



BRIEF



A model poses for photographs at Kolkata maidan during celebrations of upcoming Bengali New Year in Kolkata, Sunday.

Fire

Thane: A fire broke out in the rear motorman coach of a suburban train at Thane railway station on Sunday, an official said. The fire in the Titwala-CST train's brake system was doused soon after and there were no reports of anyone getting injured, said Avinash Sawant of the civic Regional Disaster Management Cell.

New faces

Amaravati: As many as 11 legislators, who resigned from the Andhra Pradesh Council of Ministers on April 7, will be re-inducted when Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reconstitutes his Cabinet here on Monday. The reconstituted Cabinet will have 13 new faces while a veteran will make a comeback after a long gap. Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan on Sunday evening accepted the resignations submitted by the 24 ministers, a Raj Bhavan communique said.

Virtual meeting

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a virtual meeting with US President Joe Biden on Monday to review bilateral cooperation and exchange views on recent developments in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific and global issues of mutual interest. The Ministry of External Affairs made an announcement on Sunday about the virtual meeting.

Terrorists killed

Srinagar: In a pinpoint intelligence operation, two Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists involved in the April 4 attack on CRPF personnel in the city, were killed while three security personnel got injured in an encounter here on Sunday, police said.

Weather High 40 Low 27

WORD OF CAUTION

'COVID-19 not gone, changing forms and resurfacing'

Ahmedabad, Apr 10 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the coronavirus has not gone away and keeps resurfacing, and cautioned people not to let their guard down in the battle against the pandemic.

Nobody knows when the 'bahurupiya' (one that changes form) COVID-19 will resurface, Modi said, adding that administering nearly 185 crore doses of vaccines to control its spread was made possible due to public support.

He was addressing via



video conferencing the Mahapatotsav programme of Maa Umiya Dham at Vanthali in Gujarat's Junagadh district, as part of the 14th foundation day celebration of the temple of Maa Umiya, considered as the deity of Kadva Patidar

community. The PM urged devotees of Maa Umiya to turn to natural farming with the aim to save Mother Earth from the scourge of chemical fertilisers. He also asked people to a pledge to participate in creating 75 'Amrit Sarovars' (lakes) in each district as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, being organised to mark 75 years of India's Independence.

"Corona (COVID-19 pandemic) was a big crisis, and we are not saying that the crisis is over. It may have taken a pause, but we never know when it will resur-

face. It is a 'bahurupiya' disease. To stop this, nearly 185 crore doses (of vaccines) were administered, which surprised the world. This has been made possible due to your support," he said. The PM also said the devotees of Maa Umiya should undertake a project to take care of the health of malnourished children and anemic mothers at the village level. The 'Maa Umiya Trust', which manages the temple, should organise competitions at the village level promoting good health of children, he said.

JSPL plans to set up India's second coal gasification plant

At Raigarh

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

JSPL has plans of setting up a coal gasification plant - the second in the country - at its Raigarh plant in Chhattisgarh, company's MD V R Sharma said.

The company is already using the coal gasification technology to produce steel at its plant in Angul, Odisha. The 2 million tonne per annum production capacity plant, inaugurated in 2018, holds the distinction of being India's first and

the only plant producing steel from 'swadeshi' coal using the coal gasification technology.

"As part of our mission to promote diversification of usage of coal, we will be setting one more coal gasification plant at our plant in Raigarh," the MD said adding it will be second such plant in the country.

When asked about the likely investment for the project, he said, "It will be pre-mature to quote any figure. We are evaluating it and will reach a final investment figure soon."

Communal clashes in two cities in Guj

During Ram Navami processions

Ahmedabad, Apr 10 (PTI):

Communal clashes broke out between two communities in Himmatnagar and Khambhat cities in Gujarat on Sunday during Ram Navami processions, prompting the police to fire tear gas shells to control mobs who pelted stones at each other and damaged shops and vehicles at both places. The number of injuries, if any, is not known so far, officials said. Members of two communi-

Flag rod touches overhead wire during procession, 5 injured

Chhindwara: Five persons sustained burn injuries during a Ram Navami procession on Sunday when the iron rod of a saffron flag fixed to an autorickshaw came in contact with an overhead wire in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara city, a police official said. A man and woman sustained serious injuries, and the former has been rushed to Nagpur for further treatment, while all others have been admitted in the local district hospital, Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Uikey told PTI. "The injured were in an autorickshaw with sound amplifiers etc. The incident took place in Char Fathak, some 100 metres from where the procession, with almost 10,000 in attendance, started," he added.

ties hurled stones at each other when a Ram Navami procession reached Chhapariya locality in Himmatnagar city in the Sabarkantha district in the late afternoon, a police offi-

Covid boosters

New Delhi, Apr 10:

Private vaccination centres on Sunday began the administration of the precautionary 'third' dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, also known as the booster dose, for the 18-plus population.

The age cap for the booster shot came at a time when another highly transmissible XE variant of the coronavirus is being reported. However, the official confirmation of the existence of this particular variant is yet to come.

While speaking to ANI, Pawan Seth, a professional at a private company said, "The booster dose is important as it adds to our existing immunity. With news of XE variants making inroads in India, I think the booster dose is a must to avoid unnecessary calamity. We must not forget the second wave days."

Naxals hack cop to death in village market

Bijapur, Apr 10:

A police jawan was hacked to death by Naxals at a village market in Bijapur district on Sunday, police said.

The incident occurred when the deceased assistant constable, Gopal Katti, was visiting the weekly market in Mirtur village, 73 km away from Bijapur city. The attackers, dressed as civilians, stabbed Katti with sharp-edged weapons, killing him on the spot, and fled. The deceased visited the market after he completed his shift as a sentry on the police station campus.

The attackers, dressed as civilians, stabbed Katti with sharp-edged weapons, killing him on the spot, and fled, a senior officer said. The deceased Katti was posted at the Mirtur police station. The modus operandi of the attack suggests it was executed by a small action team of Naxals. A police team has launched a search in the area to trace

About the incident

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the attackers," he said. The deceased was a resident of Mirtur village. He was visiting the market after he completed his shift as a sentry on the police station campus, the officer said, adding that Katti was in civvies and not carrying a weapon when he was attacked.

Three people killed in elephant attacks

Dhamtari, Apr 10:

Two women and a man were killed in separate incidents of elephant attack in Chhattisgarh's Dhamtari district, a forest department official said on Sunday.

The incidents took place on Saturday in forest areas under the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve, located over 150 km from the state capital Raipur, he said.

The tiger reserve covers Udanti and Sitanadi wildlife sanctuaries and adjoining areas in Gariyaband district as

well as parts of Sankara forest range in Dhamtari district. On Saturday, an elephant attacked Bhumika Markam (38), a native of Paikbhata village, when she had gone along with other women to a nearby forest to collect wood, the official said.

The other women managed to escape and informed locals, who then alerted forest personnel.

The woman's body recovered from the spot after some people managed to chase away the tusker from the area, the official said.

PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENT

Shehbaz Sharif submits nomination for PM's post

Islamabad, Apr 10:

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday nominated himself for the post of prime minister after the unceremonious ouster of Imran Khan.

The move came hours after Khan was removed from office through a no-confidence vote held early Sunday morning, becoming the first premier in the country's history to be sent home after losing the trust of the House.

In accordance with the deadline of the submission stipulated by the National Assembly, 70-year-old Shehbaz submitted nomination papers for the new leader of the house, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

"Special thanks to media, civil society, lawyers, my Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Asif Zardari, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, Bilawal Bhutto, Khalid Maqbool, Khalid Magsi, Mosin Dawar, Ali Wazir, Amir Haider Hoti & leaders & workers of all po-

'Freedom struggle' begins: Imran

In his first comment after losing the no-trust vote, ousted PM Imran Khan on Sunday tweeted, "Pakistan became an independent state in 1947; but the freedom struggle begins again today against a foreign conspiracy of regime change. It is always the people of the country who defend their sovereignty & democracy." Meanwhile, Pakistan's investigation agency FIA has put its immigration staff at all international airports on high alert with a directive to stop any government official linked to the Imran Khan regime from travelling abroad without a No-Objection Certificate, a media report said on Sunday.

litical parties for standing up for the Constitution!" he tweeted.

Former president and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chair Asif Ali Zardari had proposed Shehbaz's name for prime minister's position in a joint opposition's meeting last month.

TERROR FUNDING CASE

SIA conducts raids in Delhi, Faridabad

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

In its first operation outside Jammu and Kashmir, the newly constituted State Investigation Agency (SIA) conducted raids in the national capital region on Sunday in connection with a terror funding case, officials said.

SIA teams carried out the searches at three places in Delhi, one in Faridabad in Haryana and two in Anantnag of south Kashmir, the officials said. The teams were assisted by the Delhi Police and other security agencies.

Those raided included some lawyers who allegedly received funds from a Pakistan-based conduit of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group to sustain terrorist and secessionist networks in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country.

The case was registered by the SIA under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in Srinagar recently.

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Bhupesh Baghel offers to host 'Chintan Shivar'

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

After the party's drubbing in the recent assembly elections in five states, top Congress leaders will soon meet at a 'Chintan Shivar' to deliberate on measures for reviving the organisation at the grassroots level and address fresh challenges.

Sources said the party has convened a meeting of its general secretaries and in-charges on Tuesday to work out modalities for the conclave, which is likely to be held in Rajasthan. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his Chhattisgarh counterpart Bhupesh Baghel have already offered to host the Shivar in their respective states, and

the party leadership may settle for Jaipur in Rajasthan, owing to its proximity to the national capital.

During the last meeting of the Congress Working Committee, when the party leadership faced fresh demands for organisational overhaul in the wake of defeat in five states, it was decided that the party will hold another CWC meet after the Parliament session and finalise details of the Chintan Shivar. The major brainstorming session will chalk out a strategy for course correction to reverse the trend of electoral defeats as the party is now in power in only two states of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and is part of the ruling coalition in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

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SEFI seeks CM's support for strategic merger of Steel Sector PSUs

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: As the union government has initiated the processes to disinvest and privatise the Mini Ratna PSU - Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited (FSNL), the Officers Association of FSNL is making efforts on its part to protect the company from going in private hands. In this sequel, the FSNL officers led by SEFI Chairman and BSP-OA President Narendra Kumar Banchhor met the Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and sought his support for protecting the PSUs from privatisation. SEFI had been advocating the concept of mega steel merger to protect national property. It needs to be mentioned here that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has also been strongly protesting the Union Government's move of disinvesting and privatising the PSUs. The officers of Steel Sector PSUs have requested the CM to take necessary steps for saving the FSNL which is on the verge of privatisation.

SEFI Chairman Narendra Kumar Banchhor said that they have been pressing the demand of merging the SAIL steel plants, its subsidiary unions, RINL and its subsidiary units, NINL, NMDC and MECON into a single Maha Steel Unit. This mega merger shall be able to expand further the steel capacities of the nation. Each of the steel units has its strengths and weaknesses. Merger of all the units will help them to synergise their strengths and turn the weaknesses into opportunities for overall benefits to the nation. Steel being an essential component in the growth rate and contributes heavily to the GDP, it should be kept under the strategic sector, he added.

During discussion with the Chief Minister, the delegation stated that Steel sector PSUs have not only created employment through steel plants in different places of the country in the last six decades but have also ensured overall development of their surround-

ing areas through health, education, infrastructure and CSR activities. Today, the well-educated and capable class, known as "middle class" in the country, basically flourished due to such public sector undertakings and became the reason for the economic, educational progress of the country. There is a dire need to save this inclusive model of development so that a strong citizen can build a strong nation. The steel sector has played an important role in nation building in the last 60 years.

They added that the Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited (FSNL), which participates in many projects with the PSUs of the steel sector, is now at the verge of privatisation. Earlier the government had passed a resolution to merge the FSNL with SAIL or RINL but recently the Union Government has taken the decision to



privatise this profit making company. This decision has triggered resentment not only among the FSNL employees but the entire working class of Steel Sector PSUs. It may be noted that Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited is a Government of India undertaking under the Ministry of Steel, headquartered in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh. This organization mainly deals with scrap processing in public sector steel undertakings like SAIL, RINL and NMDC.

Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited has

never been in loss till date due to the hard work and dedication of its employees since its inception in 1979. FSNL has given profit of Rs 41.09 crore, Rs 46.02 crore and Rs 32.06 crore respectively in the last three years. In the year 2021-22, it has earned a profit of 42.67 crores in just 09 months.

Presently, Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited has got work worth Rs 240 crore in NMDC Nagarnar Steel Plant. This work is going to commence from May 2022 and will provide employment to hundreds of locals. At present, about

600 permanent and 3000 contract workers are working in various units in Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited.

JP Shukla Committee in its report dated 14 May 2008 had also recommended for merger of FSNL into SAIL or NMDC.

The Committee after site inspection of various units of Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited and after careful and in-depth study had recommended that FSNL should be made a subsidiary company of SAIL or a joint venture shall be formed with SAIL, RINL and MSTC Ltd in which SAIL shall be the majority shareholder.

Speaking about the benefits of FSNL, they informed that for the last four decades, FSNL has been rendering its valuable services to SAIL and other PSUs with undisturbed and uninterrupted service. Over the years FSNL has become an inte-

gral part of steel plants. Slag and scrap processing of iron and steel scrap is done by FSNL in SAIL and other PSUs, which is used by SAIL to make various iron products in its plants. FE Enrichment Plant carries out Value Addition work in the scrap of 45 percent to 85 percent less grade. FSNL has become an integral part of SAIL and other PSUs through its works.

The delegates stated that the government would suffer loss due to disinvestment of FSNL. The company provides an average dividend of Rs 25 - 35 crore per annum whereas the Government of India had invested only Rs 32 crore in this company. FSNL is a low cost - high profit organization. FSNL provided all possible facilities to the government and society even during the global pandemic Covid-19.

Handing over a precious asset like FSNL to private hands would be a big mistake of the Government of India. The disinvestment of FSNL will not only cause loss to the Government

but will also directly and indirectly damage the Government Steel Plants. After privatization of FSNL, opportunities will be available for scrap mafia and middlemen to infiltrate into government steel plants. This will cause loss of national property. Further, FSNL does not have any immovable assets other than the employees working in the present situation.

Taking cognizance of the highly sensitive processes conducted by Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited and possible apprehensions due to the arrival of the private sector, SEFI has demanded merger of this company with SAIL instead of privatization.

SEFI President Narendra Kumar Banchhor, OABSP General Secretary and SEFI member Parvinder Singh, FSNL Officers Association President Satyendra Kumar Jha, General Secretary Deepak Tomar, Vice President K Girish and members Prashant Sahu, Chhaganlal Nagvanshi and Saurabh Tharewal were present.

CM inaugurates fuel station at Risama

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: On Saturday, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel inaugurated a fuel station "Gita Energy KSK" at Risama. Vijay Chandrakar and Anita Chandrakar welcomed the Chief Minister. Baghel extended greetings to the owners of the fuel station. Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu, WCD Minister Anila Bhedia, MLA Arun Vora, MLA Ashish Chhabda, former



India Professional Sarpanch Yogita Congress President Chandrakar and other dignitaries were present.

'Nav Kanya' adorned in Chhattisgarhi traditional attire

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: With the objectives of protecting the Chhattisgarhi tradition and culture, the Rupali Mahtari Gudi Multipurpose Organization organised the Nav Kanya Bhoj on Maha-Ashtami in a unique manner.

All the nine girls - Nav Kanya, were adorned in traditional attire and the traditional delicacies were served to them. The organisers insisted that the Chhattisgarhi tradition can help in overcoming the problem of malnutrition.

President Shanta



Sharma informed that the event was held at Maa Sheetla temple of village Umarpoti. The girls were adorned in traditional lugra, aithi,

BSP's Mines bag many prizes at MEMC 2021-22 awards ceremony

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: Bhilai Steel Plant's Mines have won as many as 13 prizes in the Mines Environment Mineral Conservation (MEMC) 2021-22 awards for Performance of Mines in different categories. Mines Environment and Mineral Conservation Week was observed in the state of Chhattisgarh from February 28 to March 05, 2022 under the guidance of Indian Bureau of Mines, Raipur region. The concluding ceremony was organized by NMDC at Raipur on April 08, 2022.

The chief guest at the ceremony was Sanjay Lohia, IAS as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines,

Government of India and Controller General In-charge, Indian Bureau of Mines. Piyush Narain Sharma, Chief Controller of Mines In-charge, Indian Bureau of Mines, Nagpur was present as special guest. Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/C, Bhilai Steel Plant and D K Mohanty, Director (Production) NMDC were also present at the ceremony. Bhilai Steel Plant's Mines Organisation was represented by Tapan Sutradhar, CGM I/C Mines & Rowghat.

SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Mines were awarded several prizes. Mahamaya & Dulki Mines situated in the Plant's Dalli-Rajhara Iron Ore Complex that won three



prizes was awarded the Highest Prize for Best Overall Performance in A2 Group of Mines Environment Mineral Conservation. Mahamaya & Dulki Mines won the First Prize in two categories - Systematic & Scientific Development Category and Sustainable Development Category and Second prize in Publicity & Propaganda

Category Rajhara Mechanised Mines won the First Prize in the Mineral Conservation Category and the Second Prize in Reclamation & Rehabilitation Category. Jharandalli & Dalli Mechanical Mines won the First Prize in Mineral Beneficiation Category and Third Prize in Reclamation & Rehabilitation Category

Bhilai Steel Plant's Nandini limestone Mines won the Second prize in Environmental Monitoring Category while Rowghat Mines Project won the third prize in the same Environmental Monitoring Category. The Plant's Nandini limestone Mines also won the second prize in Reclamation & Rehabilitation Category.

Different Mining Organisations in the state had put up their pavilion displays on the Mines Environment Mineral Conservation subject in an Exhibition organized at the venue. Bhilai Steel Plant's pavilion was awarded the second prize for its display.

Toll free number issued for drinking water problem

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: 5352 departmental hand pumps, 203 Nal-Jal schemes, 38 Sthal-Jal schemes, 1223 single phase pumps, 673 departmental solar pumps are operational in 385 villages of the three development blocks (Durg, Dhamdha and Patan) of Durg District.

District Administration has prepared an action plan to deal with the possible drinking water problem in summer. Based on the assessment of previous years, 99 villages with potential drinking water problems have been identified.

Out of these, 22 villages with severe drinking water crises have also been identified. At present, water is being supplied through 1583 hand pumps, 52 tap water schemes, 11 Sthal - Jal schemes, 406 single phase pumps, 105 solar pumps in 99 villages with potential drinking water problems.

343 hand pumps, 7 Nal - Jal schemes, 5 Sthal - Jal schemes, 99 single phase pumps, 23 solar pump schemes are functional in the identified 22 villages with severe drinking water crisis. Presently the water level is 20.33 metres. The average fall of

.061 meter in ground water level of hand pumps has been recorded as compared to last year. To tackle the drinking water crisis, an action plan of Rs 561.16 Lakh has been prepared.

Provision has been made for digging, hydro fracturing of new tube wells, installation of single phase power pumps, extension/replacement of extra-deep well cylinder riser pipes in villages having drinking water problems. A special campaign is being run to keep all the drinking water schemes operational.

The amount received from the government for

the maintenance and operation of tap water and site water schemes has been distributed to the concerned gram panchayats. Control rooms have been set up at district level and subdivision level.

Toll Free number of the control room is 07882323633. The mobile numbers of all the officers/employees associated with the maintenance work in rural areas have been shared with the people. To ensure availability of pure drinking water in summer, testing of drinking water is being done through FTK and laboratory.

Relief and rehabilitation works launched for slum-fire victims

**Central Chronicle News**

Bhilai, Apr 10: The Bhilai Municipal Corporation and District Administration with support of various social and voluntary organisations are conducting relief and rehabilitation operations for the slum-fire victims of Surya Nagar, Chhawani.

Forensic experts also inspected the mishap site to explore the causes of fire.

Political leaders including MP Vijay Baghel, MLA Devendra Yadav, Mayor Neeraj Pal and others reached the mishap site as well as temporary shelter to meet the victims. They assured complete support for rehabilitation.

MP Vijay Baghel reached Surya Nnagar early in the morning to meet the victims. He also inspected the shelter home and oversaw the necessary arrange-



ments of food and stay. He became emotional during interaction with the victims. About 160 families were affected in this mishap.

MP Baghel instructed the officials to rehabilitate the victims at the earliest. He appealed to the people of Durg-Bhilai to help the victims in this hour of crisis. These families have nothing except the clothes they were wearing.

Everything was destroyed in the fire.

He further said that there is a wonderful spirit of mutual brotherhood and harmony is visible in Mini India - Bhilai. People are coming forward to help the victims. He assured all possible support from the government. Shankarlal Devangan, Sharda Gupta, Vinod Chelak, Nishu Pandey, Vishaldeep Nair and others accompanied



him during the visit.

Mayor Neeraj Pal and BMC Commissioner Prakash Sarve are continuously working to provide relief to the affected families. They made arrangements to accommodate the affected families in the government school, Mahatma Gandhi Nagar. On their instructions, other arrangements of food, water, clothes, medicines and essential materials were

made. Mayor Neeraj Pal has appealed to the social organizations to provide all possible help. After his appeal, many social organizations have extended their helping hand. Sikh Samaj has arranged food for the affected.

Women from Rotary Club, other social organizations and self-help groups have distributed clothes. Arrangements are being



made by the BMC to re-settle the affected families at the same place.

Bamboo sticks have been arranged for reconstruction of huts. Along with regular sanitation at temporary shelters (school rooms), arrangements of room coolers have been made. Mayor Neeraj Pal, MiC members Ekansh Banchore, Siju Anthony, Zone 3 President Santosh Nath Singh, Additional

Commissioner Ashok Dwivedi, Deputy Commissioner Sunil Agrahari, Zone 3 Commissioner Yesha Lahere and other officials monitored the relief operations.

People interested in helping the victims can contact BMC PRO Praveen Sarwa (9425512559) and Zone 3 Commissioner Yesha Lahare (6232769888) on their mobile numbers.

'Memories of Lord Shri Ram are scattered in every inch of Ch'garh'

CM thanks all for organizing the Ramayana congregations grand and very successful

CM inaugurates devp works worth 238 cr in Shivrinarayan

Makes announcement for for SDM Office in Shivrinarayan

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has said that the memories of Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram are scattered in every particle of Chhattisgarh's soil. Lord Ram has an indelible mark on the culture of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh is the maternal home of Lord Ram. It is believed that Mata Kaushalya was born in Chandkhuri near Raipur. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, on the occasion of Ram Navami today, three



days after inaugurating the first phase of renovation and beautification and development works at Shivrinarayan, a famous pilgrimage site of Chhattisgarh located at the confluence of Mahanadi, Shivrinarayan and Leech rivers. He was addressing the general public on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the grand ceremony. He said that Shivrinarayan is the city of Lord Rama, Lord Jagannath and Mata Shabri. He also extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on Ram Navami.

Minister after inaugurating development works worth 238 crores, he also inaugurated the work of renovation, upgradation and beautification of Shivrinarayan temple complex, Ramayana Interpretation Center and Tourist Information Center, development and beautification work of River Ghat, statue of Mata Shabri at Baba Ghat, View Point, Constitution maker Bharat Ratna in Shivrinarayan's Ambedkar Chowk. Dedicated the statue of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

Tamradhwaj Sahu, Urban Administration and Development Minister Dr. Shivkumar Dahria, Rajya Gau Sewa Aayog Chairman Rajeshree Mahant Dr. Ramsunder Das, MLA Indu Banjare, Chandradev Rai, Ramkumar Yadav, Shakambhari Board President Ramkumar Patel. Many public representatives and citizens including Nagar Panchayat President Smt. Anjani Tiwari were present in large numbers. While addressing the program, the Chief Minister said that the an-

cient Pilgrimage of Shivrinarayan is called the fifth Dham of India. The four dhams of India are in all the four directions, but this fifth dham is in the middle of the country. Shivrinarayan has been important in every era. It was here that during the exile, Mata Shabri had fed sweet berries to Lord Shri Ram. He said that Shivrinarayan was known as Baikunthpur in Satyug, Rampur in Treta, Vishnupuri in Dwapar and Narayanpur. Shivrinarayan is considered to be the original place of Lord Jagannath. It is be-

lieved that from here, he went to Jagannath Puri and established himself. The amount of reverence the people of Chhattisgarh have for Shivrinarayan Teerth, Equal reverence is also in the minds of the people of the neighboring state of Odisha. This holy dham connects Utkal culture and Chhattisgarh culture. The Chief Minister said that apart from being the confluence of holy rivers, the holy land of Shivrinarayan is also a confluence of Chhattisgarh and Utkal culture. The Chief Minister said that Lord Shri Ram had spent maximum time of his exile in Chhattisgarh. He traveled on the forest route from North Chhattisgarh Korea to Sukma in South Chhattisgarh. To save the memories of Lord Ram in Chhattisgarh, Ram Vanagaman tourism circuit project worth about Rs 138 crore has been started, in which 75 places related to Lord Ram have been identified. In the first phase, 9 of these places - Sitamarhi-Harchuka,

Ramgarh, Shivrinarayan, Turturiya, Chandkhuri, Rajim, Sihawa, Jagdalpur and Ramaram are being developed as tourist pilgrimages. The Chief Minister said that the development works of the first phase of Chandkhuri were inaugurated on October 7 last year. Today the development works of the first phase of Shivrinarayan are being inaugurated. He said that a new chain of tourist pilgrimages is being created in Chhattisgarh under the Ram Vanagaman Tourism Circuit Project. This will boost tourism in the state, new employment opportunities will be created and Chhattisgarh will get a new identity at the national and international level. It is worth mentioning that to smoothen administrative procedures in Shivrinarayan, an SDM office will be set up here soon. Baghel said that a three-day function had been organized to inaugurate the development works in Shivrinarayan. During this state level Manas Gaan Competition was organized. In which about 350

Manas singers from 25 districts participated. About 7000 singers took part in the Manas Gaan Competition of Ramayana troupes. Through this competition, an attempt was made to give a platform to the talents of rural areas and to save their cultural values. Ramayana has been constructed near Shivrinarayan temple complex. A statue of Mata Shabri feeding Lord Rama with berries has been installed between two trees near it. An information center has been built for the tourists at this place. Where devotees will be able to get information about Shivrinarayan and nearby tourist areas. A huge parking area and toilets have been constructed behind the temple complex including the construction of modular shops in Shivrinarayan. A building has also been constructed for the stay of the devotees in the temple premises. The huge gate of the temple has been renovated and a huge lamp pillar has been constructed inside the temple premises.

Four arrested red-handed while stealing iron

From Railway by RPF Raipur post

Raipur, Apr 10: RPF post of Raipur Railway Division got a major breakthrough in nabbing the gang involved in stealing iron of the Railways and seized iron of more than 400 kg from their possession. The Police as per plan had laid the trap right since night and waited whole night to nab the iron thieves.

In this particular action the RPF team got inputs from its sources that few thieves can reach Raipur with intentions to steal iron and after this the RPF team was well prepared to nab all the accused involved in it. The team sent a part of it to likely places and they kept waiting in the dark for their arrival and it was in the wheel hours in the morning that they got success.

So no sooner the iron thieves tried to move after



stealing iron rods and bars of the railways, the RPF team managed to arrest all three accused along with the stolen iron items. In this RPF took action against one scrap dealer and three other accused and arrested all four of them.

This particular action was taken under leadership of RPF commandant Sanjay Kumar Gupta by the Inspector D Batiya,

ASI PK Naidu, Constable Rajeev Kumar, Head Constable Akhilesh Kumar, constable Tukai Das and Head Constable RK Yadav.

All three accused were produced in the Court and from where they were sent to jail. According to RPF officers, the three accused arrested are Virendra Singh Chatri, Narendra Singh and G Devraj and T Vishwanath.

Ch'garh has made significant contribution in every field: CM

Whether in the field of Religion, Culture, Arts, Archaeology or Literature

Raipur, Apr 10: On the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of the state. The Chief Minister said that Chhattisgarh, in every era has made an important contribution in every and has achieved great heights of development. There has been a glorious cultural, historical and traditional contribution of Chhattisgarh from Treta Yuga to modern times. There is a need to save, beautify and present this melting pot of religion, art, archaeology, and culture in front of the country and the world.

He further said that 'last year, we had inaugurated the renovation and beautification work of Kaushalya Mata Temple in Chandkhuri equipped with high quality facilities de-



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel today reached Dudhadhari Math in Raipur on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. He prayed for happiness, prosperity and safety of the people of the state.

veloped for the tourists in a grand program. Today, on the occasion of Ram Navami, the restoration and development works of the temple in Shivrinarayan, the facilities developed for the tourists, are being dedicated under this tourism circuit as Ram Van Gaman Project. Other sites will also be developed in the future. Baghel said that Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram had come to Chhattisgarh in Treta Yuga. The biggest monument of the Buddhist period is in Sirpur,

Chhattisgarh, which is also being developed. Even during the freedom struggle of the country before 1857, we had martyr Gundadhar, Amar Shaheed Gendsingh, Fighters like Amar Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh whose story of valor makes us proud. He said that whether in the field of religion, culture, archaeology, literature, Chhattisgarh has made an important contribution in the Indian religion and cultural Worldview. The first story and the first novel were composed in Chhattisgarh.

The contribution of Chhattisgarh needs to be presented in front of the country and the world today.

On the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel reached Dudhadhari Math in the capital Raipur today. He visited the Shri Ram Panchayat temple located in the temple premises, Sankat Mochan, he participated in chanting hymns of Lord Hanuman, Lord Balaji. Amidst the sound of Shankh, The Chief Minister also indulged in worship ceremony accord-

ing to the rituals of Sanatan Dharma. He prayed for prosperity and happiness of the people of the state. Baghel also offered prayers to Lord Rama, Mata Sita and Ram's three brothers whose idols are seated in the Shri Ram Panchayat temple located in the temple premises. He also visited the Samadhi of Mahant Rajeshree Shri Balabhadra Dasji.

On this occasion, Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu, Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Kumar Dahria, Chhattisgarh State Cow Service Commission Chairman Mahant Rajeshree Dr. Ramsunder Das, Chhattisgarh State Other Backward Classes Commission Chairman, Thaneshwar Sahu, and a large number of public representatives and devotees, were also present. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel was accorded a warm welcome by Mahant Rajeshree Ramsunder Das, officials of the Math and devotees on his arrival at Dudhadhari Math.

AIIMS-R ranked 33rd in India's best hospitals

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Premier US newsmagazine and website Newsweek has selected All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur as one of the best Hospitals in India-2022. AIIMS, Raipur Ranked 33 with a 69.70% score. AIIMS, Delhi ranked 1st with an overall 87.80% score. The ranking is significant as all the premier medical institutes, including private hospitals, participated in the survey. AIIMS, Raipur is the only one established in the second phase to get the rank



in the first 50 hospitals on the list.

While releasing the 4th annual ranking of the World's Best Hospitals, the magazine has recognized the role of medical institutions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. In the detailed survey report experts cited that the world's leading hospitals delivered the highest quality patient care and conducted medical research despite battling COVID-19. 'Consistency in the excellence is the hallmark of these institutions,' the magazine said in the report.

Premier government

medical research institutes in India including PGIMER, Chandigarh, JIPMER, Puducherry, Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi ranked ahead of the AIIMS, Raipur. Prof. (Dr.) Nitin M. Nagarkar, Director, AIIMS, Raipur congratulated the AIIMS fraternity on a remarkable achievement.

'Prestigious news magazine Newsweek has recently released the World's Best Hospital 2022 ranking list in 27 countries including US, Germany, Japan, South Korea, France, Italy, and UK. The selection method-

ology included an online survey of medical experts in the selected countries, patient feedback, and medical key performance indicators on hospitals. More than 2200 hospitals were ranked in the latest fourth edition. AIIMS, Raipur is one of these hospitals. The ranking hallmarks quality services provided to the patients. All faculty members, employees, and supporting staff have contributed to the success. We will continue to excel with news services in the coming months, Prof. Nagarkar said.

Attendance optional for students of classes 1st to 8th

After April 15th

Raipur, Apr 10: Chhattisgarh School Education Department has extended the current academic session till April 30, which was earlier March 31. Instructions have been given to start the upcoming academic session from May 01 for additional academic work for 15 days. Attendance of students from class 1st to 8th in all government schools operating in the state will

not be mandatory after April 15. Parents can send their children to school for teaching, however presence of teachers will be mandatory.

Instructions regarding school operation and attendance of children and teachers have been issued by the Directorate of Public Instructions to all the Divisional Joint Director Education and District Education Officers. In compliance with the National Education Policy, there is already a policy in the

state of Chhattisgarh that children of classes I to VIII are not stopped in the previous class on the basis of examination and are promoted to next class. Continuous evaluation of the academic achievements of the children is done in all the schools of the state. On the basis of this, arrangements are made to improve the level of children.

This year also, this policy will be applicable for the children of classes I to VIII in the state.

CM greets Governor Anusuiya Uikey on her b'day

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel greeted Governor Ms. Anusuiya Uikey on the occasion of her birthday today, wishing her a long life and good health. Along with Chief Minister Baghel, Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu and Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Dahria also greeted Governor Uikey on her birthday.

Governor Uikey thanked Chief Minister Baghel, Home Minister Sahu and Urban Administration Minister Dr. Dahria for their good



wishes. Besides extending Ram Navmi wishes, Governor Ms. Uikey thanked Chief Minister

Baghel for the development of Ram Van Gaman tourism circuit in the state.

CM inaugurates Ramayana Interpretation Center

Raipur, Apr 10: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel today inaugurated the newly-built Ramayana Interpretation Center at Shivrinarayan in Janjgir-Champa district under the Ram Van Gaman Tourism Circuit being developed in Chhattisgarh. Information regarding the events of Ramayana and the places visited by Lord Ram during his exile period has been beautifully portrayed in a pictorial form through paintings here. Through these paintings, the upcoming generations will be able to get information about the events of Ramayana period



and people will also be able to understand the historical importance of Shivrinarayan.

Spread over an area of 6000 square feet, the center has been built at a cost of Rs 90 lakh and has been divided into two halls of 40 by 50 feet. Ramayan

Interpretation Center as well as Tourism Information Center is established in a hall. Along with the Ramayana Interpretation Center, a 40 by 50 square feet cafeteria has been built in this building to ensure quality food for the tourists coming here

from across the country and abroad. From Ramayana Interpretation Center and Tourism Information Center tourists can get information regarding famous tourist spots of Chhattisgarh besides booking their visits to any of these tourist places of the state. A statue of Mata Shabri has also been installed outside the Ramayana Interpretation Center, in which she is seen feeding her leftover berries to Lord Rama. Along with Lord Rama, the idol of his brother Lakshmana has also been installed. Ramayana Interpretation

Center established at Shivrinarayan under Ram Van Gaman Tourism Circuit will be a center of attraction for tourists and through this, Ram Van Gaman Circuit will also be promoted in Chhattisgarh.

Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu, Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Kumar Dahria, State Cow Service Commission Chairman Rajesri Mahant Dr. Ramsunder Das, Janjgir Lok Sabha constituency MP Mr. Guharam Ajgalle along with other special guests were present on the occasion.

Central and State Govt officials meet held on auction of mineral blocks

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Under the chairmanship of Sanjay Lohia, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Government of India, a meeting of officials of the Central and Chhattisgarh Government was held in connection with the auction of mineral blocks of Chhattisgarh at Mantralaya Mahanadi Bhawan, Nava Raipur, here. Various technical aspects including the action plan for auction of mineral blocks were discussed in detail in the meeting. In the meeting, Secretary, Mineral Resources Department of Chhattisgarh Government, Mr.



Siddhartha Komal Pardeshi, Director Mr. J.P. Maurya, officials of the Ministry of Mines and Geological Survey of India, State Unit, Government of India and officials of the Mineral Department of the State Government participated.

Regarding mineral auction, officials of Chhattisgarh said that in the financial year 2021-22, 16 mineral blocks have

been auctioned in 22 identified mineral blocks of the state. In the financial year 2022-23, an action plan is being prepared for the auction of 29 mineral blocks of the state and the auction of seven iron ore mineral blocks will be done by the end of this month. Sanjay Lohia, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Government of India expressed happiness over

the receipt of revenue of about Rs.12,085 crore against the fixed revenue target of Rs.7800 crore in Chhattisgarh in the financial year 2020-21. He congratulated the officers for completing the auction of mineral blocks, approval of mining leases and other ancillary works on behalf of the state of Chhattisgarh. In the meeting, the officials of the Ministry of Mines,

Government of India requested to send the proposal to the Ministry of Mines to survey more and more mineral blocks under NMET in the state of Chhattisgarh. In the meeting, various technical aspects regarding the auction of mineral blocks were discussed and clarifications were obtained from the officials of the Ministry of Mines, Government of India, so that more and more mineral grants could be allocated under the state in the coming days. Senior departmental officers including Joint Secretary Ms. Pushpa Sahu and Additional Director Mr. D. Mahesh Babu were present in the meeting.

