



BLAME IT ON STAR KIDS

Actor Kangana Ranaut says Hindi movies don't fare well these days because audience can't relate to star kids

LEISURE P2



HEATWAVE IN DELHI

Heatwave sweeps through the national capital and its neighbouring cities with mercury leaping to 49.2° Celsius

TWO STATES P8



FINLAND CONFIRMS NATO BID

Finland's President Sauli Niinisto confirms that his country would apply for membership of the NATO military alliance

INTERNATIONAL P10



Andrew Symonds dies in car crash

SYDNEY: Former Australia cricketer Andrew Symonds, one of the finest all-rounders and a two-time World Cup winner, has died in a tragic car accident, leaving the cricketing world in shock. He was 46 and is survived by his wife and two young children. Cricket Australia has now lost three prominent figures in the past two months. Spin legend Shane Warne and former wicketkeeper Rodney Marsh had died within hours of each other in March. According to Queensland police, the accident happened in Hervey Range Road, about 50km outside Townsville in Australia Saturday night.

P12

2 Sikh bizmen shot dead in Pakistan

PESHAWAR: Two Sikh businessmen were shot dead Sunday by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the latest targeted terrorist attack against the minority community in the restive province bordering Afghanistan. Saljeet Singh, 42, and Ranjeet Singh, 38, died on the spot after being attacked by two bike-borne assailants in the morning, according to the police. The attackers fled after carrying out the attack. The two Sikhs had shops in the Bata Tal bazaar in Sarband, about 17km from Peshawar.

P10



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Shuttlers create history

Another low pressure by May 19



PROUD MOMENT: Indian team members pose with the national flag after winning Thomas Cup title in Bangkok, Thailand, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

India have never bagged the **Thomas Cup** since its inception in 1949. However, all that changed Sunday as the shuttlers scripted their maiden triumph

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 15: Indian men shuttlers etched their names forever in the sports history of the country here Sunday as they dished out an awesome performance to win their maiden Thomas Cup title here. In the process, they blanked 14-time champions Indonesia 3-0 to achieve a feat which most had even a couple of weeks thought impossible.

World Championships medalist Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth and the doubles duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy delivered when it mattered the most and enabled India to win the prestigious team championship for first time ever. The underdog Indian side had not even reached the last-four stage since 1979 and ended up upsetting formidable Malaysia and Denmark (both former champions) en route the summit clash. After being off-colour in the knockout stages, Sen handed India a 1-0 lead with a come-from-behind 8-21, 21-17, 21-16 win over World No.5 Anthony Sinisuka Ginting in a superb show of temperament and skill. India's best doubles pair of Rankireddy and Shetty then showed nerves of steel as they saved four match points in the second game

AT A GLANCE

Lakshya Sen bt Anthony Ginting	8-21, 21-17, 21-16
Chirag & Satwik bt Ahsan & Kevin	18-21, 23-21, 21-19
Kidambi Srikanth bt Jonatan Christie	21-15, 23-21

to eventually outwit Mohammad Ahsan and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo 18-21, 23-21, 21-19. In the second singles, Srikanth outclassed Asian games gold medalist Jonatan Christie 21-15, 23-21 in 48 minutes to seal the historic victory. With India opening up an unassailable 3-0 lead, HS Prannoy, who had won the decisive last singles against both Malaysia and Denmark, did not have to even take court. In the first singles, Sen gave a terrific display of his mental fortitude as he recovered from the opening game reversal to outwit his higher-ranked opponent. It was his second win in as many career meetings against Ginting. "This one is for the team as they have been backing me throughout. I have played well but not got the results. I'm happy that I pulled the first match for the team," Sen stated. Next it was Satwik and Chirag's turn to own the stage and they showed their tenacity against Ahsan and Sukamuljo and they displayed tremendous grit and determination to win the rubber and give India a 2-0 lead. In the second singles, Srikanth played a measured game, keeping the rallies short and nailing it every time the shuttle was in his hitting range. It worked as his precise smashes on both the flanks earned him points. He was always in control. **(More P12)**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: With 'Asani' sparing the state a few days back, another low-pressure area is likely to be formed over the central Bay of Bengal (BoB) by May 19, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). "The system is expected to enter South Andaman Sea in a day or two, and develop into a low-pressure area," said the weatherman. A low pressure may develop in west-central BoB and southwest BoB, move in the north-northeast direction towards Odisha-Andhra Pradesh in about 24 hours and then towards Myanmar due to strong westerly and southwest monsoon. The IMD has predicted the early onset of southwest monsoon with the system advancing into the South Andaman Sea and adjoining southeast BoB in the next 24 hours. The weatherman also released its forecast and warnings for districts in Odisha for the next two days. The coastal state is likely to experience light to moderate rain or

Blazing sun scorches western Odisha



BHUBANESWAR: The western part of Odisha continued to reel under intense heat Sunday as several places in the region recorded a maximum temperature of over 40 degrees Celsius, the Met office said. Twelve towns, mostly in interior western Odisha, recorded a maximum temperature of over 40 degrees Celsius, according to the department. Subarnapur town recorded 43.3 degrees Celsius, the highest in the state, followed by 43 in Bolangir. The mercury in Bhubaneswar settled at 35.8 degrees Celsius, it said.

thunderstorm at a few places over Malkangiri, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Sundargarh, Deogarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Angul, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Bhadrak and Balasore and at one or two places over the rest districts of Odisha, Monday, it said. It also forecast light to moderate rain at a few places over interior Odisha and at one or two places over coastal Odisha for Tuesday. "Thunderstorm with lightning and gusty surface wind speed reaching 30kmph to 40kmph is very likely to occur at one or two places over Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Deogarh, Angul, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Bhadrak, Balasore and thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places over the districts of Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Nayagarh, Khurda and Puri," the weatherman added.

