm clock alternative
 - 10 Dialect
 - 11 Religious music
 - 13 Martial art
 - 15 Skipjack tuna
 - 17 Defeat skillfully
 - 20 Unemotional person
 - 21 On the way (2,5)
 - 22 Boomy
 - 23 Macho-man
 - 5 Mathematics course
 - 6 Japanese paper-folding art
 - 7 Kind of wrestling
 - 8 Antibiotic
 - 12 Numskull
 - 14 Rowdy
 - 16 Apprentice
 - 18 Hurdle
 - 19 Old autocrat
- Down**
- 1 Toll road, at times
 - 2 TV teaser
 - 4 Pummel

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

FROM TURMOIL TO TRIUMPH

Odisha's resurgence under Kapilendra Deb

Deomali Hills: The travellers' paradise



Travel trivia
Similiguda-Deomali: 39.2km
Koraput - Deomali: 60.9 km
Best time to visit: October to May
Elevation: 1,762 m
Travel option: Bike/car

POST NEWS NETWORK

For long, Odisha has been an attractive tourist destination, and the state government has initiated several measures to bolster the sector for ensuring increased tourist footfall. This, in turn, has given a boost to revenue generation and augmented employment. The state's long coastline, numerous temples, waterfalls, wetlands, forests, wildlife and beautiful mountain peaks attract tourists from the country and abroad.

Among those is the highest peak of the Eastern Ghats, Deomali hills, situated in Kotia gram panchayat of Pottangi block in Koraput district that brings maximum tourists round the year, more during the winter. Its pleasant weather and mesmerizing beauty makes visitors feel divine pleasure in the cusp of nature.

The view of the valley from the Deomali mountain peak is a treat for eyes as one gets a glimpse of the natural settings from a height of 1762 metres above the sea

level. The lofty peaks also provide ample opportunities for adventure seekers to indulge in hang-gliding, or trekking. In fact, many consider Deomali a paradise for gliders and trekkers. Nevertheless, Deomali serves the interest of tourists of all tastes and age groups with its serene, green and cool environment. Picnickers in large numbers through the spot during the season and spend a gala time.

Key features

- Hilltop amenities centre
- Watch towers for perfect view of the arena
- Best for bikers to see the tip of Odisha
- Hang-gliding
- Mountaineering and trekking
- Best place for picnickers
- Best place for nature lovers
- Brooks and deep valleys
- Inhabited by tribes such Kondh, Paraja, Bhumia, Mali and Bhotia

One can travel to the Deomali mountain by own vehicle - car or bike. Public transport vehicles (Commander jeep) are also available from Semiliguda, Sunabeda, Koraput and Kunduli Haat. One can also reach the spot from Bhubaneswar via Andhra Pradesh by road, a journey of 510 km. Similarly, one can opt for Bhubaneswar-Berhampur-Rayagada-Semiliguda-Damanjodi route and then take left on Pottangi road to reach the destination. This travel distance is about 521 km.

PATIT MANDAL, OP

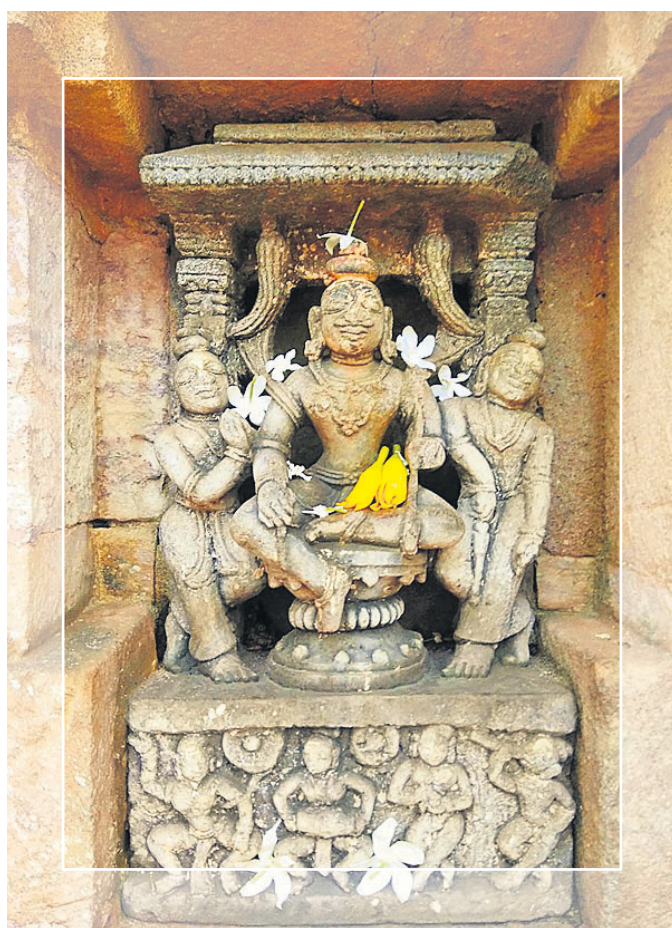
In the early 15th century, coastal Odisha was ruled by Eastern Ganga king Bhanudeb-IV. During his reign, the region went through extreme political turmoil amid incessant aggression by powerful adversaries like the Bahmani, Jaunpur, Bengal, Malwa and Reddi kingdoms.

Odia territory was shrinking. At this crucial juncture, Kapilendra Deb dethroned Bhanudeb IV in 1435 AD, bringing in Suryavanshi Gajapati dynasty at the helm of power that marked the resurgence of Odisha once again.

Kapilendra Deb's origin has always been a debatable topic. Puri Srimandir chronicle 'Madala Panji' states that 'Kapila' was the adopted son of Bhanudeb, who had picked him from near Vimala temple and raised him at the royal palace as a prince. Many scholars, however, dismiss the adoption narrative and opine that Kapilendra was a minister at Bhanudeb's court. Supported by a few other ministers, Kapilendra Deb usurped the throne when the king was engaged in southern wars.

Following coronation, Kapilendra Deb soon realised that he had a tough task ahead.

First, he emphasised on suppressing internal rebellions rather than focusing on external foes. Second, he deployed his



powerful minister Gopinath Mohapatra to take on the sultan of Bengal and mobilised his troops to secure the northern and western frontiers of Odisha. According to historian R

Subrahmaniyam, Kapilendra was able to recapture the coastal land between Ganges and Visakhapatnam by 1443 AD. After securing initial setbacks in the south, Kapilendra played

his cards carefully to tackle Vijayanagara-supported Reddis of Rajahmundry. Following the death of powerful Vijaynagar ruler Devaraya-II in 1446 AD, Kapilendra's son Hambira Deb stormed Rajahmundry and captured it in 1448 AD.

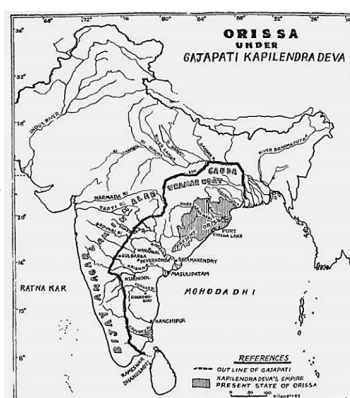
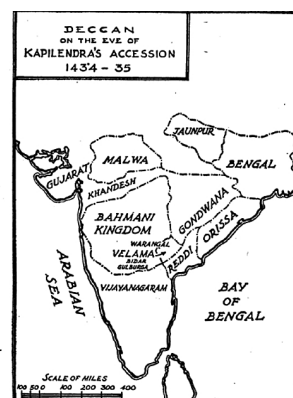
The Munnur inscriptions make it clear that by 1464, Odia forces annexed the eastern seaboard of Vijaynagar empire up to Kaveri by taking the advantage of weak emperor Malliakarjuna Raya.

"The Gajapati conquest of the south was not a mere raid," Subrahmaniyam writes.

Exploiting the internal re-

Gulbarga -- the capital of Bahmani kingdom).

By 1464 AD, Kapilendra subdued all his neighbouring contemporaries and became the master of coastal land between the Ganges in north to Trichinopoly (modern day Tiruchirappalli) in south. In Veligalani plates of Kapilendra, he proudly held the title 'Gajapati Gaudeswara Nabakoti Karnata Kalabargeswara'. Historians like RD Banerjee and Manmohan Chakravarti interpreted the above title as the lord of Bengal (Gauda), Karnataka, Gulbarga and of nine crore subjects while Subrahmaniyam comprehended



bellions within Bahmani kingdom, Odia forces defeated the Islamic rulers in several battles in 1449 AD and 1458 AD. After defeating the Bahmanis at Devarakonda, Kapilendra assumed the title of Kalabargeswara (The lord of

the term 'Nabakoti' as ninety million grams (a small segment of land).

In summary, Gajapati Kapilendra Deb's remarkable feats helped in securing Odisha's legacy amidst the turbulent currents of medieval conquests.

Debrigarh sanctuary setting example in ecotourism



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Wildlife sanctuaries have emerged as eco tourism hotspots in recent times. With inflow of foreigners and nature lovers to the sanctuaries, these places are generating more employment opportunities for locals and garnering success in conservation and livelihood while ensuring safety for wildlife.

Debrigarh, a wildlife sanctuary in Bargarh district, which has been made completely free from any human settlement following one of the country's largest 'peaceful' relocations of forest-dwellers, is situated near Sambalpur's Hirakud dam.

The wildlife sanctuary is an important location for the conservation of various local wildlife and their habitat. It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. The sanctuary is home to more than 40 species of mammals, 234 species of birds, 41 species of reptiles, 12 species of amphibians, 65 species of fish and 85 species of butterflies. The sanctuary is bound on the east and north by the colossal Hirakud reservoir. It is one of the select few sanctuaries in the state supporting both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, which further attracts a significant number of migratory waterfowl during winter, and is also home to over 250 plant species, many of which have ethnobotanical and medicinal value.

It is an eco-sensitive zone from both an ecological and environmental point of view and industries or class of industries and their operations and processes has been prohibited here.



The sanctuary, nestled between the Hirakud dam and reservoir, makes for a picturesque setting. It finds a special mention because of noted freedom fighter Veer Surendra Sai who during his rebellion against the British made his base at 'Barapathara' located within the sanctuary. The place has emerged as a tourism hotspot in recent times with inflow of foreigners and nature lovers.

The sanctuary which according to data has one tiger and 82 leopards, and other wild animals, attracts tourist during jungle safari and guaranteed sighting of the animals all along the grasslands between Hirakud lake and forests of Debrigarh. Hirakud wildlife division authorities under supervision of wildlife organization are taking all the steps to increase the attraction of the sanctuary without compromising with nature in a sustainable way. Also over 3.24 lakh migratory birds visited Hirakud reservoir last year.

Visitors are swept off by the view of the pristine riverfront with crystal clear turquoise water of Hirakud spread vast at front with rugged forested mountains and cliff at the back of the island. Summer and

winter evenings amid calm and shallow waters of lake with calls of animals echoing from the sanctuary makes this Island not only adventurous but also soul soothing.

Last year, Debrigarh ecotourism had earned booming revenue of Rs.2.5 crore (April 2022 to March 2023). Around 27,000 visitors from different parts of India and the state visited Debrigarh. Tourists from different European countries, South Africa, USA, Sydney etc also came here for either night stay inside sanctuary or for enjoying jungle safari and boating in huge Hirakud wetlands. The sanctuary provides packages such as 'Hirakud Cruise', 'Island Odyssey' that have gained popularity, mostly among local tourists.

Jungle trekking with knowledgeable eco-guides, bird watching, kayaking, cycling are equally popular. Visitors have tours in jungle safari inside Debrigarh sanctuary and can sight animals such as sambar herds, bison herds, deer, bear, wild-boar and many peacocks - male and female foraging together is a common sight on forest roads in tourism zone.

The sanctuary recently started hiking program organised under Nature Education Program in which the different activities conducted during trek like- connect with nature, talking to the trees etc.

The villages nearby and their families are engaged in ecotourism activities in Debrigarh. Odisha ecotourism model is serving as a good livelihood option for the forest dependent communities. Ninety per cent of revenue generated goes to villagers managing it in the form of their wages, recurring expenses, infrastructure maintenance etc and also for development of villages. Debrigarh tourism zone is managed 'Plastic Free' by the locals. From reception centre to villagers managing night stay facilities all are trained and have learned to speak and understand different languages, said DFO Anshu Pragyan Das of Hirakud wildlife division. The state government recently inaugurated Barabakhara Eco Park, Hirakud Nature Park and Debrigarh Nature Park near Debrigarh sanctuary which also adds attractions. These parks are managed by the villagers.



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Prez, PM, CM greet people on Utkal Divas

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 1: President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and many other dignitaries greeted the people of Odisha on the occasion of Utkal Divas, Monday.

Utkal Divas or Odisha Day marks the formation of Odisha as a separate state on this day in 1936. The state was carved with the splitting of Bihar and Orissa provinces. Orissa was rechristened as Odisha in 2011.

“Warm greetings to people on Odisha Day! Odisha is known for its vast natural wealth and rich cultural heritage. The resilient people of this state have made great contribution in the development of Odisha and the country. Odisha has produced many icons over the centuries, including several makers of modern India. May Lord Jagannath bless the state and its people with greater success and prosperity!” Murmu said in a post on X.

The PM, in a post on X in Odia language, said, “Wishing everyone a very Happy Utkala Dibasa! This day reminds us of the rich culture and heritage of Odisha and its dynamic people. The state has made a rich contribution to national progress. I pray for the success and prosperity of



Children take part in mini marathon on the occasion of Utkal Divas in Cuttack

the people of Odisha.”

Governor Raghubar Das also greeted the people of the state.

“My greetings to the people of Odisha on this auspicious occasion of Odisha Dibasa. I call upon all to be committed to transform Odisha into a prosperous and developed Odisha,” the Governor said in a post on X.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, in a post on X, said, “Odisha is writing a glorious

Utkal Divas marks the formation of Odisha as a separate state on this day in 1936. The state was carved with the splitting of Bihar and Orissa provinces

history in all fields. Odisha has become prosperous due to the commitment of every Odia. In keeping with this era of transformation, the idea of creating a ‘developed Odisha’ is the idea of Odia. On this ‘Odisha Day’, let us strengthen our Asmita and Swaviman and move forward towards building ‘Developed Odisha’ #OdishaDibasa.” The day is celebrated across the state in compliance with the Model Code of Conduct imposed for the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls which will be held simultaneously.

Celebrations in Arunachal Pradesh

ITANAGAR: Utkal Divas or Odisha Day was celebrated at Arunachal Pradesh Raj Bhavan here, Monday. Participating in the celebration, Arunachal Pradesh Governor Kaiwalya Trivikram Parnaik greeted the people of Odisha on the occasion. The celebration of statehood days of other states is a very important integrating event, which opens doors for interaction with the people working in Arunachal Pradesh, knowing their achievements, challenges and suggestions for taking Arunachal Pradesh to greater heights of development and progress, he said. He said that the people of Odisha have been important partners in the progress of Arunachal Pradesh. He conveyed gratitude to them and expressed hope that the goodwill will continue to prevail and contribute in making ‘Viksit Arunachal Pradesh’.