PALM SUNDAY



The moment of joy and hope was celebrated with great devotion by the devotees of Lord Jesus Christ on occasion of the Palm Sunday which commemorates the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem and it was celebrated by the parishioners and the good shepherd by taking out procession holding the palm leaves in their hand.

Governor calls upon Union Railway Minister



Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Governor Ms. Anusuiya Uikey had a courtesy call on Union Railway Minister, Ashwini Vaishnav at Parliament House in New Delhi last day. During this, Ms. Uikey discussed with the Railway Minister Mr. Vaishnav on the rail facilities and passenger facilities available to the state of Chhattisgarh and the demand for rail connectivity from Chhindwara to

Raipur. Apart from this, Ms. Uikey also discussed with Mr. Vaishnav about the progress of railroad projects of Chhindwara, Seoni, Nainpur, Mandla and Gondia and expansion of rail facilities. On this occasion, Ms. Uikey honoured the Union Railway Minister Vaishnav with a shawl and a memento. Along with this, the second part of the book 'Nai Sochnai Pahal', based on the activities of the Governor, was also presented.

CS instructs to strictly stop illegal transportation of narcotics

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain, in the meeting of the State Level Committee held at Mantralaya Mahanadi Bhawan here, instructions were issued for strict prevention of illegal transportation of narcotics in the border areas of the state, along with coordination at the inter-state level, special checkpoints will be made in the border districts. Monitoring has been decided.

For this, special task forces will be formed at the state level and at the district level. The Chief Secretary has said that strict vigil should be maintained from illegal production of narcotics to trans-



portation. Along with this, the places of cultivation and production of narcotics in the border areas of the state should be identified and destroyed.

Along with this, the members of the Special Task Force engaged in this work should also be given special training related to the investigation of illegal drug centers and the action to be taken against them. In coordination with the police officers of the bordering states of the state, coordinated action

should be taken after discussing the prevention of transportation of illegal drugs.

In the meeting, the (Narcotics) officers of the Police Department informed that in the year 2021-22, 33 thousand kilograms of ganja have been caught illegally transporting. So far in the year 2022, more than 16 and a half thousand kg of illegal ganja has been confiscated. Apart from this, various other types of narcotics have been seized

and strict action has been taken against the transporters. In this meeting held through video conferencing, Additional Chief Secretary of Home Department Mr. Subrat Sahoo, DGP Mr. Ashok Juneja, Principal Secretary, Forest, Mr. Manoj Pingua, Secretary of Home Department Mr. Dhananjay Devangan, Government of India, State Police Department (Narcotics) along with senior officers of the police department were present.

Daharia visits Kaushalya Mata at Chandkhuri Temple

Raipur, Apr 10:

A two-day festival was organized at Chandkhuri, the maternal grandmother of Lord Shri Ram and mother Kaushalya's birthplace, adjoining Raipur. U r b a n Administration and Development and Labour Minister Dr. Shivkumar Dahria participated in this festival. Dr. Dahria visited Mata Kaushalya at Chandkhuri temple here and took blessings and wished for the happiness and prosperity of the people of the state. Minister Dr. Dahria also visited the Jyoti Kalash on the occasion of Navratri.

It is worth mentioning that the Chhattisgarh gov-



ernment is developing Ram Van Gaman Path. In this series, first of all, Chandkhuri, the birthplace of Mother Kaushalya, has been developed as a tourist center. Along with renovating the Mata Kaushalya temple, the work of beautification of the complex has been done by the state government. Since then a large number of devotees and tourists are reaching here.

Students will get free textbooks on the day of school admission on June 16

Raipur, Apr 10: According to the instructions of the Chhattisgarh Government School Education Department, like the previous education session, through Chhattisgarh Textbook Corporation, one set each of class wise, subject wise, medium wise textbooks will be provided to all the eligible students of the state on the day of school admission on June 16th. Principal Secretary School Education Dr. Alok Shukla has directed that like previous year, this year also time bound action of textbook distribution should be ensured in a systematic manner with the joint and coordinated efforts of Textbook Corporation, Directorate of Public Instruction, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. In this regard, the printing work of the remaining unprinted textbooks of all classes, subjects and mediums, the necessary testing of the quality of paper printing from the storage work of textbooks in the prescribed dates will also be ensured in time by the Textbook Corporation. Cluster level for students of classes I to VIII of government and aided

schools by Textbook Corporation, High School and Higher Secondary level for students of class 9th-10th, Block level for students of classes I to VIII in registered madrasas and for the students of non-aided non-government schools, the vehicles required for transportation of textbooks directly at the depot level of the corporation should be ensured in advance. By preparing the necessary route chart-district wise, package wise or institution wise, date wise for the transportation of textbooks by the Textbook Corporation, all the concerned nodal officers-divisional joint operators, district education officers, block education officers, cluster in-charges and depot managers etc. should be informed in advance, so that the responsible personnel are ready to receive the textbooks on time and there is no unnecessary hindrance in the transportation and unloading work. Adequate building, space allocation should be completed in advance for all cluster coordination and maintenance of

orderly unloading of necessary textbooks to be distributed by the Principal High School and Higher Secondary within their working area. According to the date and time fixed and communicated by the Textbook Corporation, the package coordinator, Principal High School and Higher Secondary should be obtained by matching the number of sets supplied by the Textbook Corporation properly. The package coordinator will hand over the set of textbooks to the headmaster of all government primary and pre-secondary schools coming under his package, to the teacher on the next working day, on the basis of the pre-sent demand letter, assessment. The school head will compulsorily ensure the distribution of textbooks to all the eligible students of his school on the day of school admission on June 16th. The presence of local public representatives, panchayat and urban body representatives, parent union, school development committee and dignitaries should also be ensured in textbook distribution.

Cow Dung should be purchased in every Gouthan: Singh

Moong, Urad and Arhar will also be purchased on support price

Raipur, Apr 10: Agriculture Production Commissioner Dr. Kamalpreet Singh has said that cow dung should be purchased in every Gouthan. Godhan Nyay Yojana has proved to be a good source of additional income for farmers and livestock owners. He has asked to complete the under-construction gouthans and buy cow dung there too. Dr. Kamalpreet Singh informed that from the next Kharif year, Moong, Urad and Arhar will also be purchased by the State Government at support price. Dr. Singh took a meeting of the officers of Bilaspur and Surguja divisions to review the progress of Rabi year 2021-22 and scheduling of Kharif year 2022 in the Manthan meeting room of



Bilaspur district office and gave instructions to the said effect. Agriculture Production Commissioner Dr. Kamalpreet Singh reviewed agriculture and various related subjects in detail here and gave necessary directions to the offi-

cers. He said that apart from paddy, farmers producing other crops would also get the benefit of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana. For this, it is not necessary for them to sell the produce at government procurement cen-

ters. He can also take advantage of the Nyaya scheme by selling his produce in the private market. Farmers should pay attention to crops other than paddy, for this the limit of loan given from co-operative bank has been increased. He has given instructions to prepare the farmers for the upcoming season from now onwards and distribute loans accordingly. Dr. Singh has asked to further strengthen the Gothans under various schemes of the government. Farm Machinery Bank can also be established in Gouthan under the scheme of Agriculture Department. Gouthan Samiti can also earn income by paying rent at concessional rate to the farmers along with its use. He expressed displeasure over the non-fulfillment of targets under departmental micro irrigation schemes. He said that under this beneficiary oriented scheme, by providing sprinklers, drips, pumps etc. on grant, farm-

ers can be motivated to grow other profitable crops. He has emphasized on advance uptake of chemical fertilizers. He said that the distribution of fertilizers should be done immediately in the posh machine. If regular entries are not made in this, the entire stock is visible, due to which fertilizer allocation is not available when needed. Agriculture Production Commissioner said that the vermi compost currently stored in the Gothans should be lifted by this month. He said that now there will be no problem in the sale of vermi compost. Farmers will be provided one bag per acre. This would be a good effort to move towards organic farming. He expressed dissatisfaction over the non-active functioning of Gouthan run by the Forest Department. Dr. Singh also reviewed the plans of Livestock Development Department, Horticulture Department, Fisheries Department in the meeting.

Minister Rudra Kumar inaugurates boating in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir

Mungeli, Apr 10: Another link has been added in the development of Mungeli district. State Public Health Engineering and Village Industries Minister, Guru Rudra Kumar inaugurated boating in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir (Khudia Dam) built on the Maniyari River of Mungeli district. With this, the tourists and local people coming here will get boating facility. On this occasion, Minister Guru Rudra Kumar also enjoyed boating in the reservoir and appreciated the Khudia Dam built in 1930 by seeing the natural shade from close quarters. On reaching Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir, Minister Guru



Rudra Kumar was accorded a warm welcome. Minister Guru Rudra Kumar congratulated the residents of the district for starting the boating facility in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir. He said that it is the intention of the gov-

ernment that people should get adequate facilities at the tourist place, continuous work is being done in this direction. He said that 36 announcements were made by our government three years ago, out of which 32 an-

nouncements have been fulfilled. Under the Godhan Nyay Yojana, cow dung is being procured from the farmers. He said that even during the Corona epidemic, the development work continued continuously. Keeping in mind that money reaches the pockets of the general public, many schemes have been started. Chhattisgarh is the only state where there was no financial crisis during the lockdown. Minister Guru Rudra Kumar said that Chhattisgarh has become the most employable state in the recent survey report. He said that under Jal Jeevan Mission, clean drinking water would be

provided to every household through pipeline by 2023. On this occasion, he announced bore mining at 10 places in forest region of Khudia area. Apart from this, he also announced bore mining in village Guruvain Dabri, one bore in village Navagaon Dayali, one bore for village Bijrakchar and wards of Nagar Panchayat Lormi on the demand of villagers. Addressing the boating program, MLA of Lormi Assembly Constituency, Dharamjit Singh said that the program of launching boating in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir is historic. He said that with the start of boating in Rajiv Gandhi

Reservoir, people would get facilities in the tourism sector and the district would develop. District Panchayat President Mrs. Lekni Sonu Chandrakar, Collector Ajit Vasant also addressed the program. On this occasion, President of Janpad Panchayat Lormi, Meena Naresh Patle, Vice President Mrs. Khushboo Aditya Vaishnav, Member of Chhattisgarh Scheduled Caste Authority, Ms. Ratnavali Kaushal, District Member Mrs. Kala Ashok Sindram, officers of district and police administration, public representatives and a large number of villagers were present.

'Pension Adalat' to be held on April 12

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, Regional Office, Raipur, Chhattisgarh organises 'Pension Adalat' programme for redressal of grievances received from pensioners by the Regional P.F. Commissioner. The time schedule of the programme schedules for April 12, 2022 is EPF Pensioner - 10.30 am to 01.00 pm at Conference Hall, 1st floor, Bhawishya Nidhi Bhawan, Pandri,

Raipur. The concerned pensioners are requested to send their specific grievance on or before April 11, 2022 positively, to the postal address to the office, super scribing 'Pension Adalat' on the envelope. It should also be noted that the complete PF Account number/PPO number and other necessary and relevant service details/particulars along with available documentary evidences in support of the grievance should explicitly be mentioned/enclosed.

Cong respects the devp demand of the public: Baghel

**Khairagarh, Apr 10:**

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel is continuously addressing public rallies and public meetings here in the last phase of the assembly by-elections, attacking opposition BJP fervently. While addressing an election rally here in village Amilidih

Kala, Bajguda and Mandla, the Chief Minister targeted the former Raman Singh government, and chided it for staying developmental works in the region for long. Speaking on the occasion he said that 'we make tehsils on public demand but the BJP fastens

people to jail if they make such a demand, he said. Talking on developmental issues, the CM also attacked former Chief Minister Dr. Raman Singh of not visiting Vannachal region for 15 years and depriving it of developmental projects for years together. He also accused MLA Komal Janghel of

depriving the people of the region of developmental schemes and projects. Baghel further asserted that, the present state government is all set to fulfill all the poll promises, which includes opening affiliated colleges of Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya in Bastar and Ambikapur. He projected the promise by the Congress party for the people of the region in the form of giving a college in Bazar Ataria, making Salhwara a tehsil, Jalbandha a sub-tehsil and Khairagadh-Gandai-Juikhdan as a district. He appealed to the general public to vote for Yashoda Verma, Congress party candidate for the assembly by-elections.

Nodal officers should ensure cow dung is purchased regularly in Gouthans: Collector

Dhamtari, April 09:

District Collector P.S.Elma reviewed the progress of Godhan Nyay Yojana in rural Gouthans of the district here and gave necessary instructions to accompanying officials.

It is worth mentioning that after the 'Gouthan Access Day' program organized on April 6 and 7 in the district, the Collector took a meeting of the nodal and cluster nodal of 282 constructed Gouthans of rural areas and reviewed cow dung procurement, payment to beneficiaries, ready compost and its sale, entry in Gouthan map, infrastructure status, problems and demands of women groups.

Apart from this, according to the interest of women groups working in



rural Gouthans, the collector also gave instructions to make proposals to connect them with economic activities. At present 249 rural Gouthans are functional out of the total 282 in the district.

Till the end of March, a total of two lakh 69 thousand 434 quintals of cow dung were purchased in the active Gouthans. In lieu of this, a total of eight thousand 750 beneficiaries were paid Rs.5 crore 38 lakh 88 thousand 976.

It is noteworthy that in the region 18142.02 quintals of cow dung has been procured, out of which 6494.57 quintals of finished vermi compost, 3082.83 quintals were sold. Out of 94.60 quintal super compost manure produced, 46.50 quintal was sold. In Kurud block, a total of 90577.82 quintals of cow dung was purchased, out of 15174.51 quintals were produced, 8086.27 quintals were sold. Similarly, out of 689.90

quintals of super composted manure, 106.2 quintals were sold. The Collector also reviewed the progress of rural Gouthans of Magarlad and Dhamtari. On this occasion Chief Executive Officer, District Panchayat Mrs. Priyanka Mahobia, Deputy Director Agriculture, staff, concerned cluster nodal, Chief Executive Officer, Janpad Panchayat and other officials were present.

Naxals plant 10 kg IED

**Konta, Apr 10:**

Once again the ID attached to Naxalites has been recovered in Sukma district. Naxalites planted IED in Kistaram areas of Konta block, from where the security force personnel do routine patrols. Although the IED was discovered and safely disabled due to intelligence of the jawans and a major incident was prevented from happening.

It is to be known that during the routine patrol of Cobra 208 jawans under Kistaram police station area of Sukma district, the IED was identified in the area, after which a major incident was prevented from happening by safely deactivating the IED. Naxalites had planted the IED only to target the security forces. Sukma SP Sunil Sharma has confirmed this matter.

Medical Camp was organised in Supebeda

To treat patients with Kidney diseases

Ayurveda medical camp will be organized here every Wednesday

Raipur, Apr 10:

A medical camp was organized today to provide healthcare facilities to the rural populace of Supebeda, Gariaband district. Experts of Government Ayurveda College, Raipur and Ayurveda experts of Gariaband district examined and treated the patients with kidney diseases in Supebeda and adjoining villages. This medical camp was organized at Sub-Health Center located at Supebeda. Free Medicines, health and diet related advices along with proper diagnosis were



also given to all the patients. Ayurveda Medicine Specialist Dr. Ranjit Kumar Das, Dr. S.D. Khicaria, Dr. Manish Patel and Dr. Rajkumar Kannauje examined and treated the patients at the camp. Now every Wednesday a camp will be organized for the treatment of kidney disease patients of Supebeda and nearby villages. Panchkarma specialist doctors, Ayurveda doctors

and pharmacists will also be present in the camp. Free medicines will be given to the patients in the camp after treatment. Patients will also be referred for higher level treatment if required. Ayurveda medical experts educated the villagers in the camp about the profound health benefits of Ayurveda to keep the kidney healthy and increase the human body's efficiency. Ayurveda flora

Gokshur, Punarnava, Amla, Mulethi, Guggul etc. should be used to detoxify the bloodstream and kidney. Kidney diseases can be avoided by including amla, barley, moong etc. in their daily diet or regular consumption of them in any form. Experts advised not to consume excessive amounts of sour substances in their diet like chili-spices, tamarind etc.

Jawans take woman bitten by snake to hospital

Konta, Apr 10: Police party from Camp Burkopal on 10.04.2022 in Konta block of Sukma district had left for the surrounding area for search duty, while on duty, information was received that Muchaki Gangi father Muchaki Deva of village Burkopal, age 18 years was bitten by a snake while she went to forest for collecting mahua. Immediately the police personnel reached the spot and gave first aid to the woman and informed the Superintendent of Police Sukma Sunil Sharma about the

incident. On the direction of Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma, the ambulance vehicle was arranged by the police personnel to provide better health benefits to the victim and the victim was immediately sent to Chintagufa Hospital. On reaching the hospital in time, the condition of the woman is now out of danger. The villagers have thanked the police for this quick action. In this work, Deputy Inspector Mukesh Patel Camp Burkopal and other jawans made a special contribution.



Barnawapara Sanctuary gets rejuvenated with habitat upgradation works

Raipur, Apr 10:

Barnawapara, the most famous and attractive sanctuary filled with wildlife diversity of Chhattisgarh, has been rejuvenated in the recent times for the betterment of Wildlife flora and fauna. Barnawapara Sanctuary is home to wildlife species like leopard, gaur, bear, sambar, chital, nilgai, kotari, chausingha, wild boar, wild dog, striped hyena, fox, wolf and mouse antelope. The total area of Barnawapara Sanctuary is 244.86 sq km, in which mainly mixed forest, sal forest and teak plantation exist. Barnawapara also has unique trees from which woods like Sal and Teak is extracted. Other trees like Karra, Bhirra, Senha are found in mixed forests. Teak is naturally grown in the teak plantation

area and the Sal is grown in the Sal forest which is comparatively less in area. In addition to the beehive species, herbaceous species like Eupatorium, Lentana, Charohta etc. are the main weeds, due to which the herbivore wildlife found in the Barnawapara Sanctuary area does not get grass to graze. This rejuvenation of the sanctuary has been done to eradicate unnecessary weed plantations in the area. The eradication has been done with the amount approved in the annual action plan 2021-22 of CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) under wildlife habitat upgradation work. Under the weeds eradication program, inten-



Wildlife habitat upgradation work: Intensive lantana and eupatorium eradication work has been done in 5920 hectare area under CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) Favourable conditions have been developed for forest habitat and wildlife pasture

sive lantana eradication and eupatorium eradication work has been done in 5 thousand 920

hectares of area. Out of which eradication work of lantana in total 950 hectares of 19 organic corridors of Baranawapara sanctuary has been done and the eradication work of eupatorium in total area of 4 thousand 970 hectares in 32 corridors is included. As per the intention of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, under the guidance of Forest and Climate Change Minister Mr. Mohammad Akbar, continuous work is being done to make the sanctuary more attractive. At a distance of about 100 km from the capital Raipur, the grass species has started growing rapidly due to the moisture content Barnawapara Sanctuary's soil located under Balodabazar Forest Division. Along with this, grasslands in the forests are available

for the Wildlife to graze from. Due to which they have started roaming freely after the eradication work of Lantana and Eupatorium. With this initiative, tourists can now easily spot Wildlife in the Sanctuary. Moreover, the wildlife of the forest has become healthier with the availability of more grazing grasslands. Principal and Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) P.V. Narsingh Rao said that keeping this in view, the work of eradication of intensive lantana and eupatorium has been done under wildlife habitat upgradation work in the sanctuary, so that now in Barnawapara sanctuary, green edible grass can be made available to the wildlife throughout the year as their food and fodder.

Celebration of the Holy Week



At St. Joseph's Parish Bachel

Bachel, Apr 10:

The moment of joy and hope was celebrated with great devotion by the devotees of Lord Jesus Christ. Today, the Palm Sunday which commemorates the entrance of Christ into

Jerusalem was celebrated by the parishioners of St. Joseph Parish, Bachel. The Holy Mass was said by Rev. Fr. Sajan and all the parishioners along with the good shepherd moved out in procession holding the palm leaves in their own hands thus marking the beginning of the Holy Week, the final week of Lent.

District level peace committee meeting held



Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, April 10: In the coming days, festivals are to be organized by the followers of different religions including Ram Navami, Eid-ul-Fitr, Good Friday, Mahavir Jayanti, Ambedkar Jayanti, Hanuman Jayanti, and Guru Tegh Bahadur Jayanti. In view of which the admin-

istration on the instructions of District Superintendent of Police Trilok Bansal and Collector Ms Richa Prakash Choudhary, representatives of all political parties, peace committee of heads of social organizations organized a peace committee meeting. Addressing the meeting, Additional

Superintendent of Police Smt. Archana Jha asked all the people to organize and celebrate the festivals in a peaceful manner and instructed to take permission from the sub-divisional officer's office, and inform the police, about route chart and number of people participating in the processions.

Sub-divisional Revenue Officer Pushendra Sharma instructed about abstain from using high DJ devices. Sub-Divisional Officer of Police, Shri Ashok Wadeganekar said that the presence of the police will be there in all the programs, but crowd control should be made both by the participants and volunteers.

In the said meeting, prominent people of all the society, elected public representatives participated enthusiastically and expressed their views. Police station in-charge Gaurela Inspector Yuvraj Tiwari, Defense Inspector Ramprasad Paikra, DSB in-charge and other staff were also present.

Encroachments and unauthorized occupants removed by KMC

Korba, Apr 10: On the instructions of Commissioner Prabhakar Pandey, Korba Municipal Cooperation took to raze free encroachments and illegal occupants. Pavement were made free from encroachment by spreading the road sidewalk and removing unauthorized encroachments in the memorial garden parking area and clock tower open theater and Minimata College.

It is worth mentioning here that shops were decorated by spreading blankets, quilts, decorative items, clothes and other materials by some people by illegally occupying the roadsides and sidewalks and as a resultant of



which unnecessary crowds assembled causing inconvenience to the common citizens, and motorists. Taking intensive action the KMC squad removed these unauthorized shops from the site and decorated the parking area in front of the memorial garden and the open theater in front of the clock tower and on the main road in front of Minimata College.

Encroachment being done along the main road in Darri was also removed and occupants removed. Encroachment in-charge Shri Yogesh Rathore informed that a room was being constructed illegally by a person on the side of 52 main road, as soon as the information was received, the encroachment squad reached the spot and removed the encroachments.

शपथ पत्र
 मैं शपथकर्ता मनोज कुमार खुबानी MANOJ KUMAR KHUBWANI पिता जानीमल खुबानी निवासी शिवमंदिर के पास वार्ड क्र. 13 नदिनी नगर (अहिलारा) तह. धमचा जिला दुर्ग (छ.ग.) का रहने वाला हूँ, जो निम्नलिखित कथन शपथपूर्वक प्रस्तुत करता हूँ:-
 1. यह कि, मैं शपथकर्ता का नाम व पता उपरोक्तानुसार है।
 2. यह कि, मेरा पुराना नाम मनोज कुमार MANOJ KUMAR दर्ज है।
 3. यह कि, अब मेरा नाम समस्त शासकीय एवं अर्धशासकीय दस्तावेजों में मनोज कुमार खुबानी MANOJ KUMAR KHUBWANI दर्ज है, तथा इसी नाम से जाना एवं पहचाना जाते हैं।
 श्रीमान नोटरी महोदय से निवेदन है उक्त शपथपत्र समक्ष अधिकारी के समक्ष सादर प्रस्तुत है।
 // सत्यापन //
 मैं शपथकर्ता शपथपूर्वक यह सत्यापित करता हूँ कि कडिका 1 से 4 तक लिखी गयी समस्त जानकारी पूर्णतः सत्य व सही है, अतः यह शपथपत्र को पढ़कर, सुनकर मैंने अपना हस्ताक्षर आज दिनांक को स्थान धमचा में कर दिया।
 दिनांक: 5 अप्रैल 2022
 शपथकर्ता

BRIEF

Nabbed

Kolkata: The BSF nabbed six Bangladeshi nationals, including three women and a child, while they were trying to cross over into India, and handed them over to neighbouring country's border guarding force, officials said. A BSF statement said the six were apprehended when they were trying to cross over to this side at Ranghat and Jeetpur border outposts. They were handed over to Border Guard Bangladesh hours later at two border outposts in North 24 Parganas.

Recovered

Bhubaneswar: Gold, silver and Rs 1.14 crore cash were recovered from a slum in Bhubaneswar, following the arrest of a government engineer in a corruption case, officials said. Assistant engineer Kartikeswar Roul, posted at the Water Resources Department in Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district, was arrested by anti-corruption sleuths. A shanty in Salia Sahi slum was raided and Rs 1.41 crore in cash, gold weighing 354 gram and 1kg silver were recovered, they said.

Busted

Gurugram: A thak thak' gang, notorious for swiping people's valuables from their cars after knocking on their window pane, has been busted with arrest of three of its members, Gurugram police said. The gang members hailing from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka would usually come by train here but would return by flight, they said. A sum of Rs 2,62,990 in cash, three laptops, three mobiles, two watches, three ladies bags, three liquor bottles, three catapults were found.

Removed

Berhampur: Plastic waste weighing around 15 kg was removed from the stomach of a stray cow by veterinary doctors at a state-run facility in Odisha's Ganjam district, officials said. A team of veterinary doctors, led by district veterinary surgeon Dr Kiran Kumar Bisoi operated on the six-year-old cow for around three hours after it was rescued, they said. Polythene bags, wrappers and other plastic wastes were removed from the stomach of the cow, Dr Bisoi said.

Loot

Ludhiana: Three unidentified motorcycle-borne robbers looted Rs 50 lakh cash from the office of an oil trading company here, police said. They said it took just five minutes for the robbers to loot the money at gunpoint and thereafter escaped from the thickly populated area. Senior IPS officer Kaustubh Sharma, who assumed the charge of Ludhiana police commissioner, visited Kesar Ganj mandi. He said investigation is underway and police got clues about robbers.

DMK, Asam Sahitya Sabha oppose alleged Hindi 'imposition'



Chennai, Apr 10 (PTI):

The ruling DMK on Sunday 'warned' the Centre against imposing Hindi saying the Tamil people still remembered the anti-Hindi agitation by late party patriarch M Karunanidhi, implying that they would not allow it to happen.

The ruling party's mouthpiece 'Murasoli' in its edition carried a well-known slogan of Karunanidhi (1924-2018)

against foisting Hindi on people and captioned the write-up as 'Warning to the Union government.'

The crux of the Tamil slogan, which involves figurative use of language, is a clarion call to the people to staunchly oppose imposition of Hindi and an assertion that there is no 'coward' in the state hinting that Hindi cannot be imposed on them. According to the party organ, Karunanidhi as a 14-year old student

marched on the streets of his native Tiruvarur in 1938 along with other students raising this slogan to oppose Hindi imposition. The DMK Tamil daily said people still remembered Karunanidhi's rally and added, 'Do not forget it', which implied that people would hence not permit imposition of Hindi to happen in Tamil Nadu.

Reacting to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement on April 7 that Hindi should be accepted as an alternative to English and not to local languages, DMK president and Chief Minister MK Stalin had said that it would wreck the nation's integrity. The Asam Sahitya Sabha (ASS), an influential literary body, has criticised the move to make Hindi a compulsory subject till Class 10 in North-Eastern states and asked the government to concentrate on conserving and promoting indigenous languages.

Advanced baggage scanners introduced at DMRC

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

The DMRC has started introducing highly advanced and state-of-the-art baggage scanners at its metro stations in a phased manner to provide extra safety and security to passengers, officials said on Sunday.

The advanced features in these newly-introduced baggage scanners also ensure more convenience for the elderly and women commuters while lifting and placing heavy baggage items through the system for scanning, they said.

Presently, 34 such baggage scanners with specialised commuter-friendly features have already been installed at major stations at Kashmere Gate, AIIMS, Vishwavidyalaya, HUDA City Centre, Rajouri Garden, Mayur



DMRC has started introducing X-BIS System at the security frisking points of NCR Metro stations, in a phased manner.

Vihar Ph-1, NOIDA Sec-18, Palam, replacing the older X-BIS systems, the DMRC said. Gradually, over 250 more such baggage scanners will be installed across all Delhi Metro stations by the year end. At present, there are around 400 X-BIS machines in-

stalled at different metro stations across DMRC network it said. "In order to further upgrade and strengthen the X-Ray baggage Scanning System (X-BIS System) at the security frisking points of Metro stations, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has start-

Will take everyone along: Punjab Congress chief

Chandigarh, Apr 10 (PTI): Amrinder Singh Brar, the new chief of the Punjab Congress, promised to take every party leader and worker along to strengthen the organisation in the state, where the faction-ridden party was ousted from power in the recently held Assembly polls.

New Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader in the state, Partap Singh Bajwa, said he will fight tooth and nail for the rights of Punjab and its public.

Former Punjab minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu, who has been appointed as the working president of the state Congress, and



Amrinder Singh Brar

Deputy CLP leader Raj Kumar Chabbawal too said the entire state unit will work as a team.

Amrinder Singh Brar, also called Raja Warring, was appointed the party's new Punjab chief in place of Navjot Singh Sidhu by Congress president Sonia

Gandhi. Warring, who was the transport minister in the last Congress government, won the Assembly elections from the Gidderbaha constituency.

Sidhu was asked to tender his resignation after the party's debacle in the elections.

Bajwa, a former Rajya Sabha MP, was elected as an MLA from the Qadian Assembly constituency.

"I promise to work alongside every worker & leader of the party to strengthen the party & carry forward the ideology," Warring said in a tweet after his appointment as the Punjab Congress president.

Dhavalikar becomes minister in Goa's cabinet

MGP's love-hate relationship with BJP continues

Panaji, Apr 10 (PTI):

A new chapter was added to the continuous flip-flops of the Maharashtra Gomantak Party in its love-hate relationship with the BJP in Goa over the past decade after MLA Sudin Dhavalikar was sworn in as minister in the Pramod Sawant cabinet.

Incidentally, in the run-up to the Assembly polls, that were held on February 14 and results of which were declared in March 10, Dhavalikar had claimed his party would play king-maker and had added he would not sup-



Sudin Dhavalikar for a function in Gaunem-Bandora.

port any dispensation that had Sawant as chief minister. In the 2012 Assembly polls, the two parties fought in alliance, with the BJP winning 21 seats in the 40-member House, and the MGP getting two, leading to both Sudin and his younger brother

Deepak being made ministers in the Manohar Parrikar government. After Parrikar was made Defence Minister in the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, Laxmikant Parsekar took over as CM, a move that led to differences coming

HANUMAN TEMPLE VISIT



BJP National President JP Nadda serves a monkey during his visit to Hanuman temple, in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh on Sunday.

Odisha CM asks ministers for performance reports amid reshuffle buzz

Bhubaneswar, Apr 10 (PTI):

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has asked all ministers in his government to submit performance reports of their departments amid speculations over a possible reshuffle.

In a letter, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) sought to know the performance of the ministers and the achievements of their departments, among others.

Patnaik would hold one-to-one meetings with all the ministers and review their performance after getting the reports, sources in the CMO said.

Information regarding whether the ministers have worked towards fulfilling the promises made by the ruling BJD in its



Naveen Patnaik

election manifesto has also been sought.

In case of poor performance, the ministers would be asked to explain the reason, the sources said.

The BJD's performance in the recently-concluded panchayat and civic polls in the districts of the respective ministers will also be taken into consideration during the review, they said. Water Resources Minister Raghunandan

Das said, "We have prepared the performance report and will submit it to the CMO soon. Our department has undertaken many works as per the state government's 5-T initiative."

The '5T' initiative was launched in 2019 for achieving transparency, teamwork, technology and timely completion of projects, leading to transformation.

Social Security and Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities Minister Ashok Chandra Panda said his department has been submitting performance reports every month to the CMO even during the pandemic.

Asked about the possible reshuffle, Panda said, "It is the prerogative of the Chief Minister.

French nationals in Puducherry cast vote in Prez election

Puducherry, Apr 10 (PTI):

French nationals residing in the union territory of Puducherry (a former French colony) voted in the country's Presidential elections, here on Sunday.

Official sources said 4,564 French citizens from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry were eligible to exercise their franchise in the first round of the polls in France.

Sources said the polling began at 8 AM and would go on till 7 PM. Twelve candidates are in the fray. If no candidate gets an absolute majority in the first round, a run-off election would be held between the top two candidates on April 24. "France offers its citizens abroad who are over 18 years of age and



French nationals living in India arrive to cast their votes in the first round of French presidential elections at the Consulat General De France in Pondicherry on Sunday.

have registered to be in the electoral list in the Consulate General of France here to vote in person in the country of resi-

dence, an opportunity to vote in the Presidential election, referendums, legislative elections, European elections and

election of Councillors of French citizens abroad," a release said.

While the Puducherry region has two polling booths housed on the premises of Consulate General of France and in the French school Lycee Francaise, Karaikal and Chennai have one polling station each.

A number of young and elderly voters turned up at the booths in the forenoon Sunday. A 22-year old voter told PTI that she was doing a course in a college affiliated to Pondicherry University and this was the first time that she was exercising her franchise.

Elderly women were also part of those who cast their votes at a booth in the French Consul General office.

Karnataka Govt directs CID to probe Chandru murder case

Bengaluru, Apr 10 (PTI):

The Karnataka government has decided to hand over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) the probe into the case relating to the murder of 22-year-old Chandru who was allegedly stabbed to death recently by some Muslim youths. Chandru, who was accompanied by his friend Simon Raj, was stabbed to death by Shahid Pasha on April 4 afternoon. While the police maintained that it was a case of road rage, the ruling BJP asserted that Chandru was stabbed for not knowing Urdu as stated by the Home Minister Araga Jnanendra before retracting. "I spoke to the Director General of Police



Basavaraj Bommai

and the Bengaluru police Commissioner. I have decided to hand over the case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Let an impartial probe happen by a third party and truth should come out," Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai told reporters on Sunday. Probably, the

Commissioner will write to the Director General of Police to hand over the case to the CID, he added.

Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra who had initially said on Wednesday that the youth was stabbed to death for not knowing Urdu, later retracted it after coming in for flak from various quarters.

Bengaluru police maintained that it was a case of road rage and not any other case. The police said Chandru's bike had collided with Shahid Pasha's two-wheeler.

The Congress too demanded Jnanendra's resignation for stoking communal passions with his statement and giving a twist to the case.

BRIEF

Protest

Santiago: Dozens of protesters gathered in front of the Russian embassy in Chile's capital of Santiago to denounce the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Protesters unfurled a large banner featuring the colours of the Ukrainian flag. The group included Ukrainians living in Chile. Some protesters lay down on the ground and clutched stuffed animals to honour child victims of the war. A large banner read, Stand with Ukraine. Some protesters lay down on the ground with animal toys.

Surgery

Amman: Jordan's monarch is travelled to Germany for a spine surgery, Jordan's palace announced. King Abdullah II, 60, will undergo a surgery to treat a herniated disc in the thoracic spine at a hospital in Frankfurt next week, and will return home after a recovery period of one week. The king suffers from intermittent spine pain as result of parachute jumping during his years of service in special operations, and doctors advised him to receive surgery as pain increased recently.

Scam

Richmond: It's a crime that siphons untold billions from US economy but many people have never heard of it. Business Email Compromise scams involve criminals hacking into email accounts, pretending to be someone they're not and fooling victims into sending money where it does not belong. Although they get far less attention than the massive ransomware attacks that have triggered a powerful government response, BEC scams have been by far the costliest type.

Ready

Mexico City: A small archipelago off Mexico's Pacific coast that had been home to an island prison colony is now ready to receive tourists. Getting to Islas Marias, however, will be a challenge for even the sturdiest tourist: a five-hour boat ride in often choppy waters. But some people, like Beatriz Maldonado, are already imagining the voyage. When Maldonado was imprisoned between those walls of water as a Mexican writer also confined there described it she thought.

Delays

Warsaw: Air travel authorities in Poland are warning travellers of possible flight delays and cancellations at Warsaw's airport due to a protest and some flight controllers quitting their jobs. The protest is in reaction to changes made in January to the functioning of the flight regulatory body, the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency, as well as to allegations that it was not properly ensuring airspace security. The controllers have also criticised the new salary system being implemented.

Polls open in first round of France's presidential election

Paris, Apr 10 (AP):

Polls opened across France Sunday for the first round of the country's presidential election, where up to 48 million eligible voters will be choosing between 12 candidates. President Emmanuel Macron is seeking a second five-year term, with a strong challenge from the far right.

Polls opened at 8 am Sunday in most places and an hour later in some larger cities. France operates a manual system for elections: Voters are obliged to cast ballots in person, ones that will be hand-counted when the voting closes.