KALAHANDI MAN HACKED TO DEATH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, May 15: A man hacked his cousin to death suspecting him of having an illicit affair with his wife at Pandigaon under Bhawanipatna Sadar police limits in Kalahandi district Sunday. The accused was identified as Maradev Takria, while the deceased Ghasiram Takria. According to sources, Maradev was married to Manjulata. The couple frequently quarrelled as Maradev accused his wife of having an illicit affair with Ghasiram. Manjulata was living separately for the past few months. Ghasiram, on the other hand, frequently visited her place, it was learnt. On Sunday morning, Maradev found Ghasiram with Manjulata at her place. In a fit of rage, Maradev



hacked Ghasiram with an axe, killing him on the spot. In a bid to stop Maradev from attacking Ghasiram, Manjulata also suffered deep injuries. She was later admitted to a hospital in Bhawanipatna, it was learnt. On being informed, a police team reached the spot and recovered the body from a pool of blood. A case was registered and the body was sent for post-mortem. The cops launched a probe into the incident before detaining the accused.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



No, not to get rid of social media addiction. I had to come here because I posted against a powerful politician!

One more held in fake loan app case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of state Crime Branch Sunday claimed to have arrested another person in connection with the fake loan app case. The arrested was identified as Tarun Dudeja, a resident of Sector-48 area in Gurgaon in Haryana, said an official of the EOW. Tarun is the director and proprietor of various shell companies engaged in the storing of ill-gotten money that was later channelised to various legal accounts to mislead the enforcement agencies. The shell companies include Digital Batua, IPAISA Online Services Private Limited, Switz Infotech Private Limited, Bazarpe Infotech Private Limited, Milanum Enterprise and Bacchat Online, EOW sources said. The EOW with the help of Uttar Pradesh police had earlier arrested Javed Sahifi, another accused in the fake loan app case, from Ghaziabad May 4. The sleuths had also managed to freeze ₹6.57 crore deposited in the bank accounts of Mahagram payments Pvt Ltd. **(More P3)**

Kissing, fondling not unnatural offences: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 15: The Bombay High Court has observed that kissing on lips and fondling are not unnatural offences under section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, and granted bail to a man accused of sexually assaulting a minor boy.

In a recent order, Justice Anuja Prabhudessai granted bail to the man, arrested last year following a police complaint filed by the 14-year-old boy's father.

As per the FIR, the boy's father found some money missing from their cupboard. The boy told him that he had given the money to the accused person. The minor said he used to visit the accused person's shop at a suburb in Mumbai for recharging an online game, 'Ola Party', which he used to play. One day, when he went to get the recharge, the accused kissed him on the lips and touched his private parts, the boy alleged.

Following this, the boy's father approached the police who registered an FIR against the accused under relevant sections of the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 377, which makes carnal intercourse or any other unnatural act as a punishable offence. Notably, IPC Section 377 carries a maximum punishment of life imprisonment and makes grant of bail difficult.

Justice Prabhudessai, while granting bail to the accused, noted that a medical test conducted on the boy did not support his statement of sexual assault. She further said the POCSO sections imposed against the accused carried a maximum sentence of five years and entitled him for bail. In the present case, the element of unnatural sex was not prima facie applicable, Justice Prabhudessai said.

Woman donates ₹20L to Srimandir

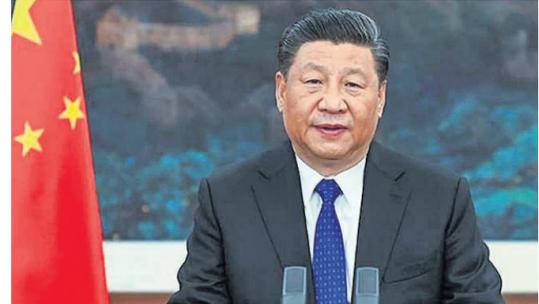
POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 15: A woman has donated Rs 20 lakh to Srimandir here to fulfil her husband's last wish, sources said Sunday.

A resident of Basta Sadanandapur in Balasore district, Suprava Panda sold a patch of land she had in Cuttack and donated the sale proceeds to the 12th century shrine, it was learnt. Sources said Suprava's husband Pankaj Panda, a government officer, was diagnosed with cancer in 2021.

He was an ardent devotee of Lord Jagannath. During his last visit to Srimandir, Pankaj had wished to make some donations to the 12th century shrine. However, before he could do so, Pankaj succumbed to the fatal disease a few days later. Before his death, Pankaj had reportedly shared his last wish with his wife. When asked, Suprava said her offerings are like service to the Lord. A few days back, she had also donated Rs 15 lakh to Sambhunath High School at Basta, it was learnt.