MK Behera assumes charge as ECoR GM

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 1: MK Behera, an officer of the Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), has taken over the charge of General Manager (I/C) of East Coast Railway (ECoR).

Behera’s extensive academic background complements his rich experience spanning over three decades in Railways. He graduated from the University College of Engineering, Burla in Civil Engineering and M.Tech in Ocean Engineering from IIT, Madras.

Behera held key positions as Chief Bridge Engineer and Chief Engineer (Bridge Rehabilitation) in ECoR. Noteworthy roles include his tenure as Group General Manager at RITES here, and Chief Engineer (Construction) overseeing the Ganga bridge project under East Central Railway at Patna and Munger. He also held critical posts such as Senior Divisional Engineer in Sambalpur, Deputy Chief Vigilance Officer in ECoR, and Deputy Chief Engineer in Northeast Frontier Railway.



Paradip Port operating revenue cross ₹2,300cr



THE OPERATING SURPLUS HAS ALSO CROSSED ₹1,510 CRORE AGAINST LAST YEAR’S ₹1,300 CRORE WITH GROWTH OF 16.44 PER CENT

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The operating revenue of Paradip port has crossed ₹2,300 crore against ₹2,074 crore in comparison to the previous fiscal, registering an increase of 14.30 per cent, an official release by Paradip Port Authority said Monday.

The operating surplus has also crossed ₹1,510 crore against last year’s ₹1,300 crore with growth of 16.44 per cent.

The net surplus (before tax) has crossed ₹1,570 crore against last year’s ₹1,296 crore exhibiting growth of 21.26 per cent. Similarly, the net surplus (after tax) has also crossed ₹1,020 crore against ₹850 crore of last year, elevated 20 per cent increase.

The operating ratio has improved to 36 per cent against 37 per cent last year.

Paradip Port, with 289 million metric tonne capacity as of today, is poised to cross the 300 million metric tonne capacity mark in another three year with

the commission of the Western Dock project.

The work of the Western Dock project with 25 million metric tonne capacity is operating in full swing by the PPP operator M/s. J.P.P.L. The project will also increase the draught of the port, enabling the port to handle fully laden cape vessels by 2026.

The Paradip Port, which has mechanised 80 per cent of the berths as of date, plans to become 100 per cent mechanised by 2030 with complete mechanisation of existing four semi-mechanised berths.

The Port has also planned to add another 4 berths for which requisite approval will be taken in the current financial year.

The Port is planning to improve the connectivity by commissioning two road flyovers within its premises with cost of ₹150 crore to avoid crossing of rail and road traffic.

The Port has also planned to develop 10 megawatt solar power plant to run the operations of the port, completely through renewable energy sources and will come up with a green refueling station by setting up an LNG and CNG depot at the Port.

Paradip Port Chairman PL Haranadh congratulated the entire team of exporters and importers, Stevedores and shipping agents whose combined effort has resulted in this achievement.

Delhi HC seeks Centre stand against ban on 23 dog breeds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The Delhi High Court Monday sought the stand of the Centre on a petition which alleged that the ban on the sale and breeding of 23 dog breeds was arbitrary and violative of the Constitution.

Justice Subramonium Prasad asked the central government to respond to the plea filed by a professional dog breeder and a doctor who was an “enthusiast of special category dogs”.

The plea claimed no studies were conducted to conclude that the breeds were ‘ferocious’ and ought to be banned and that the direction violated one’s right to practice any profession, trade or business, guaranteed under the Constitution.

On March 12, the Centre directed states to ban the sale and breeding of 23 breeds of ferocious dogs, including Pitbull Terriers, American Bulldog, Rottweilers and Mastiffs, amid rising instances of pet dog attacks. The directive issued to states and Union Territories bars people from keeping as many as 23 breeds of dogs as pets.

In a letter dated March 12 to chief secretaries of all states and UTs, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying also said that these breeds of dogs, which have already been kept as pets, should be sterilised to prevent further breeding.

The petition said the decision was taken without including the key stakeholders in the consultation process and it discriminated against individuals involved in the profession of dog training.

“Both Petitioner No. 1 and Petitioner No. 2 represent individuals directly affected by the Impugned Notification, as it infringes upon their fundamental rights, threatens their livelihoods, and undermines their collective efforts to promote responsible dog breeding practices and preserve special dog breeds,” it said.

“By stifling the activities of enthusiasts and organisations committed to preserving purebred dog breeds, the notification disrupts the fabric of the dog breeding community and curtails the dissemination of valuable knowledge and expertise,” it claimed.

The plea further said no study had been conducted to conclude that the banned breeds were “ferocious” and ought to be banned.

‘Odias have made huge contributions’



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Siksha ‘O’ Anusandhan (SOA) Deemed to be University (SOA) Monday observed the 89th Utkal Divas to commemorate the creation of a separate Odisha state on linguistic basis April 1, 1936.

The 89th Utkal Divas was observed at Siksha ‘O’ Anusandhan (SOA) Deemed to be University Monday.

University VC Pradipta Kumar Nanda, Deans of different institutes, faculty, senior officials

and staff members paid floral tributes to Utkal Gaurab Madhusudan Das, Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deo, Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan Senapati, poet Gangdhar Meher and Harekrushna Mahtab—architects of the state’s creation.

Recalling the contribution of these leaders, Nanda said it was the responsibility of all to strive to make Odisha a developed state by 2036.

In his speech, Nanda said

scores of Odias had made huge contribution in various fields including art and culture, literature, science and technology, industry, education and sport over the decades.

Among others who shared their views were Sitikantha Mishra, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Manjula Das, Controller of Examination, Manas Kumar Mallick, Director, Institute of

Technical Education and Research, Santosh Kumar Rout, Additional Dean, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Susant Kumar Chaini, Dean, School of Hotel Management, Jyoti Ranjan Das, Dean (Students’ Welfare), Debajyoti Das, Additional Dean, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Renu Sharma, Additional Dean (Student Affairs), ITER.

UTKAL HOSPITAL HOLDS EVENT

Bhubaneswar: The state’s premier Multiplespecialty Utkal Hospital in Bhubaneswar observed Utkal Divas by organising an event Monday. The doctors, senior officials and staff of the hospital took part in the activities on this occasion. Earlier the state song, Bande Utkala Janani, was sung by a band. Later, the dignitaries spoke on the significance of the day.



ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

HARIHARA KAR, OP

Among the many intelligentsia fighting for the identity and recognition of Odia language, during the 19th and 20th centuries, Fakir Mohan Senapati was a pioneer. Often regarded as the father of Odia nationalism and modern Odia literature, he used the ‘Baleswari’ dialect in many of his works such as ‘Chha Mana Atha Guntha’ and the first Odia short story ‘Rebati’. Most of his writings highlighted the socio-cultural situation in Odisha and also played a crucial role in Odia language struggle.

Over time, the linguistic movement gained momentum, marked by key events such as the restoration of Odia as the official language in the first half of the 20th century, and the enactment of the Orissa Official Language Act in 1954. Despite numerous challenges, Odia as a language managed to survive and grow, culminating in its recognition as a classical language by the government of India in 2014.

During the movement to preserve Odia, Senapati, along with other prominent figures such as Gourishankar Ray, Madhusudan Das and Gopabandhu Das among others, did their best to maintain the identity of the language. They resisted attempts to replace Odia with Bengali in government offices and schools.

Fast forward to today and there is definite concern about the development of Odia in decades to come. Eminent poet and president of the ‘Odisha Sahitya Akademi’, Hrushikesh Mallick expresses concern over

the dominance of Bengali, Hindi, and Telugu in the northern, western and southern borders of Odisha. “These languages are aggressively posing a threat to the Odia language in these border areas”, he says.

Mallick, along with writer Dileswar Rana -- who won Kendriya Sahitya Akademi Yuva Purashkar-2023 -- agrees that in the rapidly evolving digital landscape, Odia as a language has not adapted well with technology. It is less user-friendly and hence unable to compete with other regional languages such as Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Bengali.

State of Odia language in the digital age

In today’s digital era, the internet has become an integral part of our lives and most of the work is done online. A report titled ‘Google’s Year in Search 2020: India for Determined Progress’ revealed that in India, nearly 90% of internet users prefer to use their native language during online activities. The question, however, is how the Odia language adapting to this

digital landscape.

Mallick highlights various issues within the Odia script/alphabetic writing system, particularly in the digital medium. He emphasises the inadequacy of software developed for the Odia language, citing lack of language tools like thesaurus (for search of words), spelling and grammar correction tools that are available for other regional languages.

“In the age of IT, we need to make the Odia language adaptable to computers, develop software to facilitate digital writing and ensure ease of use,” Mallick asserts.

Odisha Sahitya Akademi president says the absence of a universally accepted or standardised writing process for Odia leads to diverse and varying ways of writing the same words among users. He suggests a standardised writing system which is similar to English and Devanagari.

Mallick points out inconsistencies that exist in Odia scripts and punctuation across different software platforms. He warns that if these issues are not addressed, people may resort to writing Odia using English or Roman alphabets, which could jeopardise the language in the long-term.

To address these challenges, Mallick calls for the development of better digital tools and increased government intervention through the formation of a committee for language standardisation (he hints that the government is considering forming one committee,

but no one know when it will happen) and a concerted effort to promote the use of Odia scripts/letters.

Role of newspapers and books

Recognising the role of newspapers reaching the masses, Mallick proposes that news organisations should develop and implement comprehensive dictionaries, glossaries and standardised writing guidelines. This measure aims to foster script uniformity and cohesion within the Odia language. He draws inspiration from ‘Anandabazar Patrika,’ a prominent Bengali newspaper which has successfully adopted such resources.

Moreover, the poet emphasises literature’s importance in language promotion and advocates for government support in identifying and nurturing talented writers from grassroots levels, rather than solely rewarding established figures. Mallick voices concern over the alleged preferential treatment extended to influential publishers

during book selection process for libraries. He suggests the need for a more equitable and unbiased system.

Proposed solutions

Mallick recommends making Odia a compulsory subject at least till Class-V. At the societal level, he emphasises that parents play a crucial role and should encourage their kids to speak in Odia, and schools promoting the language without downplaying it. He is also critical that Odia is not given its due in many schools as a language.

“In case of jobs, priority should be given to candidates who can speak and write in Odia. If this is implemented as a rule then candidates will certainly show inclination in learning the language,” the poet points out.

The way forward

Mallick is also of the opinion that young talented Odia writers should be encouraged, something to which Dileswar agrees. The latter -- who himself is a young writer -- stresses on the significance of realising the readers’ interests while penning something. Additionally, he harps on the need for concise and precise writing to save the reader’s time.

The young writer further says that Fakir Mohan Senapati -- whose contributions to Odia literature are priceless -- has vastly used the ‘Baleswari’ dialect in his writings. Similarly, Dileswar suggests that we can follow the footsteps of Senapati and include words from different parts of the state to enrich Odia literature.



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Anti-liquor drives prove futile as sales up 530 lakh litre in 10 years



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, April 1: Total prohibition and anti-liquor campaigns have proved to be unsuccessful with liquor sales increasing in the state by an additional 530 lakh litres during the last 10 years.

Despite various anti-liquor campaigns and total prohibition programmes being undertaken in the state, reports said liquor sales have gone up exponentially by an additional 530 lakh litres in last 10 years. Growing liquor consumption has resulted in increasing menace of alcoholics and anti-socials.

This has also caused a spurt in road accidents and social unrest, while giving rise to immoral acts as well as law and order situations. People have alleged that the state has achieved record liquor sales notwithstanding its development in comparison to other states.

According to reports available from the Excise department, 13,832 lakh litre of various types of liquor has been produced from

2014-15 to December, 2023. Similarly, 1,950 lakh litre foreign liquor including beer has been purchased for sale in the state.

The report states that 1,607 lakh litre of liquor was sold in the state in 2013-14 FY. This includes 596 lakh litre foreign liquor, 850 lakh litre beer and 161 lakh litre country liquor.

Similarly, liquor sale has increased to 2,137 lakh litre in 2022-23 FY. This includes 785 lakh litre foreign liquor, 1,210 lakh litre beer and 142 lakh litre country liquor.

An official of the Excise department said according to the Excise Policy-2021 a number of foreign liquor shops and country liquor shops have been opened at various markets squares, road sides, and populated areas in urban and rural areas of the state.

However, many shops are illegally kept open till 11pm. The Excise department has shut down many on and off shops which are within 500 metre from the national highways but it has become difficult to control the

mushrooming foreign liquor shops and country liquor shops in civic body areas like municipal corporations, municipalities, NACs as well as in blocks and rural areas. These shops are doing brisk business throwing the restrictions to the wind. The administration has failed to bring them under control.

Moreover, many licensed liquor shops have come up during this period near national highways, educational institutions, government offices, cultural institutions, and banks in alleged violation of Section-34 of the Excise Act. The foreign and country liquor shops have popped up in majority of lanes and by-lanes in both urban and rural areas.

The liquor shop owners are supplying to rural and remote areas of the state expecting more profits. Taking advantage of the situation, unemployed youths are selling liquor illegally to earn a livelihood. The easy availability of liquor has turned many youths and the elderly alcoholic.

Moreover, the rampant supply of drugs like brown sugar and ganja from West Bengal and other neighbouring states has aggravated the situation. The drug and liquor mafias are carrying out their business with impunity by allegedly greasing the palms of the Excise and police officials as well as politicians.

Various anti-liquor and total prohibition campaigns are being carried out in the state but these have proved futile in downsizing the liquor sale. Funds worth over ₹4.69 crore have been spent in these campaigns during the last 10 years but liquor sales are increasing by the day.



RECIPE FOR SUMMER: A man checks earthen water filters on pavement under the Sambalpur flyover bridge as mercury rises in the state, Monday OP PHOTO

2 Nuapada men held in Nagpur for chain-snatching

Nagpur/Nuapada: Two men from Nuapada district have been arrested in connection with six cases of chain snatching in Maharashtra's Nagpur city, police said Monday.

Jafar Ali Gholu Ali (19) and Jaheer Husain Mohammad Bihari (21), both natives of Nuapada district of Odisha, were allegedly involved in chain snatching incidents in different parts of the city March 28, commissioner of police Dr Ravinder Singal. During the investigation, the police established the identity of the accused with the help of the CCTV footage, and traced them to their hometown Nuapada in Odisha, he said. With the help of the Odisha Police, the Nagpur crime branch apprehended the duo and recovered stolen gold jewellery, a motorcycle and mobile phones from their possession, the official said. The police were searching for another accomplice involved in the thefts, he said.

GREEN ACTIVISTS URGE CANDIDATES TO AVOID USING PLASTIC FLAGS, BANNERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, April 1: As candidates gear up for campaigning in the Odisha Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, green activists in Ganjam district appealed to all political parties to use eco-friendly materials during electioneering.

Candidates and political parties are requested to use only eco-friendly campaign materials which can be recycled and to avoid non-biodegradable poll materials like plastic flags, banners and flexes, said Sudhir Rout, an environmentalist.