Unless someone gets more than half of the nationwide vote, there will be a second and decisive round between the top two candi-



French Rassemblement National (RN) presidential candidate Marine Le Pen casts her ballot in Henin-Beaumont on Sunday.

dates on Sunday, April 24.

Bundled up against an April chill, voters lined up to cast ballots at a polling station in southern Paris on Sunday before it opened. Once inside, they placed their paper ballots into envelopes and then into a transparent box, some wearing masks or using hand gel as part of COVID-

19 measures.

Aside from Macron, far-right candidate Marine Le Pen and far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon are among the prominent figures vying to take the presidential Elysee.

Macron, a political centrist, for months looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in

20 years to win a second term. But that scenario blurred in the campaign's closing stages as the pain of inflation and of pump, food and energy prices roared back as dominant election themes for many low-income households. They could drive many voters Sunday into the arms of far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Macron's political nemesis.

Macron trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become France's youngest president in 2017. The win for the former banker now 44 was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist politics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

Poland-Ukraine ties seen as target of disinformation

● Poland also has difficult history with Russia

Warsaw, Apr 10 (AP):

Days before Poland's Independence Day in November, vandals painted the blue-and-yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag on monuments in Krakow. The vandalism, which took place as Russia massed troops near Ukraine's border, looked as if Ukrainians were defacing memorials to Polish national heroes. Yet some clues suggested otherwise. The flag's colors were reversed, with the yellow on top of the blue and one offensive message was in an unnatural mix of Russian and Ukrainian. Though prosecutors are still



Workers clean a monument that was defaced with the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag, in Krakow, Poland.

investigating, Polish and Ukrainian authorities believe it was most likely a Russian-inspired attempt to trigger ethnic hostility between Ukrainians and Poles. Polish and Ukrainian authorities have for years accused Russia

of trying to provoke hostility between their neighboring nations as part of a broader effort to divide and destabilize the West and the concerns have gained greater urgency since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Experts divided on UK plan as COVID-19 cases soar

London, Apr 10 (AP):

For many in the UK, the pandemic may as well be over. Mask requirements have been dropped. Free mass testing is a thing of the past. And for the first time since spring 2020, people can go abroad for holidays without ordering tests or filling out lengthy forms.

That sense of freedom is widespread even as infections soared in Britain in March, driven by the milder but more transmissible omicron BA.2 variant that's rapidly spreading around Europe, the US and elsewhere.

The situation in the UK may portend what lies ahead for other countries as they ease coronavirus

BLESSES PALMS



Devotees wave their palm fronds as layman blesses palms during Palm Sunday at 'Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto' church in Manila, Philippines on Sunday.



A man walks past a health campaign poster at an underpass leading to Westminster underground train station, in London.

restrictions. France and Germany have seen similar spikes in infections in recent weeks, and the number of hospitalizations in the UK and France has again climbed though the number of deaths per day remains well below levels seen earlier in the pandemic.

In the US, more and more Americans are testing at home, so official case numbers are likely a vast undercount. The roster of those newly infected include actors and politicians, who are tested regularly. Cabinet members, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Broadway actors

and the governors of New Jersey and Connecticut have all tested positive.

Britain stands out in Europe because it ditched all mitigation policies in February, including mandatory self-isolation for those infected. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's conservative government is determined to stick to its 'living with COVID' plan, but experts disagree on whether the country is coping well.

Some scientists argue it's the right time to accept that 'living with COVID' means tolerating a certain level of disruption and deaths, much like we do for seasonal flu. Others believe that Britain's government lifted restrictions too quickly and too soon.

'Welcome back to 'purana Pakistan'

Islamabad, Apr 10 (PTD):

"We welcome (you) back to the purana Pakistan," top Opposition leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Sunday, as he took a jibe at ousted Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan following the adoption of a no-confidence vote against him.

Khan, who came to power in 2018 with promises to create a Naya Pakistan, was unceremoniously removed from the office, becoming the first premier in the country's history to be ousted through a no-trust motion.

Despite the government's hectic efforts to avoid voting on the no-confidence motion against Khan, the joint Opposition succeeded in its month-long efforts to oust Khan from the prime minister's



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

office as 174 members of the 342-member National Assembly voted against him after a day of high drama.

"I would like to congratulate the whole nation and this House, as for the first time in the history of the country, a no-confidence motion has succeeded and we have made history," Bilawal said. Speaking on the occasion, the PPP chairman recalled the sig-

nificance of April 10, adding that on this day, the country approved the 1973 Constitution.

"On April 10, 1986, Benazir Bhutto ended her self-imposed exile and arrived in Lahore to launch her struggle against Ziaul haq," said Bilawal as he recalled his mother. The Pakistan Peoples Party chairman said that on April 10, 2022, the person who was declared "selected by the Opposition and proved himself to be an undemocratic burden on the country saw the end of his rule."

On April 10, 2022, we welcome (you) back to the purana (old) Pakistan, said Bilawal, who is likely to be appointed the next foreign minister. Khan was dogged by claims of economic mismanagement as his government

battled depleting foreign exchange reserves and double-digit inflation.

He apparently also lost the support of the powerful Army after he refused to endorse the appointment of the ISI spy agency chief last year. Finally, he agreed but it soured his ties with the powerful Army, which has ruled the coup-prone country for more than half of its 75 years of existence and has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy. Bilwal, the lawmaker from Larkana, said that he had joined the National Assembly only three to four years ago, adding that whatever he has learned during this time is probably more than he had learnt throughout his life.

Greece softens 'tough' migration policy for Ukrainians

Athens, Apr 10 (AFP):

For more than two years, Greece's conservative government has prided itself on enforcing a "tough but fair" policy towards thousands of asylum seekers trying to cross the EU's southeastern border.

But towards Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion, the reception has been starkly different — and long-term migrants have been the first to notice.

Shahran, 16, is among around 100 Afghans who were recently told to clear out of their lodgings in a camp in Serres, northern Greece, to make space for Ukrainian refugees.

"When the Ukrainians started coming, we were told to leave the house we were living in and they took us to another area of the camp, in a very dirty container. Why?" he told AFP.

Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi drew criticism last month after calling Ukrainians "real refugees".

The conservative Greek government, in power since 2019, has strengthened patrols on the border with Turkey designed to crack down on asylum seekers.

It has slashed benefits available to recognised refugees from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, many of whom have struggled to assimilate in Greece for years.

Closed camps have been created on Greek islands with EU funds, and aid groups assisting asylum seekers have been drastically regulated.

In contrast, within weeks of the conflict starting, Athens issued temporary residence permits to Ukrainian refugees, who will be able to stay and work in the country for one year.

The government has also promised work, noting that there are more than 140,000 jobs available in the agriculture sector and some 50,000 in tourism.

More than 18,000 Ukrainians have fled to Greece so far, compared to 32,600 asylum-seekers staying in the country's camps.

Treatment for opioid addiction often brings discrimination

Philadelphia, Apr 10 (AP):

Danielle Russell was in the emergency department at an Arizona hospital last fall, sick with COVID-19, when she made the mistake of answering completely when she was asked what medications she was on. 'I said yes, I was taking methadone,' said Russell, a doctoral student who also was in recovery from heroin use.

The smart thing to do, if I wanted to be treated like a human, would be to say no. Even though her primary doctor had sent her to the ER, she said she was discharged swiftly without being treated and given a stack of papers about the hospital's policies for prescribing pain medications drugs she was not asking for.

'It becomes so absurd and the stigma against methadone especially is so strong,' she said, noting that other people in recovery have had it worse. 'You're getting blocked out from housing resources, employment.'

It's a problem people in the addiction recovery community have dealt with for decades: On top of the stigma surrounding addiction, people who are in medical treatment for substance abuse can face additional discrimination including in medical and legal settings that are supposed to help.

This week, the US Department of Justice published new guidelines aimed at dealing with the problem: They assert that it's illegal under the Americans

with Disabilities Act to discriminate against people because they are using prescribed methadone or other medications to treat opioid use disorder.

The guidelines don't change federal government policy, but they do offer clarification and signal that authorities are watching for discrimination in a wide range of settings. The Justice Department's actions this year also show it's taken an interest in the issue, reaching multiple legal settlements, filing a lawsuit and sending a warning letter alleging other violations.

One of the government's recent settlements was with a Colorado program that helps house and employ people who are homeless.

Shanghai releases COVID recovered, but cases continue to rise

Beijing, Apr 10 (PTD):

Shanghai, which is reeling under a massive outbreak of coronavirus cases, has released over 11,000 recovered COVID-19 patients from hospitals, but infection numbers continued to climb, raising questions about China's much-touted dynamic zero-case policy.

Wu Qianyu, a senior official with the east Chinese city's public health commission, told a media briefing on Sunday that the patients would be put under home quarantine and no further controls should be imposed on them. Relevant authorities in the areas they live in have to be alerted that they are allowed to go home. At the same time, the officials are required to monitor



Workers seen next to food delivered in Shanghai under lockdown on Sunday.

their health (during the quarantine period), the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. Over 11,000 recovered patients have been released, it said.

But much to the disquiet of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by President Xi Jinping, single-day new in-

fections in Shanghai hit 24,944 on Sunday, setting a new record for the ninth consecutive day. However, positive cases dropped slightly to 1,006 from 1,015.

Shanghai, China's commercial and financial capital, has seen more than 179,000 cases since the current outbreak, driven by the Omicron variant,

began on March 1, the Post report said.

About 5,400 patients were reported to have mild symptoms, while others were asymptomatic.

The sudden rise of cases has led to the much-criticised lockdown of the city of 26 million people amid public criticism of the separation of children from parents in hospitals and testing centres as well distribution of food supplies to the people who were confined for days to the apartment blocks.

"The tidal wave has yet to peak, and worries are that the citywide lockdown will last for another few weeks, which may cripple the local economy, said Wang Feng, chairman of Shanghai-based financial service group Ye Lang Capital.



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Removing landfills

After a major fire broke out at the Ghazipur landfill site in east Delhi this month, civic authorities said 20 advanced machines have been installed to speed up the biominning process of the massive dump. Biominning is a process by which garbage is treated with bio-organisms or natural elements like air and sunlight so that the biodegradable elements in the waste break down over time. Each set of these machines will process 1,000 tonne garbage per day, and eight have already started working, while the remaining 12 machines are likely to be functional. Most Indian cities have doorstep waste collection programmes, but lack the infrastructure to actually process waste, hence landfills across India are growing. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had given strict directions to carry out bio-minning, bio-remediation of legacy waste, and clear the area after observing it is the model followed by the Indore Municipal Corporation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year had assured that the garbage mountains in cities will be processed and removed completely as part of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0. Circular-economy approaches seek to 'design-out' waste and pollution by keeping materials in use in order to support and regenerate natural systems. It's not just microbes and waste bones that can prove useful. Plants underpin another type of bioremediation known as phytoremediation. Simply put, for many organisations charged with clean-up duties there remains too much unpredictability as to how different bacteria or plants will work in a particular environment, which depends on factors such as the climate, soil conditions and the presence of other chemicals and organisms. However, bioremediation projects only recover a portion of recyclables, and since most moisture content of waste is lost in the first month of waste disposal, it is unlikely that there will be significant reduction in the volume of historic waste.

Fresh waste generated in Indian cities consist of about 55-60 percent biodegradable material, 20-25 percent recyclable waste and 15-20 percent inert materials, according to CPHEEO (Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation). Historic waste largely consists of inert material and debris. With years of degradation and frequent fire accidents, ash content and volatile materials also end up contributing to historic waste. The recoverables from historic waste are not fit for recycling and hence do not fetch value. The only potential use of the sieved historic waste could be to fill low-lying areas, but this cannot be a revenue source since construction debris is abundantly available for this purpose. The other recoverable in processing historic waste is half-burnt plastic, which also has no commercial value. As part of the bioremediation process, the historic waste, after sieving, is reorganised systematically, divided into piles of greater height than haphazard disposal and then compacted. The closed landfill can also be landscaped. Handling waste while it is still fresh is a challenging job to carry out regularly, but considering the environmental hazards of accumulating waste as landfills generate dangerous methane gases, handling historic waste is far more challenging and expensive than fresh waste. Processing of fresh waste can reduce the volume of waste to less than 15-20 percent through loss of moisture content and removal of recyclables and its by-products, thus making this the sustainable, cost-effective and feasible option. Bioremediation can be a part of the solution to addressing India's mounting problems with waste, as it helps to tackle the lakhs of tonnes of garbage already accumulated at landfills across the country.

WMDs threat

In the budget session last week, the Lok Sabha passed the Bill that sought to prohibit the funding of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) with external affairs minister S Jaishankar stating that the passage of the legislation will strengthen national security and enhance India's reputation globally. The law has been introduced now because there is a need to amend the said act to provide against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems so as to fulfil India's international obligations. The statement of objectives and reasons said that in recent times, regulations relating to the proliferation of WMDs and their delivery systems by international organisations have expanded. Further, the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) targeted financial sanctions and the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) have mandated against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Experts say the timing of the law may have to do with reports of unauthorised work in labs, and also as a response to rapid advances in technology, such as drones. Biological weapons threat has become an issue of serious concern, with the development of dangerous pathogens in laboratories without the necessary level of safety protocols. The pharmaceutical industry in India is growing and this law prevents any wrongful development activity.

In practical terms, there is no possibility of individuals in India developing WMDs, but the law is being tightened to give the government the power to prevent such a possibility. The timing may have to do with the Covid virus as well as reports about unauthorised work in labs in India and even similarly controversial US-linked lab projects in Ukraine too. India has individuals and corporations making strides in drone technology and biomedical and radioactivity research which could fall under the ambit of activities concerning weapons of mass destruction. Last month, India took a measured and responsible stance at the UNSC, calling for the adherence to the full and effective implementation of the bio-weapons convention in letter and in spirit. India's UN ambassador at the UNSC TS Tirumurti said that India has repeatedly expressed serious concern over the ongoing situation. It has noted the recent statements and wider information on bio-activities relating to Ukraine and would like to underline the importance attached by India to biological and toxic weapon convention. The crisis in Ukraine has brought to the fore the threat the world continues to face from the risk of WMD in form of biological weapons and lack of transparency in biological activities of great powers such as US, China and Russia.

Central Chronicle welcomes, articles, write ups, comments on different issues for editorial page (800-900 words), Letter to editor for this page. It can be sent by e-mail at: editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com
The letters can be edited or rewritten for clarity of thoughts.

'BHANGRA' SEASON



Sikh youths perform the traditional Punjabi folk dance 'Bhangra' ahead of harvest season festival of Baisakhi at a wheat field in Amritsar, Punjab.

Fishermen struggle to survive as Assam's largest wetland shrinks

AATREYEE DHAR



When the night's darkness descends over the waters of Son Beel, the largest wetland in Assam and the second largest in Asia, Rotish Das, 33, sets out to catch fish in his boat. He fishes in the placid expanse of Son Beel through the night and sells his catch the next day, at a bustling fish market, the Kalibari bazaar, a few kilometres away. The catch that once earned him Rs 500 a day, has now dwindled in volume drastically. The declined stock of carps, prawns and catfish draws him a little more than Rs 150 daily, which is not enough to go around the year. 'Earlier I would catch the same quantity of fish both during the day and the night. Casting a fishing net weighing about 10kg doesn't guarantee a decent-sized catch, whereas a 5kg net would suffice before. Fishes like Ilish (Hilsa) and Chapila (Indian river shad) are not available anymore,' says Rotish, the resident of Bagantilla, a village on the southern bank of Son Beel.

The wetland is spread over more than 3,000 ha in Assam's Barak valley and is fed mostly by the Singla river, originating from the hills of Mizoram. The northernmost part of the wetland drains through the outlet Kachua into the river Kushiara in Bangladesh, after traversing a length of 19.3 km. A dam constructed in 1954 on Kachua was replaced by a lock gate to enable navigation and migration of fish. Home to at least 69 different species of fish, the veritable paradise sup-

ports rich birds as well as other vegetation in the region. Joykumar Das, another fisherman, from Saija Nagar, a village on the eastern bank of the wetland, resonates a similar loss. His monthly income from fisheries would earlier earn him Rs 10,000-12,000 each month. Now, the income has dwindled with the business he refers to as 'netting' or raking large unsparring synthetic nets over the wetland's waters. These fishing gears are banned by the government and their use could get him and his fellow fishermen, in trouble with the authorities, according to Sahidul Islam Laskar, a civil rights activist based in Barak valley. However, Joykumar barely gets by with his small catch totalling a daily income of Rs 300 or less, which amounts to Rs 6,000 or 7,000 in a month.

For hundreds of years now, the lifestyle of these fishermen has been shaped by the lifecycle of the wetland, brimming with water during the rainy seasons and drying up during winter. They practiced fishing when the wetland had water and cultivated buru, the local paddy, when water was scarce. The fishermen belong to the Kaibarta community who migrated to Assam's Barak Valley from Bangladesh after the Partition, settling in villages on the banks of Son Beel. There are over 30,000 Kaibarta families solely dependent on the wetland for their livelihood. Most of them are masterful boatmen and fishermen, who started engaging in agriculture only later. But a shortage of rainfall for over four years, has minimised the wetland's water supply. Rotish recounts how at one time water would overflow the paddy fields during the harvest season. Now, rains are delayed by two months, he says. 'Owing to the change in rain patterns, the water requirement for the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems for which wetlands act as a medium, is not met. This leads to them slipping away,' explains Jayaditya Purkayastha, a

leading herpetologist based in Guwahati, Assam. A 2012 study showed a reduction of 31.58 percent of the total annual rainfall between 2004 and 2008 in the Barak Valley region. As climate change and anthropogenic activities threaten the wetland, fish productivity remains a distant memory for the fisherfolk. The upstream migration of Hilsa from the downstream rivers of Bangladesh, has stopped altogether. The effects have been devastating for Rotish and Joykumar, who rely on rice distributed as ration instead of their home-grown paddy. Rotish observes a 70 percent decrease in his paddy production, which he blames on the excess silt accumulated in the wetland. Lamenting at the loss of food security, he comments, 'We would pride in feeding our guests fish from the beel and paddy from our fields. Now, that is impossible.'

In Son Beel, overfishing, upstream pollution and agricultural encroachment, are destroying the sanctity of the diverse ecosystem. Local fishermen use gigantic gill nets with small holes—locally referred to as mahajaal, to that drag the bed of the wetland, entrapping young fishes and eggs, apart from the usual catch. 'Unlike the traditional fishing nets, these mosquito-net lookalikes trap more life than they are supposed to do,' says Anwaruddin Choudhury, an ornithologist and a former bureaucrat. These standardised fishing methods stress fish populations, which are a critical source of food for the nearly 150 bird species thriving in the region, as documented by Anwaruddin. Among the many birds he marked during his sightings in Son Beel, are the openbill stork, the lesser adjutant stork, the golden plover, the whiskered tern, the great cormorant, the Indian cormorant, the common cormorant, the Brahminy kite, and the black redstart. However, most of these birds have shrunk in numbers, either due to poaching or habitat destruction and

are rarely spotted now. 'Encroachment is taking place on the small islands in Son Beel dotted with hijol trees (Barringtonia acutangula) that serve as habitats for migratory birds. These trees standing in water are being felled sizably,' says Manabendra Dutta Choudhury, a professor at the Department of Life Science and Bioinformatics, Assam University, Silchar. 'The beel largely occupied by the government and shared by the fisherfolk, is losing swathes of wetland to buru crop cultivation. Bundhs are created for capture fishing whenever the beel is found untouched,' he elaborates.

The increasing deforestation around the hills through which the river Singla, Son Beel's primary inlet flows has choked the wetland with silt, leading to eutrophication; significantly reducing the size of the wetland, adds Manabendra. As a result, the wetland is slowly disappearing. A study from 2014 on fish diversity in the Barak Valley, captured a Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of the water area. A total of 3,593.6 ha shrunk over a span of 100 years, from 1880 to 1980. Wetlands have been known to conserve tons of carbon every year through their stored biomass, in soil and land, apart from acting as buffers absorbing silt/nutrients during floods. 'Wiping them out, transforms them from carbon sinks to emitters of carbon,' points out Purkayastha. There are many hurdles to conserving Son Beel as a wetland, right from drumming up funds and political will, to changing the unsustainable fishing methods. Others question if a simple designation would solve the issues of the wetland conservation. 'The situation of wetlands such as Deepor Beel in Assam, remains grim, even after the declaration as a Ramsar site.

(Aatreyyee Dhar from Guwahati is climate tracker fellow and writes on environmental, health and gender issues.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

War is terrible

War is terrible and it is a bloody business, literally. After the insurgency in Afghanistan last year, once again the world is witnessing a war, and this time Ukraine is bleeding. An image of a Ukrainian father's farewell to his cute daughter is trending on social media. Will such images move Vladimir Putin's heart? Will the image of innocent children fleeing for refuge move those politicians' and generals' hearts? In recent times, the world saw scores of heart-rending images of crying, bleeding, wounded and helpless children in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Palestine, Kashmir and elsewhere. Civilians became victims of invading forces, crushing humanity for the sake of feigned glory. For those callous and hardened political leaders, power and wealth matter, and not human relations and emotions. And which is why, perhaps, imperialists have never learned any lesson from history. Russia's invasion of Ukraine will presumably change the course of European and world history, but for imperialists like Putin, it will hardly teach any lesson. When can we see a world which is totally and absolutely conflict-free? Perhaps, the answer is when the power of love overcomes the love of power.

Ranganathan, via email

XE variant

The report by the World Health Organization is worrisome and reiterates the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. With the ebbing of the third wave, tourist spots are bursting at their seams and COVID-19 protocols are hardly observed. One ought not to forget that there are possibilities of further variants evolving, whose spread may be aided with international flights to India being restored.

Aanya, via email

Realistic view

Just when the western bloc has been attempting to censure India for circumventing the sanctions regime against Russia, it comes as a whiff of fresh air that Australia, a member of the Quad grouping, has extended a much-needed hand of friendship to India with the signing of ECTA. That Canberra is keen on bolstering its ties with India was very clear when, in March, it ceremoniously returned 29 antiquities to India. What is heartening is that Australia is taking a more realistic view of India's stand on the Ukraine issue than the other members of the Quad. It cannot be denied that bilateral trade has been skewed toward Australia and one hopes that the recently inked ECTA will effectively bridge the wide gap in the trade imbalance between the two countries.

Nalini, via email

WHAT THEY TWEET!



Kunal Shah@kunalb11

A lot of first time founders don't tweak their pitch/style when they get rejected by an investor and end up going to keep investors and failing. Raising money is an iterative art form and having a strict style of pitching often makes it hard to persuade as it fails to empathize.

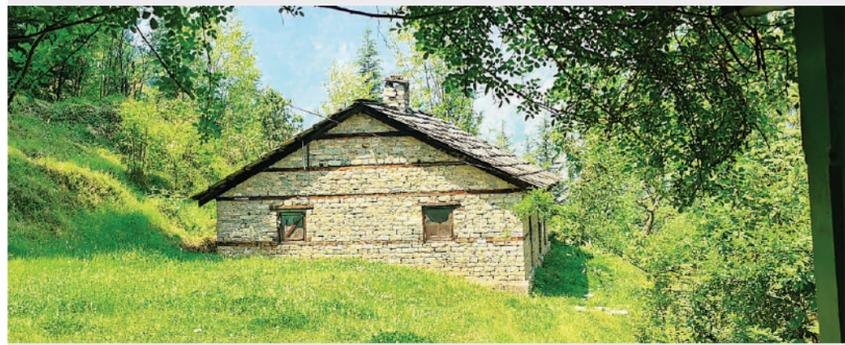
anil@anilkohli54

Do Forums like G7 & G20 serve any purpose at all, are these not away of projecting the control that USA exercises over most organisations in this world. Shud this hegemony not be dismantled & truly democratic organisations replace all these forums.



Aishwarya@aishwaryarajfis

No filters needed for this beautiful Forest Rest House.



Shilpa@godboleshilpa

The rule in many MH houses is to not wear outside footwear inside the house. We have gharatliya slippers, yet family member who shall not be named will wear office shoes first & then head indoors to secure keys, rumal, mask...development of marital tension looks like this.

Buggy@SridharanAnand

If Ranveer Singh launched a D2C apparel brand, it would be very high margin. Raw material can entirely be scraps left over after making sofa cover, curtain, shamiya etc. 99% gross margin & ESG friendly too. You're welcome, VCS.

Gaurav@majorgaurav
Pakistan has always been ruled by a dictator. Sometimes the dictator wears a uniform, sometimes not. The clothes are not important. The mindset is the same. And Pakistan is run on one principle alone ?? Apres moi, le deluge.

BRIEF

Battery



New Delhi: Battery startup Pravaig has been picked up by a European renewable energy company, Eren Groupe, for its storage applications, the start-up's co-founder said. Siddhartha Bagri on Sunday. Battery is the critical component of an electric vehicle.

Import

New Delhi: India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), rose by 33.34 per cent to USD 46.14 billion during the 2021-22 fiscal on account of higher demand, according to official data. Gold imports were worth USD 34.62 billion in 2020-21. The surge in gold imports during the last financial year contributed to the widening of the trade deficit to USD 192.41 billion.

LNG



New Delhi: Shell will foray into retailing LNG for long-haul transportation like trucks, with its first filling station coming up in Gujarat this year as it bets big on the Indian gas market. Country head Nakul Raheja told PTI that they are working now on its own expansion plans.

Invest

New Delhi: Steel products maker Goodluck India will invest Rs 200 crore over the next two-three years to expand capacity, its Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) MC Garg said. BSE-listed Goodluck India has five manufacturing units at Sikandrabad (Uttar Pradesh) and one in Kutch (Gujarat) with a total installed capacity of 3,40,000 tonnes per annum.

Expecting



New Delhi: BMW is expecting a 'mega year' in India in 2022 having clocked 25 per cent rise in four-wheeler sales and 41 per cent jump in two-wheelers. Vikram Pawah told PTI that there are some additional challenges coming through geopolitical situation.

Priority

New Delhi: India is among one of the "priority markets" for the direct selling Swedish beauty brand Oriflame, where it expects to continue its double-digit growth over the next 3-5 years. The company which sells cosmetic and wellness products in India also expects a double-digit growth in its sales force, adding more direct sellers in the coming years.

FAQ on taxation of crypto, virtual digital assets in works

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

The government is working on an FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrencies, which will give a nuanced clarification on the applicability of income tax and GST on virtual digital assets, an official said.

The set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), which is being drafted by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), RBI and Revenue Department, would also be vetted by the law ministry, the official added.

"FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrency and virtual digital assets is in works. Although FAQs are for information purposes and do not have legal sanctity, law ministry's opinion is being sought to ensure that there is no loophole,"



the official told PTI.

The DEA, Revenue Department and the Reserve Bank are working to ensure that the taxation aspect is clear both for field tax offices as well as those who deal with cryptocurrencies and other virtual digital assets.

The 2022-23 Budget has brought in clarity with regard to levy of income tax on crypto assets. From

April 1, a 30 per cent income tax plus cess and surcharges will be levied on such transactions in the same manner as the tax law treats winnings from horse races or other speculative transactions.

The Budget 2022-23 also proposed a 1 per cent TDS (tax deducted at source) on payments towards virtual currencies beyond Rs 10,000 in a year and tax-

ation of such gifts in the hands of the recipient.

The threshold limit for TDS would be Rs 50,000 a year for specified persons, which include individuals/HUFs who are required to get their accounts audited under the I-T Act.

The provisions related to 1 per cent TDS will come into effect from July 1, 2022, while the gains will be taxed effective April 1.

From the GST perspective, the FAQ is likely to provide clarity on whether cryptocurrency is goods or service.

Currently, 18 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) is levied only on service provided by crypto exchanges and it is categorised as financial services.

FM to meet PSBs' heads to nudge them for credit expansion

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to meet heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on April 23 to review performance of the lenders and progress made by them on various schemes launched by the government for revival of the economy battered by the pandemic.

This is the first full review meeting after presentation of Budget 2022-23. Banks would be urged to sanction loans for productive sectors to accelerate revival of the economy, sources said.

According to sources, there would be a comprehensive review of various segments and progress in government schemes including Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS). In the Budget,



ECLGS was extended by a year till March 2023. Further, the guarantee cover for the scheme was expanded by Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 5 lakh crore. The coverage, scope and extent of benefits under ECLGS 3.0 pertaining to hospitality, travel, tourism and civil aviation sectors were expanded.

Also, the credit limit for eligible borrowers was increased to 50 per cent of their fund-based credit outstanding from 40 per cent earlier. The enhanced

limit is subject to a maximum of Rs 200 crore per borrower.

Since its launch in May 2020, loans worth Rs 3.19 lakh crore have been sanctioned till March 25, 2022. About 95 per cent of the guarantees issued are for loans sanctioned to micro, small and medium enterprises.

The meeting to be held in New Delhi would set the agenda for the current financial year which has just started. During last financial year, no PSBs faced any loss in the April-December period and clocked a collective net profit of Rs 48,874 crore during the period.

PSBs earned a combined net profit of Rs 31,820 crore in 2020-21. However, there were collective losses for five straight years during 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Electric vehicle retail sales zoom over three-fold in FY-22

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Electric vehicle retail sales in the country witnessed over three-fold jump last fiscal with two-wheeler offtake leading the segment, according to data compiled by automobile dealers' body FADA.

Total electric vehicle (EV) retails reached 4,29,217 units in 2021-22, a rise of three-fold from 1,34,821 units in the financial year 2020-21, the industry body said. Total EV sales had stood at 1,68,300 units in the 2019-20 fiscal, it noted. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), electric passenger vehicle retail sales stood at 17,802 during the last fiscal, up over three-fold from 4,984 units in FY21. Home-



grown auto major Tata Motors led the segment with retails of 15,198 units and a market share of 85.37 per cent in the vertical. The Mumbai-based company's retail sales stood at 3,523 units in 2020-21. MG Motor India settled into the second place with sales of 2,045 units last fiscal with a market share of 11.49 per cent. It had retailed 1,115

units in the 2020-21 fiscal. Mahindra & Mahindra and Hyundai Motor India stood at third and fourth places with dispatches of 156 and 128 units respectively, both settling for a market share of less than 1 per cent. M&M and Hyundai had sold 94 and 184 units respectively in the 2020-21 fiscal, FADA data said.

High 5G spectrum prices may push players up against wall

Telecom service providers are conducting 5G trials

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Apex telecom industry body COAI has asserted that spectrum pricing should be kept conducive to market conditions as 5G entails upfront capital investments with monetisation spread over a long-haul, and pricing radiowaves high will only push the players up against the wall.

The stage is set for Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to come out with its recommendations on 5G spectrum pricing and other modalities for upcoming auctions, and the announcement from the sector watchdog is expected anytime now. Norms will



also be worked out for new frequencies such as 526-698 MHz and millimetre band, that is 24.25 - 28.5 GHz, in addition to bands such as 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300-3670 MHz.

The auction can be conducted within 2-2.5 months of regulator coming out with spectrum recommendations, which would put the mega-event in the ballpark of June timeframe, a telecom department source said. The industry has been aggressively pitching for a

drastic 80-90 per cent cut in prices of spectrum for next-generation services, which will usher in ultra high-speeds and spawn new-age services and business models.

Advocating lower prices for spectrum, COAI Director General, SP Kochhar told PTI: "5G does not have any use cases which can be monetised in a quarter, so it is going to be a long-haul. At the same time, the capital investments have to be made in a particular period of time."

It is pertinent to mention here that last time around, TRAI had suggested Rs 492 crore per MHz for spectrum in prime 5G band of 3300-3600 MHz, which meant that a mobile operator going for 100 MHz needed to shell out a whopping Rs 49,200 crore for all-India spectrum.

Q4 earnings, macro data, global trends to drive markets

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Quarterly earnings from IT majors TCS and Infosys, macroeconomic data announcements and global trends would be the major guiding factors for the equity market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Stock markets will be closed on Thursday for Mahavir Jayanti and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Jayanti, as well as on Friday on account of Good Friday.

"This week is a holiday-shortened one but it's going to be critical as it kickstarts the earnings season with two IT majors, TCS and Infosys announcing numbers. Besides, on the macroeconomic front, partici-

pants will be eyeing IIP and CPI inflation data on April 12. Apart from domestic factors, global cues like updates on Russia-Ukraine and performance of global markets will remain on the radar," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Markets would also focus on the trend in rupee, foreign institutional investors and Brent crude.

"The earnings session will kick off with results of major IT names TCS and Infosys which are scheduled on the 11th and 13th of April, respectively. Apart from earnings, global cues, crude oil prices, and FIIs' flow will play an important role in the direction of the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos rise 17.3% to Rs 1,23,244 cr

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution companies (discoms) to power producers increased by 17.3 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,23,244 crore in April 2022, as per official data.

Discoms owed a total of Rs 1,05,029 crore to power generation firms in April 2021, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

On a sequential basis too, total dues in April 2022 increased from Rs 1,17,390 crore in March 2022.



The PRAAPTI portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency

in power purchase transactions between generators and discoms. In April 2022, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 1,04,885 crore as against Rs 84,376 crore in the same month a year ago.

The overdue amount stood at Rs 1,03,331 crore in March 2022. Power producers give

Equity MFs see Rs 1.64 lakh cr net inflow in FY-22

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Strong SIP book and lower returns from traditional investments made equity mutual funds an attractive investment destination for investors with equity-oriented funds receiving a staggering net inflow of Rs 1.64 lakh crore in 2021-22.

This comes following a net outflow of Rs 25,966 crore during 2020-21, data with Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

Going ahead, we expect the growing inflow trends in equity mutual funds to sustain given the current economic condition and markets, Manish Kothari-CEO and Co-Founder, ZFunds, said.

According to the data, equity mutual funds wit-



nessed a net inflow of Rs 1,64,399 crore in the entire 2021-22. This included an all-time high inflow of Rs 28,464 crore last month.

Geopolitical tension due to the raging war between Russia and Ukraine and concerns over the surging crude prices triggered a sharp correction in the market towards the end of February and early March. The correction provided investors a good buying opportunity, which they didn't fail to capitalise.

The robust inflow pushed the asset base of equity mutual funds by 38

per cent to Rs 13.65 lakh crore at the end of March this year.

The equity category has been witnessing consistent net inflows since March 2021, after the second wave of COVID hit India and resulted in the correction in the markets.

"Despite concerns, the growth outlook over the long term has remained strong which maintained positive sentiments among investors. Also, the perception that despite intermittent corrections the markets would continue to surge have prompted many investors to make the most of the dips in the markets and invest,"

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

FPIs turn net buyers so far, invest Rs 7,707 cr in equities

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

After a six-month selling spree, foreign investors have turned net buyers in April so far by infusing Rs 7,707 crore in Indian equities as a correction in markets provided them a good buying opportunity.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said it would still be slightly premature to call it a change in trend with respect to FPI flows, and hence it will be prudent to watch how the scenario unfolds over the next few weeks or months to get more clarity.

According to latest data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net in-

vestment of Rs 7,707 crore in Indian equities during April 1-8. Srivastava said the inflow indicates that maybe foreign investors are almost done with the recalibration exercise of their portfolios owing to the current scenario. Also, the recent correction in the equity markets have opened investment opportunities, which FPIs would have sought as a good entry point, he added.

However, they were net sellers during the last two trading sessions, suggesting that there is still lack of certainty on the direction of FPI flows.

The latest inflow comes following massive net outflows to the tune of Rs 1.48 lakh crore from equities in the last six months from October 2021 to March 2022.



Ben Affleck, Jennifer Lopez are engaged again!

Hollywood "it" couple and stars Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez are engaged again. Lopez announced the engagement in a short video via her fan newsletter, On The JLo, in which she stares adoringly at a green-hued diamond ring. "You're perfect," Lopez says in a voiceover as romantic music plays, reports pagesix.com. Lopez teased the "exciting and special" announcement on Facebook earlier Friday evening. Sources close to the singer say the video is, in fact, an engagement announcement. Lopez, 52, and Affleck, 49, sparked engagement rumours earlier this week when she was photographed wearing a ring on her wedding finger while shopping in LA with 14-year-old daughter Emme. Insiders close to Affleck recently told Page Six they wouldn't be shocked if he had proposed again. The couple first started dating in 2002 and were quickly dubbed "Bennifer" by fans and the media alike. The two certainly weren't shy about showcasing their love for each other at the time, including in PDA-packed scenes from Lopez's "Jenny From the Block" music video. By November of that year, Affleck proposed to Lopez with a 6.1-carat pink diamond by Harry Winston. The massive sparkler reportedly cost \$2.5 million. Lopez addressed her initial engagement during a sit-down with Diane Sawyer in the 2000s, where she described her fiancé as "brilliantly smart, loving, charming and affectionate." She went on to call her stunning ring "the most magnificent thing I've ever seen". "Due to the excessive media attention surrounding our wedding, we have decided to postpone the date," the couple said in a joint statement. "When we found ourselves seriously contemplating hiring three separate 'decoy brides' at three different locations, we realised that something was awry." "We began to feel that the spirit of what should have been the happiest day of our lives could be compromised. We felt what should have been a joyful and sacred day could be spoiled for us, our families, and our friends." Lopez called off the engagement in early 2004, and was married to singer Marc Anthony by June of the same year. The couple went on to have twins Max and Emme in 2008. Meanwhile, Affleck moved on with Jennifer Garner. He married the actress in 2005 and welcomed three children together: daughters Violet and Seraphina, and son Samuel. Both of their marriages ended in divorce, however, with Lopez entering into another romance with Alex Rodriguez in 2017. For his part, Affleck was linked to a number of women, including 'Knives Out' star Ana De Armas until their January 2021 split.