Xi Jinping may be suffering from cerebral aneurysm



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Beijing, May 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping is rumoured to be suffering from brain aneurysm and won't go under the knife to treat it, the media reported. Bloggers have suggested that the 68-year-old Xi prefers traditional medicine and will refuse brain surgery, Daily Mail reported citing online posts removed by state censors. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic two year ago, China worked

to export traditional medicine options for the treatment of the disease. Xi was one of the campaign's leading advocates, said the Daily Mail report. The President has reportedly struggled as a wave of ultra-strict Covid lockdowns across China stretch the nation's economy and the government's ability to suppress dissent. Like Russian President Vladimir Putin, Xi's health has always been a closely guarded secret. Addressing a crowd in Shenzhen during the first Covid wave in 2020, observers noted his slow speech and coughing, Daily Mail reported. While visiting Italy in March 2019, Xi was pictured with a noticeable limp and needing help while trying to sit down. Last week the Politburo state council warned the public not to rebel against lockdowns. China's 'Zero Covid' policy has included some of the world's most draconian social distancing measures including fencing around apartment buildings and metal barriers in the street. Though it carefully censors the web, China's government has also struggled to keep a lid on dissatisfaction with the 'Zero Covid' plan. An estimated 180 million Chinese are in lockdown despite relatively low infection rates. Draconian measures in Shanghai have only tightened, with children told to walk to school in hazmat suits and diners trapped in a restaurant after the doors were drilled shut. Buildings where cases were found have had entrances sealed up, with a small opening for Covid prevention guards to pass through.

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	35.8°C	35.2°C
TEMP MIN	27.2°C	27.4°C
Humidity	76%	77%
Rainfall	NIL	NIL

Forecast: Light rain likely

leisure



MCU MOVIES INVOLVE A LOT OF ACTING: OLSEN

Actress Elizabeth Olsen says working in Marvel movies involves a lot of acting on your own. The actress, who plays Scarlet Witch in the MCU media franchise, recently reprised her role for *Doctor Strange 2*, reports aceshowbiz.com.

EVA MENDES ON WHAT WORKS FOR HER LOVE

Actress Eva Mendes opens up on what works for her long term love with actor Ryan Gosling. The 48-year-old said: "Ryan's the cook. He's an incredible cook. I think that there's a really nice balance to 'you cook, I clean'. And it just works for us."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You will put your eloquence to excellent use today, and it will be praised by one and all, particularly by members of the opposite sex, and you will bask in all the glory. However, Ganesh suggests that you spare some time for meditation to balance your internal and external worlds.

TAURUS

Today, you will be ruled by your heart, not your head, says Ganesh. You are likely to be driven by your feelings, emotions and sentiments. Most of the decisions taken today will be based on emotion, not reason. You need to be carefully that your sensitivity and emotionality does not expose you to hurt.

GEMINI

Your interest and performance in sports will go from strength to strength, says Ganesh. You are feeling a bit anxious and will not be able to concentrate on a single job. Instead, you will move from one project to another.

CANCER

You will take advantage of your ability to influence people, predicts Ganesh. At work, your power to communicate will receive widespread approval. You will enjoy social activities later in the day. Meditation will help you relieve your tension in the evening, suggests Ganesh.

LEO

It is time to erase all negative vibes in your surroundings, says Ganesh. The stars ensure that you nurture only the positive aspects of your life today. Chances are that you might find yourself perched atop the horns of dilemma at work, but that shouldn't throw you off your game.

VIRGO

Signs indicate that you shall bring changes you wanted at your workplace. Cash flow will be outrageous, even as your loved ones - on whom it is spent - will love it. Members of the opposite sex will be charmed by your appeal, says Ganesh.

LIBRA

You are at your best when communicating with others, and your silver-tongued speech will charm many. Your day will be spent in negotiating, meetings, and in interacting with people to get things done. At work, you may be put in charge of some investigative task. Towards the evening, people around you will find you incredibly charming and irresistible.

SCORPIO

Take the lonely road today in business ventures, advises Ganesh. Professionally, you are capable of managing massive missions. Be set to administer your department all by yourself. You shall stake a claim as a great team leader today, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

Belligerent - this word describes your state today. Good news, long since awaited, will come by at the workplace. Imagination is set to fly sky-high as you while the evening away in the pleasant company of someone from the opposite sex.

CAPRICORN

Your creative bent will come to the fore, and you will also prove to be a very resourceful person, says Ganesh. The valuable advice that you offer to people will help improve their situations at work as well as home, earning you the reputation of a fine counsellor or healer of many ills.

AQUARIUS

Worried about your future? Just approach your work more seriously. You may be overburdening yourself by helping others. While this is noble, Ganesh says it shouldn't be at the cost of your own health. By noon, your spirits will lift. You realise that it's okay to be a little selfish.

PISCES

Taking a break from work and going off on a small picnic might be a good idea today, says Ganesh. You will be irresistible to the opposite sex, and love affairs in particular are likely to be rewarding and satisfying.



Audience can't relate to star kids: Kangana

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut is currently promoting her upcoming action flick *Dhaakad* on various platforms. In a recent interaction, she was asked to share her thoughts on why South movies and their remakes are doing good at the box office but Hindi movies are failing to pull the audience.

The *Queen* actress said that South filmmakers have a 'connect' with their audience and it is very strong. She further added that in Hindi film industry the star kids go to for-

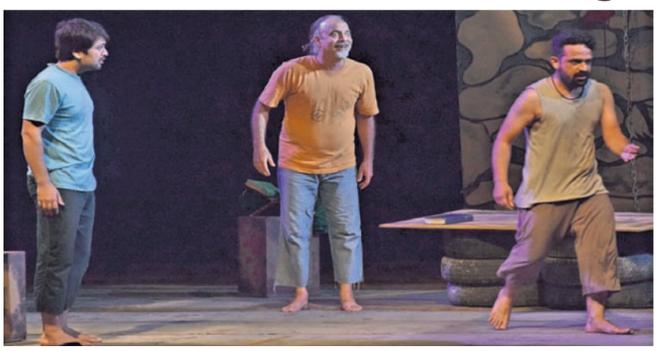
to pursue studies and then they talk in English, and watch Hollywood movies only. She went on to say that the star kids eat with knives and forks and have a different accent.