"In the last several elections, we have seen candidates and political parties use several non-biodegradable materials during the campaign. This practice causes harm to the environment," he said. Rout, the director of



Aryabhata Foundation, an organisation that works for raising awareness on protection of environment, said much before the poll announcement, they had written to the Election Commission to ensure the green protocol in polling stations and counting centres.

"We are happy as ECI has directed the election officers to

make some eco-friendly polling stations as model booths in districts and asked political parties to adopt eco-friendly measures during the campaign," he said.

"We are now appealing to candidates to adopt such a step to protect the environment," he said. Sabuja Bahini, a city-based organisation which campaigned against nailing banners and flags on trees in the last election, also appealed to candidates to avoid such practice of nailing banners or flags in trees in the elections.

Ramesh Chandra Chyau Patnaik, BJD Ganjam district president, said his party does not use the plastic flags during campaigning. "We use party flags made in cotton clothes," he said. Subash Sahu, BJP Ganjam district president also made similar claims.

COUNTRY-MADE GUN FACTORY BUSTED; 1 HELD

Raikia: Police here have busted a local gun manufacturing factory and arrested a person in this connection at Rishiguda village under Katingia panchayat and under this police limits in Kandhamal district, Monday. The accused has been identified as Munibar Mallick, a resident of Rishiguda village. Police seized a gun and various other materials used in making of guns from his possession. A case (No-41/24) was registered at Raikia police station in this regard and the accused forwarded to court Monday, informed the police. Police had arrested Munibar in 2019 on the same charges and sent him to jail. After being released from jail, he again got into the gun-manufacturing business and started trafficking those to other districts, informed G Udayagiri SDPO Bijay Kumar Bishi in a press conference Monday. In view of the elections, raids are being conducted in various places by the police to prevent any kind of untoward situation. Last week, a gun and ammunitions were seized from a man from Kansura area under Raikia police limits and Ranba panchayat.



NGT team to probe sand smuggling from Koraput to Andhra

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, April 1: A team of officials from the National Green Tribunal will conduct a probe into the alleged mining and smuggling of sand from Sobhaput and Patali riverbeds on the fringes of Nandapur block in Koraput district to Andhra Pradesh.

The team headed by Sandip Ray will visit Nandapur April 4 and commence a probe into the illegal sand smuggling allegations. The green body took up the matter for investigation after complaints were filed before it alleging that sand mining and smuggling has harmed the local environment and is also damaging the Jalaput reservoir in Koraput district.

The complainant, sarpanch of Panthlung panchayat, Puja Khil has been asked to remain present April 4 and cooperate with the team members during their probe.

The team members will visit the Sobhaput river ghats in Panthlung panchayat brodering Andhra Pradesh in Nandapur block and the Patali river ghat in Padua.

On being informed, the district and block administrations

have launched hectic preparations ahead of the visit of NGT team. Meanwhile, Nandapur tehsildar Anandi Charan Sahu visited the Sobhaput and Patali river ghats and took stock of the situation.

A few days back, sarpanch Puja Khil had alleged that sand is being smuggled to Andhra Pradesh from Sudub, Sariapali, Mariput, Ratulput, Pradhaniput, Sobhaput and Jarai river ghats of Sobhaput river and numerous ghats of Patali river notwithstanding the damage it is causing to the environment.

Notably, when the sarpanch and ward members tried to stop a sand laden truck recently, the driver tried to mow them down. Panicked, they lodged a complaint at Padua police station. The sarpanch has even written to the President and the Prime Minister as the district and block administrations have never cared to address the complaints.

The sarpanch also lodged the same complaint before the NGT. The green body admitted the matter (OA 20/2024/PB) for hearing and directed to form a team and conduct a probe into the irregularities. When contacted, sarpanch Khil confirmed the development.



UP IN FLAMES: Firemen dousing the flames from a burning onion-laden truck which caught fire after turning turtle at Dwarasuni ghati road on National Highway-49 in Mayurbhanj district, Monday. The driver is suspected to have died in the flames as he remained untraceable. OP PHOTO

Snow-white blossoms blanket Koraput coffee gardens

INTERESTINGLY, THIS ANNUAL SCENIC PHENOMENON IS SHORT-LIVED AS COFFEE BLOSSOMS WILT JUST THREE DAYS AFTER THEY BLOOM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, April 1: Coffee plants have started flowering in various gardens in Koraput district and blanketed with beautiful white sheet of blossoms, the usually green gardens draw beelines of nature lovers.

Interestingly, this annual scenic phenomenon is short-lived as coffee blossoms wilt just three days after they bloom. As the climate of Koraput is conducive for coffee cultivation, a number of plantations can be found in Koraput, Dasmantapur, Padua, Laxmipur, Ankadeli, Lamtaput, Semiliguda, Pottangi, Boipariguda areas of the district. Upendra Kumar Shah, Public



Relations Officer of the Koraput Coffee Board, said that entire coffee gardens get covered in a thick coat of white flowers to

welcome the tourists during these days. According to Shah, all the coffee plantations normally flower within a week of the first rain in the month of March. The aroma of coffee flowers attracts bees and many birds to the gardens. Following the footsteps of Karnataka, if the itinerant beekeepers are encouraged to keep honeybees inside the coffee plantations, better quality coffee honey can also be produced from these flowers, said Sushant Kumar Panda, a coffee entrepreneur of Rajput village. On the other hand, irregular rainfall in Koraput district during the month of March affects the flowering of plants. If the government takes steps to install sprinklers for irrigation, the coffee plants would blossom on time and better quality coffee could be produced, said Panda.

Suspected tetanus patient at RGH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 1: A suspected case of tetanus has been reported at the Rourkela Government Hospital here, Monday. A four-year-old boy has shown symptoms of the dreaded tetanus and such a case has come to notice after a long time.

The boy was found to be having high fever and stiffness of limbs, and other major symptoms of the disease were also visible in his body. During examination, it was found that he was injured a few days back while playing. The family members did not bother to treat him. Speaking about the patient, paediatrician and nodal officer of the SNCU at the Mother and

Child Centre here at RGH Dr Prasant Patra informed that the condition was worrisome. "The boy has come from Bileigarh



near Rajgangpur. He was not in a good shape when he arrived here. We have started the required treatment for tetanus," said Dr Patra. He also informed that the patient's blood sample has been sent for testing and once the report comes it can be established whether he is affected with tetanus. Dr Patra informed that the boy has been kept in isolation.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
E-AUCTION FOR PARKING STANDS
 Auction Catalogue No. Prkg-KUR-24-61, Station & Location: (1) DASPALLA - 2 Wheeler (in circulating area), (2) BALUGAON - 2 Wheeler (adjacent to circulating area).
 Auction start Date & Time : 08.04.2024 at 1100 hrs. (for sl. no. 1 & 2).
 Auction end Date : 08.04.2024 (for sl. no. 1 & 2) and End time : 1130 hrs. (for sl. no. 1), 1140 hrs. (for sl. no. 2).
E-AUCTION FOR PAY & USE TOILETS
 Auction Catalogue No. PnU-T-KUR-24-33, Station & Location : (1) BRAHMAMPUR - P&U-Toilet (beside RPF office), (2) BHUBANESWAR - P&U-Toilet (in circulating area Platform-1 side), (3) KHALIKOT (in circulating area).
 Auction start Date & Time : 08.04.2024 at 1400 hrs. (for sl. no. 1 to 3).
 Auction end Date : 08.04.2024 (for sl. no. 1 to 3) and End time : 1430 hrs. (for sl. no. 1), 1440 hrs. (for sl. no. 2), 1450 hrs. (for sl. no. 3).
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Higher always higher! Let us never be satisfied with what is accomplished.

THE MOTHER



Foreign Hand

When two developed countries and then the United Nations react negatively to serious political-legal-constitutional developments in India, it does tend to suggest something is seriously wrong. It is churlish for the Indian government to shrug off such criticism with a swagger that these are the country's internal matters and as such it will not brook any interference from outside. Such denial may fit in with the BJP's narrative of the country being led by a tough, powerful, no-nonsense Prime Minister who does not cow down before mighty foreign powers. Such messaging also seems to be intended to create the impression among the people during election time that this government is braver than any other previous ones on the international stage. Already, the ruling party has been assiduously trying to project its mascot, PM Narendra Modi, as a world leader of great stature, however illusory and self-congratulatory it may be.

It is a matter of great concern, especially for the country's global standing, that after Germany and the US, a spokesperson of the United Nations has adversely reacted to the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal weeks before the Lok Sabha polls. The US and German officials issued public statements gently reminding India about the importance of the rule of law. They have stated that they encouraged fair, transparent, timely legal processes being followed in the case as well as regarding the Congress' charge that its election funds have been frozen by a government agency to deny it a level playing field in the LS polls. A UN spokesperson has also weighed in on the matter, saying that he hoped everyone's rights are protected in India.

However, the response from New Delhi was anything but gentle reflecting the tough new brand of diplomacy being practiced by the PM and his External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Predictably, BJP supporters and the party controlled social media network hailed the reactions as evidence of India's "new-found" power on the global stage under the ruling dispensation. As a result, instead of pursuing nuanced, quiet diplomacy in the face of deep suspicion that the arrest is engineered without concrete evidence of corruption as argued by Kejriwal's lawyer, the Foreign Ministry immediately summoned German and US diplomats for a dressing-down in New Delhi. It lashed out at Washington for "casting aspersions" and making "completely unacceptable" comments about India's internal affairs after the State Department iterated its concerns about Kejriwal's arrest and the freezing of the Congress' campaign funds. Parroting the same line of argument Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar raised a complaint frequently heard among Modi's supporters that the US is moralizing, overbearing and prone to interfering. He told the American Bar Association at a conference in New Delhi that "there are people in the world who want to lecture us on our judicial behaviour." He then went on to dismiss the US officials' comments on the controversial new Indian citizenship law as "ignorant." His remarks that India being a nation with a civilizational ethos of more than 5,000 years is not prepared to "get scriptures from others" reflected the same arrogant attitude being shown for some time by Jaishankar on criticism of government's actions by foreign powers.

While India has been charging other countries with interference in our internal matters, PM Modi has been accused of "interfering" in the US presidential election after he gave a speech in Texas with the slogan "Abki baar Trump sarkar" that critics say endorsed then President Donald Trump for re-election.

Likewise, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in an intelligence report has alleged that India had potentially interfered in the country's election. The report named India as a "foreign interference threat" and stated that the government "must do more to protect Canada's robust democratic institutions and processes."

When the government expects foreign investments to boost our economy, it should not be averse to foreign opinions. This becomes all the more important as economic performance is affected by politics and diplomacy.

WISDOM CORNER

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.

DALE CARNEGIE

Never permit a dichotomy to rule your life, a dichotomy in which you hate what you do so you can have pleasure in your spare time. Look for a situation in which your work will give you as much happiness as your spare time.

PABLO PICASSO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1792:** The U.S. dollar is introduced. The Mint Act of 1792 established the Dollar as U.S. currency. About two-thirds of global trade today is based on the U.S. Dollar.

■ **1800:** Ludwig van Beethoven's First Symphony is premiered. The German composer conducted the orchestra himself. The premiere received exceptionally positive reviews.

■ **1968:** Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey receives its world premiere. Upon release, the epic about human evolution, technology, and extraterrestrial life polarized audiences and critics alike. Today, it is considered a classic in its genre.

■ **1982:** Argentina occupies the Falkland Islands. The invasion escalated a long-standing conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the archipelago in the South Atlantic. It triggered the Falklands War, which was won by the U.K.

■ **2002:** Israeli forces besiege the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The Israel Defense Force had occupied Bethlehem to capture wanted Palestinians. The 39-day siege ensued after some militants fled into the church, which is believed to stand on the birthplace of Jesus of Nazareth.

LOL

Time for wedding

A police officer stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street. "But officer," the man began, "I can explain." "Just be quiet," snapped the officer. "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back." "But, officer, I just wanted to say," "And I said to keep quiet! You're going

to jail!" A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you that the chief's at his daughter's wedding... He'll be in a good mood when he gets back." "Don't count on it," answered the fellow in the cell. "I'm the groom."



FOCUS ECONOMY

JOBLESS GROWTH



The growth process is supposed to absorb the surplus labour in agriculture into manufacturing and services. This is called structural transformation of the economy

The India Employment Report 2024 was published last week. It has a comprehensive, in-depth analysis contained in a 300-page report published jointly by the Geneva-based International Labour Organization (ILO) and Delhi-based Institute for Human Development (IHD). This is actually the third major report by ILO-IHD on labour and employment issues in India, the first two being published in 2014 (workers and globalisation) and 2016 (employment in manufacturing-led growth). The data used in the present report is mostly from government sources, covering a period of more than two decades since 2000. Prior to 2018 the main source of the data was the quinquennial survey of employment conditions, and thereafter it is the quarterly reporting of the periodic labour force survey (PLFS). Granular data at the unit level is available to all researchers and the present report goes into great detail to gain insights.



Ajit Ranade

THE EDUCATION SECTOR IS FAILING POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS, BECAUSE THE STUDENTS WHO COME OUT OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES ARE NOT EMPLOYABLE

Before we examine the main findings of the report, it is important to remember definitions. The labour force participation rate (LFPR) is those of working age in the population (15 years and older) who are working or seeking work. It is important to note that while India's population growth has slowed down to 0.8% per year, its labour force is still expanding at more than 2% annually. Thus, the people in the working age group are a relatively fast expanding bulge. From this bulge we first look at what is happening to LFPR over past two decades. The worker participation ratio (WPR) is the proportion of working age people who are working. The rest are unemployed, and hence the unemployment rate is the share of those in the labour force who do not have work and are seeking work.

Now to the main findings. The dismal long-term trend is that until 2019 all three ratios LFPR, WPR and unemployment rate were moving in an adverse direction. Participation rate was dropping, and unemployment rate was rising. This is dismal be-

cause it means that the growing economy was not generating work or jobs for the ever-expanding workforce. During 2000 to 2012, the economy expanded at the rate of 6.2% per year, but jobs grew only at 1.6%. This became worse between 2012 and 2019 (i.e. until the pre-COVID year) when average economic growth was 6.7%, but job growth was just 0.1%. This is the classic case of jobless growth. What does this mean? It means economic productivity measured as unit of GDP per worker has been increasing, eliminating the need for extra workers. It also means that GDP growth is more capital intensive, employing more machines per worker. This is particularly stark in the manufacturing sector of the GDP. In manufacturing for the entire period of 2000 till 2019, employment growth was merely 1.7% per annum whereas manufacturing output grew at 7.5%. By comparison the services sector employment growth was nearly 3% per year, thus providing jobs. Particularly construction work responded very well to economic growth during 2000 to 2019.