Vidya Balan wished to write to Satyajit Ray, work with him

She was just a teenager when she secretly wrote a letter to her favorite filmmaker Satyajit Ray, but didn't post it. Naturally, when he passed away suddenly, she felt heartbroken for many reasons.

Many moons later, that teenager, who is now one of the successful stars of Bollywood, Vidya Balan, talking to IANS, opened her heart and shared her wish to work with her favorite filmmaker and on how Bengali cinema influenced her.

"If I write a letter to Mr Ray today, it would read 'I wish you had lived longer.' You know even today, I would have loved to work with him. I know everyone talks about Ray's 'Pathar Panchali' and 'Charulata' but 'Mahanagar' is one of my favorite films. The film impacted me so deeply. I wish he lived longer and I could have worked with him repeatedly in multiple films."

Vidya also mentioned that more than often people told her that her side profile looks like young Madhavi Chatterjee, the legendary actress who played the protagonist in "Charulata" and that is "flattering" for her. The fangirl in her does not stop there as she shared: "I have poster collection of Ray's films like 'Mahanagar' and also a



painting that filled with a canvas full of characters from his films! I have many decorative pieces in my home, inspired by Ray's work. My home is full of Ray. I have huge love and respect for Bengali cinema and culture." No wonder her film debut happened in 2003 with "Bhalo Theko" before Bollywood. Interestingly, her Bollywood debut also happened in 2005 with "Parineeta", based on a Bengali novel of the same name. Currently, the actress is celebrating the success of her recently-released "Jalsa". Talking about how she started enjoying playing characters that are the exact opposite of who she is in reality, Vidya said: "The fact that in both the recent release of mine, 'Sherni' and 'Jalsa', my characters are so different from who I am in real life has a role to play in terms of choosing those scripts.

Vandana hosts a 'baby shower' ceremony for Yamini

Sony SAB's Wagle Ki Duniya continues to engage audiences across generations with its gripping storyline and relatable characters. The upcoming episode will see how the members of Sai Darshan Heights Society cheer up Yamini after an unfortunate incident, organising a special celebration just for her. Post her dispute with the Wagles, Aunt Kalyani returns to Sai Darshan Heights Society for the first time for her relative's godh bhara ceremony. Due to the bitterness of the past, Dakku (Deepak Pareek) and Yamini (Mansi Joshi) graciously offer to host her at their place this time. But back with her super-

stitions, aunt Kalyani prevents Yamini from attending the godh bhara, claiming that an infertile woman is a bad omen for an expectant mother. Upon realising Yamini's despair, Vandana (Pariva Pranati) decides to arrange a godh bhara ceremony for her with a miracle doll which is said to bring a child into a woman's life. This gesture of hers, along with that of other members of the society leave Dakku and Yamini happy and overjoyed.

Will this ceremony really bring good news for Yamini?

Mansi Joshi, essaying the role of Yamini said, "The latest track is very heartfelt and also highlights a very impor-

tant issue which still impacts women in our society. Kalyani mausi is superstitious so when she stops Yamini from attending the godh bhara ceremony, the latter feels deeply hurt. Yamini has been trying to have a child for a long time, so Kalyani mausi's words affect her adversely. However, Rajesh standing up for her encourages Yamini and all the neighbours coming together for the ceremonial godh-bhara make her and Dakku truly happy. I am excited to see if the doll brings good luck for Yamini."

Continue watching Wagle Ki Duniya from Monday to Saturday at 9:00 PM only on Sony SAB.



Sacchin Shroff enters 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein'

Star Plus's popular show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' has created a special place in the hearts of the audience since its inception. This popular show has maintained its place in the top-5 of the TRP list for the past one year. Neil Bhatt, Aishwarya Singh and Ayesha Singh play are seen playing the lead characters of the show. Soon the show will witness a new twist with the entry of Actor Sacchin Shroff in a prominent role. Actor Sacchin Shroff will enter the show in Rajiv's character, and play the role of Shivani i.e. Tanvi Thakkar's husband. The audience will witness the track of Shivani Bua's and Rajiv's love life. Additional to this Actor Sacchin Shroff (Rajeev) will also be seen sorting out conflicts and problems in Sai's life. Actor Sacchin Shroff who entered the role of Rajiv in the show

'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' says, "The major reason for me choosing this character is my mother. As soon as I received a call from the production house, my mother was inquisitive about the call. I informed her that, I had received a call from the show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' from Star Plus and I had got an offer.

To this she said, that this is her favourite show and she wants me to work in this show. That's how I took up this role without a second thought. My character as Rajiv is a chef by profession, he is jovial by nature, spreads happiness wherever he goes and wears only funky clothes"

Stay tuned to watch the twists and turns of the show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' every Monday to Saturday at 8.00 PM only on Star Plus



Preparing for motherhood can be beautiful, but messy: Kajal Aggarwal

Actress Kajal Aggarwal, who is in the family way, says that preparing for motherhood can be beautiful but messy. Taking to Instagram, the popular actress, who has earmarked a space for herself in the Tamil, Telugu and Hindi film industries, wrote, "Let's face it, preparing for motherhood can be beautiful, but messy. One moment you feel like you have everything under control, while the next moment, you're so drained, you wonder how you're going to manage making it to bedtime! And within these days, weeks, and months of loving our children and our partners, sometimes we forget that this accumulation of emotions (joy, sadness, anxiety, heartbreak) are what piece together our unique stories and make them ours!" The actress has been doing aerobics and strength conditioning exercises to keep herself healthy. She believes women who are pregnant without complications must be encouraged to participate in aerobic and strength conditioning exercises and had put out a post to this effect earlier.

HOROSCOPE MONDAY APRIL 11

Aquarius: Jan 21 - Feb 18

Love and romance should be flying high for you now, Aquarius. If you're single, you could soon form an incredible relationship. If you're already involved, the spiritual and emotional bonds between you and your beloved should grow by leaps and bounds. The lines of communication are wide open. Make use of them and you may find the kind of love of which most people can only dream.

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

You should be feeling physically strong, healthy, and energetic today, Pisces, although you could also be a little lightheaded. You could experience the sensation of wandering around in a daze with your feet on the ground and your head in the clouds. Achieving balance won't be easy, but you should be able to manage it today. Concentrate on activities that involve spiritual or imaginative faculties today.

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 20

In future years, you might remember today as one of the best days of your life, Aries. Romance should be going beautifully. You could exchange deeply felt words of love with your partner. The future looks bright, and you should be full of enthusiastic plans for pursuing what you really want to do. You should also be feeling especially strong, energetic, healthy, and ready to try anything. A journey could be coming up soon.

Taurus: Apr 21 - May 21

Happiness reigns in the home as friends and family members gather for a long-awaited reunion, Taurus. Or you could be hosting a gathering of friends and acquaintances interested in the arts or psychic or metaphysical matters. Discussions should be intense but fascinating nonetheless. A young visitor could come up with some unexpected insights and revelations that blow everybody away. Write down whatever impresses you the most. Enjoy your evening.

Gemini: May 22 - June 21

Group activities, perhaps with a social, ecological, or humanitarian focus, could take place today somewhere in your neighborhood, Gemini. You might decide to attend with your romantic partner. You could encounter some friends in the process, and all of you could well be caught up in the excitement generated by those in the spotlight. Listen well and think about what you learn today. It might make a difference in your future.

Cancer: June 22 - July 22

Your values could undergo a complete turnaround today, Cancer. Recent developments in the world, your community, among your circle of friends, and within you could make you realize, like it or not, you and everyone around you is going through a transformation. This might be a little disconcerting, but it's a positive development. Take things one day at a time and see where they go. You'll probably like it!

Leo: July 23 - Aug 23

Spiritual and psychic matters come to the forefront today, Leo. You could be greatly inspired to express yourself creatively. You could also be quite surprised at the wisdom you find within yourself. A gathering of friends, perhaps for the purpose of discussing metaphysical subjects, could bring this to your attention so blatantly that it becomes hard to ignore. Don't cling to the shore. Flow with the current.

Virgo: Aug 24 - Sept 22

Are you contemplating a move of some kind, Virgo? Perhaps you're thinking about relocating to be closer to members of a group with which you're affiliated. You might also be considering a move to a community where spiritual and metaphysical values are not only discussed but also lived. Make a list of your options, if that helps. You're in a transitional period right now. You need to be practical.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 23

Communication with friends, siblings, and neighbors should be open, congenial, and supportive today, Libra. A gathering could open the door to new friendships, interesting discussions, and other group activities that you might enjoy. The only downside could involve mental overload. You might learn so much today that you can't keep track of it all. Take notes so you can maintain a record of everything that particularly impresses you.

Scorpio: Oct 24 - Nov 22

Career matters couldn't be going better right now, Scorpio, especially if you're in one of the communication fields, including writing, publishing, teaching, the Internet, or mass media. Your financial situation is probably improving very quickly, and you're making contact with congenial, intriguing people who share your interests. You're also becoming more aware of the changes going on in the world and doing your part to help them along. Bravo!

Sagittarius: Nov 23 - Dec 31

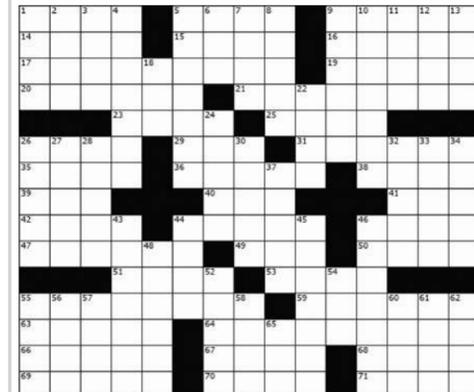
Have you been planning a trip by air, Sagittarius, perhaps to a distant place associated with a specific spiritual tradition? Warm places like Egypt, Mexico, or Israel could be especially appealing now. You could be going with a group of friends. If you haven't been considering such a journey, think about it. You might receive some surprising insights and revelations from such a trip. Start planning it now. Go for it!

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 20

Some vivid, inspiring, and intense dreams or visions could come your way today, Capricorn. They could involve paranormal figures, such as angels. Make sure you keep a record of them, as your higher self is trying to tell you something. Make a list of all the images you can remember and analyze what these images symbolize to you. You could come up with some profound insights about the world and yourself.

CROSSWORD

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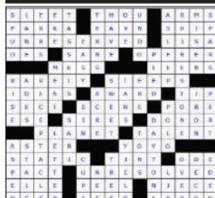
ACROSS

- Small nail
- Mild oath
- Map feature
- Existence
- Egypt's attire
- Egypt's capital
- Flexible
- "Sesame Street" character
- Courageous
- Makes bigger

DOWN

- Unexciting
- Go by taxi
- Distant
- Bank statement entry
- Famous vampire
- Burglarize
- Fit
- Adolescents
- Cold era (2 wds.)
- Relate
- Warble
- Huron's neighbor
- Foot digits
- Topple
- Dalai _____
- Designer _____ Lauren
- Gardener's tool

SOLUTION 265



- Inexpensive
- Amtrak terminals (abbr.)
- Sign up
- Be mistaken
- Slight
- House division
- Hero shop
- Voiced for
- Couch _____
- Slack
- Johann _____ Bach
- External
- "The Lion King" villain
- Brim
- Squirrels' homes
- Long ago
- Famous loch
- Actress _____ Barkin
- Back tooth
- Buying frenzy
- Delight
- Hollywood award
- _____ Witherspoon of "Walk the Line"
- Stash
- Anticipate
- Thicken
- Get ready
- Enamored
- Defeated ones
- Disordered
- _____ Angeles
- Many (2 wds.)
- Sightseeing trip
- Hafl
- Art
- Staff officer
- Stickers
- Wallet fillers
- Cocktail lounge

Capitals put on fiery all-round show to brush aside KKR

Mumbai, Apr 10 (PTI):

Openers Prithvi Shaw and David Warner's fearless batting laid the foundation as Delhi Capitals out-batted Kolkata Knight Riders by 44 runs to notch up their second win in the IPL here on Sunday.

On a batting belter, KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer's decision to put Delhi Capitals in backfired as they piled up 215 for five riding on half-centuries from Shaw (51 off 29 balls) and Warner (61 off 45 balls).

In reply, KKR were all-out for 171 in 19.4 overs and it was left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav's evening at the B R Bourne Stadium as he exacted sweet revenge against a franchise that didn't treat him too well during his stint as his career came to a halt. The scoreboard pressure was always telling and Kuldeep's (4/35 in 4 overs), who is proving to be an asset for Capitals, decisively swung the match in the Rishabh Pant-led side's favour, getting opposition skipper Shreyas Iyer (54 off 33 balls) stumped with a left-arm wrist spinner's googly. Iyer had no clue as he came down the track and the ball turned away after pitching. Pat Cummins didn't play any manic knock as a Kuldeep leg-break ended his stay and then he took a mag-



nificent skier off his own bowling to cap off a superb evening under lights.

Left-arm pacer Khaleel Ahmed (3/25 in 4 overs) bowled fast and sharp at the onset and in the end Andre Russell (24 off 21 balls) had too much to do with too little time left and result was a one-sided victory for DC.

At the start, Shaw and Warner feasted on a quality bowling attack before DC survived a scratchy middle-order show to reach a healthy 215 for 5.

If Shaw-Warner added 93 to set the platform, Shardul Thakur (29 not out off 11 balls) and Axar Patel (22 off 14 balls) added 49 in just 3.2

as Iyer looked clueless.

Cummins was pulled for six by Shaw, while Warner slog swept Varun Chakravarthy (1/44 in 4 overs) over mid-wicket for a six. Sunil Narine (2/21) was reverse swept as both spinners were introduced with in the Powerplay after pacers got severely punished first up.

It was Chakravarthy, who breached Shaw's defence to give his team first breakthrough but skipper Pant (27 off 14 balls), promoting himself up the order, didn't let the momentum slip away as he and Warner added 55 in just 4.1 overs.

Pant was audacious as usual, hitting those fallen reverse sweep off spinners and a straight six off Cummins.

Warner completed his first half-century of this edition with a six off Russell before Pant was dismissed by a slower bowled by the Jamaican all-rounder.

Once Pant was dismissed, Warner's shots lacked a bit of sting and Narine was very steady as he slowly brought KKR back into the game, dismissing Lalit Yadav and Rovman Powell in quick succession.

It was left to Axar and Shardul to show their batting prowess that helped DC reach a par score on this track.

Gujarat Titans, the team to beat, take on inconsistent SRH

Navi Mumbai, Apr 10 (PTI):

Gujarat Titans, who have become the team to beat in its debut IPL season, would aim to build on a dream start against an inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday.

Three consecutive wins in the IPL have given Gujarat Titans the momentum and they showed against Punjab Kings that they can win from any situation.

Skipper Hardik Pandya will need to showcase his tactical acumen against Sunrisers, who earned their first win against CSK but still are placed in the bottom half of the points table.

Gujarat have found different match-winners in every game while Sunrisers, who got a win after a horrendous start to their campaign, would like to keep improving with every game.

At the DY Patil stadium, focus again will be on young Shubman Gill. He has been in prime form and posted his highest IPL score against Punjab Kings. The elegant right-hander would however need support from Matthew Wade, who has the ability to play big shots and Sai Sudarshan, who also chipped in with a useful knock in the last game.



In the last outing against Punjab, Rahul Tewatia found his mojo with two sixes and emerged as the match-winner. Titans are up against death overs specialist Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the raw pace of Umran Malik,

the yorkers of T Natarajan and classical off-breaks of Washington Sundar.

Add to it the variations brought in by lanky South African pacer Marco Jansen, the batters could encounter a tough time.

Gujarat's bowlers on the

other hand have been right on the money.

Hardik's four overs can change the complexion of the game while another pacer who can wreak havoc is Lockie Ferguson. Mohammad Shami too has been impressive with the new ball.

The other important cog in their wheel is Rashid Khan, who is capable of running riot and can pose challenges to his former team SRH.

For the Sunrisers, after failure in the first-two games, skipper Kane Williamson got a start and would be keen to score a big one against Gujarat.

SRH opener Abhishek Sharma reposed the faith shown in-to him and made a match-winning 75 on last Saturday when the team chased a tricky 155 in 17.4 overs. He would also like to continue from where he left. Rahul Tripathi's role will also be crucial and ditto for Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram.

The three need to show consistency and show their mettle while taking responsibility in the middle-order. Sundar has the ability to play cameos.

Both the teams are unlikely to tinker with the winning combination and considering dew, the toss becomes crucial as it has proved to be the case in majority of the games.

It's just a matter of getting first win and finding spark: Zaheer



Pune, Apr 10 (PTI):

IPL's most successful franchise Mumbai Indians are struggling this season with four losses on the trot but their Director of Cricket Zaheer Khan feels it's just a matter finding that "one win" and missing "spark" to get their campaign back on track.

Khan, however, is aware that a string of defeats may lead to self doubt among the players.

"There are still 11 league matches to go. We've got to get on a roll. You've seen in this tournament teams get on a losing roll or winning

momentum. It's just a matter of (getting the) first win," Zaheer, a former India lead pacer, said. "At times you get tight as well, you start doubting yourselves in situations where the pressure is highest. So that is something we have to be aware of and look for that spark in the group," he said at the post-match conference after MI's seven-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Saturday.

He said players who have been doing well despite the winless streak "need to carry the team and get us that win which is going to be very important".

"Those back-to-back win is something which we have to see but not everyday is going to be your day."

Asked why Mumbai Indians, who have won the title five times in the past, have struggled early this season, Khan said his side have not been able to come out on top in "close situations".

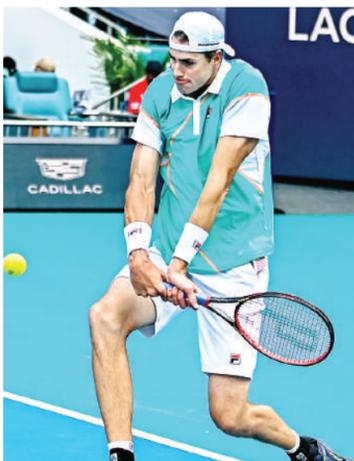
Big servers Isner, Opelka set up all-American Houston final

Houston, Apr 10 (AP):

Tall, big-hitting Americans John Isner and Reilly Opelka joke about being serve-bots and their similar styles of play will be on display against each other in the final of the U.S. Men's Clay Court Championship.

The fourth-seeded Isner, who won the Houston title in 2013, hit 17 aces Saturday to eliminate reigning champion Cristian Garin 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the semifinals. The third-seeded Opelka had 21 aces while beating Nick Kyrgios 6-3, 7-5.

The final Sunday will be the sixth career meeting between the 24-year-old Opelka, who is listed by the ATP at 6-foot-11, and the 36-year-old Isner, who is listed at 6-10. Opelka leads 4-1 head-to-head, with four victories in a row. When guys like Reilly and I lock horns, Isner



said, it's going to be tiebreakers. Talk about an understatement. The last 12 sets they contested all went to tiebreakers, including one Isner called ridiculous on Saturday. That's because it went to

24-22 in the semifinals at Dallas in February the longest tiebreaker in an ATP match since 1990. Opelka landed 39 aces in that win, 18 more than Isner. Isner is up to 71 aces this week after playing

three consecutive three-set matches, breaking his own Houston record of 64 aces for the tournament, which he established in 2013.

Clay is a good surface for guys like Reilly and I, Isner said.

Ronaldo sorry for 'outburst' after United loss to Everton



Manchester, Apr 10 (AP):

Cristiano Ronaldo apologized for what he described as an outburst after Manchester United's 1-0 loss to Everton in the

Premier League. Footage shared on social media showed Ronaldo apparently slapping a phone out of a supporter's hand as he left the field at Goodison Park on Saturday. In a post on Instagram, Ronaldo said: I would like to apologize for my outburst and, if possible, I would like to invite this supporter to watch a game at Old Trafford as a sign of fair-play and sportsmanship.

Ronaldo said it was never easy to deal with emotions in difficult moments such as the one we are facing.

Nevertheless, he said, we always have to be respectful, patient and set the example for all the youngsters who love the beautiful game.

United is looking into the incident.

RCB pacer Harshal Patel bereaved

Pune, Apr 10 (PTI):

Royal Challengers Bangalore pacer Harshal Patel has left the IPL bio-bubble following the death of a family member.

PTI has learnt that Harshal exited the bubble after getting to know about the tragedy in the family right after the game against Mumbai Indians.

Harshal has been the star performer for RCB over the past couple of seasons and took two wickets on Saturday night in the team's seven wicket win over MI. "Unfortunately, Harshal had to leave the bio-bubble due to a death in his family. It was his sister. He did not take the team bus back to Mumbai from Pune," said an IPL source.

"He will be rejoining the bubble before the next game against CSK on April 12."

The 31-year-old has played eight T20Is after making his debut last year. RCB face Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday.

Rawat a future star in making: Du Plessis

Pune, Apr 10 (PTI):

Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Faf du Plessis is mighty impressed with team-mate Anuj Rawat in this IPL so far and feels the young wicketkeeper-batter is a "future" star in the making.

Rawat, a left-handed batter, has opened with Du Plessis in all the matches for RCB so far this IPL season.

But his best came only in their last outing on Saturday when the 22-year-old slammed a 47-ball 66 to be adjudged the Player-of-the-match in RCB's successful 152-run chase against five-time champions Mumbai Indians. "The way he's playing at the moment is beautiful... He's a very good player for the future," Du Plessis said after their seven-wicket win over MI at the MCA Stadium here.

"Comes down the wicket, shows intent, he's a very good player for the future. That's what makes the young guy so good for



us at the moment."

Rawat made a lacklustre IPL debut for Rajasthan Royals against Kolkata Knight Riders in 2021 when he was out for a golden duck, which happened to be the only match for the son of a farmer from Ramnagar in Uttarakhand.

Hat tricks for Mbappe and Neymar as PSG routs Clermont 6-1

Paris, Apr 10 (AP):

Kylian Mbappe and Neymar both scored hat tricks as runaway leader Paris Saint-Germain moved closer to a record-tying 10th French league title by thrashing Clermont 6-1.

PSG extended its lead to 15 points with seven rounds remaining after this weekend.

Lionel Messi picked out Neymar, who rifled into the far corner in the sixth minute for the opener. The Argentina star then chested down a cross from Neymar in the 19th to provide a volleyed pass for Mbappe, who beat goalkeeper Arthur Desmas on Saturday.

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino showed signs of irritation on the touchline as his visiting team became complacent after the second goal. Clermont scored in the 42nd when Benin winger Jodel Dossou tapped in a cross from Saif-Eddine Khaoui. Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma protected PSG's lead by parrying Jason Berthomier's



shot in the 62nd before PSG took full control.

Neymar gave PSG a 3-1 lead by converting a penalty in the 71st after Clermont fullback Akim Zedadka brought down Mbappe.

Three minutes later, Neymar hit a ball over the top for Mbappe, who rounded Desmas to score into an empty net.

Mbappe got his hat trick by curling into the far corner in the 80th to raise his tally to a league-leading 20 goals.

The France striker generously set up Neymar for a tap-in for his hat trick in the 83rd. Messi, Neymar and Mbappe are combining more effectively on the field, with a greater understanding between the players.

It's a pity that it's only coming now, Mbappe told Canal Plus television.

Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (L) celebrates with Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe after scoring three goals.

Squash stars hope to get TOPS funding in CWG and Asiad year



New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

India's squash stars including Dipika Pallikal, Saurav Ghosal and Joshna Chinappa are hoping to get entry into Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) after their title winning exploits at the World Doubles Championship in Glasgow.

TOPS was formed in September 2014 to support elite athletes in Olympic sports but in the year of Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, players

from non Olympic sports like squash have been added to the scheme in the past.

TOPS cuts through the government red tape and athletes get access to funds faster for competition and training. The chosen athletes also get a monthly stipend of Rs 50,000.

Ghosal, Joshna and Dipika are genuine medal contenders at CWG and Asiad this year and were part of TOPS heading into the two multi sporting events back in 2018.

16 women die after delivery every month

In four major govt hospitals of Delhi

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Despite efforts to bring down the maternal mortality rate, 16 women die after childbirth every month in four major government hospitals of Delhi. The hospitals made this information available in response to separate applications filed by PTI-Bhasha under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. According to the information received, 1,281 women died after childbirth between January 2015 and September 2021 at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML),

Safdarjung Hospital and Sucheta Kriplani Hospital. According to information, the worst situation is of Safdarjung Hospital, where in the last 81 months, on an average, more than 11 women lost their lives after delivery every month. The RTI applications had asked how many babies were born in these hospitals between January 2015 and July 2021, how many women died after delivery and what was the reason for their death. In response, Safdarjung and Sucheta Kriplani Hospitals provided numbers up to September 2021, while the

other two hospitals provided figures up to July 2021. According to the information received, more than 2.73 lakh children were born in the four hospitals during this period. Safdarjung Hospital said between January 2015 and September 2021, more than 1.68 lakh children were born and 943 women died after delivery. However, the hospital did not give reasons for the women's death. The lowest maternal mortality rate after delivery was in AIIMS and between January 2015 and July 2021, 29 women died after the birth of their baby. Fifty-nine women

died at RML Hospital during this period while in Sucheta Kriplani Hospital, 250 women died after delivery. Barring Safdarjung, all three hospitals reported that life-threatening infections, excessive bleeding, septic strokes, heart attacks and impaired bowel function were the main causes of women's death after cesarean delivery. Many women also lost their lives due to liver disease, blood clots in the arteries of the lungs, severe anemia, blood infection, breathing problems, uterine rupture, tuberculosis and complications arising from covid.

Robert Vadra offers prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple

● Says BJP did nothing for its development

Ujjain, Apr 10 (PTI):

Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, on Sunday visited the Mahakaleshwar temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain, where he offered prayers. Talking to reporters later, Vadra accused the ruling BJP of doing nothing for the development of the temple. Vadra, husband of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, arrived at the temple in the morning and offered prayers inside the sanctum sanctorum of the famous

pilgrimage centre, which is one of the 12 jyotirlingas in the country. "Change is coming here due to the work started by our government (Congress). Our government did a good work here. But the BJP government has done nothing," Vadra told reporters, adding that the facilities in the Mahakaleshwar temple premises need to be developed further as devotees from across the country visit the place. Vadra said he felt peace after offering prayers and added that he sought blessings for the family and people. When asked about the rising inflation in the country, he said that people should come forward to op-

pose as the "government is thinking about its own good". He, however, said that he does not want to talk about political issues as he is on a "spiritual and religious visit" here. Meanwhile, responding to Vadra's allegation that the ruling BJP has done nothing for the development of Mahakaleshwar temple, party's state unit spokesman Dr Hitesh Bajpai said, "Robert Vadra neither understands the temples nor does he have any respect for such places." Vadra's party is opposing the construction of Ram temple, he alleged. "But now he is visiting temples on the advice of pundits in a bid to avoid action against himself," he said.

PALM SUNDAY PRAYERS



Archbishop Felix Toppo conducts a prayer session on the occasion of Palm Sunday, in Ranchi, Sunday.

Local entrepreneurs draw good response at pre-Bihu fair

Guwahati, Apr 10 (PTI):

Prospects are looking up for local entrepreneurs with Rongali Bihu, marking the Assamese New Year, a couple of days away, as exhibitions and fairs are giving them a chance to showcase and sell their products, according to stakeholders. Fairs and similar events are making a comeback after the pandemic hiatus as all COVID-19 related restrictions have been relaxed because of the drop in the number of positive cases, resulting in a semblance of normalcy returning to daily activities in the northeastern state. The three-day Rongali'

cultural fest here, which concludes on Sunday, has provided such a platform for startups and entrepreneurs with its Vocal for Local' exhibition. Around 200 local entrepreneurs comprising self-help groups, agri-entrepreneurs, weavers, artisans, government agencies, and industrial organisations are showcasing their products at the event. Putolo.com, a Guwahati-based startup, that primarily deals in soaps free from harmful chemicals as well as organic plants and potteries, started its business venture in 2020 when the COVID crisis hit the world. This is the first time they have set up their

stall in an exhibition and within a day, they registered a sale of Rs 10,000 with their handmade soaps becoming a hit among the visitors. This is the first time we are selling our products offline. Participating in the festival not only gave a push to our offline sales but also online. We are quite happy with the kind of response we have been getting from people who visited our stall. We have been getting many orders, said Archana Borthakur, founder of Putola.com. Many startups are using the Rongali platform as a medium to launch their new products. IWA Silk Farmer

Producer Co. Ltd, a Palashbari-based association, has launched an eri thread and some variants of natural dye eri thread under the brand Palash'. They have already sold 5 kilograms of the thread besides sarees and mekhela chador', traditional Assamese attire for women. 'Bahuboli Egg' which emerged as a popular brand in Jorhat and Guwahati during the pandemic, with their seamless home delivery of eggs, registered a sale of Rs 3,000 on the inaugural day of the festival. We have been getting decent responses from the people here. Even people outside Assam have been showing interest.

RAM NAVAMI PROCESSION



Artists dressed as mythological characters take part in the procession of Ram Navami festival, in Ranchi, Sunday.

In jail on cheating charges, actress Leena Paul learns making jam and jelly

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Madras Cafe actress Leena Maria Paul, who is in Tihar jail along with her husband and notorious conman Suresh Chandrasekhar for alleged fraud, is now learning to make jam and jelly as part of a skill training programme for women inmates. Paul, who is in Tihar since last year, is a trained classical dancer and also actively participates in cultural activities organised by the prison to create a positive environment, jail officials said. Besides jam and jelly, they said, art, music, dance, yoga and pickle-making classes are also conducted for inmates. "Since the time she has been in jail, Paul like other women inmates has been trying to stay positive and utilise her time in learning new things which interest her," a senior



prison department official said, adding that "with keen interest and dedication, she has been attending the jam and jelly making classes, conducted twice a week, for over the last two months". While the actress is lodged in the number six wing or women's wing of the Tihar jail, her husband is in the number one wing. Paul has learnt to make guava squash, tomato jam and custard. She has also enrolled for nail art and makeup classes, the official

said. On November 2 last year, the Delhi Police had filed a charge sheet before a court here against Paul and Chandrasekhar for allegedly duping Aditi Singh, the wife of former Ranbaxy promoter Shivinder Singh of Rs 200 crore. They are in custody along with some other co-accused in the case, which is also being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) based on the Delhi Police's FIR. Talking about the vocational and skill training classes for inmates, the officials said that these were resumed after Covid cases reduced in the jail. "The intention behind organising such activities is to create a positive environment, keep inmates busy and make them skilled and financially independent so that when they are released, they can start their life afresh and earn a living," the senior official said.

Centre reduces raw jute stock limit to facilitate supply to mills

Kolkata, Apr 10 (PTI):

The Centre has further reduced raw jute stock limit for balers and traders in a bid to increase supply of the raw material to mills at a time when major foodgrain producing states are facing a shortage for the environment-friendly packaging material, industry stakeholders said on Sunday. In a recent notification issued by the Office of the Jute Commissioner, the maximum stock limit has been brought down to 500 quintals for jute balers from 750 quintals and 50 quintals for traders from 150 quintals, they said.

This is the second such move that the authorities have taken in the current year. "In January, the government reduced the raw jute limit to 750 quintals from 1,500 quintals. Now, the same has been brought down to 500 quintals. It is not a viable quantity for a baling unit to run its operation smoothly," Jute Balers Association secretary A K Palit told PTI. Balers are major suppliers of raw jute to mills. The ongoing raw material crisis has led to "closure of nearly 15 mills and units that are still running have reduced utilisation and are making losses", a source in the industry

claimed. The Centre has put a ceiling on the stock limit with an objective to prevent hoarding of raw jute in the market and ease supply of the commodity to mills at a reasonable price, the industry stakeholders said. The price of raw jute continues to hover around Rs 7,000-7,200 per quintal, but the government will pay Rs 6,500 per quintal as the raw material cost for gunny bag production, they claimed. "The move to prevent hoarding could not yield much result for improving supply of the key raw material to jute mills.

Kannur(Ker), Apr 10 (PTI):

Senior CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury was re-elected as the General Secretary of the party for the third consecutive time here on Sunday. Speaking to the delegates after being re-elected to the top post at CPI(M)'s 23rd Party Congress, Yechury said the principal task of the party was to isolate and defeat the BJP, which is pursuing the Hindutva communal agenda of the fascist RSS. He said isolation and defeat of the saffron party was essential not only for our forward march for human liberation but to safeguard

India as a secular democratic republic. The Party Congress also selected 17-member polit bureau and 85-member central committee to lead the party for next three years. Senior leader from West Bengal, Ram Chandra Dome was elevated to the polit bureau from the central committee and has become the first Dalit representation in PB ever. Two new faces - LDF convenor A Vijayaraghavan from Kerala and All India Kissan Sabha president Ashok Dhawle - have also been selected to the polit bureau of the CPI(M).



CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury with delegates during the 23rd CPI(M) Party Congress, at E.K. Nayanar Academy in Kannur.

Meanwhile, senior leaders Ramachandran Pillai, S Biman Bose and Hannan

Mollah were dropped from the PB as they crossed the upper age limit of 75 years. However, all three of them are now special invitees to the central committee. Among the 85-member central committee, 17 are fresh faces, while 15 are women members. State ministers K N Balagopal, P Rajeev, former MP C S Sujatha and Kerala women's commission chairperson P Sathidevi are the new entrants to the central committee from Kerala. The five-day national conference of the Left party will come to an end today with a massive rally at Kannur.



BRIEF



A model poses for photographs at Kolkata maidan during celebrations of upcoming Bengali New Year in Kolkata, Sunday.

Fire

Thane: A fire broke out in the rear motorman coach of a suburban train at Thane railway station on Sunday, an official said. The fire in the Titwala-CST train's brake system was doused soon after and there were no reports of anyone getting injured, said Avinash Sawant of the civic Regional Disaster Management Cell.

New faces

Amaravati: As many as 11 legislators, who resigned from the Andhra Pradesh Council of Ministers on April 7, will be re-inducted when Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reconstitutes his Cabinet here on Monday. The reconstituted Cabinet will have 13 new faces while a veteran will make a comeback after a long gap. Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan on Sunday evening accepted the resignations submitted by the 24 ministers, a Raj Bhavan communique said.

Virtual meeting

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a virtual meeting with US President Joe Biden on Monday to review bilateral cooperation and exchange views on recent developments in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific and global issues of mutual interest. The Ministry of External Affairs made an announcement on Sunday about the virtual meeting.

Terrorists killed

Srinagar: In a pinpoint intelligence operation, two Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists involved in the April 4 attack on CRPF personnel in the city, were killed while three security personnel got injured in an encounter here on Sunday, police said.

Weather

High 40 Low 27

WORD OF CAUTION

'COVID-19 not gone, changing forms and resurfacing'

Ahmedabad, Apr 10 (PTI):

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the coronavirus has not gone away and keeps resurfacing, and cautioned people not to let their guard down in the battle against the pandemic.

Nobody knows when the 'bahurupiya' (one that changes form) COVID-19 will resurface, Modi said, adding that administering nearly 185 crore doses of vaccines to control its spread was made possible due to public support.

He was addressing via



video conferencing the Mahapatotsav programme of Maa Umiya Dham at Vanthali in Gujarat's Junagadh district, as part of the 14th foundation day celebration of the temple of Maa Umiya, considered as the deity of Kadva Patidar

community. The PM urged devotees of Maa Umiya to turn to natural farming with the aim to save Mother Earth from the scourge of chemical fertilisers. He also asked people to a pledge to participate in creating 75 'Amrit Sarovars' (lakes) in each district as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, being organised to mark 75 years of India's Independence.