She also stated that they look like 'Ubley hue ande' (boiled eggs). She also added that their look has changed and hence the audience cannot relate to them. Kangana concluded by saying that she doesn't mean to troll anyone.

Meanwhile, *Dhaakad* is helmed by Razneesh Ghai and stars Arjun Rampal as the antagonist. The film has been slated to hit the theatres May 20, 2022.

MULTILINGUAL THEATRE FEST- DAY 4

Hindi drama 'Muntazir' leaves viewers on edge



Bhubaneswar: Nipa Rangamandali of Lucknow Sunday presented Hindi play *Muntazir* (One who waits in expectation) on the fourth evening of a national-level theatre festival, organised by City-based theatre troupe Bidyakanak Srujanusthan, here at Rabindra Mandap.

Written jointly by Bharatendu Kashyap and Suryamohan Kulshreshtha and directed by the latter, the play was about three people - an American, a

Pakistani and an Indian - who were abducted by ISIS in Iraq. They are seen fighting between themselves over their religion and nationality but they soon realise the reality and become close. Their fear of death, pain of separation and hope for liberation formed the crux of the play. The narration was gripping and left the viewers on the edge of their seats.

Mahindra Pal Singh, Nitish Bhardwaj, Binay Mishra and Shubham Tiwari were among the ac-

tors who played important roles in the play.

Manoranjan Panigrahi, Chief Income Tax Commissioner, Mumbai, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi vice-president Manmath Kumar Satpathy, eminent theatre personality Samar Mudali, Principal secretary of Industry department Hemant Sharma addressed the audience before the play began. Troupe's secretary Shubhakanta Padhi coordinated the programme.

Taapsee cheers beau over India's Thomas Cup win

Mumbai: Sunday, the Indian badminton team created history as they won the 2022 Thomas Cup. This is India's first win at the tournament. Actress Taapsee Pannu was quick to react to the big win as her boyfriend Mathias Boe coached the team. She took to social media and cheered for him and the entire team.



to her Instagram story and wrote, "The boys did it. First-ever Thomas Cup for India." She also shared a picture of one of the players hugging Mathias and wrote, "Mr Coach you made us proud @mathias.boe #ThomasCupWinner."

Taapsee reportedly met Mathias after she went to watch one of his matches. Earlier speaking about Mathias, the actress said, "I didn't want to date someone from the industry for this very reason. I want to keep my personal and professional lives separate. I always share a picture with those who matter to me on their birthdays and did the same for Mathias, who is a part of my inner circle."

Mathias is an Olympic medallist and he has won silver at the 2012 Games in men's doubles.

Taapsee has been following the Indian team throughout and she is often seen sharing updates on social media. After today's win, she took



Akshay tests Covid +ve again, to miss Cannes

Mumbai: Akshay Kumar, whose historical film *Prithviraj* is scheduled for a June 3 release, has tested positive for Covid-19 for the second time.

In an announcement made on Twitter, Akshay said he would not be able to join the delegation of film personalities that Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur is leading to the Cannes Film Festival.

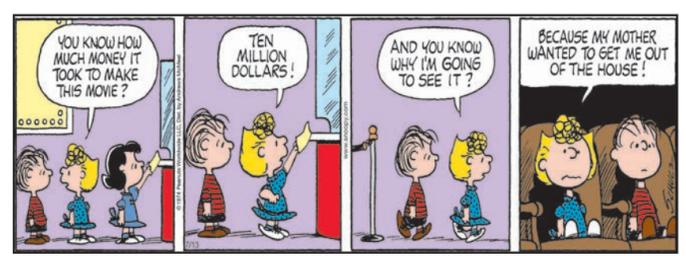
"Was really looking forward to rooting for our cinema at the India Pavilion at #Cannes2022, but have sadly tested positive for Covid," the actor said in his tweet Saturday night. "Will rest it out. Loads of best wishes to you and your entire team, @ianuragthakur. Will really miss being there."

Akshay was to walk the Cannes 2022 red carpet alongside music maestro AR Rahman, actors R Madhavan, Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Nayanthara and Tamannaah Bhatia, filmmaker Shekhar Kapur; Censor Board chief Prasoos Joshi and two-time Grammy winner Ricky Kej, among others.

The star had previously tested Covid-19 positive last year in April.