The growth process is supposed to absorb the surplus labour in agriculture into manufacturing and services. This is called structural transformation of the economy. It can be aided by rising exports too. The share of export of goods and services in GDP was just 6.3%

back in 1984 and is now at 22% in 2022. This expansion in global market opportunities should have meant more employment in India, a pattern we would have witnessed if we had focused on labour intensive exports. Indeed, that was the story of export-led growth in most of East Asia starting five decades ago with Japan, and still continuing with countries like Vietnam. India somehow missed the bus, firstly with its initial export pessimism, and then being wary of joining global value chains. This is likely to change in the coming years. But now there are new challenges, as trade barriers go up due to geopolitical reasons, and automation threatens to eliminate jobs even in labour intensive sectors.

Manufacturing employment remains stuck at 12 to 14% of the workforce for over two decades. The reasons for non-absorption of new workers into manufacturing are many, not least because manufacturing still has a bias of more capital intensity. But a big and persisting problem is that of skills mismatch. The education sector is failing potential employers, because the students who come out of schools and colleges are not employable. No wonder the bulk of unemployment is among the youth. A whopping 83% of the unemployed are youth i.e. under the age of 34. Above that age the chance of getting a job im-

proves dramatically, even though the job may not be high paying. The youth constitute 27% of the population and due to the ageing process this number will decline to 23% by 2036. Since India's gross enrolment rate in colleges will keep rising, those youth will not be part of the labour force, and hence LFPR might decline somewhat.

But youth unemployment remains a stubbornly difficult challenge. It tripled from 5.7% to 17.5% in 2019 and declined a bit to 12.1% in 2022. The problem of youth unemployment is inversely correlated with education. In 2022, the youth unemployment rate for those who cannot read or write was 3.4%, for those who have secondary or higher-level education was 18.4% and those who are graduates it was 29.1%. This is the highest countrywide educated youth unemployment we have ever had. The causative factors are many, but chief among them is lack of skill building and vocational training. It is the failure of our teaching and skill imparting institutions. Since a lot of vocational skills and learning happens on the job and the shop floor, it is time to aggressively pursue the apprenticeship programme, which is portable across the country. It should not force the apprentice employer to make the job holder permanent.

There are many useful nuggets of insights and information in the ILO-IHD report as also recommendations for policymakers. The main thrust of policy is to incentivise investment which maximises jobs per dollar; not just exports or total production value. Simultaneously the National Education Policy 2020 can be oriented to focus much more on employability, skill intensity, collaboration with employers and experiential learning. The next decade should be a decade of investing in enhancing India's human capital.

The writer is a noted Pune-based economist.

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SPECTRUM SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Business lessons from the Fall of Icarus

Balancing corporate social responsibility (CSR), which implies a long-term vision of how businesses can contribute to the broader social good, with a company's daily operations is a formidable task. To understand this dynamic, and the challenges that it poses, we would do well to ditch the spreadsheets and seek insight in a sixteenth-century Flemish Renaissance masterpiece: Landscape with the Fall of Icarus, attributed to Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Viewed from the right perspective, Bruegel's portrayal of the ancient Greek myth of Daedalus and his son Icarus provides unique insights into the excesses of the market economy, as well as recent efforts to rein them in.



Vanessa Badré

ONLY BY UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS AT STAKE CAN TODAY'S BUSINESSPEOPLE DEVELOP COHERENT AND EFFECTIVE CSR STRATEGIES

Imprisoned on the island of Crete, Daedalus constructs wings of wax and feathers for himself and his son. Despite his father's instructions not to fly too high or too low, Icarus flies so close to the sun that his wings melt, and he falls into the sea and drowns (the painting depicts a pair of white legs disappearing into the water). The moral of the tale is straightforward: hubris can be fatal.

It is tempting to draw parallels between Milton Friedman and Icarus. Generations of business

students have been bottle-fed the Friedman doctrine: the social responsibility of business is to maximize profits. The ideas of Friedman and the rest of the Chicago school of economics helped create the free-wheeling capitalism of postwar Western economies. But the 2008 global financial crisis, coupled with rapid global warming, marked the end of the dominant consensus that "the business of business is business." Now, the ruthless pursuit of profit at all costs seems doomed to disappear like Icarus beneath the waves, one hand waving helplessly in the air. As Colin Mayer put it in his 2018 book Prosperity: Better Business Makes the Greater Good, "the social purpose of the company must be to find profitable solutions to the problems of our planet and its inhabitants."

Bruegel's painting also serves as a reminder of CSR's aims. The plowman guiding the horse and digging a shallow furrow highlights the importance of sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, and companionship between man and an animal. Meanwhile, the fisherman casting his line draws our attention to the sea - an important common good that should be cared for accordingly. Their modest ef-

forts underscore that we cannot deplete the sources of our well-being, which must be accessible to and shared by all. This should remain at the forefront of our thinking as we take responsibility for the worsening climate crisis and pursue the radical changes needed to preserve the planet and prevent catastrophic global warming.

On Bruegel's horizon, the sun illuminates ships transporting people and goods. Is it setting on the old world, or rising on a new one? The question forces us to contemplate who will steer our ship - the global economy - to calmer waters in the long term. In 2015, Mark Carney, then Governor of Bank of England, explained in a speech in London that climate change "will be felt beyond the traditional horizons of most actors - imposing a cost on future generations that the current generation has no direct incentive to fix." It is thus our responsibility to overcome what Carney described as "the tragedy of the horizon." Lastly, the shepherd peers up at Daedalus in the sky, seemingly transfixed by the possibility of flight. Neither he nor his dog, tied up at his side, is minding the sheep. The scene invites us to seek help from oth-

ers to unleash the energies needed to protect the climate and preserve nature. It also highlights the challenge of balancing current concerns with aspirations for the future - a dilemma that has become more acute as corporations shift to new ways of doing business. When implementing these changes, we must avoid alienating our fellow citizens and potentially inciting unrest.

To be sure, interpreting a work of visual art almost always requires an understanding of its historical context. The social, political, religious, economic, and cultural settings of the period help us understand the work's meaning. But, once presented to the public, art takes on a life of its own, because it belongs to us all.

Only by understanding what is at stake can today's businesspeople develop coherent and effective CSR strategies. For corporate leaders who want to be good stewards of the social and environmental systems in which they operate, pondering Landscape with the Fall of Icarus is an ideal way to see the full picture.

The writer is a lawyer and art historian.

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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, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Cultural preservation

Sir, It is a matter of pride that 60 traditional products from across India, including the quintessential drink Banaras Thandai, have been granted Geographical Indication (GI). In fact, this is the first time that such a large number of products have been awarded with the GI tag at one go. This is a significant occasion towards cultural preservation of such products in the country, and it is a strategic move in attracting global recognition of India's diverse heritage. The ripple effects of this award will likely foster greater appreciation and demand for traditional crafts, contributing to sustainable development of local communities. GI tags cut across States and their cultures and communities, and each GI tag is a testament to the diversity of India.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Autism awareness

Sir, Developmental disorder that is a person with autism tends to withdraw into a shell due to impaired ability to communicate with the surroundings. Also termed Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), speech and non-verbal interaction are hampered in autism compelling the affected to go through a repetitive behaviour. Diagnosable as early as one year, proper scientific intervention can mitigate the developmental problems to a large extent for the same reason. The puzzling ways of autism - that often goes undetected till later life - have made the disorder a professional challenge. There are specific milestones in a child's developmental curve, and parents should know what to expect of their little ones at appropriate stages in life. Known to run in the family, the unknown cause of autism makes it interesting to professionals who have relied mainly on behavioural therapy and language therapy.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Flashes of brilliance

Sir, Rishabh Pant packed a punch as Delhi Capitals brought the high-flying Chennai Super Kings (CSK) to earth in their IPL clash Sunday. The Delhi skipper hit 51 off 32 balls after fellow left-hander David Warner smashed 52, helping the team score 191-5 in Visakhapatnam. Pant, who returned to professional cricket after recovering from a devastating car accident that kept him out for 14 months, displayed flashes of brilliance.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

SC refuses to stay Hindu prayers in Gyanvapi cellar

TOP COURT ORDERS 'STATUS QUO' ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES BY BOTH THE HINDU AND MUSLIM SIDES INSIDE THE MOSQUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The Supreme Court Monday refused to stay the Hindu prayers in the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi even as it ordered a 'status quo' on the religious observances by both the Hindu and Muslim sides inside the mosque premises.

The court was hearing a fresh plea of the Gyanvapi mosque management committee against an Allahabad High Court decision upholding a lower court's order allowing Hindu prayers in the southern cellar of the mosque.

The top court noted that both the Muslim and Hindu sides have been conducting their respective religious observances 'unhindered' inside the mosque premises and, therefore, a status quo would serve the ends of justice for now.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud also sought the response of priest Shailendra Kumar Pathak Vyas by April 30 on the plea of the mosque committee.

"Bearing in mind the fact that the namaz is offered by the Muslim community unhindered after the orders dated January 17, 2024 and January 31, 2024, and the offering of pooja by Hindu priest is confined to the area of tehkhana, it is appropriate to maintain status quo so



as to enable both the communities to offer worships in the above terms. The religious observances by the Hindus shall be in terms of directions contained in the order dated January 31, 2024... Status quo as obtained from the above terms shall not be disturbed without obtaining the previous sanction and leave of this court," the bench, also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said.

The apex court, after seeing the Google Earth images of the structures, noted that the entry to the cellar is from the southern side while the entry to the mosque for the purposes of offering namaz is from the steps on the northern side.

At the outset, senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi, appearing for Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, sought a stay on the civil court's order and submitted that puja was being allowed to take place within the mosque premises. Ahmadi said this will only fester some discord. "History has taught us some other lessons where violence has happened despite assurances. This is an egregious order. Communities have lived peacefully. Why this insistence on having this now? For 30 years the situation has been very normal," he submitted.

warrant any intervention by the apex court at this stage as there are detailed reasons in the trial court and the high court orders.

The high court, February 26, had dismissed the committee's plea in which it had challenged the district court's January 31 order allowing Hindus to offer prayers in the cellar.

While dismissing the plea of the mosque committee, the high court had observed that the Uttar Pradesh government's 1993 decision of stopping worship rituals inside the 'Vyas Tehkhana' -- located at the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi -- was 'illegal'.

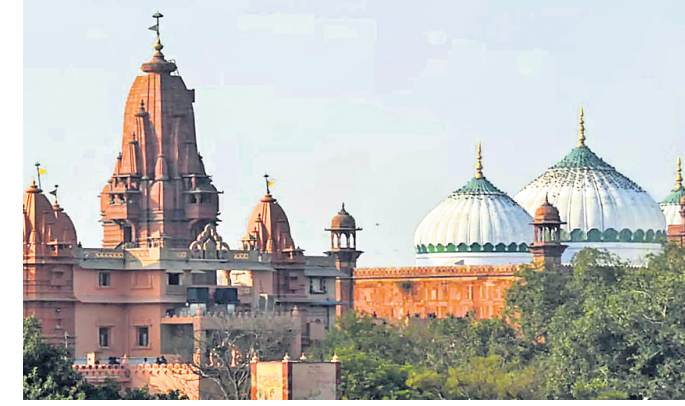
The high court said worship will continue in the 'Vyas Tehkhana' of the mosque adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

A survey conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on the court's order had suggested that the Gyanvapi mosque was constructed during Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's rule over the remains of a Hindu temple.

The district court ruled January 31 that a Hindu priest can perform prayers before the idols in the southern cellar of the mosque.

The prayers are now being conducted by a Hindu priest nominated by the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust and the petitioner, who has claimed that his grandfather offered puja in the cellar till December 1993.

Shahi Idgah mosque: Next hearing April 4



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj, April 1: The Allahabad High Court Monday fixed April 4 for hearing a plea regarding maintainability of a suit seeking 'removal' of the Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura that stands adjacent to the Krishna Janmasthan temple.

The petition claims that the mosque has been built on a 13.37 acre piece of land of the Katra Keshav Deo temple.

After hearing the matter, Justice Mayank Kumar Jain fixed the next date of hearing in the case April 4.

The counsel for the Muslim side, Taslima Aziz Ahmadi, appearing through video conference, submitted before the court that the suit is barred by limitation.

Monday, the Muslim side concluded its arguments on their

objection regarding maintainability of the suit.

It was further submitted that the suit was filed for possession after "removal" of the structure of the Shahi idgah mosque as well as for restoration of the Katra Keshav Deo temple and for permanent injunction.

The plea in the suit shows the structure of the mosque is there and the committee of management is in possession of the same.

"In this way a question/dispute has been raised on Waqf property and thus provisions of the Waqf Act will apply, and in such it is the Waqf tribunal that has the jurisdiction to hear the matter and not a civil court," argued Ahmadi.

After hearing her, the court asked her to conclude her arguments by the next date of hearing.

'IMPARTIAL ELECTIONS' WILL BE EC'S VICTORY: AKHILESH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, April 1: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav Monday said the Election Commission of India is the only ray of hope, which can curb the misuse of the ED, CBI and IT department by the BJP government from the front.

"E=ED, C = CBI, I=IT. The way ECI is formed by combining the first letters of ED, CBI and IT department is actually a positive indication that 'Election Commission of India' is the ray of hope that can curb the misuse of ED, CBI and IT department by the BJP government from the front," Yadav said in a post on X in Hindi.

"From today we are entering the first election month of 2024. It is hoped that the 'Election Commission' will fulfill its constitutional responsibility and will not allow the unbridled and dishonest government machinery to become active and will become a shield to protect democratic values as always. Only when democracy survives, the dignity ('garima') and reputation ('prathistha') of the Election Commission will also remain intact," he said.



Around 15.34 crore people are eligible to vote in Uttar Pradesh -- a politically crucial state with 80 Lok Sabha seats where the elections will be held in seven phases from April 19

Voting in the second phase will take place April 26, while voting in the third phase will be held May 7.

The fourth phase of the Lok Sabha polls will witness voting May 13.

State capital Lucknow will go to polls in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections May 20.

Voting in the sixth phase will be held May 25.

The seventh and final phase of polling will be held June 1 and among the seats it will cover are Varanasi -- represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi -- and Gorakhpur, the pocket borough of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Counting of votes will be held June 4.

are eligible to vote in Uttar Pradesh -- a politically crucial state with 80 Lok Sabha seats where the elections will be held in seven phases from April 19.

According to the election schedule, eight parliamentary constituencies in the state will vote in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on April 19. These are Saharanpur, Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Nagina (SC), Moradabad, Rampur and Pilibhit.

Vijayan rakes up Cong role in ED probe against Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kozhikode, April 1: The unity among 18 anti-BJP parties, who gathered in New Delhi to protest the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, showed signs of fracture a day later when veteran CPI(M) leader and Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Monday accused the Congress of demanding the ED probe into the Delhi liquor excise policy case.

Addressing a press conference amidst his Lok Sabha poll campaign, seeking votes for LDF candidates, who are in direct fight against the Congress-led UDF in many constituencies, Vijayan alleged that it was the grand old party which levelled the allegations against the Delhi government, demanded the ED probe, and lodged a complaint regarding the matter.

The Marxist veteran said the huge participation of people in INDIA bloc rally held in New Delhi a day ago was a strong warning for the BJP.

He, however, added that the Congress should also learn a lesson from the rally.

Referring to the stand taken by the Congress in the Delhi liquor excise policy case, he said the grand old party should intro-



spect on their stand when it comes to attacking non-Congress parties across the country.