"Corona (COVID-19 pandemic) was a big crisis, and we are not saying that the crisis is over. It may have taken a pause, but we never know when it will resur-

face. It is a 'bahurupiya' disease. To stop this, nearly 185 crore doses (of vaccines) were administered, which surprised the world. This has been made possible due to your support," he said. The PM also said the devotees of Maa Umiya should undertake a project to take care of the health of malnourished children and anemic mothers at the village level. The 'Maa Umiya Trust', which manages the temple, should organise competitions at the village level promoting good health of children, he said.

JSPL plans to set up India's second coal gasification plant

At Raigarh

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

JSPL has plans of setting up a coal gasification plant - the second in the country - at its Raigarh plant in Chhattisgarh, company's MD V R Sharma said.

The company is already using the coal gasification technology to produce steel at its plant in Angul, Odisha. The 2 million tonne per annum production capacity plant, inaugurated in 2018, holds the distinction of being India's first and

the only plant producing steel from 'swadeshi' coal using the coal gasification technology.

"As part of our mission to promote diversification of usage of coal, we will be setting one more coal gasification plant at our plant in Raigarh," the MD said, adding it will be second such plant in the country.

When asked about the likely investment for the project, he said, "It will be pre-mature to quote any figure. We are evaluating it and will reach a final investment figure soon."

Communal clashes in two cities in Guj

During Ram Navami processions

Ahmedabad, Apr 10 (PTI):

Communal clashes broke out between two communities in Himmatnagar and Khambhat cities in Gujarat on Sunday during Ram Navami processions, prompting the police to fire tear gas shells to control mobs who pelted stones at each other and damaged shops and vehicles at both places. The number of injuries, if any, is not known so far, officials said. Members of two communi-

Flag rod touches overhead wire during procession, 5 injured

Chhindwara: Five persons sustained burn injuries during a Ram Navami procession on Sunday when the iron rod of a saffron flag fixed to an autorickshaw came in contact with an overhead wire in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara city, a police official said. A man and woman sustained serious injuries, and the former has been rushed to Nagpur for further treatment, while all others have been admitted in the local district hospital, Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Uikey told PTI. "The injured were in an autorickshaw with sound amplifiers etc. The incident took place in Char Fathak, some 100 metres from where the procession, with almost 10,000 in attendance, started," he added.

ties hurled stones at each other when a Ram Navami procession reached Chhapariya locality in Himmatnagar city in the Sabarkantha district in the late afternoon, a police offi-

Covid boosters

New Delhi, Apr 10:

Private vaccination centres on Sunday began the administration of the precautionary 'third' dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, also known as the booster dose, for the 18-plus population.

The age cap for the booster shot came at a time when another highly transmissible XE variant of the coronavirus is being reported. However, the official confirmation of the existence of this particular variant is yet to come.

While speaking to ANI, Pawan Seth, a professional at a private company said, "The booster dose is important as it adds to our existing immunity. With news of XE variants making inroads in India, I think the booster dose is a must to avoid unnecessary calamity. We must not forget the second wave days."

Naxals hack cop to death in village market

Bijapur, Apr 10:

A police jawan was hacked to death by Naxals at a village market in Bijapur district on Sunday, police said.

The incident occurred when the deceased assistant constable, Gopal Katti, was visiting the weekly market in Mirtur village, 73 km away from Bijapur city. The attackers, dressed as civilians, stabbed Katti with sharp-edged weapons, killing him on the spot, and fled. The deceased visited the market after he completed his shift as a sentry on the police station campus.

The attackers, dressed as civilians, stabbed Katti with sharp-edged weapons, killing him on the spot, and fled, a senior officer said. The deceased Katti was posted at the Mirtur police station. The modus operandi of the attack suggests it was executed by a small action team of Naxals. A police team has launched a search in the area to trace

About the incident

The incident occurred when the deceased assistant constable, Gopal Katti, was visiting the weekly market in Mirtur village, 73 km away from Bijapur city. The attackers, dressed as civilians, stabbed Katti with sharp-edged weapons, killing him on the spot, and fled. The deceased visited the market after he completed his shift as a sentry on the police station campus.

the attackers," he said. The deceased was a resident of Mirtur village. He was visiting the market after he completed his shift as a sentry on the police station campus, the officer said, adding that Katti was in civvies and not carrying a weapon when he was attacked.

Three people killed in elephant attacks

Dhantari, Apr 10:

Two women and a man were killed in separate incidents of elephant attack in Chhattisgarh's Dhantari district, a forest department official said on Sunday.

The incidents took place on Saturday in forest areas under the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve, located over 150 km from the state capital Raipur, he said.

The tiger reserve covers Udanti and Sitanadi wildlife sanctuaries and adjoining areas in Gariyaband district as

well as parts of Sankara forest range in Dhantari district. On Saturday, an elephant attacked Bhumika Markam (38), a native of Paikbhata village, when she had gone along with other women to a nearby forest to collect wood, the official said.

The other women managed to escape and informed locals, who then alerted forest personnel.

The woman's body recovered from the spot after some people managed to chase away the tusker from the area, the official said.

PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENT

Shehbaz Sharif submits nomination for PM's post

Islamabad, Apr 10:

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday nominated himself for the post of prime minister after the unceremonious ouster of Imran Khan.

The move came hours after Khan was removed from office through a no-confidence vote held early Sunday morning, becoming the first premier in the country's history to be sent home after losing the trust of the House.

In accordance with the deadline of the submission stipulated by the National Assembly, 70-year-old Shehbaz submitted nomination papers for the new leader of the house, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

"Special thanks to media, civil society, lawyers, my Quaid Nawaz Sharif, Asif Zardari, Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman, Bilawal Bhutto, Khalid Maqbool, Khalid Magsi, Mosin Dawar, Ali Wazir, Amir Haider Hoti & leaders & workers of all po-

'Freedom struggle' begins: Imran

In his first comment after losing the no-trust vote, ousted PM Imran Khan on Sunday tweeted, "Pakistan became an independent state in 1947; but the freedom struggle begins again today against a foreign conspiracy of regime change. It is always the people of the country who defend their sovereignty & democracy." Meanwhile, Pakistan's investigation agency FIA has put its immigration staff at all international airports on high alert with a directive to stop any government official linked to the Imran Khan regime from travelling abroad without a No-Objection Certificate, a media report said on Sunday.

litical parties for standing up for the Constitution!" he tweeted.

Former president and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chair Asif Ali Zardari had proposed Shehbaz's name for prime minister's position in a joint opposition's meeting last month.

TERROR FUNDING CASE

SIA conducts raids in Delhi, Faridabad

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

In its first operation outside Jammu and Kashmir, the newly constituted State Investigation Agency (SIA) conducted raids in the national capital region on Sunday in connection with a terror funding case, officials said.

SIA teams carried out the searches at three places in Delhi, one in Faridabad in Haryana and two in Anantnag of south Kashmir, the officials said. The teams were assisted by the Delhi Police and other security agencies.

Those raided included some lawyers who allegedly received funds from a Pakistan-based conduit of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group to sustain terrorist and secessionist networks in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country.

The case was registered by the SIA under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in Srinagar recently.

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Bhupesh Baghel offers to host 'Chintan Shivar'

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

After the party's drubbing in the recent assembly elections in five states, top Congress leaders will soon meet at a 'Chintan Shivar' to deliberate on measures for reviving the organisation at the grassroots level and address fresh challenges.

Sources said the party has convened a meeting of its general secretaries and in-charges on Tuesday to work out modalities for the conclave, which is likely to be held in Rajasthan. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his Chhattisgarh counterpart Bhupesh Baghel have already offered to host the Shivar in their respective states, and

the party leadership may settle for Jaipur in Rajasthan, owing to its proximity to the national capital. During the last meeting of the Congress Working Committee, when the party leadership faced fresh demands for organisational overhaul in the wake of defeat in five states, it was decided that the party will hold another CWC meet after the Parliament session and finalise details of the Chintan Shivar. The major brainstorming session will chalk out a strategy for course correction to reverse the trend of electoral defeats as the party is now in power in only two states of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and is part of the ruling coalition in Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

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SEFI seeks CM's support for strategic merger of Steel Sector PSUs

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: As the union government has initiated the processes to disinvest and privatise the Mini Ratna PSU - Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited (FSNL), the Officers Association of FSNL is making efforts on its part to protect the company from going in private hands. In this sequel, the FSNL officers led by SEFI Chairman and BSP-OA President Narendra Kumar Banchhor met the Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and sought his support for protecting the PSUs from privatisation. SEFI had been advocating the concept of mega steel merger to protect national property. It needs to be mentioned here that Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has also been strongly protesting the Union Government's move of disinvesting and privatising the PSUs. The officers of Steel Sector PSUs have requested the CM to take necessary steps for saving the FSNL which is on the verge of privatisation.

SEFI Chairman Narendra Kumar Banchhor said that they have been pressing the demand of merging the SAIL steel plants, its subsidiary unions, RINL and its subsidiary units, NINL, NMDC and MECON into a single Maha Steel Unit. This mega merger shall be able to expand further the steel capacities of the nation. Each of the steel units has its strengths and weaknesses. Merger of all the units will help them to synergise their strengths and turn the weaknesses into opportunities for overall benefits to the nation. Steel being an essential component in the growth rate and contributes heavily to the GDP, it should be kept under the strategic sector, he added.

During discussion with the Chief Minister, the delegation stated that Steel sector PSUs have not only created employment through steel plants in different places of the country in the last six decades but have also ensured overall development of their surround-

ing areas through health, education, infrastructure and CSR activities. Today, the well-educated and capable class, known as "middle class" in the country, basically flourished due to such public sector undertakings and became the reason for the economic, educational progress of the country. There is a dire need to save this inclusive model of development so that a strong citizen can build a strong nation. The steel sector has played an important role in nation building in the last 60 years.

They added that the Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited (FSNL), which participates in many projects with the PSUs of the steel sector, is now at the verge of privatisation. Earlier the government had passed a resolution to merge the FSNL with SAIL or RINL but recently the Union Government has taken the decision to



privatise this profit making company. This decision has triggered resentment not only among the FSNL employees but the entire working class of Steel Sector PSUs. It may be noted that Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited is a Government of India undertaking under the Ministry of Steel, headquartered in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh. This organization mainly deals with scrap processing in public sector steel undertakings like SAIL, RINL and NMDC.

Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited has

never been in loss till date due to the hard work and dedication of its employees since its inception in 1979. FSNL has given profit of Rs 41.09 crore, Rs 46.02 crore and Rs 32.06 crore respectively in the last three years. In the year 2021-22, it has earned a profit of 42.67 crores in just 09 months.

Presently, Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited has got work worth Rs 240 crore in NMDC Nagarnar Steel Plant. This work is going to commence from May 2022 and will provide employment to hundreds of locals. At present, about

600 permanent and 3000 contract workers are working in various units in Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited.

JP Shukla Committee in its report dated 14 May 2008 had also recommended for merger of FSNL into SAIL or NMDC.

The Committee after site inspection of various units of Ferro Scrap Corporation Limited and after careful and in-depth study had recommended that FSNL should be made a subsidiary company of SAIL or a joint venture shall be formed with SAIL, RINL and MSTC Ltd in which SAIL shall be the majority shareholder.

Speaking about the benefits of FSNL, they informed that for the last four decades, FSNL has been rendering its valuable services to SAIL and other PSUs with undisturbed and uninterrupted service. Over the years FSNL has become an inte-

gral part of steel plants. Slag and scrap processing of iron and steel scrap is done by FSNL in SAIL and other PSUs, which is used by SAIL to make various iron products in its plants. FE Enrichment Plant carries out Value Addition work in the scrap of 45 percent to 85 percent less grade. FSNL has become an integral part of SAIL and other PSUs through its works.

The delegates stated that the government would suffer loss due to disinvestment of FSNL. The company provides an average dividend of Rs 25 - 35 crore per annum whereas the Government of India had invested only Rs 32 crore in this company. FSNL is a low cost - high profit organization. FSNL provided all possible facilities to the government and society even during the global pandemic Covid-19.

Handing over a precious asset like FSNL to private hands would be a big mistake of the Government of India. The disinvestment of FSNL will not only cause loss to the Government

but will also directly and indirectly damage the Government Steel Plants. After privatization of FSNL, opportunities will be available for scrap mafia and middlemen to infiltrate into government steel plants. This will cause loss of national property. Further, FSNL does not have any immovable assets other than the employees working in the present situation.

Taking cognizance of the highly sensitive processes conducted by Ferro Scrap Nigam Limited and possible apprehensions due to the arrival of the private sector, SEFI has demanded merger of this company with SAIL instead of privatization.

SEFI President Narendra Kumar Banchhor, OABSP General Secretary and SEFI member Parvinder Singh, FSNL Officers Association President Satyendra Kumar Jha, General Secretary Deepak Tomar, Vice President K Girish and members Prashant Sahu, Chhaganlal Nagvanshi and Saurabh Tharewal were present.

CM inaugurates fuel station at Risama

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: On Saturday, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel inaugurated a fuel station "Gita Energy KSK" at Risama. Vijay Chandrakar and Anita Chandrakar welcomed the Chief Minister. Baghel extended greetings to the owners of the fuel station. Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu, WCD Minister Anila Bhedra, MLA Arun Vora, MLA Ashish Chhabda, former



India Professional Sarpanch Yogita Congress President Chandrakar and other dignitaries were present.

BSP's Mines bag many prizes at MEMC 2021-22 awards ceremony

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: Bhilai Steel Plant's Mines have won as many as 13 prizes in the Mines Environment Mineral Conservation (MEMC) 2021-22 awards for Performance of Mines in different categories. Mines Environment and Mineral Conservation Week was observed in the state of Chhattisgarh from February 28 to March 05, 2022 under the guidance of Indian Bureau of Mines, Raipur region. The concluding ceremony was organized by NMDC at Raipur on April 08, 2022.

The chief guest at the ceremony was Sanjay Lohia, IAS as Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines,

Government of India and Controller General In-charge, Indian Bureau of Mines. Piyush Narain Sharma, Chief Controller of Mines In-charge, Indian Bureau of Mines, Nagpur was present as special guest. Anirban Dasgupta, Director I/C, Bhilai Steel Plant and D K Mohanty, Director (Production) NMDC were also present at the ceremony. Bhilai Steel Plant's Mines Organisation was represented by Tapan Sutradhar, CGM I/C Mines & Rowghat.

SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Mines were awarded several prizes. Mahamaya & Dulki Mines situated in the Plant's Dalli-Rajhara Iron Ore Complex that won three



prizes was awarded the Highest Prize for Best Overall Performance in A2 Group of Mines Environment Mineral Conservation. Mahamaya & Dulki Mines won the First Prize in two categories - Systematic & Scientific Development Category and Sustainable Development Category and Second prize in Publicity & Propaganda

Category Rajhara Mechanised Mines won the First Prize in the Mineral Conservation Category and the Second Prize in Reclamation & Rehabilitation Category. Jharandalli & Dalli Mechanical Mines won the First Prize in Mineral Beneficiation Category and Third Prize in Reclamation & Rehabilitation Category.

Bhilai Steel Plant's Nandini limestone Mines won the Second prize in Environmental Monitoring Category while Rowghat Mines Project won the third prize in the same Environmental Monitoring Category. The Plant's Nandini limestone Mines also won the second prize in Reclamation & Rehabilitation Category. Different Mining Organisations in the state had put up their pavilion displays on the Mines Environment Mineral Conservation subject in an Exhibition organized at the venue. Bhilai Steel Plant's pavilion was awarded the second prize for its display.

'Nav Kanya' adorned in Chhattisgarhi traditional attire

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: With the objectives of protecting the Chhattisgarhi tradition and culture, the Rupali Mahtari Gudi Multipurpose Organization organised the Nav Kanya Bhoj on Maha-Ashtami in a unique manner.

All the nine girls - Nav Kanya, were adorned in traditional attire and the traditional delicacies were served to them. The organisers insisted that the Chhattisgarhi tradition can help in overcoming the problem of malnutrition.



Sharma informed that the event was held at Maa Sheetla temple of village Umarpoti. The girls were adorned in traditional lugra, aithi, pahuchi, bandha, chudi, bindi, birwa, pajjan, kardhan, gajra, mahur and mehndi. Chhattisgarhi delicacies including Tasmayi,

Gulgul Bhajiya, Suhari, Saag, Chana and fruits and sweets were served to them. An NRI, Anju Dewangan, who hails from village Hardi (Janjgir - Champa) made significant contributions in organising this event.

Gram Panchayat Umarpoti Sarpanch Tikendra Thakur, Pankaj Markande, organisation President Shanta Sharma, treasurer Malti Yadav, Sangeeta Das, Mukesh Thakur, Nishu Deshlahra, Moni Sahu, Trilok Thakur, Pooja Sahu and the villagers were present.

Toll free number issued for drinking water problem

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: 5352 departmental hand pumps, 203 Nal-Jal schemes, 38 Sthal-Jal schemes, 1223 single phase pumps, 673 departmental solar pumps are operational in 385 villages of the three development blocks (Durg, Dhamdha and Patan) of Durg District.

District Administration has prepared an action plan to deal with the possible drinking water problem in summer. Based on the assessment of previous years, 99 villages with potential drinking water problems have been identified.

Out of these, 22 villages with severe drinking water crises have also been identified. At present, water is being supplied through 1583 hand pumps, 52 tap water schemes, 11 Sthal - Jal schemes, 406 single phase pumps, 105 solar pumps in 99 villages with potential drinking water problems.

343 hand pumps, 7 Nal - Jal schemes, 5 Sthal - Jal schemes, 99 single phase pumps, 23 solar pump schemes are functional in the identified 22 villages with severe drinking water crisis. Presently the water level is 20.33 metres. The average fall of

.061 meter in ground water level of hand pumps has been recorded as compared to last year. To tackle the drinking water crisis, an action plan of Rs 561.16 Lakh has been prepared.

Provision has been made for digging, hydro fracturing of new tube wells, installation of single phase power pumps, extension/replacement of extra-deep well cylinder riser pipes in villages having drinking water problems. A special campaign is being run to keep all the drinking water schemes operational.

The amount received from the government for

the maintenance and operation of tap water and site water schemes has been distributed to the concerned gram panchayats. Control rooms have been set up at district level and subdivision level.

Toll Free number of the control room is 07882323633. The mobile numbers of all the officers/employees associated with the maintenance work in rural areas have been shared with the people. To ensure availability of pure drinking water in summer, testing of drinking water is being done through FTK and laboratory.

Relief and rehabilitation works launched for slum-fire victims



Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Apr 10: The Bhilai Municipal Corporation and District Administration with support of various social and voluntary organisations are conducting relief and rehabilitation operations for the slum-fire victims of Surya Nagar, Chhawani.

Forensic experts also inspected the mishap site to explore the causes of fire.



Political leaders including MP Vijay Baghel, MLA Devendra Yadav, Mayor Neeraj Pal and others reached the mishap site as well as temporary shelter to meet the victims. They assured complete support for rehabilitation.

MP Vijay Baghel reached Surya Nagar early in the morning to meet the victims. He also inspected the shelter home and oversaw the necessary arrange-



ments of food and stay. He became emotional during interaction with the victims. About 160 families were affected in this mishap.

MP Baghel instructed the officials to rehabilitate the victims at the earliest. He appealed to the people of Durg-Bhilai to help the victims in this hour of crisis. These families have nothing except the clothes they were wearing.

Everything was destroyed in the fire.

He further said that there is a wonderful spirit of mutual brotherhood and harmony is visible in Mini India - Bhilai. People are coming forward to help the victims. He assured all possible support from the government. Shankarlal Devangan, Sharda Gupta, Vinod Chelak, Nishu Pandey, Vishaldeep Nair and others accompanied



him during the visit.

Mayor Neeraj Pal and BMC Commissioner Prakash Sarve are continuously working to provide relief to the affected families. They made arrangements to accommodate the affected families in the government school, Mahatma Gandhi Nagar. On their instructions, other arrangements of food, water, clothes, medicines and essential materials were

made. Mayor Neeraj Pal has appealed to the social organizations to provide all possible help. After his appeal, many social organizations have extended their helping hand. Sikh Samaj has arranged food for the affected.

Women from Rotary Club, other social organizations and self-help groups have distributed clothes. Arrangements are being



made by the BMC to re-settle the affected families at the same place.

Bamboo sticks have been arranged for reconstruction of huts. Along with regular sanitation at temporary shelters (school rooms), arrangements of room coolers have been made. Mayor Neeraj Pal, MiC members Ekansh Banchore, Siju Anthony, Zone 3 President Santosh Nath Singh, Additional

Commissioner Ashok Dwivedi, Deputy Commissioner Sunil Agrahari, Zone 3 Commissioner Yesha Lahere and other officials monitored the relief operations.

People interested in helping the victims can contact BMC PRO Praveen Sarwa (9425512559) and Zone 3 Commissioner Yesha Lahare (6232769888) on their mobile numbers.

'Memories of Lord Shri Ram are scattered in every inch of Ch'garh'

CM thanks all for organizing the Ramayana congregations grand and very successful

CM inaugurates devp works worth 238 cr in Shivrinarayan

Makes announcement for for SDM Office in Shivrinarayan

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has said that the memories of Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram are scattered in every particle of Chhattisgarh's soil. Lord Ram has an indelible mark on the culture of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh is the maternal home of Lord Ram. It is believed that Mata Kaushalya was born in Chandkhuri near Raipur. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, on the occasion of Ram Navami today, three



days after inaugurating the first phase of renovation and beautification and development works at Shivrinarayan, a famous pilgrimage site of Chhattisgarh located at the confluence of Mahanadi, Shivrinarayan and Leech rivers. He was addressing the general public on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the grand ceremony. He said that Shivrinarayan is the city of Lord Rama, Lord Jagannath and Mata Shabri. He also extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on Ram Navami.

Minister after inaugurating development works worth 238 crores, he also inaugurated the work of renovation, upgradation and beautification of Shivrinarayan temple complex, Ramayana Interpretation Center and Tourist Information Center, development and beautification work of River Ghat, statue of Mata Shabri at Baba Ghat, View Point, Constitution maker Bharat Ratna in Shivrinarayan's Ambedkar Chowk. Dedicated the statue of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar.

Tamradhwaj Sahu, Urban Administration and Development Minister Dr. Shivkumar Dahria, Rajya Gau Sewa Aayog Chairman Rajeshree Mahant Dr. Ramsunder Das, MLA Indu Banjare, Chandradev Rai, Ramkumar Yadav, Shakambhari Board President Ramkumar Patel. Many public representatives and citizens including Nagar Panchayat President Smt. Anjani Tiwari were present in large numbers. While addressing the program, the Chief Minister said that the an-

cient Pilgrimage of Shivrinarayan is called the fifth Dham of India. The four dhams of India are in all the four directions, but this fifth dham is in the middle of the country. Shivrinarayan has been important in every era. It was here that during the exile, Mata Shabri had fed sweet berries to Lord Shri Ram. He said that Shivrinarayan was known as Baikunthpur in Satyug, Rampur in Treta, Vishnupuri in Dwapar and Narayanpur. Shivrinarayan is considered to be the original place of Lord Jagannath. It is be-

lieved that from here, he went to Jagannath Puri and established himself. The amount of reverence the people of Chhattisgarh have for Shivrinarayan Teerth, Equal reverence is also in the minds of the people of the neighboring state of Odisha. This holy dham connects Utkal culture and Chhattisgarh culture. The Chief Minister said that apart from being the confluence of holy rivers, the holy land of Shivrinarayan is also a confluence of Chhattisgarh and Utkal culture. The Chief Minister said that Lord Shri Ram had spent maximum time of his exile in Chhattisgarh. He traveled on the forest route from North Chhattisgarh Korea to Sukma in South Chhattisgarh. To save the memories of Lord Ram in Chhattisgarh, Ram Vanagaman tourism circuit project worth about Rs 138 crore has been started, in which 75 places related to Lord Ram have been identified. In the first phase, 9 of these places - Sitamarhi-Harchuka,

Ramgarh, Shivrinarayan, Turturiya, Chandkhuri, Rajim, Sihawa, Jagdalpur and Ramaram are being developed as tourist pilgrimages. The Chief Minister said that the development works of the first phase of Chandkhuri were inaugurated on October 7 last year. Today the development works of the first phase of Shivrinarayan are being inaugurated. He said that a new chain of tourist pilgrimages is being created in Chhattisgarh under the Ram Vanagaman Tourism Circuit Project. This will boost tourism in the state, new employment opportunities will be created and Chhattisgarh will get a new identity at the national and international level. It is worth mentioning that to smoothen administrative procedures in Shivrinarayan, an SDM office will be set up here soon. Baghel said that a three-day function had been organized to inaugurate the development works in Shivrinarayan. During this state level Manas Gaan Competition was organized. In which about 350

Manas singers from 25 districts participated. About 7000 singers took part in the Manas Gaan Competition of Ramayana troupes. Through this competition, an attempt was made to give a platform to the talents of rural areas and to save their cultural values. Ramayana has been constructed near Shivrinarayan temple complex. A statue of Mata Shabri feeding Lord Rama with berries has been installed between two trees near it. An information center has been built for the tourists at this place. Where devotees will be able to get information about Shivrinarayan and nearby tourist areas. A huge parking area and toilets have been constructed behind the temple complex including the construction of modular shops in Shivrinarayan. A building has also been constructed for the stay of the devotees in the temple premises. The huge gate of the temple has been renovated and a huge lamp pillar has been constructed inside the temple premises.

Four arrested red-handed while stealing iron

From Railway by RPF Raipur post

Raipur, Apr 10: RPF post of Raipur Railway Division got a major breakthrough in nabbing the gang involved in stealing iron of the Railways and seized iron of more than 400 kg from their possession. The Police as per plan had laid the trap right since night and waited whole night to nab the iron thieves.

In this particular action the RPF team got inputs from its sources that few thieves can reach Raipur with intentions to steal iron and after this the RPF team was well prepared to nab all the accused involved in it. The team sent a part of it to likely places and they kept waiting in the dark for their arrival and it was in the wee hours in the morning that they got success.

So no sooner the iron thieves tried to move after



stealing iron rods and bars of the railways, the RPF team managed to arrest all three accused along with the stolen iron items. In this RPF took action against one scrap dealer and three other accused and arrested all four of them.

This particular action was taken under leadership of RPF commandant Sanjay Kumar Gupta by the Inspector D Batiya,

ASI PK Naidu, Constable Rajeev Kumar, Head Constable Akhilesh Kumar, constable Tukai Das and Head Constable RK Yadav.

All three accused were produced in the Court and from where they were sent to jail. According to RPF officers, the three accused arrested are Virendra Singh Chatri, Narendra Singh and G Devraj and T Vishwanath.

Ch'garh has made significant contribution in every field: CM

Whether in the field of Religion, Culture, Arts, Archaeology or Literature

Raipur, Apr 10: On the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of the state. The Chief Minister said that Chhattisgarh, in every era has made an important contribution in every and has achieved great heights of development. There has been a glorious cultural, historical and traditional contribution of Chhattisgarh from Treta Yuga to modern times. There is a need to save, beautify and present this melting pot of religion, art, archaeology, and culture in front of the country and the world.

He further said that 'last year, we had inaugurated the renovation and beautification work of Kaushalya Mata Temple in Chandkhuri equipped with high quality facilities de-



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel today reached Dudhadhari Math in Raipur on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami. He prayed for happiness, prosperity and safety of the people of the state.

veloped for the tourists in a grand program. Today, on the occasion of Ram Navami, the restoration and development works of the temple in Shivrinarayan, the facilities developed for the tourists, are being dedicated under this tourism circuit as Ram Van Gaman Project. Other sites will also be developed in the future. Baghel said that Maryada Purushottam Lord Shri Ram had come to Chhattisgarh in Treta Yuga. The biggest monument of the Buddhist period is in Sirpur,

Chhattisgarh, which is also being developed. Even during the freedom struggle of the country before 1857, we had martyr Gundadhar, Amar Shaheed Gendsingh, Fighters like Amar Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh whose story of valor makes us proud. He said that whether in the field of religion, culture, archaeology, literature, Chhattisgarh has made an important contribution in the Indian religion and cultural Worldview. The first story and the first novel were composed in Chhattisgarh.

The contribution of Chhattisgarh needs to be presented in front of the country and the world today.

On the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami, Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel reached Dudhadhari Math in the capital Raipur today. He visited the Shri Ram Panchayat temple located in the temple premises, Sankat Mochan, he participated in chanting hymns of Lord Hanuman, Lord Balaji. Amidst the sound of Shankh, The Chief Minister also indulged in worship ceremony accord-

ing to the rituals of Sanatan Dharma. He prayed for prosperity and happiness of the people of the state. Baghel also offered prayers to Lord Rama, Mata Sita and Ram's three brothers whose idols are seated in the Shri Ram Panchayat temple located in the temple premises. He also visited the Samadhi of Mahant Rajeshree Shri Balabhadra Dasji.

On this occasion, Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu, Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Kumar Dahria, Chhattisgarh State Cow Service Commission Chairman Mahant Rajeshree Dr. Ramsunder Das, Chhattisgarh State Other Backward Classes Commission Chairman, Thaneshwar Sahu, and a large number of public representatives and devotees, were also present. Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel was accorded a warm welcome by Mahant Rajeshree Ramsunder Das, officials of the Math and devotees on his arrival at Dudhadhari Math.

AIIMS-R ranked 33rd in India's best hospitals

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Premier US newsmagazine and website Newsweek has selected All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur as one of the best Hospitals in India-2022. AIIMS, Raipur Ranked 33 with a 69.70% score. AIIMS, Delhi ranked 1st with an overall 87.80% score. The ranking is significant as all the premier medical institutes, including private hospitals, participated in the survey. AIIMS, Raipur is the only one established in the second phase to get the rank



in the first 50 hospitals on the list.

While releasing the 4th annual ranking of the World's Best Hospitals, the magazine has recognized the role of medical institutions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. In the detailed survey report experts cited that the world's leading hospitals delivered the highest quality patient care and conducted medical research despite battling COVID-19. 'Consistency in the excellence is the hallmark of these institutions,' the magazine said in the report.

Premier government

medical research institutes in India including PGIMER, Chandigarh, JIPMER, Puducherry, Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi ranked ahead of the AIIMS, Raipur. Prof. (Dr.) Nitin M. Nagarkar, Director, AIIMS, Raipur congratulated the AIIMS fraternity on a remarkable achievement.

'Prestigious news magazine Newsweek has recently released the World's Best Hospital 2022 ranking list in 27 countries including US, Germany, Japan, South Korea, France, Italy, and UK. The selection method-

ology included an online survey of medical experts in the selected countries, patient feedback, and medical key performance indicators on hospitals. More than 2200 hospitals were ranked in the latest fourth edition. AIIMS, Raipur is one of these hospitals. The ranking hallmarks quality services provided to the patients. All faculty members, employees, and supporting staff have contributed to the success. We will continue to excel with news services in the coming months, Prof. Nagarkar said.

Attendance optional for students of classes 1st to 8th

After April 15th

Raipur, Apr 10: Chhattisgarh School Education Department has extended the current academic session till April 30, which was earlier March 31. Instructions have been given to start the upcoming academic session from May 01 for additional academic work for 15 days. Attendance of students from class 1st to 8th in all government schools operating in the state will

not be mandatory after April 15. Parents can send their children to school for teaching, however presence of teachers will be mandatory.

Instructions regarding school operation and attendance of children and teachers have been issued by the Directorate of Public Instructions to all the Divisional Joint Director Education and District Education Officers. In compliance with the National Education Policy, there is already a policy in the

state of Chhattisgarh that children of classes I to VIII are not stopped in the previous class on the basis of examination and are promoted to next class. Continuous evaluation of the academic achievements of the children is done in all the schools of the state. On the basis of this, arrangements are made to improve the level of children.

This year also, this policy will be applicable for the children of classes I to VIII in the state.

CM greets Governor Anusuiya Uikey on her b'day

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel greeted Governor Ms. Anusuiya Uikey on the occasion of her birthday today, wishing her a long life and good health. Along with Chief Minister Baghel, Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu and Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Dahria also greeted Governor Uikey on her birthday.



wishes. Besides extending Ram Navmi wishes, Governor Ms. Uikey thanked Chief Minister

Baghel for the development of Ram Van Gaman tourism circuit in the state.

CM inaugurates Ramayana Interpretation Center

Raipur, Apr 10: Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel today inaugurated the newly-built Ramayana Interpretation Center at Shivrinarayan in Janjgir-Champa district under the Ram Van Gaman Tourism Circuit being developed in Chhattisgarh. Information regarding the events of Ramayana and the places visited by Lord Ram during his exile period has been beautifully portrayed in a pictorial form through paintings here. Through these paintings, the upcoming generations will be able to get information about the events of Ramayana period



and people will also be able to understand the historical importance of Shivrinarayan.

Spread over an area of 6000 square feet, the center has been built at a cost of Rs 90 lakh and has been divided into two halls of 40 by 50 feet. Ramayan

Interpretation Center as well as Tourism Information Center is established in a hall. Along with the Ramayana Interpretation Center, a 40 by 50 square feet cafeteria has been built in this building to ensure quality food for the tourists coming here

from across the country and abroad. From Ramayana Interpretation Center and Tourism Information Center tourists can get information regarding famous tourist spots of Chhattisgarh besides booking their visits to any of these tourist places of the state. A statue of Mata Shabri has also been installed outside the Ramayana Interpretation Center, in which she is seen feeding her leftover berries to Lord Rama. Along with Lord Rama, the idol of his brother Lakshmana has also been installed. Ramayana Interpretation

Center established at Shivrinarayan under Ram Van Gaman Tourism Circuit will be a center of attraction for tourists and through this, Ram Van Gaman Circuit will also be promoted in Chhattisgarh.

Home Minister Tamradhwaj Sahu, Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Kumar Dahria, State Cow Service Commission Chairman Rajesri Mahant Dr. Ramsunder Das, Janjgir Lok Sabha constituency MP Mr. Guharam Ajgalle along with other special guests were present on the occasion.

Central and State Govt officials meet held on auction of mineral blocks

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Under the chairmanship of Sanjay Lohia, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Government of India, a meeting of officials of the Central and Chhattisgarh Government was held in connection with the auction of mineral blocks of Chhattisgarh at Mantralaya Mahanadi Bhawan, Nava Raipur, here. Various technical aspects including the action plan for auction of mineral blocks were discussed in detail in the meeting. In the meeting, Secretary, Mineral Resources Department of Chhattisgarh Government, Mr.



Siddhartha Komal Pardeshi, Director Mr. J.P. Maurya, officials of the Ministry of Mines and Geological Survey of India, State Unit, Government of India and officials of the Mineral Department of the State Government participated.

Regarding mineral auction, officials of Chhattisgarh said that in the financial year 2021-22, 16 mineral blocks have

been auctioned in 22 identified mineral blocks of the state. In the financial year 2022-23, an action plan is being prepared for the auction of 29 mineral blocks of the state and the auction of seven iron ore mineral blocks will be done by the end of this month. Sanjay Lohia, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Mines, Government of India expressed happiness over

the receipt of revenue of about Rs.12,085 crore against the fixed revenue target of Rs.7800 crore in Chhattisgarh in the financial year 2020-21. He congratulated the officers for completing the auction of mineral blocks, approval of mining leases and other ancillary works on behalf of the state of Chhattisgarh. In the meeting, the officials of the Ministry of Mines,

Government of India requested to send the proposal to the Ministry of Mines to survey more and more mineral blocks under NMET in the state of Chhattisgarh. In the meeting, various technical aspects regarding the auction of mineral blocks were discussed and clarifications were obtained from the officials of the Ministry of Mines, Government of India, so that more and more mineral grants could be allocated under the state in the coming days. Senior departmental officers including Joint Secretary Ms. Pushpa Sahu and Additional Director Mr. D. Mahesh Babu were present in the meeting.

PALM SUNDAY



The moment of joy and hope was celebrated with great devotion by the devotees of Lord Jesus Christ on occasion of the Palm Sunday which commemorates the entrance of Christ into Jerusalem and it was celebrated by the parishioners and the good shepherd by taking out procession holding the palm leaves in their hand.

Governor calls upon Union Railway Minister



Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Governor Ms. Anusuiya Uikey had a courtesy call on Union Railway Minister, Ashwini Vaishnav at Parliament House in New Delhi last day. During this, Ms. Uikey discussed with the Railway Minister Mr. Vaishnav on the rail facilities and passenger facilities available to the state of Chhattisgarh and the demand for rail connectivity from Chhindwara to

Raipur. Apart from this, Ms. Uikey also discussed with Mr. Vaishnav about the progress of railroad projects of Chhindwara, Seoni, Nainpur, Mandla and Gondia and expansion of rail facilities. On this occasion, Ms. Uikey honoured the Union Railway Minister Vaishnav with a shawl and a memento. Along with this, the second part of the book 'Nai Sochnai Pahal', based on the activities of the Governor, was also presented.