PEANUTS



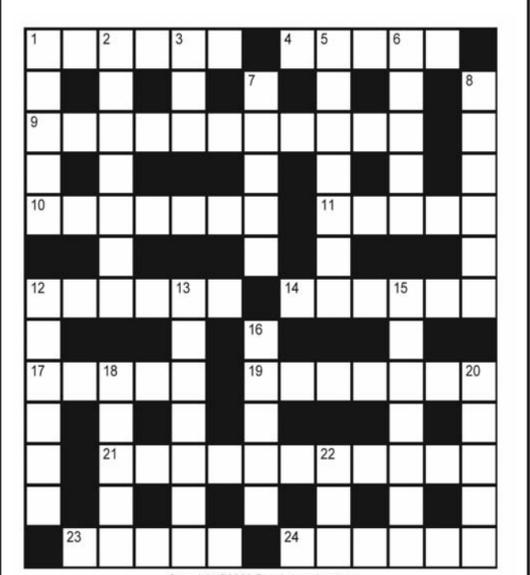
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



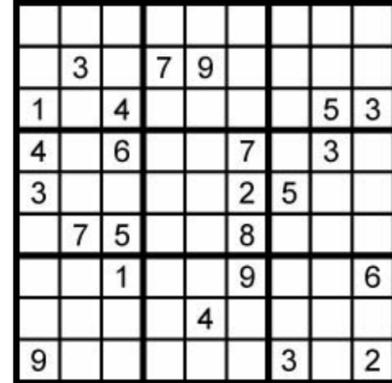
FUN post CROSSWORD



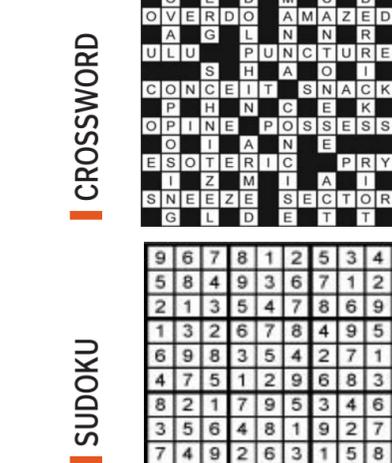
- Across**
- 1 Linger
 - 4 Kind of nerve
 - 9 "That cad was ___!" (2,9)
 - 10 High spirits
 - 11 Kitchen garb
 - 12 Rancher's charge
 - 14 Jeweller's tools
 - 17 Outspoken
 - 19 Suitcases
 - 21 Clay pigeon killer?
 - 23 Horse carts
 - 24 Punctual
- Down**
- 1 Washer cycle
 - 2 Kind of worker
 - 3 Charge carrier
 - 5 Warm-water fatty fish
 - 6 Word with ear or peace
 - 7 Carpenter's tool
 - 8 Court contest
 - 12 Tooth problem
 - 13 Song sung by mom
 - 15 Wraith
 - 16 Eruption
 - 18 Provide food
 - 20 White heron
 - 22 Shell mover

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

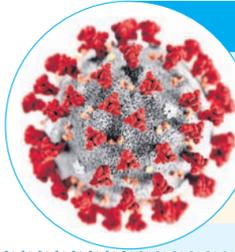


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



MUSEUM VISIT

People queuing up to visit Odisha State Museum near Kalpana Square in Bhubaneswar, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	52,10,77,873	47,55,38,850	62,88,098
India	4,31,21,599	4,25,79,693	5,24,214
Odisha	12,88,304	12,79,000	9,126

Gurgaon man held in fake loan app case

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of state Crime Branch Sunday claimed to have arrested another person in connection with the fake loan app case.

The arrested has been identified as Tarun Dudeja, a resident of Sector- 48 area in Gurgaon in Haryana, said an official of the EOW.

Tarun is the director and proprietor of various shell companies engaged in the storing of ill-gotten money that was later channelised to various legal accounts to mislead the enforcement agencies.

The shell companies include Digital Batua, IPAISA Online Services Private Limited, Switz Infotech Private Limited, Bazarpe Infotech Private Limited, Milanum Enterprise and Bacchat Online, EOW sources said.

The EOW with the help of Uttar Pradesh police had earlier arrested Javed Sahifi, another accused in the fake loan app case, from Ghaziabad May 4. The sleuths had also managed to freeze Rs 6.57 crore deposited in the bank accounts of Mahagram payments Pvt Ltd.

During investigation, the EOW sleuths came to know that Tarun and Javed would convince their employees and other gullible persons through various inducements to allow the duo to open bank accounts and collect new SIM cards in their names.

"These accounts would be used to channelise the money collected through illegal loan Apps. The



THE ARRESTED HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS TARUN DUDEJA, A RESIDENT OF SECTOR- 48 AREA IN GURGAON IN HARYANA

TARUN IS THE DIRECTOR AND PROPRIETOR OF VARIOUS SHELL COMPANIES ENGAGED IN THE STORING OF ILL-GOTTEN MONEY THAT WAS LATER CHANNELISED TO VARIOUS LEGAL ACCOUNTS TO MISLEAD THE ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

SEVERAL PEOPLE IN ODISHA FELL INTO THE TRAPS OF THE FRAUDSTERS AFTER DOWNLOADING FAKE LOAN APPLICATIONS LIKE COCO AND JOJO

THE EOW WITH THE HELP OF UTTAR PRADESH POLICE HAD EARLIER ARRESTED JAVED SAHIFI, ANOTHER ACCUSED IN THE FAKE LOAN APP CASE, FROM GHAZIABAD MAY 4

THE EOW, MEANWHILE, HAS ADVISED PEOPLE NOT TO ALLOW ANYBODY TO USE THEIR BANK ACCOUNTS AND SIM CARDS. IT NOW AGAIN URGED THE PEOPLE NOT TO DOWNLOAD AND USE ANY ILLEGAL LOAN APPS FOR BORROWING MONEY

for illegal activities, sources added.

The EOW, meanwhile, has advised people not to allow anybody to use their bank accounts and SIM cards. "The bank accounts and SIM cards registered in the name of several gullible persons are being used by the fraudsters in various illegal activities," said the EOW.

The EOW once again urged the people not to download and use any illegal loan apps for borrowing money.