"It was the Congress which raised the allegation against the Delhi government. It was the Congress which filed a complaint in that regard, paving the way for the probe by the Enforcement Directorate," Vijayan alleged.

The chief minister alleged that when former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was arrested, the Congress clamoured for the arrest of Kejriwal.

"They asked why Kejriwal was not arrested. This was the

stand taken by the Congress. However, they changed their stance, which is a welcome move. The Congress leadership should acknowledge their mistake," Vijayan said.

Speaking on the INDIA bloc rally held in Delhi attended by all prominent leaders of anti-BJP parties including the Congress and the CPI(M), he said it was essential that "we all stand together against such moves by the BJP."

"The Central government, led by the BJP, is targeting all Opposition parties in the country," Vijayan said.

LS Polls: SDPI extends support to Congress-led UDF in Kerala



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, April 1: The Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), the political arm of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI), Monday extended its support to the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

However, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly VD Sathesan told the media that the UDF has not reached any understanding with the SDPI. SDPI state President Muvattupuzha Ashraf Moulavi, who met the media here, said after considering all factors, the party has decided to support a secular front -- the UDF. "In Kerala, we have decided to support the Congress-led UDF which

is spearheading the anti-BJP bloc," Moulavi told the media.

The SDPI leader said the party has not fielded any candidates in Kerala but has 18 candidates in various parts of the country. "Our Constitution is being challenged. The BJP is bringing in laws to provide citizenship on the basis of religion. Uniform Civil Code is planned, which will affect the diversity of the country. We will support the Congress-led UDF which is fighting the BJP at the national level," Moulavi said. Sathesan, stating that many parties are extending support to the UDF, said, "We have not held any discussion with the SDPI nor have reached any understanding." Polling will be held in Kerala April 26 for the Lok Sabha elections and the nationwide results will be declared June 4.

Sudden monster waves swallow coastal villages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, April 1: Ancy and her seven family members were sleeping after attending the Easter mass when a monster wave flooded her home in Pozhiyoor near Poovar in Thiruvananthapuram.

Everything that they had prepared for a feast on Easter and whatever little they had inside their house were washed away as sea water entered the house Sunday. They scrambled for whatever they could and rushed out to save their lives.

Coastal communities in Thiruvananthapuram and many other coastal districts of Kerala were shocked by a sudden, rough sea Sunday.

"It was like a tsunami. We had no warnings from the authorities, and everything we had had gone with the water," a teary-eyed Ancy told PTI as the monstrous waves continued to swallow the half-damaged sea wall bordering her house.

More than 100 families had their houses damaged in Pozhiyoor, some of them losing them permanently, and huge losses occurred to fishermen as the waves damaged their



boats and fishing nets.

"The monstrous waves continued to pound, flooding the entire area in Pozhiyoor and nearby areas for over five hours. The situation is getting worse as the waves are still very powerful and even climbing over the half-seawall constructed at Pozhiyoor," Kulathoor Gram

Panchayat president Geetha Suresh told PTI. The coastal village of Pozhiyoor looked like a graveyard, with cement bricks and waste from damaged houses strewn all around. The famous tourism spot, Poovar, and nearby areas were completely under water Sunday. Though the water has receded, huge waves con-

tinue to hit the shore.

The coastal road in this part was completely damaged. The fish landing area and the Okhi memorial on the beach have been swallowed by the sea.

"Nobody has come to help us. This is election time, and they will come asking for votes. We have a lot to ask them, as we

have been demanding a full seawall in this area," a local fisherman who was fuming at the neglect of the authorities said.

"We have opened one camp at the government school, and we have had 24 families stay here since yesterday. But most of the affected are not ready to come to the camp as they are unhappy with the facilities provided here," Geetha Suresh said.

She said the area has only one government hospital, but the inpatient facility has been discontinued by the government.

"There are many who are bedridden and cannot be admitted to the camp. If the hospital had the inpatient facility, then we could have admitted them there," she added. The rough sea and monstrous waves are expected to continue till April 4.

According to INCOIS, the Central government agency that issues weather warnings for fishermen in the country, this phenomenon is caused by 'high-period swell waves.'

But there is no scientific explanation to define this sudden phenomenon during a season that is not known for such rough sea issues.



MERGER MEETING: Aul MLA and state Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Dev welcoming the newly inducted Congress workers into BJD at a merger meeting held in Bharigada panchayat under Rajkanika block in Kendrapara district, Monday



CAMPAIGN MODE: BJP candidate for Mayurbhanj Lok Sabha seat Naba Charan Majhi being welcomed by party workers on his arrival at Udala Assembly constituency in the district, Monday

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

War of words erupts between BJD & BJP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, April 1: A war of words ensued between the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state over delay in announcement of candidates for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Leaders from both parties Monday again targeted each other for not declaring the com-
BJD is terming everyone a criminal whenever a leader is leaving their party. Instead of offering us advice, let BJD first announce the names of candidates for the rest of the Assembly seats if it has the courage

GOLAK MOHAPATRA | BJP LEADER

plete list of candidates. "They (BJP) had claimed about forming the government in 2024 by winning 80 Assembly seats in the state. However, the reality is that Bharatiya Janata Party's Odisha unit doesn't have candidates to contest 80 Assembly seats, let alone 147. For this reason, they are not able to announce the names even for a single Assembly seat," said BJD spokesperson Swayam Prakash Mohapatra.

Mohapatra alleged that the state BJP unit is picking those leaders who were either expelled or left other political parties and those with criminal backgrounds



BJD HAS SO FAR DECLARED THE CANDIDATES FOR 72 ASSEMBLY AND 15 LOK SABHA SEATS OUT OF THE 147 AND 21 ASSEMBLY AND LOK SABHA SEATS RESPECTIVELY IN THE STATE.

BJP HAS DECLARED THE CANDIDATES FOR ALL THE 21 PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES. HOWEVER, IT IS YET TO ANNOUNCE THE CANDIDATES FOR THE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES

CONGRESS IS YET TO ANNOUNCE THE CANDIDATES' LIST FOR BOTH THE ASSEMBLY AND LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCIES OF THE STATE FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS

as candidates. Taking a jibe at the saffron party, Mohapatra said leaders of the BJP are wandering here and there searching for eligible persons to make them candidates for the 147 Assembly seats. On the other hand, senior BJP leader Golak Mohapatra dubbed the ruling BJD as 'a party of criminals'.

"BJD is terming everyone a criminal whenever a leader is leaving their party. Instead of offering us advice, let BJD first announce the names of candidates for the rest of the Assembly seats if it has the courage," said the BJP leader.

BJD has so far declared the

'Love to serve Odisha after staying out for long'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, April 1: Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Arup Patnaik, who is contesting the Lok Sabha elections on BJD ticket from Puri, Monday said it would be a "great feeling" if he can serve the people of Odisha after staying out of the state since his school days.

The retired IPS officer, who lost to BJP's Aparajita Sarangi from Bhubaneswar in 2019, is pitted against BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra in Puri this time. "I have been outside the state since my childhood. I was sent to a boarding school. I did my college outside the state. My job in police service was also outside the state. So naturally, after so many years, if I get a chance to serve the people of Puri and especially get the blessings of Lord Jagannath, it would be a great feeling," Patnaik told PTI Video.

Patnaik, a decorated police



officer, was in a boarding school in Rajasthan. He retired as an IPS officer in 2015 and joined the BJD in 2018.

On being nominated for the Puri seat, he said that being the seat of Lord Jagannath, everything in Odisha starts with this seaside pilgrim town. "I am going back to the soul of the state. Our family belongs to Delang in Pipli, which is part of Puri district. My maternal grandfather is from Puri," Patnaik said.

Asked what he would tell the

On being nominated for the Puri seat, Arup Patnaik said that being the seat of Lord Jagannath, everything in Odisha starts with this seaside pilgrim town

people in campaigns, he claimed the BJD government's development works are self-explanatory. "Everything is before people," he said, referring to the Jagannath Temple Corridor project which added amenities for pilgrims in the Puri temple, the state government's health insurance scheme, student scholarship and others. "There are thousands of such welfare schemes, which will take a whole day to count. The vision was of the chief minister. The execution so far is almost

perfect. My job will be to go and join the movement, and contribute to the initiative through whatever means I can," he added. The Chief Minister has an emotional attachment to Puri, the candidate said. The former police officer said he likes the discipline in the BJD. "Everything is so beautifully planned by the Chief Minister. In a movie, there is an actor, a director, there is a script. There are similarities in the BJD - everyone has been assigned a task, and everybody's role has been defined. I came from a disciplined background and there is discipline in the party," he said. After the 2019 elections, Patnaik was given the responsibility of 'Odisha MoParivar' (Odisha my family), which is a social organisation, "above party line, helping anyone and everyone in Odisha". On his confidence of winning this time, he said the matter rests with Lord Jagannath.

BJP to hold 100 election rallies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The BJP, which is aiming to topple the Naveen Patnaik government in Odisha, plans to hold as many as 100 election rallies in the state, with key speakers including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Sate BJP vice-president Golak Mohapatra Sunday said that mega rallies will be held in all the 21 Lok Sabha constituencies, which will be addressed by BJP president JP Nadda and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh besides Modi and Shah.

The party Saturday held a meeting here on strategies for the polls. Simultaneous elections to 147 Assembly seats and 21 Lok



Sabha constituencies will be held in Odisha in four phases from May 13.

Modi has addressed two rallies in Sambalpur and Chandikhole February 3 and March 5 respectively. Besides, Rajnath Singh and former MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan have also held meetings

in the state. Mohapatra said that while top party leaders and Union ministers will address the public meetings in parliamentary constituencies, several chief ministers including Uttar Pradesh's Yogi Adityanath and Assam's Himanta Biswa Sharma, will address rallies in different Assembly segments. Mohapatra said that the preparations for the campaign are underway and corruption and crime against women will be highlighted in it. BJD MLA Sudhir Samal, on the other hand, asserted that the people of Odisha have decided to bless Naveen Patnaik with another term in office to make him the longest-serving CM of the country, and that the party would sweep the polls.

ANUBHAV MOHANTY JOINS BJP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: BJD's Lok Sabha MP from Kendrapara Anubhav Mohanty joined the BJP Monday, days after quitting the ruling party in Odisha, saying he was 'feeling suffocated' there.

Mohanty, a cine star, praised the Narendra Modi government, saying he was proud to witness the passage of several historic Bills in Parliament, including the abolition of triple talaq and the introduction of new criminal laws in the last five years. For a developed India, people should support Modi, the Kendrapara MP said.

"Bold steps have been taken by the government," he said and lauded Prime Minister Modi as a statesman.

Welcoming him to the BJP, its national general secretary Vinod Tawde said the opposition is trying to project its strength by coming together but is not succeeding.

Those interested in a developed India are supporting the ruling party, Tawde added. Mohanty noted that it is often said that artists do not fit in politics and asserted he tried his best to be a part of it. He is the second sitting BJD MP after Bhartruhari Mahtab to quit the regional party ahead of the 2024 general elections and join the BJP. Mohanty was a Rajya Sabha member before being elected to the Lok Sabha from Kendrapara in 2019.

Sandhyabati quits BJD

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Former chairperson of Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCRC) Sandhyabati Pradhan Monday resigned from Biju Janata Dal (BJD) citing that her voice did not reach the Chief Minister.

Sending the resignation letter to BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik, Pradhan mentioned that he was unreachable for suggestions and advice.

"I am veritably pained to tender my resignation from the primary membership of Biju Janata Dal as I strongly feel our voices do not reach your good self since you are surrounded by a coterie with a vested personal interest. Your door seems to be closed to listen to our grievances, suggestions and advice," she wrote in the letter.

"As I am disillusioned with the present state of affairs in Biju Janata Dal, I regretfully have taken this decision to leave the Biju Janata Dal and hence, tender my resignation from the primary membership of this political party," she concluded.

No vacancy till 2047, BJP's Maurya tells Rahul Gandhi

THE UP DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER SAYS PEOPLE ARE NOT READY TO GIVE THEIR MANDATE TO THE CONGRESS AS THEY HAVE SEEN HOW THE GRAND OLD PARTY DESTROYED THE COUNTRY WITH CORRUPTION WHEN IT WAS IN POWER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Pooh-pooing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's attempt at grabbing power, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya Monday said he must realise there is "no vacancy" for the top post at least until 2047.

The senior BJP leader also took a swipe at Congress for delay in announcing candidates for Amethi and Rae Bareilly, saying the party is so scared that it has not been able to name candidates for what they always considered their "ancestral seats" and that this shows they do not have confidence even in the Gandhi family.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Maurya said people are not ready to give their mandate to the Congress as they have seen how the grand old party destroyed the country with corruption when it was in power.



"Till 2047, there is no vacancy," Maurya said, when asked whether Rahul Gandhi should start preparing for the 2029 Lok Sabha polls. Gandhi's desperation to become the Prime Minister was evident from him repeatedly raising the caste bogey but he was least concerned about OBCs, SCs or STs, Maurya said. "He is desperate to grab the PM's chair, but he is not going to succeed in whatever he does. All his issues are hollow and his OBC bogey has already got punctured," the BJP leader said. He said the country has now entered into 'shatabdi kaal' after completion of 'Amrit Kaal' and during this period, "people are not ready to leave the country in the hands of the Congress. It's because people relied on the

Congress for 60 years and saw what happened during its rule".

"If anyone destroyed the country and put it into the swamp of corruption, it's the Congress. That's why I say the Congress is the mother of corruption," Maurya charged. "No matter how much he tries, nobody can stop lotus (the BJP's poll symbol) from blooming because we are working so hard," he said.

"It is true that the Congress is scared at the moment. They do not seem to have any trust in either the Gandhi family, or Rahul Gandhi, or Priyanka Vadra who gives big speeches like - Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon."

"All parties announce the names of big leaders in their first list," he said. "They used to call Amethi and Rae Bareilly their ancestral seats, but they have not been able to announce their candidates yet." "When we say that we will win all the 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar

Pradesh, it is not our arrogance or over-confidence, but it is based on the work that we have done on the ground and the ever-rising popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Elections are beginning April 19 and the 80 seats of Uttar Pradesh are spread over the all seven phases of voting, ending June 1. Counting of votes will take place June 4. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP alone had won 62 seats in the state, while it had got 71 in 2014 polls. Its allies also won some seats both the times.

Rahul Gandhi had won Amethi Lok Sabha seat in 2014, but lost to BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019. His mother Sonia Gandhi won Rae Bareilly in 2014 as well as in 2019, but she has already announced that she won't contest this time, fuelling speculation that her daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra can be fielded from either of the two seats.

national

of the day quote

The huge participation of people in the INDIA bloc rally held in Delhi Sunday gives a strong warning for the BJP

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought peace and development to the Northeast by signing as many as 12 accords

MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

We respect Owaisi and Pallavi Patel. But, one should always remain stable in politics. The one who remains constant reaches heights

SHIVPAL YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY LEADER

SHORT TAKES

SC refuses to stay survey of Bhojshala

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday refused to stay a 'scientific survey' of Bhojshala, a medieval-era structure in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district which both Hindus and Muslims claim as their own, but said no action should be taken without its permission on the outcome of the exercise. Hindus consider Bhojshala, an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected 11th-century monument, to be a temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while the Muslim community calls it Kamal Maulla mosque. Under an arrangement made by the ASI April 7, 2003, Hindus perform puja on the Bhojshala premises Tuesdays and Muslims offer 'namaz' in the complex Fridays.