CS instructs to strictly stop illegal transportation of narcotics

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain, in the meeting of the State Level Committee held at Mantralaya Mahanadi Bhawan here, instructions were issued for strict prevention of illegal transportation of narcotics in the border areas of the state, along with coordination at the inter-state level, special checkpoints will be made in the border districts. Monitoring has been decided.

For this, special task forces will be formed at the state level and at the district level. The Chief Secretary has said that strict vigil should be maintained from illegal production of narcotics to trans-



portation. Along with this, the places of cultivation and production of narcotics in the border areas of the state should be identified and destroyed.

Along with this, the members of the Special Task Force engaged in this work should also be given special training related to the investigation of illegal drug centers and the action to be taken against them. In coordination with the police officers of the bordering states of the state, coordinated action

should be taken after discussing the prevention of transportation of illegal drugs.

In the meeting, the (Narcotics) officers of the Police Department informed that in the year 2021-22, 33 thousand kilograms of ganja have been caught illegally transporting. So far in the year 2022, more than 16 and a half thousand kg of illegal ganja has been confiscated. Apart from this, various other types of narcotics have been seized

and strict action has been taken against the transporters. In this meeting held through video conferencing, Additional Chief Secretary of Home Department Mr. Subrat Sahoo, DGP Mr. Ashok Juneja, Principal Secretary, Forest, Mr. Manoj Pingua, Secretary of Home Department Mr. Dhananjay Devangan, Government of India, State Police Department (Narcotics) along with senior officers of the police department were present.

Daharia visits Kaushalya Mata at Chandkhuri Temple

Raipur, Apr 10: A two-day festival was organized at Chandkhuri, the maternal grandmother of Lord Shri Ram and mother Kaushalya's birthplace, adjoining Raipur. U r b a n Administration and Development and Labour Minister Dr. Shivkumar Dahria participated in this festival. Dr. Dahria visited Mata Kaushalya at Chandkhuri temple here and took blessings and wished for the happiness and prosperity of the people of the state. Minister Dr. Dahria also visited the Jyoti Kalash on the occasion of Navratri.



It is worth mentioning that the Chhattisgarh government is developing Ram Van Gaman Path. In this series, first of all, Chandkhuri, the birthplace of Mother Kaushalya, has been developed as a tourist center. Along with renovating the Mata Kaushalya temple, the work of beautification of the complex has been done by the state government. Since then a large number of devotees and tourists are reaching here.

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Students will get free textbooks on the day of school admission on June 16

Raipur, Apr 10: According to the instructions of the Chhattisgarh Government School Education Department, like the previous education session, through Chhattisgarh Textbook Corporation, one set each of class wise, subject wise, medium wise textbooks will be provided to all the eligible students of the state on the day of school admission on June 16th. Principal Secretary School Education Dr. Alok Shukla has directed that like previous year, this year also time bound action of textbook distribution should be ensured in a systematic manner with the joint and coordinated efforts of Textbook Corporation, Directorate of Public Instruction, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. In this regard, the printing work of the remaining unprinted textbooks of all classes, subjects and mediums, the necessary testing of the quality of paper printing from the storage work of textbooks in the prescribed dates will also be ensured in time by the Textbook Corporation. Cluster level for students of classes I to VIII of government and aided

schools by Textbook Corporation, High School and Higher Secondary level for students of class 9th-10th, Block level for students of classes I to VIII in registered madrasas and for the students of non-aided non-government schools, the vehicles required for transportation of textbooks directly at the depot level of the corporation should be ensured in advance. By preparing the necessary route chart-district wise, package wise or institution wise, date wise for the transportation of textbooks by the Textbook Corporation, all the concerned nodal officers-divisional joint operators, district education officers, block education officers, cluster in-charges and depot managers etc. should be informed in advance, so that the responsible personnel are ready to receive the textbooks on time and there is no unnecessary hindrance in the transportation and unloading work. Adequate building, space allocation should be completed in advance for all cluster coordination and maintenance of

orderly unloading of necessary textbooks to be distributed by the Principal High School and Higher Secondary within their working area. According to the date and time fixed and communicated by the Textbook Corporation, the package coordinator, Principal High School and Higher Secondary should be obtained by matching the number of sets supplied by the Textbook Corporation properly. The package coordinator will hand over the set of textbooks to the headmaster of all government primary and pre-secondary schools coming under his package, to the teacher on the next working day, on the basis of the pre-sent demand letter, assessment. The school head will compulsorily ensure the distribution of textbooks to all the eligible students of his school on the day of school admission on June 16th. The presence of local public representatives, panchayat and urban body representatives, parent union, school development committee and dignitaries should also be ensured in textbook distribution.

Cow Dung should be purchased in every Gouthan: Singh

Moong, Urad and Arhar will also be purchased on support price

Raipur, Apr 10: Agriculture Production Commissioner Dr. Kamalpreet Singh has said that cow dung should be purchased in every Gouthan. Godhan Nyay Yojana has proved to be a good source of additional income for farmers and livestock owners. He has asked to complete the under-construction gouthans and buy cow dung there too. Dr. Kamalpreet Singh informed that from the next Kharif year, Moong, Urad and Arhar will also be purchased by the State Government at support price. Dr. Singh took a meeting of the officers of Bilaspur and Surguja divisions to review the progress of Rabi year 2021-22 and scheduling of Kharif year 2022 in the Manthan meeting room of



Bilaspur district office and gave instructions to the said effect. Agriculture Production Commissioner Dr. Kamalpreet Singh reviewed agriculture and various related subjects in detail here and gave necessary directions to the officers.

He said that apart from paddy, farmers producing other crops would also get the benefit of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana. For this, it is not necessary for them to sell the produce at government procurement centers.

He can also take advantage of the Nyaya scheme by selling his produce in the private market. Farmers should pay attention to crops other than paddy, for this the limit of loan given from co-operative bank has been increased. He has given instructions to prepare the farmers for the upcoming season from now onwards and distribute loans accordingly. Dr. Singh has asked to further strengthen the Gothans under various schemes of the government. Farm Machinery Bank can also be established in Gouthan under the scheme of Agriculture Department. Gouthan Samiti can also earn income by paying rent at concessional rate to the farmers along with its use. He expressed displeasure over the non-fulfillment of targets under departmental micro irrigation schemes. He said that under this beneficiary oriented scheme, by providing sprinklers, drips, pumps etc. on grant, farm-

ers can be motivated to grow other profitable crops. He has emphasized on advance uptake of chemical fertilizers. He said that the distribution of fertilizers should be done immediately in the pish machine. If regular entries are not made in this, the entire stock is visible, due to which fertilizer allocation is not available when needed. Agriculture Production Commissioner said that the vermi compost currently stored in the Gothans should be lifted by this month. He said that now there will be no problem in the sale of vermi compost. Farmers will be provided one bag per acre. This would be a good effort to move towards organic farming. He expressed dissatisfaction over the non-active functioning of Gouthan run by the Forest Department. Dr. Singh also reviewed the plans of Livestock Development Department, Horticulture Department, Fisheries Department in the meeting.

Minister Rudra Kumar inaugurates boating in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir

Mungeli, Apr 10: Another link has been added in the development of Mungeli district. State Public Health Engineering and Village Industries Minister, Guru Rudra Kumar inaugurated boating in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir (Khudia Dam) built on the Maniyari River of Mungeli district. With this, the tourists and local people coming here will get boating facility. On this occasion, Minister Guru Rudra Kumar also enjoyed boating in the reservoir and appreciated the Khudia Dam built in 1930 by seeing the natural shade from close quarters. On reaching Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir, Minister Guru



Rudra Kumar was accorded a warm welcome. Minister Guru Rudra Kumar congratulated the residents of the district for starting the boating facility in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir. He said that it is the intention of the gov-

ernment that people should get adequate facilities at the tourist place, continuous work is being done in this direction. He said that 36 announcements were made by our government three years ago, out of which 32 an-

nouncements have been fulfilled. Under the Godhan Nyay Yojana, cow dung is being procured from the farmers. He said that even during the Corona epidemic, the development work continued continuously. Keeping in mind that money reaches the pockets of the general public, many schemes have been started. Chhattisgarh is the only state where there was no financial crisis during the lockdown. Minister Guru Rudra Kumar said that Chhattisgarh has become the most employable state in the recent survey report. He said that under Jal Jeevan Mission, clean drinking water would be

provided to every household through pipeline by 2023. On this occasion, he announced bore mining at 10 places in forest region of Khudia area. Apart from this, he also announced bore mining in village Guruvain Dabri, one bore in village Navagaon Dayali, one bore for village Bijrakchar and wards of Nagar Panchayat Lormi on the demand of villagers. Addressing the boating program, MLA of Lormi Assembly Constituency, Dharamjit Singh said that the program of launching boating in Rajiv Gandhi Reservoir is historic. He said that with the start of boating in Rajiv Gandhi

Reservoir, people would get facilities in the tourism sector and the district would develop. District Panchayat President Mrs. Lekni Sonu Chandrakar, Collector Ajit Vasant also addressed the program. On this occasion, President of Janpad Panchayat Lormi, Meena Naresh Patle, Vice President Mrs. Khushboo Aditya Vaishnav, Member of Chhattisgarh Scheduled Caste Authority, Ms. Ratnavali Kaushal, District Member Mrs. Kala Ashok Sindram, officers of district and police administration, public representatives and a large number of villagers were present.

'Pension Adalat' to be held on April 12

Central Chronicle News

Raipur, Apr 10: Employees' Provident Fund Organisation, Regional Office, Raipur, Chhattisgarh organises 'Pension Adalat' programme for redressal of grievances received from pensioners by the Regional P.F. Commissioner. The time schedule of the programme schedules for April 12, 2022 is EPF Pensioner - 10.30 am to 01.00 pm at Conference Hall, 1st floor, Bhawishya Nidhi Bhawan, Pandri,

Raipur. The concerned pensioners are requested to send their specific grievance on or before April 11, 2022 positively, to the postal address to the office, super scribing 'Pension Adalat' on the envelope. It should also be noted that the complete PF Account number/PPO number and other necessary and relevant service details/particulars along with available documentary evidences in support of the grievance should explicitly be mentioned/enclosed.

Cong respects the devp demand of the public: Baghel

**Khairagarh, Apr 10:**

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel is continuously addressing public rallies and public meetings here in the last phase of the assembly by-elections, attacking opposition BJP fervently. While addressing an election rally here in village Amilidih

Kala, Bajguda and Mandla, the Chief Minister targeted the former Raman Singh government, and chided it for stalling developmental works in the region for long. Speaking on the occasion he said that 'we make tehsils on public demand but the BJP fastens

people to jail if they make such a demand, he said. Talking on developmental issues, the CM also attacked former Chief Minister Dr. Raman Singh of not visiting Vannachal region for 15 years and depriving it of developmental projects for years together. He also accused MLA Komal Janghel of

depriving the people of the region of developmental schemes and projects. Baghel further asserted that, the present state government is all set to fulfill all the poll promises, which includes opening affiliated colleges of Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya in Bastar and Ambikapur. He projected the promise by the Congress party for the people of the region in the form of giving a college in Bazar Ataria, making Salhwara a tehsil, Jalbanda a sub-tehsil and Khairagadh-Gandai-Juikhdan as a district. He appealed to the general public to vote for Yashoda Verma, Congress party candidate for the assembly by-elections.

Nodal officers should ensure cow dung is purchased regularly in Gouthans: Collector

Dhamtari, April 09:

District Collector P.S.Elma reviewed the progress of Godhan Nyay Yojana in rural Gouthans of the district here and gave necessary instructions to accompanying officials.

It is worth mentioning that after the 'Gouthan Access Day' program organized on April 6 and 7 in the district, the Collector took a meeting of the nodal and cluster nodal of 282 constructed Gouthans of rural areas and reviewed cow dung procurement, payment to beneficiaries, ready compost and its sale, entry in Gouthan map, infrastructure status, problems and demands of women groups.

Apart from this, according to the interest of women groups working in



rural Gouthans, the collector also gave instructions to make proposals to connect them with economic activities. At present 249 rural Gouthans are functional out of the total 282 in the district.

Till the end of March, a total of two lakh 69 thousand 434 quintals of cow dung were purchased in the active Gouthans. In lieu of this, a total of eight thousand 750 beneficiaries were paid Rs.5 crore 38 lakh 88 thousand 976.

It is noteworthy that in the region 18142.02 quintals of cow dung has been procured, out of which 6494.57 quintals of finished vermi compost, 3082.83 quintals were sold. Out of 94.60 quintal super compost manure produced, 46.50 quintal was sold. In Kurud block, a total of 90577.82 quintals of cow dung was purchased, out of 15174.51 quintals were produced, 8086.27 quintals were sold. Similarly, out of 689.90

quintals of super composted manure, 106.2 quintals were sold. The Collector also reviewed the progress of rural Gouthans of Magarlod and Dhamtari. On this occasion Chief Executive Officer, District Panchayat Mrs. Priyanka Mahobia, Deputy Director Agriculture, staff, concerned cluster nodal, Chief Executive Officer, Janpad Panchayat and other officials were present.

Naxals plant 10 kg IED

**Konta, Apr 10:**

Once again the ID attached to Naxalites has been recovered in Sukma district. Naxalites planted IED in Kistaram areas of Konta block, from where the security force personnel do routine patrols. Although the IED was discovered and safely disabled due to intelligence of the jawans and a major incident was prevented from happening.

It is to be known that during the routine patrol of Cobra 208 jawans under Kistaram police station area of Sukma district, the IED was identified in the area, after which a major incident was prevented from happening by safely deactivating the IED. Naxalites had planted the IED only to target the security forces. Sukma SP Sunil Sharma has confirmed this matter.

Medical Camp was organised in Supebeda

To treat patients with Kidney diseases

Ayurveda medical camp will be organized here every Wednesday

Raipur, Apr 10:

A medical camp was organized today to provide healthcare facilities to the rural populace of Supebeda, Gariaband district. Experts of Government Ayurveda College, Raipur and Ayurveda experts of Gariaband district examined and treated the patients with kidney diseases in Supebeda and adjoining villages. This medical camp was organized at Sub-Health Center located at Supebeda. Free Medicines, health and diet related advices along with proper diagnosis were



also given to all the patients. Ayurveda Medicine Specialist Dr. Ranjit Kumar Das, Dr. S.D. Khicaria, Dr. Manish Patel and Dr. Rajkumar Kannauje examined and treated the patients at the camp. Now every Wednesday a camp will be organized for the treatment of kidney disease patients of Supebeda and nearby villages. Panchkarma specialist doctors, Ayurveda doctors

and pharmacists will also be present in the camp. Free medicines will be given to the patients in the camp after treatment. Patients will also be referred for higher level treatment if required. Ayurveda medical experts educated the villagers in the camp about the profound health benefits of Ayurveda to keep the kidney healthy and increase the human body's efficiency. Ayurveda flora

Gokshur, Punarnava, Amla, Mulethi, Guggul etc. should be used to detoxify the bloodstream and kidney. Kidney diseases can be avoided by including amla, barley, moong etc. in their daily diet or regular consumption of them in any form. Experts advised not to consume excessive amounts of sour substances in their diet like chili-spices, tamarind etc.

Jawans take woman bitten by snake to hospital

Konta, Apr 10: Police party from Camp Burkawal on 10.04.2022 in Konta block of Sukma district had left for the surrounding area for search duty, while on duty, information was received that Muchaki Gangi father Muchaki Deva of village Burkawal, age 18 years was bitten by a snake while she went to forest for collecting mahua. Immediately the police personnel reached the spot and gave first aid to the woman and informed the Superintendent of Police Sukma Sunil Sharma about the

incident. On the direction of Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma, the ambulance vehicle was arranged by the police personnel to provide better health benefits to the victim and the victim was immediately sent to Chintagufa Hospital. On reaching the hospital in time, the condition of the woman is now out of danger. The villagers have thanked the Police for this quick action. In this work, Deputy Inspector Mukesh Patel Camp Burkawal and other jawans made a special contribution.



Barnawapara Sanctuary gets rejuvenated with habitat upgradation works

Raipur, Apr 10:

Barnawapara, the most famous and attractive sanctuary filled with wildlife diversity of Chhattisgarh, has been rejuvenated in the recent times for the betterment of Wildlife flora and fauna. Barnawapara Sanctuary is home to wildlife species like leopard, gaur, bear, sambar, chital, nilgai, kotari, chausingha, wild boar, wild dog, striped hyena, fox, wolf and mouse antelope. The total area of Barnawapara Sanctuary is 244.86 sq km, in which mainly mixed forest, sal forest and teak plantation exist. Barnawapara also has unique trees from which woods like Sal and Teak is extracted. Other trees like Karra, Bhirra, Senha are found in mixed forests. Teak is naturally grown in the teak plantation

area and the Sal is grown in the Sal forest which is comparatively less in area. In addition to the beehive species, herbaceous species like Eupatorium, Lentana, Charoia etc. are the main weeds, due to which the herbivore wildlife found in the Barnawapara Sanctuary area does not get grass to graze. This rejuvenation of the sanctuary has been done to eradicate unnecessary weed plantations in the area. The eradication has been done with the amount approved in the annual action plan 2021-22 of CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) under wildlife habitat upgradation work. Under the weeds eradication program, inten-



Wildlife habitat upgradation work: Intensive lantana and eupatorium eradication work has been done in 5920 hectare area under CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) Favourable conditions have been developed for forest habitat and wildlife pasture

sive lantana eradication and eupatorium eradication work has been done in 5 thousand 920

hectares of area. Out of which eradication work of lantana in total 950 hectares of 19 organic corridors of Baranawapara sanctuary has been done and the eradication work of eupatorium in total area of 4 thousand 970 hectares in 32 corridors is included. As per the intention of Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, under the guidance of Forest and Climate Change Minister Mr. Mohammad Akbar, continuous work is being done to make the sanctuary more attractive. At a distance of about 100 km from the capital Raipur, the grass species has started growing rapidly due to the moisture content Barnawapara Sanctuary's soil located under Balodabazar Forest Division. Along with this, grasslands in the forests are available

for the Wildlife to graze from. Due to which they have started roaming freely after the eradication work of Lantana and Eupatorium. With this initiative, tourists can now easily spot Wildlife in the Sanctuary. Moreover, the wildlife of the forest has become healthier with the availability of more grazing grasslands. Principal and Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) P.V. Narsingh Rao said that keeping this in view, the work of eradication of intensive lantana and eupatorium has been done under wildlife habitat upgradation work in the sanctuary, so that now in Barnawapara sanctuary, green edible grass can be made available to the wildlife throughout the year as their food and fodder.

Celebration of the Holy Week



At St. Joseph's Parish Bachel

Bachel, Apr 10:

The moment of joy and hope was celebrated with great devotion by the devotees of Lord Jesus Christ. Today, the Palm Sunday which commemorates the entrance of Christ into

Jerusalem was celebrated by the parishioners of St. Joseph Parish, Bachel. The Holy Mass was said by Rev. Fr. Sajan and all the parishioners along with the good shepherd moved out in procession holding the palm leaves in their own hands thus marking the beginning of the Holy Week, the final week of Lent.

District level peace committee meeting held



Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi, April 10: In the coming days, festivals are to be organized by the followers of different religions including Ram Navami, Eid-ul-Fitr, Good Friday, Mahavir Jayanti, Ambedkar Jayanti, Hanuman Jayanti, and Guru Tegh Bahadur Jayanti. In view of which the admin-

istration on the instructions of District Superintendent of Police Trilok Bansal and Collector Ms Richa Prakash Choudhary, representatives of all political parties, peace committee of heads of social organizations organized a peace committee meeting. Addressing the meeting, Additional

Superintendent of Police Smt. Archana Jha asked all the people to organize and celebrate the festivals in a peaceful manner and instructed to take permission from the sub-divisional officer's office, and inform the police, about route chart and number of people participating in the processions.

Sub-divisional Revenue Officer Pushendra Sharma instructed about abstain from using high DJ devices. Sub-Divisional Officer of Police, Shri Ashok Wadegaonkar said that the presence of the police will be there in all the programs, but crowd control should be made both by the participants and volunteers.

In the said meeting, prominent people of all the society, elected public representatives participated enthusiastically and expressed their views. Police station in-charge Gaurela Inspector Yuvraj Tiwari, Defense Inspector Ramprasad Paikra, DSB in-charge and other staff were also present.

Encroachments and unauthorized occupants removed by KMC

**Korba, Apr 10:**

On the instructions of Commissioner Prabhakar Pandey, Korba Municipal Cooperation took to raze free encroachments and illegal occupants. Pavement were made free from encroachment by spreading the road sidewalk and re-

moving unauthorized encroachments in the memorial garden parking area and clock tower open theater and Minimata College. It is worth mentioning here that shops were decorated by spreading blankets, quilts, decorative items, clothes and other

materials by some people by illegally occupying the roadsides and sidewalks and as a resultant of which unnecessary crowds assembled causing inconvenience to the common citizens, and motorists. Taking intensive action the KMC squad removed these unauthorized

shops from the site and decorated the parking area in front of the memorial garden and the open theater in front of the clock tower and on the main road in front of Minimata College. Encroachment being done along the main road in Darri was also removed and occupants removed. Encroachment in-charge Shri Yogesh Rathore informed that a room was being constructed illegally by a person on the side of 52 main road, as soon as the information was received, the encroachment squad reached the spot and removed the encroachments.

BRIEF

Nabbed

Kolkata: The BSF nabbed six Bangladeshi nationals, including three women and a child, while they were trying to cross over into India, and handed them over to neighbouring country's border guarding force, officials said. A BSF statement said the six were apprehended when they were trying to cross over to this side at Ranghat and Jeetpur border outposts. They were handed over to Border Guard Bangladesh hours later at two border outposts in North 24 Parganas.

Recovered

Bhubaneswar: Gold, silver and Rs 1.14 crore cash were recovered from a slum in Bhubaneswar, following the arrest of a government engineer in a corruption case, officials said. Assistant engineer Kartikeswar Roul, posted at the Water Resources Department in Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district, was arrested by anti-corruption sleuths. A shanty in Salia Sahi slum was raided and Rs 1.41 crore in cash, gold weighing 354 gram and 1kg silver were recovered, they said.

Busted

Gurugram: A thak thak' gang, notorious for swiping people's valuables from their cars after knocking on their window pane, has been busted with arrest of three of its members, Gurugram police said. The gang members hailing from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka would usually come by train here but would return by flight, they said. A sum of Rs 2,62,990 in cash, three laptops, three mobiles, two watches, three ladies bags, three liquor bottles, three catapults were found.

Removed

Berhampur: Plastic waste weighing around 15 kg was removed from the stomach of a stray cow by veterinary doctors at a state-run facility in Odisha's Ganjam district, officials said. A team of veterinary doctors, led by district veterinary surgeon Dr Kiran Kumar Bisoi operated on the six-year-old cow for around three hours after it was rescued, they said. Polythene bags, wrappers and other plastic wastes were removed from the stomach of the cow, Dr Bisoi said.

Loot

Ludhiana: Three unidentified motorcycle-borne robbers looted Rs 50 lakh cash from the office of an oil trading company here, police said. They said it took just five minutes for the robbers to loot the money at gunpoint and thereafter escaped from the thickly populated area. Senior IPS officer Kaustubh Sharma, who assumed the charge of Ludhiana police commissioner, visited Kesar Ganj mandi. He said investigation is underway and police got clues about robbers.

DMK, Asam Sahitya Sabha oppose alleged Hindi 'imposition'



Chennai, Apr 10 (PTI):

The ruling DMK on Sunday 'warned' the Centre against imposing Hindi saying the Tamil people still remembered the anti-Hindi agitation by late party patriarch M Karunanidhi, implying that they would not allow it to happen. The ruling party's mouthpiece 'Murasoli' in its edition carried a well-known slogan of Karunanidhi (1924-2018)

against foisting Hindi on people and captioned the write-up as 'Warning to the Union government.'

The crux of the Tamil slogan, which involves figurative use of language, is a clarion call to the people to staunchly oppose imposition of Hindi and an assertion that there is no 'coward' in the state hinting that Hindi cannot be imposed on them. According to the party organ, Karunanidhi as a 14-year old student

marched on the streets of his native Tiruvarur in 1938 along with other students raising this slogan to oppose Hindi imposition. The DMK Tamil daily said people still remembered Karunanidhi's rally and added, 'Do not forget it', which implied that people would hence not permit imposition of Hindi to happen in Tamil Nadu.

Reacting to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement on April 7 that Hindi should be accepted as an alternative to English and not to local languages, DMK president and Chief Minister MK Stalin had said that it would wreck the nation's integrity. The Asam Sahitya Sabha (ASS), an influential literary body, has criticised the move to make Hindi a compulsory subject till Class 10 in North-Eastern states and asked the government to concentrate on conserving and promoting indigenous languages.

Advanced baggage scanners introduced at DMRC

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

The DMRC has started introducing highly advanced and state-of-the-art baggage scanners at its metro stations in a phased manner to provide extra safety and security to passengers, officials said on Sunday.

The advanced features in these newly-introduced baggage scanners also ensure more convenience for the elderly and women commuters while lifting and placing heavy baggage items through the system for scanning, they said.

Presently, 34 such baggage scanners with specialised commuter-friendly features have already been installed at major stations at Kashmere Gate, AIIMS, Vishwavidyalaya, HUDA City Centre, Rajouri Garden, Mayur



DMRC has started introducing X-BIS System at the security frisking points of NCR Metro stations, in a phased manner.

Vihar Ph-1, NOIDA Sec-18, Palam, replacing the older X-BIS systems, the DMRC said. Gradually, over 250 more such baggage scanners will be installed across all Delhi Metro stations by the year end. At present, there are around 400 X-BIS machines in-

stalled at different metro stations across DMRC network it said. "In order to further upgrade and strengthen the X-Ray baggage Scanning System (X-BIS System) at the security frisking points of Metro stations, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation has start-

Will take everyone along: Punjab Congress chief

Chandigarh, Apr 10 (PTI): Amrinder Singh Brar, the new chief of the Punjab Congress, promised to take every party leader and worker along to strengthen the organisation in the state, where the faction-ridden party was ousted from power in the recently held Assembly polls.

New Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader in the state, Partap Singh Bajwa, said he will fight tooth and nail for the rights of Punjab and its public.

Former Punjab minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu, who has been appointed as the working president of the state Congress, and



Amrinder Singh Brar

Deputy CLP leader Raj Kumar Chabbawal too said the entire state unit will work as a team.

Amrinder Singh Brar, also called Raja Warring, was appointed the party's new Punjab chief in place of Navjot Singh Sidhu by Congress president Sonia

Gandhi. Warring, who was the transport minister in the last Congress government, won the Assembly elections from the Gidderbaha constituency.

Sidhu was asked to tender his resignation after the party's debacle in the elections.

Bajwa, a former Rajya Sabha MP, was elected as an MLA from the Qadian Assembly constituency.

"I promise to work alongside every worker & leader of the party to strengthen the party & carry forward the ideology," Warring said in a tweet after his appointment as the Punjab Congress president.

Dhavalikar becomes minister in Goa's cabinet

MGP's love-hate relationship with BJP continues

Panaji, Apr 10 (PTI):

A new chapter was added to the continuous flip-flops of the Maharashtra Gomantak Party in its love-hate relationship with the BJP in Goa over the past decade after MLA Sudin Dhavalikar was sworn in as minister in the Pramod Sawant cabinet.

Incidentally, in the run-up to the Assembly polls, that were held on February 14 and results of which were declared in March 10, Dhavalikar had claimed his party would play king-maker and had added he would not sup-



Sudin Dhavalikar for a function in Gaunem-Bandora.

port any dispensation that had Sawant as chief minister. In the 2012 Assembly polls, the two parties fought in alliance, with the BJP winning 21 seats in the 40-member House, and the MGP getting two, leading to both Sudin and his younger brother

Deepak being made ministers in the Manohar Parrikar government. After Parrikar was made Defence Minister in the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, Laxmikant Parsekar took over as CM, a move that led to differences coming

HANUMAN TEMPLE VISIT



BJP National President JP Nadda serves a monkey during his visit to Hanuman temple, in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh on Sunday.

Odisha CM asks ministers for performance reports amid reshuffle buzz

Bhubaneswar, Apr 10 (PTI):

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has asked all ministers in his government to submit performance reports of their departments amid speculations over a possible reshuffle.

In a letter, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) sought to know the performance of the ministers and the achievements of their departments, among others.

Patnaik would hold one-to-one meetings with all the ministers and review their performance after getting the reports, sources in the CMO said.

Information regarding whether the ministers have worked towards fulfilling the promises made by the ruling BJD in its



Naveen Patnaik

election manifesto has also been sought.

In case of poor performance, the ministers would be asked to explain the reason, the sources said.

The BJD's performance in the recently-concluded panchayat and civic polls in the districts of the respective ministers will also be taken into consideration during the review, they said. Water Resources Minister Raghunandan

Das said, "We have prepared the performance report and will submit it to the CMO soon. Our department has undertaken many works as per the state government's 5-T initiative."

The '5T' initiative was launched in 2019 for achieving transparency, teamwork, technology and timely completion of projects, leading to transformation.

Social Security and Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities Minister Ashok Chandra Panda said his department has been submitting performance reports every month to the CMO even during the pandemic.

Asked about the possible reshuffle, Panda said, "It is the prerogative of the Chief Minister.

French nationals in Puducherry cast vote in Prez election

Puducherry, Apr 10 (PTI):

French nationals residing in the union territory of Puducherry (a former French colony) voted in the country's Presidential elections, here on Sunday.

Official sources said 4,564 French citizens from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry were eligible to exercise their franchise in the first round of the polls in France.

Sources said the polling began at 8 AM and would go on till 7 PM. Twelve candidates are in the fray. If no candidate gets an absolute majority in the first round, a run-off election would be held between the top two candidates on April 24. "France offers its citizens abroad who are over 18 years of age and



French nationals living in India arrive to cast their votes in the first round of French presidential elections at the Consulat General De France in Pondicherry on Sunday.

have registered to be in the electoral list in the Consulate General of France here to vote in person in the country of resi-

dence, an opportunity to vote in the Presidential election, referendums, legislative elections, European elections and

election of Councillors of French citizens abroad," a release said.

While the Puducherry region has two polling booths housed on the premises of Consulate General of France and in the French school Lycee Francaise, Karaikal and Chennai have one polling station each.

A number of young and elderly voters turned up at the booths in the forenoon Sunday. A 22-year old voter told PTI that she was doing a course in a college affiliated to Pondicherry University and this was the first time that she was exercising her franchise.

Elderly women were also part of those who cast their votes at a booth in the French Consul General office.

Karnataka Govt directs CID to probe Chandru murder case

Bengaluru, Apr 10 (PTI):

The Karnataka government has decided to hand over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) the probe into the case relating to the murder of 22-year-old Chandru who was allegedly stabbed to death recently by some Muslim youths. Chandru, who was accompanied by his friend Simon Raj, was stabbed to death by Shahid Pasha on April 4 afternoon. While the police maintained that it was a case of road rage, the ruling BJP asserted that Chandru was stabbed for not knowing Urdu as stated by the Home Minister Araga Jnanendra before retracting. "I spoke to the Director General of Police



Basavaraj Bommai

and the Bengaluru police Commissioner. I have decided to hand over the case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). Let an impartial probe happen by a third party and truth should come out," Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai told reporters on Sunday. Probably, the

Commissioner will write to the Director General of Police to hand over the case to the CID, he added.

Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra who had initially said on Wednesday that the youth was stabbed to death for not knowing Urdu, later retracted it after coming in for flak from various quarters.

Bengaluru police maintained that it was a case of road rage and not any other case. The police said Chandru's bike had collided with Shahid Pasha's two-wheeler.

The Congress too demanded Jnanendra's resignation for stoking communal passions with his statement and giving a twist to the case.

BRIEF

Protest

Santiago: Dozens of protesters gathered in front of the Russian embassy in Chile's capital of Santiago to denounce the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Protesters unfurled a large banner featuring the colours of the Ukrainian flag. The group included Ukrainians living in Chile. Some protesters lay down on the ground and clutched stuffed animals to honour child victims of the war. A large banner read, Stand with Ukraine. Some protesters lay down on the ground with animal toys.

Surgery

Amman: Jordan's monarch is travelled to Germany for a spine surgery, Jordan's palace announced. King Abdullah II, 60, will undergo a surgery to treat a herniated disc in the thoracic spine at a hospital in Frankfurt next week, and will return home after a recovery period of one week. The king suffers from intermittent spine pain as result of parachute jumping during his years of service in special operations, and doctors advised him to receive surgery as pain increased recently.

Scam

Richmond: It's a crime that siphons untold billions from US economy but many people have never heard of it. Business Email Compromise scams involve criminals hacking into email accounts, pretending to be someone they're not and fooling victims into sending money where it does not belong. Although they get far less attention than the massive ransomware attacks that have triggered a powerful government response, BEC scams have been by far the costliest type.

Ready

Mexico City: A small archipelago off Mexico's Pacific coast that had been home to an island prison colony is now ready to receive tourists. Getting to Islas Marias, however, will be a challenge for even the sturdiest tourist: a five-hour boat ride in often choppy waters. But some people, like Beatriz Maldonado, are already imagining the voyage. When Maldonado was imprisoned between those walls of water as a Mexican writer also confined there described it she thought.

Delays

Warsaw: Air travel authorities in Poland are warning travellers of possible flight delays and cancellations at Warsaw's airport due to a protest and some flight controllers quitting their jobs. The protest is in reaction to changes made in January to the functioning of the flight regulatory body, the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency, as well as to allegations that it was not properly ensuring airspace security. The controllers have also criticised the new salary system being implemented.

Polls open in first round of France's presidential election

Paris, Apr 10 (AP):

Polls opened across France Sunday for the first round of the country's presidential election, where up to 48 million eligible voters will be choosing between 12 candidates. President Emmanuel Macron is seeking a second five-year term, with a strong challenge from the far right.

Polls opened at 8 am Sunday in most places and an hour later in some larger cities. France operates a manual system for elections: Voters are obliged to cast ballots in person, ones that will be hand-counted when the voting closes.

Unless someone gets more than half of the nationwide vote, there will be a second and decisive round between the top two candi-



French Rassemblement National (RN) presidential candidate Marine Le Pen casts her ballot in Henin-Beaumont on Sunday.

dates on Sunday, April 24.

Bundled up against an April chill, voters lined up to cast ballots at a polling station in southern Paris on Sunday before it opened. Once inside, they placed their paper ballots into envelopes and then into a transparent box, some wearing masks or using hand gel as part of COVID-

19 measures.

Aside from Macron, far-right candidate Marine Le Pen and far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon are among the prominent figures vying to take the presidential Elysee.

Macron, a political centrist, for months looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in

20 years to win a second term. But that scenario blurred in the campaign's closing stages as the pain of inflation and of pump, food and energy prices roared back as dominant election themes for many low-income households. They could drive many voters Sunday into the arms of far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Macron's political nemesis.

Macron trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become France's youngest president in 2017. The win for the former banker now 44 was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist politics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

Poland-Ukraine ties seen as target of disinformation

● Poland also has difficult history with Russia

Warsaw, Apr 10 (AP):

Days before Poland's Independence Day in November, vandals painted the blue-and-yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag on monuments in Krakow. The vandalism, which took place as Russia massed troops near Ukraine's border, looked as if Ukrainians were defacing memorials to Polish national heroes. Yet some clues suggested otherwise. The flag's colors were reversed, with the yellow on top of the blue and one offensive message was in an unnatural mix of Russian and Ukrainian. Though prosecutors are still



Workers clean a monument that was defaced with the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag, in Krakow, Poland.

investigating, Polish and Ukrainian authorities believe it was most likely a Russian-inspired attempt to trigger ethnic hostility between Ukrainians and Poles. Polish and Ukrainian authorities have for years accused Russia

of trying to provoke hostility between their neighboring nations as part of a broader effort to divide and destabilize the West and the concerns have gained greater urgency since Russia invaded Ukraine.

'Welcome back to 'purana Pakistan'

Islamabad, Apr 10 (PTD):

"We welcome (you) back to the purana Pakistan," top Opposition leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Sunday, as he took a jibe at ousted Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan following the adoption of a no-confidence vote against him.

Khan, who came to power in 2018 with promises to create a Naya Pakistan, was unceremoniously removed from the office, becoming the first premier in the country's history to be ousted through a no-trust motion.

Despite the government's hectic efforts to avoid voting on the no-confidence motion against Khan, the joint Opposition succeeded in its month-long efforts to oust Khan from the prime minister's



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari

office as 174 members of the 342-member National Assembly voted against him after a day of high drama.