Notably, several people in Odisha fell into the traps of the fraudsters after downloading fake loan applications like COCO and JOJO.

During investigation, the EOW found that the illegal apps were offering loans ranging from Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 to its customers through their bank accounts.

After the money was credited to customers' bank accounts, the officials of the two apps were asking the borrowers to return the amounts with high rate of interest within a week.

The officials of the illegal apps used to harass the borrowers if they raise any objection to the high rate of interest. The fraudsters used to hack the phone numbers and social media accounts of the borrowers and send obscene messages and photos to their contacts.

Several borrowers in other states have ended their lives after facing harassment and humiliation for the fraudsters.

"The borrowers must not surrender to abusive/ torturous methods of the recovery agents of these illegal apps and report the matter to police," said the EOW in its advisory.

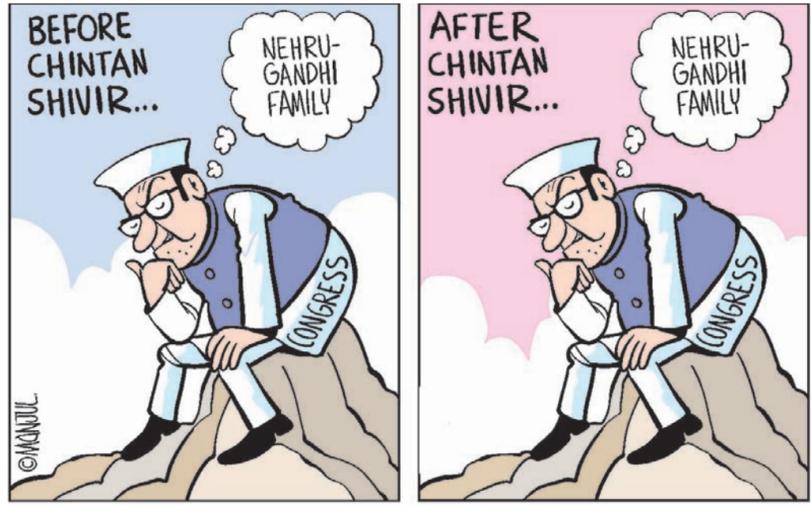
mobile/SIM numbers connected to these bank accounts would be actually handled by the fraudsters. All the related information/ call/ OTP would land on these mobile numbers, handled by the fraudsters not by the actual/official account holders," informed the EOW in its press note.

These bank accounts are called mule accounts. The common in-

involved in financial frauds use these accounts to launder the proceeds of crime to the mastermind's account through several extra layers to confuse the law enforcement agencies, sources said.

Tarun has reportedly confessed before the EOW sleuths that they would pay up to Rs 2 lakh each to the gullible persons for utilizing their bank accounts and SIM cards

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Ward no. 37 in City to get smart road by year-end

THE ROAD WOULD BE CONSTRUCTED WITH AN EXPENDITURE OF ₹4.5 CRORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: With an aim to improve connectivity, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to construct three roads in ward no. 37 and 39 of the capital city here by the end of this year.

Two internal roads would be laid under ward no. 39 under the Project Infra. Similarly, the civic authorities would construct a road in ward no. 37, sources said.

"In ward no. 39, two internal



roads would be renovated with an expenditure of Rs 33.5 lakh. In ward no. 37, a road would be con-

structed with an expenditure of Rs 4.5 crore. The project involves BT road, paver footpath, drain and other accessories like footpath, road furniture, lighting and dedicated parking place. This would be developed as a smart road," said an official of the BMC.

The construction work of the road projects would be completed in seven months, said the official.

Mayor Sulochana Das and MLA Ananata Narayan Jena had laid foundation stones for the road projects recently.

THRUST ON FIRE SAFETY



Fire brigade personnel inspected fire safety measures at a private hospital in Cuttack, Sunday, in the wake of a massive fire in Delhi that killed at least 27 people

Fire safety audit at hotels, hospitals in twin cities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Acting upon the instructions of Director General of Fire Services, Odisha, Santosh Kumar Upadhyay, the fire services personnel Sunday carried out fire safety audits at different commercial establishments and hospitals in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

The fire services officials inspected the premises of Care Hospital and Aswini Hospital in Chandrasekharpur area, Shree Hospital at Lewis Road and Sanjebani Hospital in Samantarapur area in Bhubaneswar. This apart, the team also inspected the Nilaya Hotel in Patia area to check the fire preparedness and status of fire equipment installed in the buildings.

Firemen in Cuttack inspected commercial establishments to check whether they were following the guidelines of Odisha Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Rules, 2017 or not. In the wake of the fire tragedy in Delhi that claimed at least 27 lives, Upadhyay Saturday ordered the audit of all vital establishments including hospitals, industries and market complexes across the state.

IIT team studied 'Fani' to check damage to power infra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Gandhinagar, have developed a comprehensive framework that can reduce the damage to power transmission systems in coastal areas under cyclone scenario.

The team used damage-cum-wind speed data of Cyclone Fani in Odisha to develop a fragility model for towers, which helps assess the functionality of the network and the influence of strategic interventions on the same.

According to the team, they found that the most efficient strategy could be to pick a fraction of towers from the highest wind speed zones (according to the Indian standards) that are associated with substations serving a large population. Strengthening towers nearest to the coast may somewhat help reduce the number of towers damaged during a cyclone, but its resultant impact on the affected population may not be as significant.