Eight held for murder in Delhi

New Delhi: Delhi police has arrested six persons and apprehended two juveniles for stabbing a man to death and injuring another in the Harit Vihar area of north Delhi, officials said Monday. Police recovered the alleged murder weapon, a scooter, and a motorcycle belonging to the accused. The accused have been identified as Umesh (23), Lala (22), Chintu (23), Mohit (19), Rohita (19), Sumit (20), and two juveniles. According to police, they received a PCR call March 26 at 6 pm regarding the stabbing of two persons in Harit Vihar area.

Shajahan's ED custody extended

Kolkata: A court here Monday granted 13 days' Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody of Shajahan Sheikh, who was arrested by the central agency in connection with a money laundering case over alleged siphoning of money in the garb of pisciculture business in Sandeshkhali. The now-suspended Trinamool Congress leader was arrested by the ED Saturday in Basirhat jail, where he is lodged in connection with a case of mob assault on the agency's officials when they went to search his premises in Sandeshkhali January 5 about another money laundering case. Rejecting the bail prayer of Sheikh, the PMLA Court Judge Suwendu Saha granted his custody to ED till April 13.

Cop arrested

Thane: A police inspector was arrested Monday in connection with a Rs 2 crore dacoity in Navi Mumbai, an official said. Six persons posing as policemen had looted the amount from a businessman near Palm Beach Road in Vashi March 29 and a probe zeroed in on Inspector Nitin Bhikaji Vijaykar (55) of the security branch of Thane rural police, he said.



Opposition parties raise the bogey of the Constitution being changed every time polls are near since they do not have better issues to discuss

AJIT PAWAR | MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

HEMANT WITHDRAWS PLEA

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren Monday withdrew from the Supreme Court his plea challenging a High Court order that refused to grant him permission to attend the Budget session of the Assembly



Trinamool writes to EC over actions by Central agencies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The Trinamool Congress Monday urged the Election Commission to immediately restrain Central agencies like the ED, CBI, Income Tax Department and NIA from taking action against candidates, leaders and workers of the Trinamool Congress and other parties opposed to the BJP till the conclusion of Lok Sabha elections.

A delegation of TMC leaders that included Derek O'Brien, Dola Sen, Saket Gokhale and Sagarika Ghose met the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners and submitted a memorandum alleging misuse of Central agencies by the BJP against the opposition parties.

They also urged the poll panel to transfer the directors of ED, CBI, I-T department and the NIA to ensure a level playing field for political parties in the Lok Sabha elections. The TMC leaders cited incidents where Central agencies have taken action against their party candidates.

"Yesterday every single opposition party agreed and a resolution was passed (at INDIA bloc rally) that there is unprecedented and biased action by Central agencies. We have seen a surge in actions by Central agencies," Gokhale said after the meeting.



"This is all being done at the behest of the ruling party... Why has not a single official from Central agencies been transferred? Why is it limited to state government officials?" he said and urged the poll panel to pause the action of agencies to ensure a level playing field in elections.

The list mentioned Mahua Moitra's office being raided by the CBI, ED summons to her and Chandranath Sinha, West Bengal's Minister-in-Charge of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Textiles, income tax raid on Jui Biswas, Councillor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation, and the arrest of a number of TMC workers by the NIA in West Bengal.

"Not only do AITC candidates have to contest the elections, but outside hindrances, like the ones mentioned above, are an ongoing battle they have to face. "The assurance of the Election Commission of India to provide a level playing field is being compromised at every step," the memorandum submitted by TMC claimed.

If workers at the local level are "hauled up on an everyday basis, then they have no time and energy left to carry out their prior political engagements. Such deliberate roadblocks instigated by the Central departments/agencies have only one beneficiary, i.e., the ruling dispensation at the Centre", it said. The party said it looks to the Election Commission to ensure a level playing field. "This must be done to protect the basic structure of the Constitution," the leaders said.

THE PARTY SAID IT LOOKS TO THE ELECTION COMMISSION TO ENSURE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

THE TMC LEADERS CITED INCIDENTS WHERE CENTRAL AGENCIES HAVE TAKEN ACTION AGAINST THEIR PARTY CANDIDATES

Pick your battles, CJI cautions probe agencies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Underlining that investigative agencies like the CBI have been spread "too thin" over the years, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud Monday said they must pick their battles and concentrate efforts on crimes that truly threaten the nation's security, economic health and public order.

Expressing concern over instances of "unwarranted" confiscation of personal devices during raids, the CJI said they highlight the pressing need to strike a balance between investigative imperatives and individual privacy rights.

In the realm of criminal justice, the delicate balance between search and seizure powers of agencies like the CBI and individual privacy rights stands at the cornerstone of a fair and just society, he said in his keynote address at the 20th DP Kohli Memorial Lecture in the memory of agency's first director.

At the heart of this balance lies

the need to uphold due process while ensuring the effective functioning of law enforcement agencies, he said. "It is important for us, both in the context of not just streamlining the courts but also promoting the efficiency of the CBI and the investigative agencies to pick our battles.

"I think we have perhaps been spreading our investigative agencies too thin over the years, despite a rapid change in the environment. Our premier investigative agencies must concentrate their attention and efforts on that class of crime which truly threatens the security of the nation, public order or economic health of the nation," the CJI said.

He said Section 94 of the newly enacted Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Section 185 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam grant courts and law enforcement the authority to summon documents and materials, including digital evidence deemed necessary for investigation.



Judicial custody for Kejriwal till April 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: A Delhi court Monday sent Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to judicial custody till April 15, noting the Enforcement Directorate's contention that his release could hamper the investigation into the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case.

Underscoring that Kejriwal was misleading it, the federal probe agency said it was still investigating the Chief Minister's role, unearthing the further proceeds of crime and identifying the other persons involved with the activities related to proceeds of crime.

Kejriwal, who is the national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), was produced in the court of Special Judge Kaveri Baweja after his ED custody



came to an end. "Since the investigation of the case is stated to be pending qua role of the arrestee, for unearthing the further proceeds of crime and identifying the other person who may be involved or connected, the accused is remanded to judicial custody till April 15," the judge said.

Kejriwal is the fourth AAP

leader to land in jail after Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and former minister Satyendar Jain. All were arrested by central probe agencies in corruption cases.

The Chief Minister's petition challenging his arrest will come up for hearing before the Delhi High Court April 3. In its order,

Student sexually harassed on JNU campus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: A Jawaharlal Nehru University student alleged that she was sexually harassed on campus by four people, including two former students, prompting the university administration to order an inquiry, an official said Monday.

The Left-led students' union

has alleged that the four people, including the two former students, belong to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). The ABVP, however, denied the allegation and claimed that it was being falsely implicated.

The chief proctor's office received a complaint alleging sexual harassment on the night of

March 31. The complainant said the alleged incident occurred when she and her male friend were taking a walk near the JNU Ring Road around 2 am, the official said.

They were allegedly followed by four people, including two students who have already graduated, in a car. These people allegedly sexually harassed the female student, he said.

Leopard barges into house in Delhi; 5 injured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: At least five people were injured in an attack by a leopard which strayed into a village in north Delhi's Wazirabad Monday morning, triggering panic among the locals, officials said.

The leopard was later rescued, Delhi Fire Service chief Atul Garg said. According to officials, the leopard had jumped from the terrace of a house in Jagatpur village early in the morning and barged into the next building where it was locked in a room. Videos on social media showed the leopard being chased by some people and others running in panic.



According to the Delhi Fire Service, information about the incident was received around 6:20 am and two fire tenders were sent to the spot. "With the

help of the locals, the officials locked the leopard in a room. The injured were sent to a hospital," Delhi Fire Service (DFS) chief Atul Garg said.

A resident said the leopard was first spotted around 4:30 am and a PCR call was made at 5:15 am. It tried to attack over a dozen people and injured some of them, he said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (north) M K Meena said a call about the leopard entering a house was received from Jagatpur village, following which the local police reached the spot and forest department officials were informed.

Police said that five people were injured in the leopard attack and three of them have been identified as Mahender, Akash and Rampal. Seven personnel of the forest department, a team from the Delhi Fire

Department along with the local police are present at the spot, the DCP said.

A local said the village is surrounded by jungle but there is no fencing or any other kind of security. December 1 last year, a leopard was sighted at Sainik Farms in South Delhi with some videos showing the spotted big cat strolling in the lanes of the residential area. It was last seen December 6 and the forest department suspected it had returned to the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary. A week later, a leopard was killed after being hit by a car on the National Highway 44 near Khatushyam temple in north Delhi's Alipur.

How quickly can people change colours. From a suave liberal foreign service officer to a smart foreign secretary to a mouthpiece of the RSS-BJP, life and times of Mr Jaishankar will be recorded in the annals of acrobatic sports

P CHIDAMBARAM | CONGRESS LEADER

Katchatheevu row: Opposition hits back



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Hitting back at the Centre over the Katchatheevu island issue, opposition leaders Monday cited a 2015 RTI reply, which stated that the agreements in 1974 and 1976 did not involve either acquiring or ceding of territory belonging to India, and asked whether the "change" in the Modi government's stance is for "election politics".

The Opposition's response came after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Monday claimed that former Prime Ministers of the Congress displayed indifference to Katchatheevu island and gave away the Indian fishermen's rights despite legal views to the contrary. Jaishankar's remarks at a press conference were made a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi cited a media report to assert that new facts reveal that the Congress "callously" gave away Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Is Dr S Jaishankar, now Minister of External Affairs, disowning the reply given by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on January 27th, 2015, when the same Dr Jaishankar was foreign secretary?"

"The MEA's response to a RTI query on Katchatheevu in 2015 had said 'This (Agreement) did not involve either acquiring or ceding of territory belonging to India since the area in question had never been demarcated. Under the Agreements, the Island of Katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line," Ramesh said on X. "The easiest to hunt in a political expedition is a scapegoat. Who will it be?" Ramesh added. Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram also hit out at the government over the issue.

"Tit for tat is old. Tweet for Tweet is the new weapon. Will foreign minister Mr Jaishankar please refer to the RTI reply dated 27-1-2015...The reply justified the circumstances under which India acknowledged that a small island belonged to Sri Lanka," Chidambaram said.

He asked why the External Affairs Minister and his ministry are doing a somersault now. "How quickly can people change colours. From a suave liberal foreign service officer to a smart foreign secretary to a mouthpiece of the RSS-BJP, life and times of Mr Jaishankar will be recorded in the annals of acrobatic sports," Chidambaram said.

Act against Rahul for 'match-fixing' remarks: BJP to EC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The BJP Monday urged the Election Commission to take the strictest action against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and issue directions to lodge an FIR against him for his 'match-fixing' remarks at an opposition INDIA bloc rally here a day ago.

A BJP delegation comprising Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri and BJP national general secretary Arun Singh lodged the complaint against Rahul Gandhi with the poll panel, urging it to direct the Congress leader to tender an "unconditional public apology" to the nation and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for levelling "false allegations" against him.

Addressing the INDIA bloc's 'Loktantra Bachao' (Save Democracy) rally at the Ramlila Maidan Sunday, Rahul Gandhi accused Modi of trying to do "match-fixing" in the Lok Sabha polls and warned that if the BJP wins the election through this endeavour and "changes" the Constitution, then the whole country would be "finished".

international



I asked the government how many probes for (2019 Easter bombings) were carried out and what were their recommendations
SAJITH PREMADASA | LEADER OF THE OPNP OF SRI LANKA

UPS TO REPLACE FEDEX
United Parcel Service will become the United States Postal Service's (USPS) primary air cargo provider, the company said Monday, as rival FedEx announced an end to its more than 20-year partnership with the postal service provider



of the day quote

I request all political parties that they should set aside all their political issues and work for the development and prosperity of the country
ASIF ALI ZARDARI | PAKISTAN PRESIDENT

The daily assault on the human dignity of Palestinians is creating a crisis of credibility for the international community
ANTÓNIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UN

I will propose granting Spain's recognition to the Palestinian state. I do this out of moral conviction, for a just cause and because it is the only way that the two states, Israel and Palestine, can live together in peace
PEDRO SANCHEZ | PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN

China releases 30 more names for places in Arunachal

India has been rejecting China renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, asserting that the state is an integral part of the country and assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality



of standardised geographical names in Zangnan, the Chinese name for Arunachal Pradesh which Beijing claims as part of south Tibet, state-run Global Times reported Sunday. The official website of the ministry posted 30 additional names for the region. Set to take effect from May 1, the implementation

measures stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization," the report said. The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of the standardised names of six

places in Zangnan was released in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021 followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

The recent statements by China to reassert its claims over the state started with Beijing lodging a diplomatic protest with India over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, where he dedicated to the nation the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of 13,000 feet in Arunachal Pradesh.

The tunnel will provide all-weather connectivity to strategically located Tawang and is expected to ensure better movement of troops along the frontier region. Chinese Foreign and Defence ministries have issued a flurry of statements to highlight China's claims over the area.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar March 23 dismissed China's repeated claims on Arunachal Pradesh as "ludicrous" and that the frontier state was a "natural part of India".

Beijing was also peeved over the US statement recognising Arunachal Pradesh as part of Indian territory. State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said March 9 that "the US recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory, and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control."

India boundary issue is a matter between the two countries and has nothing to do with Washington.

Hasina attacks 'boycott India' campaigners



AGENCIES

New Delhi, April 1: Opposition leaders demanding a boycott of Indian products must declare how many Indian sarees their wives have and why they are not setting these on fire, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said.

Addressing a meeting of the ruling Awami League, of which she is the president, Hasina tore into the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leaders calling for a boycott of Indian products. "My question is, how many Indian sarees do their wives have? And why are they not taking the sarees from their wives and setting them on fire? Please ask BNP leaders," she said.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister, who secured the fourth consecutive term in office in the elections held earlier this year, said that when the BNP was in power, ministers and their wives would buy sarees on India trips and sell them in Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina then moved to Indian spices and their role in Bangladesh's kitchens. "Garam masala, onions, garlic, ginger, all spices that come (from India) should not be seen in their (BNP leaders') homes," she said.

The remarks came after BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi threw away his Kashmiri shawl on the road as a symbolic protest against Indian products, *The Daily Star* reported.

The developments are taking place against the backdrop of an 'India-Out' campaign in Bangladesh.

Launched by some activists and influencers and backed by a section of Opposition politicians, the campaign has gathered steam after the Awami League's recent victory in an election boycotted by the Opposition BNP.

Imran's 14-yr jail term suspended

AGENCIES

Islamabad, April 1: In a temporary relief to jailed former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, a high court Monday suspended the 14-year sentence handed out to him and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana corruption case.