"I would like to congratulate the whole nation and this House, as for the first time in the history of the country, a no-confidence motion has succeeded and we have made history," Bilawal said. Speaking on the occasion, the PPP chairman recalled the sig-

nificance of April 10, adding that on this day, the country approved the 1973 Constitution.

"On April 10, 1986, Benazir Bhutto ended her self-imposed exile and arrived in Lahore to launch her struggle against Ziaul haq," said Bilawal as he recalled his mother. The Pakistan Peoples Party chairman said that on April 10, 2022, the person who was declared "selected by the Opposition and proved himself to be an undemocratic burden on the country saw the end of his rule."

On April 10, 2022, we welcome (you) back to the purana (old) Pakistan, said Bilawal, who is likely to be appointed the next foreign minister. Khan was dogged by claims of economic mismanagement as his government

Experts divided on UK plan as COVID-19 cases soar

London, Apr 10 (AP):

For many in the UK, the pandemic may as well be over. Mask requirements have been dropped. Free mass testing is a thing of the past. And for the first time since spring 2020, people can go abroad for holidays without ordering tests or filling out lengthy forms.

That sense of freedom is widespread even as infections soared in Britain in March, driven by the milder but more transmissible omicron BA.2 variant that's rapidly spreading around Europe, the US and elsewhere.

The situation in the UK may portend what lies ahead for other countries as they ease coronavirus



A man walks past a health campaign poster at an underpass leading to Westminster underground train station, in London.

restrictions. France and Germany have seen similar spikes in infections in recent weeks, and the number of hospitalizations in the UK and France has again climbed though the number of deaths per day remains well below levels seen earlier in the pandemic.

In the US, more and more Americans are testing at home, so official case numbers are likely a vast undercount. The roster of those newly infected include actors and politicians, who are tested regularly. Cabinet members, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Broadway actors

and the governors of New Jersey and Connecticut have all tested positive.

Britain stands out in Europe because it ditched all mitigation policies in February, including mandatory self-isolation for those infected. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's conservative government is determined to stick to its 'living with COVID' plan, but experts disagree on whether the country is coping well.

Some scientists argue it's the right time to accept that 'living with COVID' means tolerating a certain level of disruption and deaths, much like we do for seasonal flu. Others believe that Britain's government lifted restrictions too quickly and too soon.

Greece softens 'tough' migration policy for Ukrainians

Athens, Apr 10 (AFP):

For more than two years, Greece's conservative government has prided itself on enforcing a "tough but fair" policy towards thousands of asylum seekers trying to cross the EU's southeastern border.

But towards Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion, the reception has been starkly different — and long-term migrants have been the first to notice.

Shahran, 16, is among around 100 Afghans who were recently told to clear out of their lodgings in a camp in Serres, northern Greece, to make space for Ukrainian refugees.

"When the Ukrainians started coming, we were told to leave the house we were living in and they took us to another area of the camp, in a very dirty container. Why?" he told AFP.

Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi drew criticism last month after calling Ukrainians "real refugees".

The conservative Greek government, in power since 2019, has strengthened patrols on the border with Turkey designed to crack down on asylum seekers.

It has slashed benefits available to recognised refugees from the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, many of whom have struggled to assimilate in Greece for years.

Closed camps have been created on Greek islands with EU funds, and aid groups assisting asylum seekers have been drastically regulated.

In contrast, within weeks of the conflict starting, Athens issued temporary residence permits to Ukrainian refugees, who will be able to stay and work in the country for one year.

The government has also promised work, noting that there are more than 140,000 jobs available in the agriculture sector and some 50,000 in tourism.

More than 18,000 Ukrainians have fled to Greece so far, compared to 32,600 asylum-seekers staying in the country's camps.

Treatment for opioid addiction often brings discrimination

Philadelphia, Apr 10 (AP):

Danielle Russell was in the emergency department at an Arizona hospital last fall, sick with COVID-19, when she made the mistake of answering completely when she was asked what medications she was on. 'I said yes, I was taking methadone,' said Russell, a doctoral student who also was in recovery from heroin use.

The smart thing to do, if I wanted to be treated like a human, would be to say no. Even though her primary doctor had sent her to the ER, she said she was discharged swiftly without being treated and given a stack of papers about the hospital's policies for prescribing pain medications drugs she was not asking for.

'It becomes so absurd and the stigma against methadone especially is so strong,' she said, noting that other people in recovery have had it worse. 'You're getting blocked out from housing resources, employment.'

It's a problem people in the addiction recovery community have dealt with for decades: On top of the stigma surrounding addiction, people who are in medical treatment for substance abuse can face additional discrimination including in medical and legal settings that are supposed to help.

This week, the US Department of Justice published new guidelines aimed at dealing with the problem: They assert that it's illegal under the Americans

with Disabilities Act to discriminate against people because they are using prescribed methadone or other medications to treat opioid use disorder.

The guidelines don't change federal government policy, but they do offer clarification and signal that authorities are watching for discrimination in a wide range of settings. The Justice Department's actions this year also show it's taken an interest in the issue, reaching multiple legal settlements, filing a lawsuit and sending a warning letter alleging other violations.

One of the government's recent settlements was with a Colorado program that helps house and employ people who are homeless.

Shanghai releases COVID recovered, but cases continue to rise

Beijing, Apr 10 (PTD):

Shanghai, which is reeling under a massive outbreak of coronavirus cases, has released over 11,000 recovered COVID-19 patients from hospitals, but infection numbers continued to climb, raising questions about China's much-touted dynamic zero-case policy.

Wu Qianyu, a senior official with the east Chinese city's public health commission, told a media briefing on Sunday that the patients would be put under home quarantine and no further controls should be imposed on them. Relevant authorities in the areas they live in have to be alerted that they are allowed to go home. At the same time, the officials are required to monitor



Workers seen next to food delivered in Shanghai under lockdown on Sunday.

their health (during the quarantine period), the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported. Over 11,000 recovered patients have been released, it said.

But much to the disquiet of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by President Xi Jinping, single-day new in-

fections in Shanghai hit 24,944 on Sunday, setting a new record for the ninth consecutive day. However, positive cases dropped slightly to 1,006 from 1,015.

Shanghai, China's commercial and financial capital, has seen more than 179,000 cases since the current outbreak, driven by the Omicron variant,

began on March 1, the Post report said.

About 5,400 patients were reported to have mild symptoms, while others were asymptomatic.

The sudden rise of cases has led to the much-criticised lockdown of the city of 26 million people amid public criticism of the separation of children from parents in hospitals and testing centres as well distribution of food supplies to the people who were confined for days to the apartment blocks.

"The tidal wave has yet to peak, and worries are that the citywide lockdown will last for another few weeks, which may cripple the local economy, said Wang Feng, chairman of Shanghai-based financial service group Ye Lang Capital.



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Removing landfills

After a major fire broke out at the Ghazipur landfill site in east Delhi this month, civic authorities said 20 advanced machines have been installed to speed up the biominning process of the massive dump. Biominning is a process by which garbage is treated with bio-organisms or natural elements like air and sunlight so that the biodegradable elements in the waste break down over time. Each set of these machines will process 1,000 tonne garbage per day, and eight have already started working, while the remaining 12 machines are likely to be functional. Most Indian cities have doorstep waste collection programmes, but lack the infrastructure to actually process waste, hence landfills across India are growing. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had given strict directions to carry out bio-minning, bio-remediation of legacy waste, and clear the area after observing it is the model followed by the Indore Municipal Corporation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year had assured that the garbage mountains in cities will be processed and removed completely as part of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0. Circular-economy approaches seek to 'design-out' waste and pollution by keeping materials in use in order to support and regenerate natural systems. It's not just microbes and waste bones that can prove useful. Plants underpin another type of bioremediation known as phytoremediation. Simply put, for many organisations charged with clean-up duties there remains too much unpredictability as to how different bacteria or plants will work in a particular environment, which depends on factors such as the climate, soil conditions and the presence of other chemicals and organisms. However, bioremediation projects only recover a portion of recyclables, and since most moisture content of waste is lost in the first month of waste disposal, it is unlikely that there will be significant reduction in the volume of historic waste.

Fresh waste generated in Indian cities consist of about 55-60 percent biodegradable material, 20-25 percent recyclable waste and 15-20 percent inert materials, according to CPHEEO (Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation). Historic waste largely consists of inert material and debris. With years of degradation and frequent fire accidents, ash content and volatile materials also end up contributing to historic waste. The recoverables from historic waste are not fit for recycling and hence do not fetch value. The only potential use of the sieved historic waste could be to fill low-lying areas, but this cannot be a revenue source since construction debris is abundantly available for this purpose. The other recoverable in processing historic waste is half-burnt plastic, which also has no commercial value. As part of the bioremediation process, the historic waste, after sieving, is reorganised systematically, divided into piles of greater height than haphazard disposal and then compacted. The closed landfill can also be landscaped. Handling waste while it is still fresh is a challenging job to carry out regularly but considering the environmental hazards of accumulating waste as landfills generate dangerous methane gases, handling historic waste is far more challenging and expensive than fresh waste. Processing of fresh waste can reduce the volume of waste to less than 15-20 percent through loss of moisture content and removal of recyclables and its by-products, thus making this the sustainable, cost-effective and feasible option. Bioremediation can be a part of the solution to addressing India's mounting problems with waste, as it helps to tackle the lakhs of tonnes of garbage already accumulated at landfills across the country.

WMDs threat

In the budget session last week, the Lok Sabha passed the Bill that sought to prohibit the funding of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) with external affairs minister S Jaishankar stating that the passage of the legislation will strengthen national security and enhance India's reputation globally. The law has been introduced now because there is a need to amend the said act to provide against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems so as to fulfil India's international obligations. The statement of objectives and reasons said that in recent times, regulations relating to the proliferation of WMDs and their delivery systems by international organisations have expanded. Further, the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) targeted financial sanctions and the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) have mandated against the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Experts say the timing of the law may have to do with reports of unauthorised work in labs, and also as a response to rapid advances in technology, such as drones. Biological weapons threat has become an issue of serious concern, with the development of dangerous pathogens in laboratories without the necessary level of safety protocols. The pharmaceutical industry in India is growing and this law prevents any wrongful development activity.

In practical terms, there is no possibility of individuals in India developing WMDs, but the law is being tightened to give the government the power to prevent such a possibility. The timing may have to do with the Covid virus as well as reports about unauthorised work in labs in India and even similarly controversial US-linked lab projects in Ukraine too. India has individuals and corporations making strides in drone technology and biomedical and radioactivity research which could fall under the ambit of activities concerning weapons of mass destruction. Last month, India took a measured and responsible stance at the UNSC, calling for the adherence to the full and effective implementation of the bio-weapons convention in letter and in spirit. India's UN ambassador at the UNSC TS Tirumurti said that India has repeatedly expressed serious concern over the ongoing situation. It has noted the recent statements and wider information on bio-activities relating to Ukraine and would like to underline the importance attached by India to biological and toxic weapon convention. The crisis in Ukraine has brought to the fore the threat the world continues to face from the risk of WMD in form of biological weapons and lack of transparency in biological activities of great powers such as US, China and Russia.

'BHANGRA' SEASON



Sikh youths perform the traditional Punjabi folk dance 'Bhangra' ahead of harvest season festival of Baisakhi at a wheat field in Amritsar, Punjab.

Fishermen struggle to survive as Assam's largest wetland shrinks

AATREYEE DHAR



When the night's darkness descends over the waters of Son Beel, the largest wetland in Assam and the second largest in Asia, Rotish Das, 33, sets out to catch fish in his boat. He fishes in the placid expanse of Son Beel through the night and sells his catch the next day, at a bustling fish market, the Kalibari bazaar, a few kilometres away. The catch that once earned him Rs 500 a day, has now dwindled in volume drastically. The declined stock of carps, prawns and catfish draws him a little more than Rs 150 daily, which is not enough to go around the year. 'Earlier I would catch the same quantity of fish both during the day and the night. Casting a fishing net weighing about 10kg doesn't guarantee a decent-sized catch, whereas a 5kg net would suffice before. Fishes like Ilish (Hilsa) and Chapila (Indian river shad) are not available anymore,' says Rotish, the resident of Bagantilla, a village on the southern bank of Son Beel.

The wetland is spread over more than 3,000 ha in Assam's Barak valley and is fed mostly by the Singla river, originating from the hills of Mizoram. The northernmost part of the wetland drains through the outlet Kachua into the river Kuchiarra in Bangladesh, after traversing a length of 19.3 km. A dam constructed in 1954 on Kachua was replaced by a lock gate to enable navigation and migration of fish. Home to at least 69 different species of fish, the veritable paradise sup-

ports rich birds as well as other vegetation in the region. Joykumar Das, another fisherman, from Saija Nagar, a village on the eastern bank of the wetland, resonates a similar loss. His monthly income from fisheries would earlier earn him Rs 10,000-12,000 each month. Now, the income has dwindled with the business he refers to as 'netting' or raking large unsparing synthetic nets over the wetland's waters. These fishing gears are banned by the government and their use could get him and his fellow fishermen, in trouble with the authorities, according to Sahidul Islam Laskar, a civil rights activist based in Barak valley. However, Joykumar barely gets by with his small catch totalling a daily income of Rs 300 or less, which amounts to Rs 6,000 or 7,000 in a month.

For hundreds of years now, the lifestyle of these fishermen has been shaped by the lifecycle of the wetland, brimming with water during the rainy seasons and drying up during winter. They practiced fishing when the wetland had water and cultivated buru, the local paddy, when water was scarce. The fishermen belong to the Kaibarta community who migrated to Assam's Barak Valley from Bangladesh after the Partition, settling in villages on the banks of Son Beel. There are over 30,000 Kaibarta families solely dependent on the wetland for their livelihood. Most of them are masterful boatmen and fishermen, who started engaging in agriculture only later. But a shortage of rainfall for over four years, has minimised the wetland's water supply. Rotish recounts how at one time water would overflow the paddy fields during the harvest season. Now, rains are delayed by two months, he says. 'Owing to the change in rain patterns, the water requirement for the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems for which wetlands act as a medium, is not met. This leads to them slipping away,' explains Jayaditya Purkayastha, a

leading herpetologist based in Guwahati, Assam. A 2012 study showed a reduction of 31.58 percent of the total annual rainfall between 2004 and 2008 in the Barak Valley region. As climate change and anthropogenic activities threaten the wetland, fish productivity remains a distant memory for the fisherfolk. The upstream migration of Hilsa from the downstream rivers of Bangladesh, has stopped altogether. The effects have been devastating for Rotish and Joykumar, who rely on rice distributed as ration instead of their home-grown paddy. Rotish observes a 70 percent decrease in his paddy production, which he blames on the excess silt accumulated in the wetland. Lamenting at the loss of food security, he comments, 'We would pride in feeding our guests fish from the beel and paddy from our fields. Now, that is impossible.'

In Son Beel, overfishing, upstream pollution and agricultural encroachment, are destroying the sanctity of the diverse ecosystem. Local fishermen use gigantic gill nets with small holes -locally referred to as mahajjal, to that drag the bed of the wetland, entrapping young fishes and eggs, apart from the usual catch. 'Unlike the traditional fishing nets, these mosquito-net lookalikes trap more life than they are supposed to do,' says Anwaruddin Choudhury, an ornithologist and a former bureaucrat. These standardised fishing methods stress fish populations, which are a critical source of food for the nearly 150 bird species thriving in the region, as documented by Anwaruddin. Among the many birds he marked during his sightings in Son Beel, are the openbill stork, the lesser adjutant stork, the golden plover, the whiskered tern, the great cormorant, the Indian cormorant, the common cormorant, the Brahminy kite, and the black redstart. However, most of these birds have shrunk in numbers, either due to poaching or habitat destruction and

are rarely spotted now. 'Encroachment is taking place on the small islands in Son Beel dotted with hijol trees (Barringtonia acutangula) that serve as habitats for migratory birds. These trees standing in water are being felled sizably,' says Manabendra Dutta Choudhury, a professor at the Department of Life Science and Bioinformatics, Assam University, Silchar. 'The beel largely occupied by the government and shared by the fisherfolk, is losing swathes of wetland to buru crop cultivation. Bundhs are created for capture fishing whenever the beel is found untouched,' he elaborates.

The increasing deforestation around the hills through which the river Singla, Son Beel's primary inlet flows has choked the wetland with silt, leading to eutrophication; significantly reducing the size of the wetland, adds Manabendra. As a result, the wetland is slowly disappearing. A study from 2014 on fish diversity in the Barak Valley, captured a Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of the water area. A total of 3,593.6 ha shrunk over a span of 100 years, from 1880 to 1980. Wetlands have been known to conserve tons of carbon every year through their stored biomass, in soil and land, apart from acting as buffers absorbing silt/nutrients during floods. 'Wiping them out, transforms them from carbon sinks to emitters of carbon,' points out Purkayastha. There are many hurdles to conserving Son Beel as a wetland, right from drumming up funds and political will, to changing the unsustainable fishing methods. Others question if a simple designation would solve the issues of the wetland conservation. 'The situation of wetlands such as Deepor Beel in Assam, remains grim, even after the declaration as a Ramsar site.

(Aatreyyee Dhar from Guwahati is climate tracker fellow and writes on environmental, health and gender issues.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

War is terrible

War is terrible and it is a bloody business, literally. After the insurgency in Afghanistan last year, once again the world is witnessing a war, and this time Ukraine is bleeding. An image of a Ukrainian father's farewell to his cute daughter is trending on social media. Will such images move Vladimir Putin's heart? Will the image of innocent children fleeing for refuge move those politicians' and generals' hearts? In recent times, the world saw scores of heart-rending images of crying, bleeding, wounded and helpless children in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Palestine, Kashmir and elsewhere. Civilians became victims of invading forces, crushing humanity for the sake of feigned glory. For those callous and hardened political leaders, power and wealth matter, and not human relations and emotions. And which is why, perhaps, imperialists have never learned any lesson from history. Russia's invasion of Ukraine will presumably change the course of European and world history, but for imperialists like Putin, it will hardly teach any lesson. When can we see a world which is totally and absolutely conflict-free? Perhaps, the answer is when the power of love overcomes the love of power.

Ranganathan, via email

XE variant

The report by the World Health Organization is worrisome and reiterates the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over. With the ebbing of the third wave, tourist spots are bursting at their seams and COVID-19 protocols are hardly observed. One ought not to forget that there are possibilities of further variants evolving, whose spread may be aided with international flights to India being restored.

Aanya, via email

Realistic view

Just when the western bloc has been attempting to censure India for circumventing the sanctions regime against Russia, it comes as a whiff of fresh air that Australia, a member of the Quad grouping, has extended a much-needed hand of friendship to India with the signing of ECTA. That Canberra is keen on bolstering its ties with India was very clear when, in March, it ceremoniously returned 29 antiquities to India. What is heartening is that Australia is taking a more realistic view of India's stand on the Ukraine issue than the other members of the Quad. It cannot be denied that bilateral trade has been skewed toward Australia and one hopes that the recently inked ECTA will effectively bridge the wide gap in the trade imbalance between the two countries.

Nalini, via email

WHAT THEY TWEET!

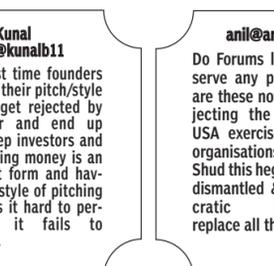


Giriraj@GirirajDaga5
First time in my career, happy to see that we have a RBI Governor, who is understanding cause of inflation & treating accordingly, rather than just following a historic rule book i.e. Higher inflation = Interest rate hike (irrespective of the fact what is causing inflation).

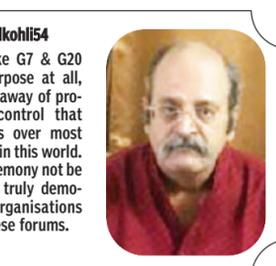
Gaurav@majorgaurav
Pakistan has always been ruled by a dictator. Sometimes the dictator wears a uniform, sometimes not. The clothes are not important. The mindset is the same. And Pakistan is run on one principle alone ?? Apres moi, le deluge.



Kunal Shah@kunalb11
A lot of first time founders don't tweak their pitch/style when they get rejected by an investor and end up going to keep investors and failing. Raising money is an iterative art form and having a strict style of pitching often makes it hard to persuade as it fails to empathize.



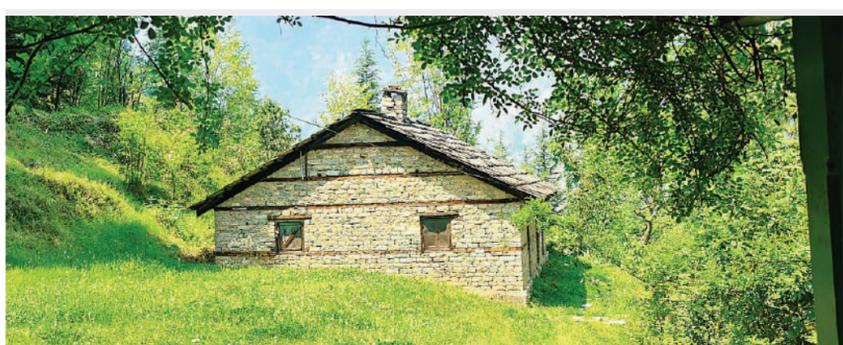
anil@anilkohli54
Do Forums like G7 & G20 serve any purpose at all, are these not away of projecting the control that USA exercises over most organisations in this world. Shud this hegemony not be dismantled & truly democratic organisations replace all these forums.



Aishwarya@aishwaryarajifs
No filters needed for this beautiful Forest Rest House.



Shilpa@godboleshilpa
The rule in many MH houses is to not wear outside footwear inside the house. We have gharatliya slippers, yet family member who shall not be named will wear office shoes first & then head indoors to secure keys, rumal, mask..development of marital tension looks like this.



Buggy@SridharanAnand
If Ranveer Singh launched a D2C apparel brand, it would be very high margin. Raw material can entirely be scraps left over after making sofa cover, curtain, shamiya etc. 99% gross margin & ESG friendly too. You're welcome, VCS.

BRIEF

Battery



New Delhi: Battery startup Pravaig has been picked up by a European renewable energy company, Eren Groupe, for its storage applications, the start-up's co-founder said. Siddhartha Bagri on Sunday. Battery is the critical component of an electric vehicle.

Import

New Delhi: India's gold imports, which have a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), rose by 33.34 per cent to USD 46.14 billion during the 2021-22 fiscal on account of higher demand, according to official data. Gold imports were worth USD 34.62 billion in 2020-21. The surge in gold imports during the last financial year contributed to the widening of the trade deficit to USD 192.41 billion.

LNG



New Delhi: Shell will foray into retailing LNG for long-haul transportation like trucks, with its first filling station coming up in Gujarat this year as it bets big on the Indian gas market. Country head Nakul Raheja told PTI that they are working now on its own expansion plans.

Invest

New Delhi: Steel products maker Goodluck India will invest Rs 200 crore over the next two-three years to expand capacity, its Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) MC Garg said. BSE-listed Goodluck India has five manufacturing units at Sikandrabad (Uttar Pradesh) and one in Kutch (Gujarat) with a total installed capacity of 3,40,000 tonnes per annum.

Expecting



New Delhi: BMW is expecting a 'mega year' in India in 2022 having clocked 25 per cent rise in four-wheeler sales and 41 per cent jump in two-wheelers. Vikram Pawah told PTI that there are some additional challenges coming through geopolitical situation.

Priority

New Delhi: India is among one of the "priority markets" for the direct selling Swedish beauty brand Oriflame, where it expects to continue its double-digit growth over the next 3-5 years. The company which sells cosmetic and wellness products in India also expects a double-digit growth in its sales force, adding more direct sellers in the coming years.

FAQ on taxation of crypto, virtual digital assets in works

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

The government is working on an FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrencies, which will give a nuanced clarification on the applicability of income tax and GST on virtual digital assets, an official said.

The set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), which is being drafted by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), RBI and Revenue Department, would also be vetted by the law ministry, the official added.

"FAQ on taxation of cryptocurrency and virtual digital assets is in works. Although FAQs are for information purposes and do not have legal sanctity, law ministry's opinion is being sought to ensure that there is no loophole,"



the official told PTI.

The DEA, Revenue Department and the Reserve Bank are working to ensure that the taxation aspect is clear both for field tax offices as well as those who deal with cryptocurrencies and other virtual digital assets.

The 2022-23 Budget has brought in clarity with regard to levy of income tax on crypto assets. From

April 1, a 30 per cent income tax plus cess and surcharges will be levied on such transactions in the same manner as the tax law treats winnings from horse races or other speculative transactions.

The Budget 2022-23 also proposed a 1 per cent TDS (tax deducted at source) on payments towards virtual currencies beyond Rs 10,000 in a year and tax-

ation of such gifts in the hands of the recipient.

The threshold limit for TDS would be Rs 50,000 a year for specified persons, which include individuals/HUFs who are required to get their accounts audited under the I-T Act.

The provisions related to 1 per cent TDS will come into effect from July 1, 2022, while the gains will be taxed effective April 1.

From the GST perspective, the FAQ is likely to provide clarity on whether cryptocurrency is goods or service.

Currently, 18 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) is levied only on service provided by crypto exchanges and it is categorised as financial services.

FM to meet PSBs' heads to nudge them for credit expansion

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to meet heads of public sector banks (PSBs) on April 23 to review performance of the lenders and progress made by them on various schemes launched by the government for revival of the economy battered by the pandemic.

This is the first full review meeting after presentation of Budget 2022-23. Banks would be urged to sanction loans for productive sectors to accelerate revival of the economy, sources said.

According to sources, there would be a comprehensive review of various segments and progress in government schemes including Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS). In the Budget,



ECLGS was extended by a year till March 2023. Further, the guarantee cover for the scheme was expanded by Rs 50,000 crore to Rs 5 lakh crore. The coverage, scope and extent of benefits under ECLGS 3.0 pertaining to hospitality, travel, tourism and civil aviation sectors were expanded.

Also, the credit limit for eligible borrowers was increased to 50 per cent of their fund-based credit outstanding from 40 per cent earlier. The enhanced

limit is subject to a maximum of Rs 200 crore per borrower.

Since its launch in May 2020, loans worth Rs 3.19 lakh crore have been sanctioned till March 25, 2022. About 95 per cent of the guarantees issued are for loans sanctioned to micro, small and medium enterprises.

The meeting to be held in New Delhi would set the agenda for the current financial year which has just started. During last financial year, no PSBs faced any loss in the April-December period and clocked a collective net profit of Rs 48,874 crore during the period.

PSBs earned a combined net profit of Rs 31,820 crore in 2020-21. However, there were collective losses for five straight years during 2015-16 to 2019-20.

Electric vehicle retail sales zoom over three-fold in FY-22

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Electric vehicle retail sales in the country witnessed over three-fold jump last fiscal with two-wheeler offtake leading the segment, according to data compiled by automobile dealers' body FADA.

Total electric vehicle (EV) retails reached 4,29,217 units in 2021-22, a rise of three-fold from 1,34,821 units in the financial year 2020-21, the industry body said. Total EV sales had stood at 1,68,300 units in the 2019-20 fiscal, it noted. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), electric passenger vehicle retail sales stood at 17,802 during the last fiscal, up over three-fold from 4,984 units in FY21. Home-



grown auto major Tata Motors led the segment with retails of 15,198 units and a market share of 85.37 per cent in the vertical. The Mumbai-based company's retail sales stood at 3,523 units in 2020-21. MG Motor India settled into the second place with sales of 2,045 units last fiscal with a market share of 11.49 per cent. It had retailed 1,115

units in the 2020-21 fiscal. Mahindra & Mahindra and Hyundai Motor India stood at third and fourth places with dispatches of 156 and 128 units respectively, both settling for a market share of less than 1 per cent. M&M and Hyundai had sold 94 and 184 units respectively in the 2020-21 fiscal, FADA data said.

High 5G spectrum prices may push players up against wall

Telecom service providers are conducting 5G trials

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Apex telecom industry body COAI has asserted that spectrum pricing should be kept conducive to market conditions as 5G entails upfront capital investments with monetisation spread over a long-haul, and pricing radiowaves high will only push the players up against the wall.

The stage is set for Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) to come out with its recommendations on 5G spectrum pricing and other modalities for upcoming auctions, and the announcement from the sector watchdog is expected anytime now. Norms will



also be worked out for new frequencies such as 526-698 MHz and millimetre band, that is 24.25 - 28.5 GHz, in addition to bands such as 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz, 3300-3670 MHz.

The auction can be conducted within 2-2.5 months of regulator coming out with spectrum recommendations, which would put the mega-event in the ballpark of June timeframe, a telecom department source said. The industry has been aggressively pitching for a

drastic 80-90 per cent cut in prices of spectrum for next-generation services, which will usher in ultra high-speeds and spawn new-age services and business models.

Advocating lower prices for spectrum, COAI Director General, SP Kochhar told PTI: "5G does not have any use cases which can be monetised in a quarter, so it is going to be a long-haul. At the same time, the capital investments have to be made in a particular period of time."

It is pertinent to mention here that last time around, TRAI had suggested Rs 492 crore per MHz for spectrum in prime 5G band of 3300-3600 MHz, which meant that a mobile operator going for 100 MHz needed to shell out a whopping Rs 49,200 crore for all-India spectrum.

For 3rd quarter in row, startup funding crosses USD 10 bn

Creates 14 unicorns

Mumbai, Apr 10 (PTI):

The startup ecosystem has created as many as 14 unicorns in the first three months of 2022, and for the third consecutive quarter, they have received over USD 10 billion across 334 funding deals, says an industry report.

Creation of 14 more unicorns takes the overall tally of startups with over USD 1 billion valuation in the country to 84 now, according to a PwC India report.

This is the third consecutive quarter ending March 2022 when the fund inflows into the domestic start-ups ecosystem have grossed over USD 10 billion in fresh funding. The quarter also has seen as many as 14 startups becoming unicorns, the report said,



adding the total fund inflow in Q1 stands at USD 10.8 billion.

According to the agency, the quarter saw maximum funds flowing into software-as-a-service (SaaS) companies, grossing more than USD 3.5 billion.

Unicorn creation continued to flourish with 14 startups attaining the coveted status in Q1 with the SaaS sector accounting for the largest share creating

five unicorns. Amit Nawka, the startups leader at the consultancy, told PTI that despite uncertainties in the global economic environment, the domestic startups have continued to attract capital, particularly in the growth capital stage.

He further said as more startups mature, talks around corporate governance are now becoming mainstream and it will become increasingly important for the startups to design a corporate governance roadmap that is in sync with organisational growth aspirations.

The quantum of investments into SaaS ecosystem has a threefold increase in the last three years, he said, adding the pandemic has only boosted this ecosystem globally, given the rising importance of remote working, productivity and overall digital

transformation.

The past year has seen the advent of 15 SaaS businesses in the unicorn category amongst in the country, including Darwinbox, Fractal, Uniphore, Hasura and Amagi Media Labs.

With Freshworks' blockbuster listing on the Nasdaq late 2021, mature SaaS players are increasingly considering public listing, he said.

The first quarter saw around 80 M&A transactions in the start-up ecosystem, driven primarily by roll-up e-commerce companies. And Curefoods, Mensa Brands, GlobalBees and MyGlamm, which have M&As as their core business strategy continued to be the top acquirers in Q1 as well and Upscalo and Evenflow are other roll-up e-commerce companies that have joined this bandwagon.

Four of top-10 cos lose over Rs 1 lakh cr in m-cap

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

The combined market valuation of four of the 10 most valued firms tumbled Rs 1,05,848.14 crore last week, with IT majors TCS and Infosys emerging as the biggest laggards.

While the market valuation of Reliance Industries, TCS, Infosys and Bajaj Finance declined, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, HUL, SBI, HDFC and Bharti Airtel emerged as the gainers with a combined addition of Rs 51,628.12 crore.

Among the four firms, the valuation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) tumbled the most by Rs 40,640.76 crore to stand at Rs 13,49,037.36 crore.

Infosys' market capitalisation (m-cap) tanked Rs 36,703.8 crore to reach Rs 7,63,565.13 crore.

Equity MFs see Rs 1.64 lakh cr net inflow in FY-22

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Strong SIP book and lower returns from traditional investments made equity mutual funds an attractive investment destination for investors with equity-oriented funds receiving a staggering net inflow of Rs 1.64 lakh crore in 2021-22.

This comes following a net outflow of Rs 25,966 crore during 2020-21, data with Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

Going ahead, we expect the growing inflow trends in equity mutual funds to sustain given the current economic condition and markets, Manish Kothari-CEO and Co-Founder, ZFunds, said.

According to the data, equity mutual funds wit-



nessed a net inflow of Rs 1,64,399 crore in the entire 2021-22. This included an all-time high inflow of Rs 28,464 crore last month.

Geopolitical tension due to the raging war between Russia and Ukraine and concerns over the surging crude prices triggered a sharp correction in the market towards the end of February and early March. The correction provided investors a good buying opportunity, which they didn't fail to capitalise.

The robust inflow pushed the asset base of equity mutual funds by 38

per cent to Rs 13.65 lakh crore at the end of March this year.

The equity category has been witnessing consistent net inflows since March 2021, after the second wave of COVID hit India and resulted in the correction in the markets.

"Despite concerns, the growth outlook over the long term has remained strong which maintained positive sentiments among investors. Also, the perception that despite intermittent corrections the markets would continue to surge have prompted many investors to make the most of the dips in the markets and invest,"

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

Q4 earnings, macro data, global trends to drive markets

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Quarterly earnings from IT majors TCS and Infosys, macroeconomic data announcements and global trends would be the major guiding factors for the equity market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Stock markets will be closed on Thursday for Mahavir Jayanti and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Jayanti, as well as on Friday on account of Good Friday.

"This week is a holiday-shortened one but it's going to be critical as it kickstarts the earnings season with two IT majors, TCS and Infosys announcing numbers."

"Besides, on the macroeconomic front, partici-

pants will be eyeing IIP and CPI inflation data on April 12. Apart from domestic factors, global cues like updates on Russia-Ukraine and performance of global markets will remain on the radar," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Markets would also focus on the trend in rupee, foreign institutional investors and Brent crude.

"The earnings session will kick off with results of major IT names TCS and Infosys which are scheduled on the 11th and 13th of April, respectively. Apart from earnings, global cues, crude oil prices, and FIIs' flow will play an important role in the direction of the market," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos rise 17.3% to Rs 1,23,244 cr

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution companies (discoms) to power producers increased by 17.3 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1,23,244 crore in April 2022, as per official data.

Discoms owed a total of Rs 1,05,029 crore to power generation firms in April 2021, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

On a sequential basis too, total dues in April 2022 increased from Rs 1,17,390 crore in March 2022.

The PRAAPTI portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency



in power purchase transactions between generators and discoms.

In April 2022, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 1,04,885 crore as against Rs 84,376 crore in the same month a year ago.

The overdue amount stood at Rs 1,03,331 crore in March 2022. Power producers give

45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

To give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019.

Under this mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply. The Centre had also given some breather to discoms for paying dues to gencos in view of the COVID-19-induced lockdown. The government had also waived penal charges for the late payment of dues.

FPIs turn net buyers so far, invest Rs 7,707 cr in equities

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

After a six-month selling spree, foreign investors have turned net buyers in April so far by infusing Rs 7,707 crore in Indian equities as a correction in markets provided them a good buying opportunity.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said it would still be slightly premature to call it a change in trend with respect to FPI flows, and hence it will be prudent to watch how the scenario unfolds over the next few weeks or months to get more clarity.

According to latest data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net in-

vestment of Rs 7,707 crore in Indian equities during April 1-8. Srivastava said the inflow indicates that maybe foreign investors are almost done with the recalibration exercise of their portfolios owing to the current scenario. Also, the recent correction in the equity markets have opened investment opportunities, which FPIs would have sought as a good entry point, he added.

However, they were net sellers during the last two trading sessions, suggesting that there is still lack of certainty on the direction of FPI flows.

The latest inflow comes following massive net outflows to the tune of Rs 1.48 lakh crore from equities in the last six months from October 2021 to March 2022.



Ben Affleck, Jennifer Lopez are engaged again!