The study results revealed that a greater number of reinforced towers or a greater level of strengthening in them based on tailor-made

and efficient reinforcement prioritisation strategies in a particular region leads to better functionality of power transmission systems. The research team also found that strengthening the towers in a transmission line associated with important substations (importance was quantified in terms of population served by the substation) close to the coastline led to maximum enhancement in performance, meaning lesser population is affected, they claimed.

"This is a first of its kind research work because here we were able to consider a large-scale network, its relationship with the coastline, a suitable context-specific fragility curve for the towers, and realistic cyclone scenarios in a reasonable manner, which led to interesting insights into strengthening strategies for the power transmission network of Odisha. The framework can be useful for cost-effective strengthening of transmission tower networks of other coastal states of India as well, such as West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, and Maharashtra," said, Manish Kumar, Associate Professor at IIT

MITIGATING CYCLONES



The team used damage-cum-wind speed data of Cyclone Fani in Odisha to develop a fragility model for towers, which helps assess the functionality of the network and the influence of strategic interventions on the same

Gandhinagar. "The towers can be prioritised differently if a different performance metric is selected. Structural strengthening that would lead to the shift in the fragility curves considered in this study can be based on wind-tunnel tests and/or computational fluid dy-

namics analyses, which will further optimise the resources. This approach may also be relevant for transmission lines associated with some power plants that may require a shutdown in the event of damage to the lines," he added.

The researchers observed that the

loss in functionality of transmission towers depends considerably on the location of the landfall of the cyclone. The damage was greater if the landfall was close to a region with many substations in the vicinity. This observation emphasises the need to consider the orientation of the network with respect to the coastline and the realistic properties of cyclones. Researchers also noted that the loss of functionality in power transmission could be affected considerably by the path of a cyclone before making landfall.

"A simulated cyclone trajectory indicated that it could damage towers even up to 300 km apart from each other, which further underscores the need to perform such studies on a holistic scale. The framework developed by the team helps in prioritising the towers that should be strengthened to minimise the overall losses in functionality in a cost-effective manner," he said.

The team considered two broad aspects to identify towers for priority strengthening which were identification of a geographical region and basis for prioritisation within that geographical region.

Each intervention suggested by

the team is unique from each other in terms of selection of a geographical region, the basis for prioritising the towers, the number of towers to strengthen, and the extent of strengthening considered.

"In post-disaster scenarios, decision-makers always face a constraint on 3Ms—Manpower, Money (budget) and Materials. Hence, there is a need to supplement the bird-eye view with the component level view to identify the right set of components that should be reinforced and strengthened to minimise damage after natural calamities," said Udit Bhatia, Assistant Professor of Civil Engineering at IIT Gandhinagar.

"Changing climate scenarios and upward trend in frequency and magnitudes of cyclones as a consequence of increasing Sea Surface Temperature put our coastal infrastructure at a greater risk. While our understanding of these hazards has increased significantly in recent years, still a lot needs to be done on the adaptation side. Our framework brings us one step closer to possible solutions that stakeholders and infrastructure managers can invest in," added Bhatia.

PURI HERITAGE CORRIDOR ROW

No objection to works within law: Pradhan



"All developmental works should be carried out within the ambit of law. The state government should abide by the rules and laws enacted by the Government of India for the protection of mutts, temples, heritage sites and culture," he said.

However, he did not demand for suspension of work of the controversial corridor project as his party colleagues made earlier.

Noting that Odisha is known for its rich culture and heritage, Pradhan said the Srimandir is dotted with numerous mutts and monasteries which are several centuries old. "These are symbols of Odisha's rich heritage and should not be destroyed on the plea of beautification," he said.

BJP's Sundargarh MP and former Union minister Jual Oram Sunday demanded that work in the protected zone must be stopped immediately.

"This is illegal to undertake any construction project in the protected zone. I doubt some officers are carrying out illegal work by hiding the truth from the CM. It is unfortunate that Puri MP Pinaki Misra misled the Parliament while speaking on the project. I was present there when Pinaki babu made the statement," he said.

Misra had said that only four toilets were being constructed near the Jagannath Temple. He, however, later clarified that he could not mention other works being carried out at the temple due to the paucity of time in the Lok Sabha.

Oram said the state BJP president has already visited the construction site and will soon submit a report to the party's central leadership.

It is not wise to ignore the recovery of ancient idols and other heritage remains dating back to thousands of years from the surrounding of Srimandir. As a devotee of Lord Jagannath, I expect that the beautification works under the Puri Heritage Corridor Project be implemented within laws

The charges are being made to halt the ongoing developmental works in Puri even as all parties had unanimously agreed to the project. The Chief Minister is committed to the overall development of Puri and transforming it into a world heritage site

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN | UNION MINISTER
SUBHASH SINGH | BJD LEADER, CMC MAYOR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Amid the ongoing row over the controversial Heritage Corridor project at the 800-year-old Jagannath Temple in Puri, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said that while there is "no objection" to development activity for the benefit of devotees of the 12th-century shrine, but such work should be carried out within the ambit of law.

The comment from the BJP leader holds significance as his party colleagues, including saffron camp's national spokesperson Sambit Patra and Bhubaneswar

MP Aparajita Sarangi, demanded suspension of the work in the protected zone of the temple.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) May 9 informed the Orissa High Court that the project was being carried out without valid permission from the authority.

After visiting Angul Saturday, Pradhan issued a one-page statement mentioning that there is no objection to development works for benefit of devotees and beautification of the surrounding of the 12th-century shrine, but certain news coming to the fore in this regard were a matter of concern.