The beleaguered couple were sentenced to 14 years in jail each by an accountability court January 31 for alleged corruption in state gifts they got from the state depository, days before the general elections.

According to the verdict, Khan and Bushra were barred from holding any public office for 10 years and slapped with a fine of Rs 787 million each. They challenged the conviction in the Islamabad High Court where a two-member bench headed by IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case.

On Monday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) gave temporary relief to the couple in the case by suspending their sentences and granting them bail in the case.

However, the court announced that their appeals against the conviction would be heard after the Eid festival next month. But Khan may not be released as he is convicted in other cases and cannot be released until absolved from charges in other cases.



Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi were found guilty in the Toshakhana case

Khan was sentenced in the case days before the general elections

Similarly, Bushra is also convicted in another case and may not be released after her sentence has been suspended.

In the Toshakhana corruption case, the 71-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician is accused of retaining expensive state gifts they received during his tenure as Pakistan's premier.

Under the rules governing Toshakhana - a Persian word meaning "treasure house" - government officials can keep gifts by paying a price for them but first the gift should be deposited. Khan and his wife either failed to deposit the gift or got it for a low price by allegedly using their authority.

The verdict was initially announced by the accountability court 31 January, which was later challenged in the Islamabad High Court (IHC), which now has suspended the sentence and has allowed Imran Khan and his wife Bushra to be released on bail

The conviction of Khan in the Toshakhana case had come a day after he was sentenced to 10 years in jail in the cipher case January 30.

Earlier, he was also convicted in a different Toshakhana corruption case in August 2023, leading to his arrest. The latest conviction was based on the charges of misusing his authority as prime minister to retain gifts he or his spouse got during his tenure. It was filed by the National Accountability Bureau.

The previous Toshakhana graft case was filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan in the charges of hiring the sale of state gifts.

Israeli troops exit Gaza's Shifa hosp

REUTERS

Deir Al-Balah, April 1: Israeli forces left Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City Monday after a two-week operation, leaving a wasteland of destroyed buildings and Palestinian bodies scattered in the dirt.

Hundreds of people, including some who had been sheltering in the Gaza Strip's largest hospital prior to the Israeli incursion, rushed back to check damage and hunt for belongings.

The Israeli military said it had killed or detained hundreds of Hamas militants in the hospital area, seized weaponry and intelligence documents, lost two soldiers in fighting, but sought to prevent harm to civilians, patients or medics. Hamas and medics deny any armed presence in hospitals.

The Hamas-run Gaza media office said Israeli forces killed 400 Palestinians around Al Shifa, including a woman doctor and her son, also a doctor, and put the medical facility out of function. There was no immediate Israeli response. "The occupation destroyed and burnt all buildings inside Al Shifa Medical Complex. They bulldozed the courtyards, burying dozens of bodies of martyrs in the rubble, turning the



- Israeli army leaves Gaza hospital after two-week raid
- Hamas says Israel killed 400 Palestinians in and around Al Shifa
- Israel says it killed and detained hundreds of gunmen
- Displaced Palestinians comb rubble for belongings

place into a mass graveyard," said Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of the media office.

A spokesperson for Gaza's Civil Emergency Service said Israeli forces had executed two people whose bodies were found at the complex in handcuffs, and used bulldozers to dig up the grounds of the complex and exhume corpses.

More than 32,000 Palestinians have been killed, including 63 in the past 24 hours, in Israel's military offensive in Gaza, according to the Palestinian health authorities.

Iran alerted Russia to security threat before Moscow attack

REUTERS

Dubai, April 1: Iran tipped off Russia about the possibility of a major "terrorist operation" on its soil ahead of the concert hall massacre near Moscow last month, three sources familiar with the matter said.

In the deadliest attack inside Russia in 20 years, gunmen opened fire with automatic weapons at concertgoers March 22 at the Crocus City Hall, killing at least 144 people in violence claimed by the Islamic State militant group.

The United States had also warned Russia in advance of a likely militant Islamist attack but Moscow, deeply distrustful of Washington's intentions, played down that intelligence.

It is harder, however, for Russia to dismiss intelligence from diplomatic ally Iran on the attack, which has also raised questions over the effectiveness of Russian security services.

Moscow and Tehran, both under Western sanctions, have deepened military and other cooperation during the two-year Ukraine war.

"Days before the attack in Russia, Tehran shared information with Moscow about a possible big terrorist attack inside Russia that was acquired during interrogations of those arrested in connection with deadly bombings in Iran," one of the sources told *Reuters*.



An attendee flips open a fan while dancing on the street during a march to celebrate International Transgender Day of Visibility in Lisbon, Portugal

Germany approves cannabis amid controversy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Frankfurt, April 1: Marijuana campaigners in Germany lit celebratory joints Monday as the country liberalised rules on cannabis to allow possession of small amounts.

The German Cannabis Association, which campaigned for the new law, staged a "smoke-in" at Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate when the law took effect at midnight. Other public consumption events were scheduled throughout the country, including one in front of the Cologne cathedral and others in Hamburg, Regensburg and Dortmund. The new law legalises possession by adults of up to 25 grams (nearly 1 ounce) of marijuana for recreational purposes and allows individuals to grow



up to three plants on their own. That part of the legislation took effect Monday.

German residents age 18 and older will be allowed to join non-profit "cannabis clubs" with a maximum 500 members each starting July 1. Individuals will be allowed to buy up to 25 grams

per day, or a maximum 50 grams per month — a figure limited to 30 grams for people under age 21. Membership in multiple clubs won't be allowed.

The clubs' costs will be covered by membership fees, which are to be staggered according to how much marijuana members use.

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The legislation also calls for an amnesty under which sentences for cannabis-related offenses that will no longer be illegal are to be reviewed and in many cases reversed. Regional authorities worry that the judicial system will be overburdened by thousands of cases.

The law was pushed through by the current coalition of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens and the pro-business Free Democrats, against Opposition from some of Germany's federal states and the center-right Christian Democrats. Christian Democratic leader Friedrich Merz has vowed that his party will reverse the legislation if it wins national elections expected in the fall of 2025.

Leading garden stores surveyed by the dpa news agency indicated they would not be adding cannabis plants to their horticultural offerings, and the German Medical Association opposed the law, saying it could have "grave consequences" for the "developmental and life prospects of young people in our country."

TIDBITS

Israeli air strike destroys Iranian consulate in Syria

Damascus: An Israeli airstrike has destroyed the consular section of Iran's embassy in Damascus, killing or wounding everyone inside, Syrian state media said Monday. The Iranian Arabic-language state television Al-Alam and pan-Arab television station Al-Mayadeen, which has reporters in Syria, said the strike killed Iranian military adviser Gen. Ali Reza Zahdi, who led the elite Quds Force in Lebanon and Syria until 2016. Iranian Ambassador Hossein Akbari condemned Israel and said as many as seven people were killed, but first responders were still searching for any other bodies under the rubble. He said two police officers who guard the building were wounded. In comments to the media after meeting Akbari, Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said "several" people were killed.

Suicide bomb attack: Pakistan police arrest 12

Islamabad: At least 12 people, including the mastermind, have been arrested in connection with last week's suicide bombing that killed five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, officials said Monday. The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), which launched a probe into the attack, blamed the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militant group for the assault. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. No group had claimed responsibility for the terror attack that took place when the Chinese engineers were en route from Islamabad to their camp in Dasu, the headquarters of the Upper Kohistan district of the province, when a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-rigged car into their vehicle in Bisham area of Shangila district.

business

of the day quote

With balance sheets in their healthiest, capacity utilisation around peak levels and expected interest rate cuts, a broad-based pick-up in private capex is finally in sight

GURPREET CHHATWAL | MD, CRISIL RATINGS

There is a rising demand for construction skills in the GCC and Eastern European countries and almost all countries have a high demand for IT professionals. We are also observing the emerging need for green jobs

DHRITI PRASANNA MAHANTA | VP, TEAMLEASE DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

The residential real estate sector in Mumbai has continued to perform exceptionally well in March 2024. The consistent increase in property sale registrations during March highlights the market's attractiveness among homebuyers

SHISHIR BAJAJ | CHAIRMAN AND MD, KNIGHT FRANK

SHORT TAKES

Coal, lignite output hits all-time high

New Delhi: The country has for the first time crossed the milestone of 1 billion tonne of coal and lignite production in the financial year 2023-24, Union Coal and Mines Minister Pralhad Joshi said Monday. India's total coal and lignite output was at 937 million tonne (MT) in the preceding 2022-23 fiscal, as per official figures. "Proud to share that under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi, we have registered a stellar achievement by crossing 1 billion tonne (BT) coal and lignite production," Joshi said. It is a historic moment for India as the country has achieved the highest-ever production, and it will go a long way in ensuring energy security to the nation. The continuous efforts to increase domestic coal production has ensured that going forward the country will never have to face coal shortage, the minister said.

Commercial LPG, ATF price slashed

New Delhi: Jet fuel or ATF price Monday was cut by a marginal 0.5 per cent while rates of commercial LPG used by establishments such as hotels and restaurants were slashed by ₹31 per cylinder in line with international prices. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was cut by ₹502.91 per kilolitre or 0.49 per cent, to ₹100,893.63 per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Govt garners ₹16,507 crore via disinvestment in FY24

DURING 2023-24 FISCAL, GOVT SOLD STAKES IN 10 CPSEs THROUGH OFS

The government also sold shares in RVNL, SJVN, IRCON International, HUDCO and earned remittances from SUUTI. The budget had pegged disinvestment proceeds for 2023-24 fiscal at ₹51,000 crore. However, the revised estimates (RE) February 1, 2024, did away with separate head for disinvestment receipts. Under the heading of capital receipts, the government estimated to collect ₹30,000 crore. Officials said this includes ₹20,000 crore from disinvestment and ₹10,000 crore from asset monetisation. The government historically has been missing the disinvestment targets set in budgets with the exception of 2018-19 and 2017-18 financial years. The highest ever mop-up from disinvestment at Rs 1,00,056 crore was recorded in 2017-18, marginally exceeding the budget target of Rs 1 lakh crore.

90 YEARS OF RBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: The Reserve Bank has to accord "top-most priority" to growth and at the same time focus on trust and stability, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday. Addressing the inauguration of the event commemorating 90 years of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) here, Modi said the next decade is as important for attaining the goal of developed India as it is for the RBI, which will complete 100 years of existence in 2035. Modi said as per the "mantra" of the central bank, "The RBI should make fast growth its top-most priority, along with focusing on trust and stability." Since 2016, keeping inflation under check has become the primary goal of the RBI. Often,

March Russian oil imports up by 7%

REUTERS

New Delhi, April 1: India's Russian oil imports rose by more than 7% in March from February as refiners snapped up cheaper oil, data from trade flow tracking agencies Kpler and LSEG shows.

Refiners in India have been gorging on Russian oil since the West shunned purchases from Moscow and imposed sanctions following its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The data shows that Russia continued to be the top oil supplier to India followed by Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

India, the world's third biggest oil importer and consumer, cut monthly purchases from Saudi Arabia in March and raised those from Iraq, the data showed.

Because of the challenges posed by sanctions, India's Russian oil imports are expected to decline in coming months.

The nation is set to receive about 1.25 million barrels per day in April, a drop of about 9% from March, according to LSEG data.

97.69% of ₹2K notes returned

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monday said nearly 97.69 per cent of the ₹2000 denomination bank notes have returned to the banking system, and only ₹8,202 crore worth of the withdrawn notes are still with the public.

On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of ₹2,000 denomination bank notes from circulation.

The total value of ₹2000 banknotes in circulation, which was ₹3.56 lakh crore at the

Growth should be top priority: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

there are voices who have pitched for additional attention to growth through measures like rate cuts. The comments come days ahead of the first monetary policy review of the new fiscal year.

Modi said the "reflection" of double-digit inflation rate was not visible in the financial policies earlier, and claimed credit for giving the RBI the rights to take decisions to curb inflation.

The six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) has also done some very good work on its mandate over the years, Modi said.

The government's efforts, including delivering on fiscal con-

Asian economies are not doing as well as they could and growth in the region is forecast to slow to 4.5% this year from 5.1% in 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

solidation and active price monitoring, also helped in the cooling of inflation, he added. Modi said inflation is at a "moderate level", despite the Covid pandemic or the challenges posed by wars in various countries.

India followed a path where it took care of both financial prudence concerns and also the requirements of the common man during the pandemic, he said. At a time when many countries of the world are still struggling to come out of the shocks suffered during the pandemic, the Indian economy is creating new records, Modi said.

He said balancing inflation control and growth is a unique

'ONE VEHICLE, ONE FASTAG' NORM COMES INTO FORCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

State-owned National Highways Authority of India's 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' norm, which aims to discourage the use of single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle, has come into force from Monday, a senior official said

D-St starts new fiscal on a high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: Stock markets started the new fiscal on a high with benchmark Sensex and Nifty scaling fresh record high levels in intra-day trade before settling in the green Monday, backed by firm trends in Asian markets and foreign fund inflows.

Extending its winning momentum to the third day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 363.20 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 74,014.55. During the day, it zoomed 603.27 points or 0.81 per cent to hit its record intra-day high of 74,254.62.

The NSE Nifty climbed 135.10 points or 0.61 per cent to 22,462. During the day, it jumped 203.05 points or 0.90 per cent to hit the all-time peak of 22,529.95.

Realty and metal shares performed well while FMCG and auto traded subdued.

From the Sensex basket, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro and HDFC Bank were the major gainers. Titan, Nestle, Bharti Airtel and IndusInd Bank were among the laggards.

"The Indian market boarded on a strong trajectory at the onset of the new financial year, with indications pointing towards a continuation of this favourable momentum, in the near term. This confidence is supported by a global rally in expectation of a Fed rate cut in

ALL-TIME HIGH Gold surges by ₹1,070

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gold prices surged by ₹1,070 to hit an all-time high of ₹68,420 per 10 grams in the national capital Monday amid a rally in the precious metal in global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at ₹67,350 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver prices also jumped by ₹1,120 to ₹78,570 per kg. In the previous trade, it had closed at ₹77,450 per kg. Gold prices touched record levels as the US Federal Reserve is getting closer to cutting interest rates which is adding momentum to a rise in bullion prices.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹188.31 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

Investors' wealth soared by ₹10.58 lakh crore in three days of the market rally, where the BSE benchmark jumped over 2 per cent, and hit an all-time high Monday. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by ₹10,58,034.42 crore to ₹3,93,15,471.18 crore (\$4.74 trillion) in three days.

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SECOND HIGHEST SINCE ROLL-OUT

GST mop-up rises 11.5%

Gross GST collection for the last fiscal stood at ₹20.18L-cr, 11.7% higher YoY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: GST collections in March grew 11.5 per cent to ₹1.78 lakh crore on higher domestic sales, the finance ministry said Monday.

The gross GST collection for the last fiscal (April 2023-March 2024) stood at ₹20.18 lakh crore, 11.7 per cent higher than the mop-up in the preceding fiscal.