Hollywood "it" couple and stars Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez are engaged again. Lopez announced the engagement in a short video via her fan newsletter, On The JLo, in which she stares adoringly at a green-hued diamond ring. "You're perfect," Lopez says in a voiceover as romantic music plays, reports pagesix.com. Lopez teased the "exciting and special" announcement on Facebook earlier Friday evening. Sources close to the singer say the video is, in fact, an engagement announcement. Lopez, 52, and Affleck, 49, sparked engagement rumours earlier this week when she was photographed wearing a ring on her wedding finger while shopping in LA with 14-year-old daughter Emmie. Insiders close to Affleck recently told Page Six they wouldn't be shocked if he had proposed again. The couple first started dating in 2002 and were quickly dubbed "Bennifer" by fans and the media alike. The two certainly weren't shy about showcasing their love for each other at the time, including in PDA-packed scenes from Lopez's "Jenny From the Block" music video. By November of that year, Affleck proposed to Lopez with a 6.1-carat pink diamond by Harry Winston. The massive sparkler reportedly cost \$2.5 million. Lopez addressed her initial engagement during a sit-down with Diane Sawyer in the 2000s, where she described her fiancé as "brilliantly smart, loving, charming and affectionate." She went on to call her stunning ring "the most magnificent thing I've ever seen". "Due to the excessive media attention surrounding our wedding, we have decided to postpone the date," the couple said in a joint statement. "When we found ourselves seriously contemplating hiring three separate 'decoy brides' at three different locations, we realised that something was awry." "We began to feel that the spirit of what should have been the happiest day of our lives could be compromised. We felt what should have been a joyful and sacred day could be spoiled for us, our families, and our friends." Lopez called off the engagement in early 2004, and was married to singer Marc Anthony by June of the same year. The couple went on to have twins Max and Emmie in 2008. Meanwhile, Affleck moved on with Jennifer Garner. He married the actress in 2005 and welcomed three children together: daughters Violet and Seraphina, and son Samuel. Both of their marriages ended in divorce, however, with Lopez entering into another romance with Alex Rodriguez in 2017. For his part, Affleck was linked to a number of women, including 'Knives Out' star Ana De Armas until their January 2021 split.

Vidya Balan wished to write to Satyajit Ray, work with him

She was just a teenager when she secretly wrote a letter to her favorite filmmaker Satyajit Ray, but didn't post it. Naturally, when he passed away suddenly, she felt heartbroken for many reasons.

Many moons later, that teenager, who is now one of the successful stars of Bollywood, Vidya Balan, talking to IANS, opened her heart and shared her wish to work with her favorite filmmaker and on how Bengali cinema influenced her.

"If I write a letter to Mr Ray today, it would read 'I wish you had lived longer.' You know even today, I would have loved to work with him. I know everyone talks about Ray's 'Pathar Panchali' and 'Charulata' but 'Mahanagar' is one of my favorite films. The film impacted me so deeply. I wish he lived longer and I could have worked with him repeatedly in multiple films."

Vidya also mentioned that more than often people told her that her side profile looks like young Madhavi Chatterjee, the legendary actress who played the protagonist in "Charulata" and that is "flattering" for her. The fangirl in her does not stop there as she shared: "I have poster collection of Ray's films like 'Mahanagar' and also a



painting that filled with a canvas full of characters from his films! I have many decorative pieces in my home, inspired by Ray's work. My home is full of Ray. I have huge love and respect for Bengali cinema and culture." No wonder her film debut happened in 2003 with "Bhalo Theko" before Bollywood. Interestingly, her Bollywood debut also happened in 2005 with "Parineeta", based on a Bengali novel of the same name. Currently, the actress is celebrating the success of her recently-released "Jalsa". Talking about how she started enjoying playing characters that are the exact opposite of who she is in reality, Vidya said: "The fact that in both the recent release of mine, 'Sherni' and 'Jalsa', my characters are so different from who I am in real life has a role to play in terms of choosing those scripts.

Vandana hosts a 'baby shower' ceremony for Yamini

Sony SAB's Wagle Ki Duniya continues to engage audiences across generations with its gripping storyline and relatable characters. The upcoming episode will see how the members of Sai Darshan Heights Society cheer up Yamini after an unfortunate incident, organising a special celebration just for her. Post her dispute with the Wagles, Aunt Kalyani returns to Sai Darshan Heights Society for the first time for her relative's godh bhara ceremony. Due to the bitterness of the past, Dakku (Deepak Pareek) and Yamini (Mansi Joshi) graciously offer to host her at their place this time. But back with her super-

stitions, aunt Kalyani prevents Yamini from attending the godh bhara, claiming that an infertile woman is a bad omen for an expectant mother. Upon realising Yamini's despair, Vandana (Pariva Pranati) decides to arrange a godh bhara ceremony for her with a miracle doll which is said to bring a child into a woman's life. This gesture of hers, along with that of other members of the society leave Dakku and Yamini happy and overjoyed.

Will this ceremony really bring good news for Yamini?

Mansi Joshi, essaying the role of Yamini said, "The latest track is very heartfelt and also highlights a very impor-

tant issue which still impacts women in our society. Kalyani mausi is superstitious so when she stops Yamini from attending the godh bhara ceremony, the latter feels deeply hurt. Yamini has been trying to have a child for a long time, so Kalyani mausi's words affect her adversely. However, Rajesh standing up for her encourages Yamini and all the neighbours coming together for the ceremonial godh-bhara make her and Dakku truly happy. I am excited to see if the doll brings good luck for Yamini."

Continue watching Wagle Ki Duniya from Monday to Saturday at 9:00 PM only on Sony SAB.



Sacchin Shroff enters 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein'

Star Plus's popular show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' has created a special place in the hearts of the audience since its inception. This popular show has maintained its place in the top-5 of the TRP list for the past one year. Neil Bhatt, Aishwarya Singh and Ayesha Singh play are seen playing the lead characters of the show. Soon the show will witness a new twist with the entry of Actor Sacchin Shroff in a prominent role. Actor Sacchin Shroff will enter the show in Rajiv's character, and play the role of Shivani i.e. Tanvi Thakkar's husband. The audience will witness the track of Shivani Bua's and Rajiv's love life. Additional to this Actor Sacchin Shroff (Rajeev) will also be seen sorting out conflicts and problems in Sai's life. Actor Sacchin Shroff who entered the role of Rajiv in the show

'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' says, "The major reason for me choosing this character is my mother. As soon as I received a call from the production house, my mother was inquisitive about the call. I informed her that, I had received a call from the show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' from Star Plus and I had got an offer.

To this she said, that this is her favourite show and she wants me to work in this show. That's how I took up this role without a second thought. My character as Rajiv is a chef by profession, he is jovial by nature, spreads happiness wherever he goes and wears only funky clothes"

Stay tuned to watch the twists and turns of the show 'Ghum Hai Kisike Pyaar Mein' every Monday to Saturday at 8.00 PM only on Star Plus



Preparing for motherhood can be beautiful, but messy: Kajal Aggarwal

Actress Kajal Aggarwal, who is in the family way, says that preparing for motherhood can be beautiful but messy. Taking to Instagram, the popular actress, who has earmarked a space for herself in the Tamil, Telugu and Hindi film industries, wrote, "Let's face it, preparing for motherhood can be beautiful, but messy. One moment you feel like you have everything under control, while the next moment, you're so drained, you wonder how you're going to manage making it to bedtime! And within these days, weeks, and months of loving our children and our partners, sometimes we forget that this accumulation of emotions (joy, sadness, anxiety, heartbreak) are what piece together our unique stories and make them ours!" The actress has been doing aerobics and strength conditioning exercises to keep herself healthy. She believes women who are pregnant without complications must be encouraged to participate in aerobic and strength conditioning exercises and had put out a post to this effect earlier.

HOROSCOPE MONDAY APRIL 11

Aquarius: Jan 21 - Feb 18

Love and romance should be flying high for you now, Aquarius. If you're single, you could soon form an incredible relationship. If you're already involved, the spiritual and emotional bonds between you and your beloved should grow by leaps and bounds. The lines of communication are wide open. Make use of them and you may find the kind of love of which most people can only dream.

Gemini: May 22 - June 21

Group activities, perhaps with a social, ecological, or humanitarian focus, could take place today somewhere in your neighborhood. Gemini. You might decide to attend with your romantic partner. You could encounter some friends in the process, and all of you could well be caught up in the excitement generated by those in the spotlight. Listen well and think about what you learn today. It might make a difference in your future.

Libra: Sept 23 - Oct 23

Communication with friends, siblings, and neighbors should be open, congenial, and supportive today, Libra. A gathering could open the door to new friendships, interesting discussions, and other group activities that you might enjoy. The only downside could involve mental overload. You might learn so much today that you can't keep track of it all. Take notes so you can maintain a record of everything that particularly impresses you.

Pisces: Feb 19 - Mar 20

You should be feeling physically strong, healthy, and energetic today, Pisces, although you could also be a little lightheaded. You could experience the sensation of wandering around in a daze with your feet on the ground and your head in the clouds. Achieving balance won't be easy, but you should be able to manage it today. Concentrate on activities that involve spiritual or imaginative faculties today.

Cancer: June 22 - July 22

Your values could undergo a complete turnaround today, Cancer. Recent developments in the world, your community, among your circle of friends, and within you could make you realize, like it or not, you and everyone around you is going through a transformation. This might be a little disconcerting, but it's a positive development. Take things one day at a time and see where they go. You'll probably like it!

Scorpio: Oct 24 - Nov 22

Career matters couldn't be going better right now, Scorpio, especially if you're in one of the communication fields, including writing, publishing, teaching, the Internet, or mass media. Your financial situation is probably improving very quickly, and you're making contact with congenial, intriguing people who share your interests. You're also becoming more aware of the changes going on in the world and doing your part to help them along. Bravo!

Aries: Mar 21 - Apr 20

In future years, you might remember today as one of the best days of your life, Aries. Romance should be going beautifully. You could exchange deeply felt words of love with your partner. The future looks bright, and you should be full of enthusiastic plans for pursuing what you really want to do. You should also be feeling especially strong, energetic, healthy, and ready to try anything. A journey could be coming up soon.

Leo: July 23 - Aug 23

Spiritual and psychic matters come to the forefront today, Leo. You could be greatly inspired to express yourself creatively. You could also be quite surprised at the wisdom you find within yourself. A gathering of friends, perhaps for the purpose of discussing metaphysical subjects, could bring this to your attention so blatantly that it becomes hard to ignore. Don't cling to the shore. Flow with the current.

Sagittarius: Nov 23 - Dec 21

Have you been planning a trip by air, Sagittarius, perhaps to a distant place associated with a specific spiritual tradition? Warm places like Egypt, Mexico, or Israel could be especially appealing now. You could be going with a group of friends. If you haven't been considering such a journey, think about it. You might receive some surprising insights and revelations from such a trip. Start planning it now. Go for it!

Taurus: Apr 21 - May 21

Happiness reigns in the home as friends and family members gather for a long-awaited reunion, Taurus. Or you could be hosting a gathering of friends and acquaintances interested in the arts or psychic or metaphysical matters. Discussions should be intense but fascinating nonetheless. A young visitor could come up with some unexpected insights and revelations that blow everybody away. Write down whatever impresses you the most. Enjoy your evening.

Virgo: Aug 24 - Sept 22

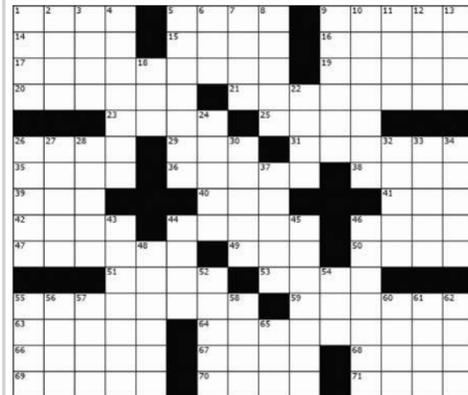
Are you contemplating a move of some kind, Virgo? Perhaps you're thinking about relocating to be closer to members of a group with which you're affiliated. You might also be considering a move to a community where spiritual and metaphysical values are not only discussed but also lived. Make a list of your options, if that helps. You're in a transitional period right now. You need to be practical.

Capricorn: Dec 22 - Jan 20

Some vivid, inspiring, and intense dreams or visions could come your way today, Capricorn. They could involve paranormal figures, such as angels. Make sure you keep a record of them, as your higher self is trying to tell you something. Make a list of all the images you can remember and analyze what these images symbolize to you. You could come up with some profound insights about the world and yourself.

CROSSWORD

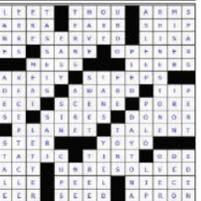
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- ACROSS**
- Small nail
 - Mild oath
 - Map feature
 - Existence
 - Egypt's attire
 - Egypt's capital
 - Flexible
 - "Sesame Street" character
 - Courageous
 - Makes bigger
 - Prod
 - Epic
 - Tractor-trailer
 - Cruces
 - Falling star
 - Conspiracy
 - Greek vowel
 - If not
 - "_____ That Jazz"
 - Master
 - Expert
 - Hearing-impaired

- Inexpensive
 - Amtrak terminals (abbr.)
 - Sign up
 - Be mistaken
 - Slight
 - House division
 - Hero shop
 - Voiced for
 - Couch
 - Slack
 - Johann _____ Bach
 - External
 - "The Lion King" villain
 - Brim
 - Squirrels' homes
 - Long ago
 - Famous loch
- DOWN**
- Unexciting
 - Go by taxi
 - Distant
 - Bank statement entry
 - Famous vampire
 - Burglarize
 - Fit
 - Adolescents
 - Cold era (2 wds.)
 - Relate
 - Warble
 - Huron's neighbor
 - Foot digits
 - Topple
 - Dalai _____
 - Designer _____ Lauren
 - Gardener's tool
 - Actress _____ Barkin
 - Back tooth
 - Buying frenzy
 - Delight
 - Hollywood award
 - _____ Witherspoon of "Walk the Line"
 - Stash
 - Anticipate
 - Thicken
 - Get ready
 - Enamored
 - Defeated ones
 - Disordered
 - _____ Angeles
 - Many (2 wds.)
 - Sightseeing trip
 - Hafl
 - Art
 - Staff officer
 - Stickers
 - Wallet fillers
 - Cocktail lounge

SOLUTION 265



Capitals put on fiery all-round show to brush aside KKR

Mumbai, Apr 10 (PTI):

Openers Prithvi Shaw and David Warner's fearless batting laid the foundation as Delhi Capitals out-batted Kolkata Knight Riders by 44 runs to notch up their second win in the IPL here on Sunday.

On a batting belter, KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer's decision to put Delhi Capitals in backfired as they piled up 215 for five riding on half-centuries from Shaw (51 off 29 balls) and Warner (61 off 45 balls).

In reply, KKR were all-out for 171 in 19.4 overs and it was left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav's evening at the B. R. B. Stadium as he exacted sweet revenge against a franchise that didn't treat him too well during his stint as his career came to a halt. The scoreboard pressure was always telling and Kuldeep's (4/35 in 4 overs), who is proving to be an asset for Capitals, decisively swung the match in the Rishabh Pant-led side's favour, getting opposition skipper Shreyas Iyer (54 off 33 balls) stumped with a left-arm wrist spinner's googly. Iyer had no clue as he came down the track and the ball turned away after pitching. Pat Cummins didn't play any manic knock as a Kuldeep leg-break ended his stay and then he took a mag-



nificent skier off his own bowling to cap off a superb evening under lights.

Left-arm pacer Khaleel Ahmed (3/25 in 4 overs) bowled fast and sharp at the onset and in the end Andre Russell (24 off 21 balls) had too much to do with too little time left and result was a one-sided victory for DC.

At the start, Shaw and Warner feasted on a quality bowling attack before DC survived a scratchy middle-order show to reach a healthy 215 for 5.

If Shaw-Warner added 93 to set the platform, Shardul Thakur (29 not out off 11 balls) and Axar Patel (22 off 14 balls) added 49 in just 3.2

as Iyer looked clueless.

Cummins was pulled for six by Shaw, while Warner slog swept Varun Chakravarthy (1/44 in 4 overs) over mid-wicket for a six. Sunil Narine (2/21) was reverse swept as both spinners were introduced with in the Powerplay after pacers got severely punished first up.

It was Chakravarthy, who breached Shaw's defence to give his team first breakthrough but skipper Pant (27 off 14 balls), promoting himself up the order, didn't let the momentum slip away as he and Warner added 55 in just 4.1 overs.

Pant was audacious as usual, hitting those fallen reverse sweep off spinners and a straight six off Cummins.

Warner completed his first half-century of this edition with a six off Russell before Pant was dismissed by a slower bowled by the Jamaican all-rounder.

Once Pant was dismissed, Warner's shots lacked a bit of sting and Narine was very steady as he slowly brought KKR back into the game, dismissing Lalit Yadav and Rovman Powell in quick succession.

It was left to Axar and Shardul to show their batting prowess that helped DC reach a par score on this track.

Gujarat Titans, the team to beat, take on inconsistent SRH

Navi Mumbai, Apr 10 (PTI):

Gujarat Titans, who have become the team to beat in its debut IPL season, would aim to build on a dream start against an inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday.

Three consecutive wins in the IPL have given Gujarat Titans the momentum and they showed against Punjab Kings that they can win from any situation.

Skipper Hardik Pandya will need to showcase his tactical acumen against Sunrisers, who earned their first win against CSK but still are placed in the bottom half of the points table.

Gujarat have found different match-winners in every game while Sunrisers, who got a win after a horrendous start to their campaign, would like to keep improving with every game.

At the DY Patil stadium, focus again will be on young Shubman Gill. He has been in prime form and posted his highest IPL score against Punjab Kings. The elegant right-hander would however need support from Matthew Wade, who has the ability to play big shots and Sai Sudarshan, who also chipped in with a useful knock in the last game.



In the last outing against Punjab, Rahul Tewatia found his mojo with two sixes and emerged as the match-winner. Titans are up against death overs specialist Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the raw pace of Umran Malik,

the yorkers of T Natarajan and classical off-breaks of Washington Sundar.

Add to it the variations brought in by lanky South African pacer Marco Jansen, the batters could encounter a tough time.

Gujarat's bowlers on the

other hand have been right on the money.

Hardik's four overs can change the complexion of the game while another pacer who can wreak havoc is Lockie Ferguson. Mohammad Shami too has been impressive with the new ball.

The other important cog in their wheel is Rashid Khan, who is capable of running riot and can pose challenges to his former team SRH.

For the Sunrisers, after failure in the first-two games, skipper Kane Williamson got a start and would be keen to score a big one against Gujarat.

SRH opener Abhishek Sharma reposed the faith shown in-to him and made a match-winning 75 on last Saturday when the team chased a tricky 155 in 17.4 overs. He would also like to continue from where he left. Rahul Tripathi's role will also be crucial and ditto for Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram.

The three need to show consistency and show their mettle while taking responsibility in the middle-order. Sundar has the ability to play cameos.

Both the teams are unlikely to tinker with the winning combination and considering dew, the toss becomes crucial as it has proved to be the case in majority of the games.

It's just a matter of getting first win and finding spark: Zaheer



Pune, Apr 10 (PTI):

IPL's most successful franchise Mumbai Indians are struggling this season with four losses on the trot but their Director of Cricket Zaheer Khan feels it's just a matter of finding that "one win" and missing "spark" to get their campaign back on track.

Khan, however, is aware that a string of defeats may lead to self-doubt among the players.

"There are still 11 league matches to go. We've got to get on a roll. You've seen in this tournament teams get on a losing roll or winning

momentum. It's just a matter of (getting the) first win," Zaheer, a former India lead pacer, said. "At times you get tight as well, you start doubting yourselves in situations where the pressure is highest. So that is something we have to be aware of and look for that spark in the group," he said at the post-match conference after MI's seven-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Saturday.

He said players who have been doing well despite the winless streak "need to carry the team and get us that win which is going to be very important".

"Those back-to-back win is something which we have to see but not everyday is going to be your day."

Asked why Mumbai Indians, who have won the title five times in the past, have struggled early this season, Khan said his side have not been able to come out on top in "close situations".

Big servers Isner, Opelka set up all-American Houston final

Houston, Apr 10 (AP):

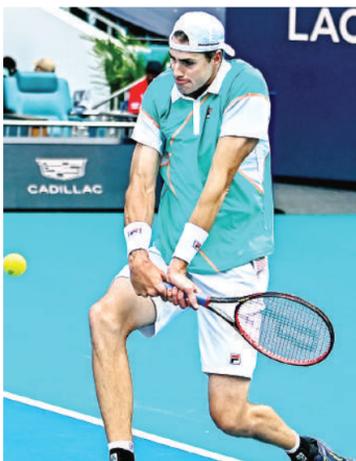
Tall, big-hitting Americans John Isner and Reilly Opelka joke about being serve-bots and their similar styles of play will be on display against each other in the final of the U.S. Men's Clay Court Championship.

The fourth-seeded Isner, who won the Houston title in 2013, hit 17 aces Saturday to eliminate reigning champion Cristian Garin 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the semifinals. The third-seeded Opelka had 21 aces while beating Nick Kyrgios 6-3, 7-5.

The final Sunday will be the sixth career meeting between the 24-year-old Opelka, who is listed by the ATP at 6-foot-11, and the 36-year-old Isner, who is listed at 6-10. Opelka leads 4-1 head-to-head, with four victories in a row. When guys like Reilly and I lock horns, Isner



said, it's going to be tiebreakers. Talk about an understatement. The last 12 sets they contested all went to tiebreakers, including one Isner called ridiculous on Saturday. That's because it went to



24-22 in the semifinals at Dallas in February the longest tiebreaker in an ATP match since 1990. Opelka landed 39 aces in that win, 18 more than Isner. Isner is up to 71 aces this week after playing

three consecutive three-set matches, breaking his own Houston record of 64 aces for the tournament, which he established in 2013.

Clay is a good surface for guys like Reilly and I, Isner said.

Ronaldo sorry for 'outburst' after United loss to Everton



Manchester, Apr 10 (AP):

Cristiano Ronaldo apologized for what he described as an outburst after Manchester United's 1-0 loss to Everton in the

Premier League. Footage shared on social media showed Ronaldo apparently slapping a phone out of a supporter's hand as he left the field at Goodison Park on Saturday. In a post on Instagram, Ronaldo said: I would like to apologize for my outburst and, if possible, I would like to invite this supporter to watch a game at Old Trafford as a sign of fair-play and sportsmanship.

Ronaldo said it was never easy to deal with emotions in difficult moments such as the one we are facing.

Nevertheless, he said, we always have to be respectful, patient and set the example for all the youngsters who love the beautiful game.

United is looking into the incident.

RCB pacer Harshal Patel bereaved

Pune, Apr 10 (PTI):

Royal Challengers Bangalore pacer Harshal Patel has left the IPL bio-bubble following the death of a family member.

PTI has learnt that Harshal exited the bubble after getting to know about the tragedy in the family right after the game against Mumbai Indians.

Harshal has been the star performer for RCB over the past couple of seasons and took two wickets on Saturday night in the team's seven-wicket win over MI. "Unfortunately, Harshal had to leave the bio-bubble due to a death in his family. It was his sister. He did not take the team bus back to Mumbai from Pune," said an IPL source.

"He will be rejoining the bubble before the next game against CSK on April 12."

The 31-year-old has played eight T20Is after making his debut last year. RCB face Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday.

Rawat a future star in making: Du Plessis

Pune, Apr 10 (PTI):

Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Faf du Plessis is mighty impressed with team-mate Anuj Rawat in this IPL so far and feels the young wicketkeeper-batter is a "future" star in the making.

Rawat, a left-handed batter, has opened with Du Plessis in all the matches for RCB so far this IPL season.

But his best came only in their last outing on Saturday when the 22-year-old slammed a 47-ball 66 to be adjudged the Player-of-the-match in RCB's successful 152-run chase against five-time champions Mumbai Indians. "The way he's playing at the moment is beautiful... He's a very good player for the future," Du Plessis said after their seven-wicket win over MI at the MCA Stadium here.

"Comes down the wicket, shows intent, he's a very good player for the future. That's what makes the young guy so good for



us at the moment." Rawat made a lacklustre IPL debut for Rajasthan Royals against Kolkata Knight Riders in 2021 when he was out for a golden duck, which happened to be the only match for the son of a farmer from Ramnagar in Uttarakhand.

Hat tricks for Mbappe and Neymar as PSG routs Clermont 6-1

Paris, Apr 10 (AP):

Kylian Mbappe and Neymar both scored hat tricks as runaway leader Paris Saint-Germain moved closer to a record-tying 10th French league title by thrashing Clermont 6-1.

PSG extended its lead to 15 points with seven rounds remaining after this weekend.

Lionel Messi picked out Neymar, who rifled into the far corner in the sixth minute for the opener. The Argentina star then chested down a cross from Neymar in the 19th to provide a volleyed pass for Mbappe, who beat goalkeeper Arthur Desmas on Saturday.

PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino showed signs of irritation on the touchline as his visiting team became complacent after the second goal. Clermont scored in the 42nd when Benin winger Jodel Dossou tapped in a cross from Saif-Eddine Khaoui. Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma protected PSG's lead by parrying Jason Berthomier's



shot in the 62nd before PSG took full control.

Neymar gave PSG a 3-1 lead by converting a penalty in the 71st after Clermont fullback Akim Zedadka brought down Mbappe.

Three minutes later, Neymar hit a ball over the top for Mbappe, who rounded Desmas to score into an empty net.

Mbappe got his hat trick by curling into the far corner in the 80th to raise his tally to a league-leading 20 goals.

The France striker generously set up Neymar for a tap-in for his hat trick in the 83rd. Messi, Neymar and Mbappe are combining more effectively on the field, with a greater understanding between the players.

It's a pity that it's only coming now, Mbappe told Canal Plus television.

Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar (L) celebrates with Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe after scoring three goals.

Squash stars hope to get TOPS funding in CWG and Asiad year



New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

India's squash stars including Dipika Pallikal, Saurav Ghosal and Joshna Chinappa are hoping to get entry into Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) after their title winning exploits at the World Doubles Championship in Glasgow.

TOPS was formed in September 2014 to support elite athletes in Olympic sports but in the year of Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, players

from non Olympic sports like squash have been added to the scheme in the past.

TOPS cuts through the government red tape and athletes get access to funds faster for competition and training. The chosen athletes also get a monthly stipend of Rs 50,000.

Ghosal, Joshna and Dipika are genuine medal contenders at CWG and Asiad this year and were part of TOPS heading into the two multi sporting events back in 2018.

16 women die after delivery every month

In four major govt hospitals of Delhi

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Despite efforts to bring down the maternal mortality rate, 16 women die after childbirth every month in four major government hospitals of Delhi. The hospitals made this information available in response to separate applications filed by PTI-Bhasha under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

According to the information received, 1,281 women died after childbirth between January 2015 and September 2021 at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML),

Safdarjung Hospital and Sucheta Kriplani Hospital. According to information, the worst situation is of Safdarjung Hospital, where in the last 81 months, on an average, more than 11 women lost their lives after delivery every month.

The RTI applications had asked how many babies were born in these hospitals between January 2015 and July 2021, how many women died after delivery and what was the reason for their death. In response, Safdarjung and Sucheta Kriplani Hospitals provided numbers up to September 2021, while the

other two hospitals provided figures up to July 2021. According to the information received, more than 2.73 lakh children were born in the four hospitals during this period.

Safdarjung Hospital said between January 2015 and September 2021, more than 1.68 lakh children were born and 943 women died after delivery. However, the hospital did not give reasons for the women's death.

The lowest maternal mortality rate after delivery was in AIIMS and between January 2015 and July 2021, 29 women died after the birth of their baby. Fifty-nine women

died at RML Hospital during this period while in Sucheta Kriplani Hospital, 250 women died after delivery.

Barring Safdarjung, all three hospitals reported that life-threatening infections, excessive bleeding, septic strokes, heart attacks and impaired bowel function were the main causes of women's death after cesarean delivery.

Many women also lost their lives due to liver disease, blood clots in the arteries of the lungs, severe anemia, blood infection, breathing problems, uterine rupture, tuberculosis and complications arising from covid.

MP begins administering precautionary dose To 18-59 age group

Bhopal, Apr 10 (PTI):

Madhya Pradesh on Sunday started administering the precautionary dose against coronavirus to people in the age group of 18-59 years, but it may take some time to set up private centres for the purpose, a state government official said. The precautionary doses of Covishield and Covaxin vaccines for this age group will be available at private medical centres at a cost of Rs 386.25, including a service charge of Rs 150, Director (Vaccination), National Health Mission, Dr Santosh Shukla told PTI. The rollout of precautionary dose of anti-coronavirus vaccines has been started in the state. People should get information about such centres in their respective cities on the CoWIN portal, he said. Such private centres will need to purchase the vaccines and the entire process may take some time to start the facility, the official said. Those who have completed 39 weeks or 273 days after getting the second jab of coronavirus will be eligible for the precautionary dose, and the decision in this regard was taken by the Centre only on Saturday, he noted. For healthcare and frontline workers and those above the age of 60 years, the third dose will be free at government hospitals, he added. The Centre announced on Saturday that the precautionary dose of anti-COVID19 vaccines will be available to everyone aged above 18 years at the private vaccination centres beginning April 10.

Robert Vadra offers prayers at Mahakaleshwar temple

● Says BJP did nothing for its development

Ujjain, Apr 10 (PTI):

Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress president Sonia Gandhi, on Sunday visited the Mahakaleshwar temple dedicated to Lord Shiva in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain, where he offered prayers. Talking to reporters later, Vadra accused the ruling BJP of doing nothing for the development of the temple.

Vadra, husband of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, arrived at the temple in the morning and offered prayers inside the sanctum sanctorum of the famous

pilgrimage centre, which is one of the 12 jyotirlingas in the country.

"Change is coming here due to the work started by our government (Congress). Our government did a good work here. But the BJP government has done nothing," Vadra told reporters, adding that the facilities in the Mahakaleshwar temple premises need to be developed further as devotees from across the country visit the place.

Vadra said he felt peace after offering prayers and added that he sought blessings for the family and people. When asked about the rising inflation in the country, he said that people should come forward to op-

pose as the "government is thinking about its own good". He, however, said that he does not want to talk about political issues as he is on a "spiritual and religious visit" here.

Meanwhile, responding to Vadra's allegation that the ruling BJP has done nothing for the development of Mahakaleshwar temple, party's state unit spokesman Dr Hitesh Bajpai said, "Robert Vadra neither understands the temples nor does he have any respect for such places." Vadra's party is opposing the construction of Ram temple, he alleged. "But now he is visiting temples on the advice of pundits in a bid to avoid action against himself," he said.

PALM SUNDAY PRAYERS



Archbishop Felix Toppo conducts a prayer session on the occasion of Palm Sunday, in Ranchi, Sunday.

Local entrepreneurs draw good response at pre-Bihu fair

Guwahati, Apr 10 (PTI):

Prospects are looking up for local entrepreneurs with Rongali Bihu, marking the Assamese New Year, a couple of days away, as exhibitions and fairs are giving them a chance to showcase and sell their products, according to stakeholders.

Fairs and similar events are making a comeback after the pandemic hiatus as all COVID-19 related restrictions have been relaxed because of the drop in the number of positive cases, resulting in a semblance of normalcy returning to daily activities in the northeastern state. The three-day Rongali'

cultural fest here, which concludes on Sunday, has provided such a platform for startups and entrepreneurs with its Vocal for Local' exhibition. Around 200 local entrepreneurs comprising self-help groups, agri-entrepreneurs, weavers, artisans, government agencies, and industrial organisations are showcasing their products at the event.

Putolo.com, a Guwahati-based startup, that primarily deals in soaps free from harmful chemicals as well as organic plants and potteries, started its business venture in 2020 when the COVID crisis hit the world. This is the first time they have set up their

stall in an exhibition and within a day, they registered a sale of Rs 10,000 with their handmade soaps becoming a hit among the visitors.

This is the first time we are selling our products offline. Participating in the festival not only gave a push to our offline sales but also online. We are quite happy with the kind of response we have been getting from people who visited our stall. We have been getting many orders, said Archana Borthakur, founder of Putola.com.

Many startups are using the Rongali platform as a medium to launch their new products. IWA Silk Farmer

Producer Co. Ltd, a Palashbari-based association, has launched an eri thread and some variants of natural dye eri thread under the brand Palash'.

They have already sold 5 kilograms of the thread besides sarees and mekhela chador', traditional Assamese attire for women. 'Bahuboli Egg' which emerged as a popular brand in Jorhat and Guwahati during the pandemic, with their seamless home delivery of eggs, registered a sale of Rs 3,000 on the inaugural day of the festival. We have been getting decent responses from the people here. Even people outside Assam have been showing interest.

RAM NAVAMI PROCESSION



Artists dressed as mythological characters take part in the procession of Ram Navami festival, in Ranchi, Sunday.

In jail on cheating charges, actress Leena Paul learns making jam and jelly

New Delhi, Apr 10 (PTI):

Madras Cafe actress Leena Maria Paul, who is in Tihar jail along with her husband and notorious conman Suresh Chandrasekhar for alleged fraud, is now learning to make jam and jelly as part of a skill training programme for women inmates. Paul, who is in Tihar since last year, is a trained classical dancer and also actively participates in cultural activities organised by the prison to create a positive environment, jail officials said.

Besides jam and jelly, they said, art, music, dance, yoga and pickle-making classes are also conducted for inmates. "Since the time she has been in jail, Paul like other women inmates has been trying to stay positive and utilise her time in learning new things which interest her," a senior



prison department official said, adding that "with keen interest and dedication, she has been attending the jam and jelly making classes, conducted twice a week, for over the last two months". While the actress is lodged in the number six wing or women's wing of the Tihar jail, her husband is in the number one wing. Paul has learnt to make guava squash, tomato jam and custard. She has also enrolled for nail art and makeup classes, the official

said. On November 2 last year, the Delhi Police had filed a charge sheet before a court here against Paul and Chandrasekhar for allegedly duping Aditi Singh, the wife of former Ranbaxy promoter Shivinder Singh of Rs 200 crore. They are in custody along with some other co-accused in the case, which is also being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) based on the Delhi Police's FIR.

Talking about the vocational and skill training classes for inmates, the officials said that these were resumed after Covid cases reduced in the jail. "The intention behind organising such activities is to create a positive environment, keep inmates busy and make them skilled and financially independent so that when they are released, they can start their life afresh and earn a living," the senior official said.

Centre reduces raw jute stock limit to facilitate supply to mills

Kolkata, Apr 10 (PTI):

The Centre has further reduced raw jute stock limit for balers and traders in a bid to increase supply of the raw material to mills at a time when major foodgrain producing states are facing a shortage for the environment-friendly packaging material, industry stakeholders said on Sunday.

In a recent notification issued by the Office of the Jute Commissioner, the maximum stock limit has been brought down to 500 quintals for jute balers from 750 quintals and 50 quintals for traders from 150 quintals, they said.

This is the second such move that the authorities have taken in the current year. "In January, the government reduced the raw jute limit to 750 quintals from 1,500 quintals. Now, the same has been brought down to 500 quintals. It is not a viable quantity for a baling unit to run its operation smoothly," Jute Balers Association secretary A K Palit told PTI.

Balers are major suppliers of raw jute to mills. The ongoing raw material crisis has led to "closure of nearly 15 mills and units that are still running have reduced utilisation and are making losses", a source in the industry

claimed. The Centre has put a ceiling on the stock limit with an objective to prevent hoarding of raw jute in the market and ease supply of the commodity to mills at a reasonable price, the industry stakeholders said.

The price of raw jute continues to hover around Rs 7,000-7,200 per quintal, but the government will pay Rs 6,500 per quintal as the raw material cost for gunny bag production, they claimed. "The move to prevent hoarding could not yield much result for improving supply of the key raw material to jute mills.

Kannur(Ker), Apr 10 (PTI):

Senior CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury was re-elected as the General Secretary of the party for the third consecutive time here on Sunday.

Speaking to the delegates after being re-elected to the top post at CPI(M)'s 23rd Party Congress, Yechury said the principal task of the party was to isolate and defeat the BJP, which is pursuing the Hindutva communal agenda of the fascist RSS.

He said isolation and defeat of the saffron party was essential not only for our forward march for human liberation but to safeguard

India as a secular democratic republic.

The Party Congress also selected 17-member polit bureau and 85-member central committee to lead the party for next three years.

Senior leader from West Bengal, Ram Chandra Dome was elevated to the polit bureau from the central committee and has become the first Dalit representation in PB ever.

Two new faces - LDF convenor A Vijayaraghavan from Kerala and All India Kissan Sabha president Ashok Dhawle - have also been selected to the polit bureau of the CPI(M).



CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury with delegates during the 23rd CPI(M) Party Congress, at E.K. Nayanar Academy in Kannur.

Meanwhile, senior leaders Ramachandran Pillai, S Biman Bose and Hannan

Mollah were dropped from the PB as they crossed the upper age limit of 75 years. However, all three of them are now special invitees to the central committee.

Among the 85-member central committee, 17 are fresh faces, while 15 are women members. State ministers K N Balagopal, P Rajeev, former MP C S Sujatha and Kerala women's commission chairperson P Sathidevi are the new entrants to the central committee from Kerala.

The five-day national conference of the Left party will come to an end today with a massive rally at Kannur.