"Gross Good and Services Tax (GST) revenue for March 2024 witnessed the second highest collection ever at ₹1.78 lakh crore, with a 11.5 per cent year-on-year growth. This surge was driven by a significant rise in GST collection from domestic transactions at 17.6 per cent," the ministry said in a statement.

The highest-ever GST collection was recorded at ₹1.87 lakh crore in April 2023.

Experts said the double-digit increase in monthly GST col-



The collections, which are only likely to be better in coming months, may pave the way for next wave of GST reforms including rate rationalisation

PRATIK JAIN | PWC INDIA PARTNER

lection underscores the resilience of economy and paves way for next generation GST reforms.

The ministry said GST collections have shown "strong consistent performance" in 2023-24 and the fiscal ended March 31 marks a "milestone" with total gross GST collection of ₹20.18 lakh crore, a 11.7 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

GST revenue net of refunds as of March 2024 is ₹18.01 lakh crore, which is a growth of 13.4 per cent over the same period a year ago. During the just-concluded fiscal,

No new change in income tax regime from April 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The finance ministry Monday said there is no change in the new income tax regime for individuals for the current fiscal year and individual taxpayers can opt out of the regime at the time of filing their ITR.

Clarifying on social media posts claiming certain changes in the new tax regime effective April 1, the ministry said, "There is no new change which is coming in from 01.04.2024."

A modified new income tax regime was rolled out from the financial year beginning April 1, 2023, for individuals under



which the tax rates are "significantly lower".

However, the benefit of various exemptions and deductions (other than standard deduction of Rs 50,000 from salary and Rs 15,000 from family pension) is not available, as in the old regime.

"New tax regime is the default tax regime. However, tax payers can choose the tax regime

(old or new) that they think is beneficial to them... Option for opting out from the new tax regime is available till filing of return for the AY 2024-25," the ministry said.

Under the new I-T regime, income of up to Rs 3 lakh is exempt from tax. A 5 per cent tax is levied on income between Rs 3-6 lakh, 10 per cent for income between Rs 6-9 lakh.

Income between Rs 9-12 lakh and Rs 12-15 lakh is subject to 15 per cent and 20 per cent tax, respectively. A 30 per cent I-T would be applicable on income above Rs 15 lakh.

The new tax regime was set as "a default regime" from 2023-24

and the Assessment Year corresponding to this is AY 2024-25. This can be changed by the taxpayer at the time of filing Income Tax Returns (ITR) by an individual.

Eligible persons without any business income will have the option to choose the regime for each financial year.

So, they can choose new tax regime in one financial year and old tax regime in another year and vice-versa, the ministry said in a statement.

The old tax regime which is still in force and offers a host of deductions and exemptions, exempts income up to Rs 2.5 lakh from taxes.

FULL THROTTLE PV sales soar to record high in FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Driven by robust demand for sports utility vehicles, passenger vehicle sales in India soared to a record high in FY 2023-24 with dispatch of over 42 lakh units.

The overall passenger vehicle dispatches from manufacturers to dealers last fiscal rose to 42.3 lakh units, an increase of 9 per cent, as compared with 38.9 lakh units in FY2022-23 on the back of record sales by manufacturers, including Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai Motor India and Toyota Kirloskar Motor.

The share of sports utility vehicles to the overall passenger vehicle dispatches rose to 50.4 per cent in the last fiscal as compared to 43 per cent in FY 2022-23.

Maruti Suzuki India reported the highest-ever yearly domestic sales of 17,93,644 units and record exports of 2,83,067 units in 2023-24 fiscal.

DESPATCHES CROSS 42L MARK



The company saw its SUV market share double to 22 per cent last fiscal from 11 per cent in the year-ago period, Maruti Suzuki India Member Executive Committee Shashank Srivastava said. He noted that the company missed out on SUVs accounting for 25 per cent of the overall

This is the first time that passenger vehicle sales have crossed the 40 lakh sales mark in the country... Much of the growth that has happened is in the SUV segment

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, MARUTI SUZUKI

financial year. In the domestic market, the auto major dispatched 6,14,721 units to its dealers, an increase of 8 per cent, as against 5,67,546 units in FY 2022-23.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor also reported its highest-ever wholesales of 2,63,512 units in the last fiscal, an increase of 48 per cent, as against 1,77,683 units in 2022-23.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business Sabari Manohar said the company has always remained ahead in assessing and understanding the diverse needs of varied cus-

tomers and market trends, serving them the best with our wider range of quality products and services. Mahindra & Mahindra reported a 28 per cent increase in passenger vehicle wholesales at 4,59,877 units as against 3,59,253 units in 2022-23 financial year. Tata Motors said its passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 5,73,495 units, up 6 per cent from 5,41,087 units in FY2022-23. In the two-wheeler segment, TVS Motor Company reported its highest-ever sales of 41.91 lakh units in FY 2023-24, a growth of 14 per cent as compared with 36.82 lakh units in 2022-23. Suzuki Motorcycle India reported its highest-ever sales of 11,33,902 units in FY2023-24, a growth of 21 per cent as against 9,38,371 units in FY2022-23. Royal Enfield reported 14 per cent year-on-year growth in domestic sales last fiscal at 8,34,795 units as against 7,34,840 units in the 2022-23 financial year.

Sinner reigns supreme

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami Gardens, April 1: Jannik Sinner's strong 2024 continued as he won the Miami Open with 6-3, 6-1 victory over 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov Sunday.

In a flawless display on a 79-degree afternoon, Sinner, the 2024 Australian Open champion, moved to 22-1 on the year in winning the Miami Open for the first time. Sinner had been runner-up twice in 2021 and 2023.

In his second straight Miami Open finals appearance (Sinner lost last year to Daniil Medvedev), the 22-year-old played with an abundance of confidence despite the crowd cheering on the underdog from Bulgaria.

Sinner dropped just seven games combined in the semifinals and finals. "This was my third time in the final and I figured this would be the lucky one, Sinner said. "I'm really happy I can hold the big trophy.

Chants of "Gri-gor" resounded the entire match inside the home stadium of the NFL's Miami Dolphins. Dimitrov had created a buzz this week with upsets of top seed Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinals and No.3 seed Alexander Zverev in the semifinals.

Dimitrov, 10 years older than Sinner at 32, will climb into the top 10 rankings for the first time since 2018. "Unfortunately, 10 years made a huge difference today," Dimitrov said. "Clearly it's Jannik's week. He's been playing amazing tennis."

Sinner also hit a milestone, moving from No.3 to 2 — highest ranking of his young career and in Italian history. "It means a lot to me," Sinner said. "More importantly it was a great performance for me. Being No. 2 is an amazing feeling and never thought to be at this point."

Sinner, who was never broken and faced just one break point, was undeterred by the pro-Dimitrov crowd and could be an early favorite for the upcoming French Open. The men's tour swings in April to the clay-



court season in Europe finished off by the French at Roland Garros which begins May 20.

Sinner won his first major at the Australian Open, then captured the title Rotterdam, and was a finalist in Indian Wells. His only loss in 2024 was in the Indian Wells final to Alcaraz.

Dimitrov won the first eight points on his serve, holding at love in each game. Then the Bulgarian got broken at 2-2 when he tried to get too fancy. Amidst a long rally, Dimitrov hit a drop shot into the net. Thereafter, he advanced to the net twice only to get beaten by two deft passing shots by Sinner. While Dimitrov has a decent net game, Sinner is perhaps the best passer in tennis.

His chances in the second set

were wiped out when he got broken at 2-1. Sinner kept the ball deep on the final two rallies of the game and Dimitrov flubbed shots into the net. At 4-1, Dimitrov got broken again when he flubbed an easy volley long.

Darren Cahill, Sinner's coach of two years and a former tour player and an ESPN analyst, said afterward he's added "little things" to Sinner's game and "a belief."

The American women made a clean sweep. On Saturday, Danielle Collins won the women's singles title. In women's doubles Sunday, Americans Sofia Kenin and Bethanie Mattek-Sands rallied from a set down to top Gabriela Dabrowski (Canada) and Erin Routliffe (New Zealand) 4-6, 7-6(7-5), 11-9 in a third-set

MEMORABLE FEAT

LONDON: Ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal Monday achieved a career-high ranking of 95 in the ATP singles chart, following impressive results in recent times. His previous best was 97 in February, which he had attained after winning the Chennai Open, an ATP Challenger series event. Nagal made headlines in January after he made it to the main draw of the Australian Open and also became the first Indian to beat a seeded player (Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan) in the same before bowing out in the second round after losing to Shang Juncheng of China.

match tie-breaker. The American men didn't fare well in Miami without anyone advancing in singles to the round of 16.

Clinical Royals outplay Mumbai



Riyan Parag, Yuzvendra Chahal (left inset) & Trent Boult (right inset)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: A clinical Rajasthan Royals romped home for a third win on the trot in the IPL with a six-wicket hammering of Mumbai Indians, whose skipper Hardik Pandya continued to be on the receiving end of fans' anger, here Monday.

After Yuzvendra Chahal (3/11) and Trent Boult (3/22) combined to suffocate Mumbai Indians with the bat, restricting them to 125/9, Riyan Parag (54 n o, 39b, 5x4, 3x6) churned out yet another top-drawer knock to take Rajasthan Royals to the first spot in the IPL points table.

The 22-year-old Parag continued to make giant strides this season with a knock that reflected his maturity and aggression, dishing out some spectacular hits while being single-minded to not relent until his side was over the line. Royals reached 127/4 from 15.3 overs.

Meanwhile, there was no letup for Pandya who was booed on several occasions in Mumbai Indians' first home game. It started with Pandya being booed when he took field for warm-up drills and the fans hit the player hard again when he came out for the toss.

Even though commentator and former India and Mumbai player Sanjay Manjrekar appealed to the crowd to "behave", the boos continued until Pandya hit a few fours to bring smile back on Mumbai fans after their side was left reeling at 20/4 inside the powerplay.

Pandya top-scored with 34 for Mumbai in his bid to turn the brickbats into cheers but Rajasthan came out on top on every moment in the game, which was underlined by special bowling efforts from Chahal, Boult as well as Nandre Burger (2/32), who were all backed by excellent fielding.

Boult struck early with a three-wicket burst inside the powerplay and Chahal made life miserable for rest of the batters in the following overs, accounting for Pandya, Tilak Varma (32) and Gerald Coetzee (4).

If Chahal suffocated the MI batters in the middle overs while stopping both Pandya and Varma in their tracks, it was Boult who ran riot in the home side's top order, dismissing Rohit Sharma, Naman Dhir and Dewald Brevis for first-ball ducks.

Pandya, who was booed from all parts of the ground here,

walked to a similar reception but a brief fightback from him turned the negative noise into cheers. The Mumbai skipper showed intent when he hit three fours off Burger in the sixth over, but it was Chahal who brought an end to Pandya's resistance.

Chahal tossed one outside off-stump to make Pandya have a go at it, and the batter obliged with a big swing of the bat but the ball did not travel far enough. The substitute fielder Rovman Powell read the elevation and speed well to cover a few yards to his right and take a fine diving catch, denying Pandya an opportunity to be a hero for his side.

BRIEF SCORES: MI 125/9 (Hardik Pandya 34, Tilak Varma 32; Yuzvendra Chahal 3/11, Trent Boult 3/22, Nandre Burger 2/32) lost to RR 127/4 (Riyan Parag 54 n o, R Ashwin 16; Akash Madhwal 3/20) by 6 wickets.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League

RCB vs LSG

Time: 07:30 pm

Telecast: Star Sports Network

Stream: Jio Cinema

ADVANTAGE LIVERPOOL IN THREE-WAY EPL TITLE RACE



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manchester, April 1: Liverpool lead the way in the race for the English Premier League (EPL) title after Manchester City and Arsenal cancelled each other out.

A 2-1 comeback win against Brighton left Jurgen Klopp's team looking down on its rivals — two points ahead of second-place Arsenal and three clear of City in third with nine games to go.

There is still some way to go in the three-way fight, but Mohamed Salah's second-half winner at Anfield could be crucial. Even City manager Pep Guardiola admitted it's in Liverpool's

hands now. Victory had moved Liverpool to the top of the standings before City and Arsenal played out a frustrating 0-0 draw at Etihad Stadium later in the day. The clash between last season's top two had been highly anticipated but failed to live up to the pre-match hype, with few goal-scoring chances.

While the result suited Liverpool most of all, it was the latest evidence of Arsenal's growing title credentials after falling away at the end of last season. The Londoners had lost on their previous eight visits to City — including a 1-4 defeat last year that proved costly in the title race. This season, Mikel Arteta's team

has taken four points off the defending champions, as well as winning the Community Shield against City in August. But the Arsenal manager said he was still looking for more from his players to prove they are ready to end Guardiola's dominance with City.

Arsenal have now had the better of both of their title rivals, having also won and drawn against Liverpool. By contrast, City have no league wins against any of the teams above it, having drawn against Liverpool home and away. Sunday was a chance to improve that record — but City instead slipped further adrift of the top.

Guardiola is still backing his team to do just that as it targets back-to-back trebles after winning the Premier League title, Champions League and FA Cup last season. With just three points separating the top three, it looks to set to be the most open title race in recent years.

And Brighton's performance at Anfield suggested there could still be some surprises along the way, with Liverpool having to come back from a goal down after Danny Welbeck's strike in the second minute. Luis Diaz evened the score before the break and Salah struck his 22nd goal of the season in the second half to secure all three points.

Mirabai set to bag Paris berth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Phuket (Thailand), April 1: Tokyo Olympics silver-medalist Mirabai Chanu all but qualified for the 2024 Paris Games after she finished third in the women's 49kg Group B event of the IWF World Cup here Monday.

Returning from a six-month injury lay off, Chanu lifted a total of 184kg (81kg+103kg) at the tournament, which is the final and a mandatory qualifier for the Paris Olympics. Chanu has fulfilled the criteria for the Paris Olympics, which is participating in two compulsory events and three other qualifiers. The 2017 world champion is currently ranked second in the women's 49kg Olympic Qualification Ranking (OQR) behind China's Jian Huihua.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, April 1: Rodrigo thrived in the absence of Vinicius Junior as Real Madrid beat Athletic Bilbao 2-0 to keep an eight-point lead over Barcelona in the Spanish league.

Rodrigo scored both goals and Madrid maintained their comfortable lead at the top after Barcelona had won 1-0 at Las Palmas Saturday. Vinicius didn't play because of a sus-

pension over yellow cards, but Jude Bellingham was back in the squad after missing two straight league games because of a red-card suspension. The influential England international set up Rodrigo's second goal in Madrid's third straight league win.

Rodrigo's opener came with a beautiful shot into the top corner from just outside the area eight minutes into the match at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. The Brazil forward had scored for Brazil in a friendly against Spain at the Bernabeu last week, but he hadn't found the net for Madrid in seven consecutive games.

Fourth-placed Athletic arrived with their focus on next weekend's Copa del Rey final against Mallorca. The Basque Country club will try to win the cup for the first time in four decades. Defender Yeray Alvarez left Sunday's game with an apparent muscle injury in the 25th and could be doubtful for the final in Seville.



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