HAMMER OF THE GODS



Carpenters fixing the spokes of a wheel as part of chariot construction work in Puri ahead of Rath Yatra, Sunday

OP PHOTO

No fresh Covid death in state for 12 days

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Odisha recorded 14 more coronavirus cases Sunday of which four are in the age group of newborn to 18 years. There was no new fatality for the 12th consecutive day, the state Health department said in a bulletin.

Out of the total 14 new infections, eight were reported from quarantine centres while six persons contracted the virus locally.

There are 138 active Covid cases and seven more patients have recuperated from the disease, according to the bulletin.

Nuapada district registered the highest number of new cases with



nine persons testing positive for the disease. It was followed by Cuttack with three new infections. Balasore and Khurda districts re-

Nuapada district registered the highest number of new cases at nine, followed by Cuttack (3)

Balasore and Khurda districts reported one fresh Covid case each

The daily test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.10 per cent and 14,613 samples were tested in the past 24 hours

positive for the disease.

The coastal state's daily test positivity rate (TPR) was 0.10 per cent, it said, adding that 14,613 samples were tested in the past 24 hours, the bulletin stated. The state had logged 18 infections and zero death Saturday.

The toll stood at 9,126 and these are confirmed as Covid deaths after an audit. Fifty-three other coronavirus patients in state have died due to comorbidities so far, according to data.

The tally rose to 12,88,304 including 12,78,987 recoveries, it added. A total of 3,15,30,251 swab samples have been cumulatively tested so far.

State dairy farmers' body demands milk MSP at ₹50 per litre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 15: A body of dairy farmers in Odisha Sunday submitted a memorandum to Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan, demanding a minimum support price for milk at ₹50 per litre.

Odisha Milk Farmers' Association chairman Rabi Behera met Union Minister Balyan, who is currently on a two-day visit to the state.

Milk producers have ensured that India secures the top position in the sector globally, but they do not get a remunerative price for their produce, the association said in its representation. "Hence there is a need of fixing up milk MSP at ₹50 per litre in the present era of price rise," it said.

The body also requested the minister of state for fishery, animal husbandry and dairying, to include milk and other milk-based products like paneer in Integrated Child Development Services and Mid Day Meal programmes.

ICDS scheme is one of the flagship programmes of the Centre for early childhood care and development, while the Mid Day Meal is among the largest initiatives in the world to enhance nutrition levels of school-going children through cooked food.

The association also demanded installation of milk parlours along national highways which can create additional employment opportunities for unemployed youths.

It also urged the minister to take an initiative to set up milk hubs on premises of various temples in the country where dairy products can be made available for puja.

They have also demanded for protection of grazing land across the country to boost animal husbandry.

Behera said the minister has appreciated the association's demand and assured him of taking necessary steps to boost the sector.



People thronged the Balijatra ground in Cuttack as the Baisakhi Banijya Mela concluded, Sunday

OP PHOTO

FAIR CONCLUSION

BOI officers' association holds 41st annual meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The 41st Annual General Body Meet of Bank of India Officers' Association (BOIOA), Odisha Unit, was organised Sunday here at KIIT Auditorium. The meeting was presided over by association President Smrutiranjana Sahoo.

Sahoo attended the meet in the presence of association general secretary Kamaljit Mohapatra, General Secretary of the Federation of Bank of India Officers' Associations Sunil Kumar, and the federation's President Sanjay Das, who attended the meeting as the Chief Guest and Guest of Honor respectively.

The federation leaders held discussions regarding the challenges the entire banking industry is going to face if the Central government privatises the public sector banks, and how the general public will be affected by it. The members highlighted the road map of trade unions to protect the pub-

lic money and nation's interest.

The members motivated and appealed the officers to contribute quality business to the bank's balance sheet which will keep the BOI flag always high. Along with the guests, the meeting was also attended by the former leaders of the BOIOA, leaders of the BOI Staff Union and also the leaders from different bank associations in state.

As a good gesture, the BOIOA donated ₹51,000/- to young mountaineer Lipika Seth for her forthcoming project of reaching the highest peak of Mount Everest. More than 850 officers of BOI posted in Odisha were present in the meeting.

OTC painkiller in pregnancy ups preterm, stillbirth risks by 50%

Maternal use of over-the-counter (OTC) painkillers is about one and a half times more likely to increase the risk of delivering a baby with health issues, finds a study calling for reassessment of medical advice about the use of analgesics during pregnancy.

Researchers at the University of Aberdeen in the UK analysed data from more than 1,51,000 pregnancies over 30 years.

The team looked at medical notes for non-prescribed maternal consumption of five common painkillers i.e. paracetamol, aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), diclofenac, naproxen, and ibuprofen, either as single compounds or in combinations.

Among mothers who took parac-

etamol and ibuprofen during pregnancy, the risk of a preterm delivery before 37 weeks was 50 per cent more likely, while the risk of stillbirth was 33 per cent.

Other risks of using painkillers include neural tube defects (64 per cent more likely); admission to a neonatal unit (57 per cent more likely); neonatal death (56 per cent more likely); and birth-weight under 2.5 kg (28 per cent more likely) among others, revealed the study published in BMJ Open.

"It should be reinforced that paracetamol in combination with NSAIDs is associated with a higher risk and pregnant women should always consult their doctor or midwife before taking any over-the-counter drugs. We would encourage a strong reinforcement of the



official advice for pregnant women," said Aikaterini Zafeiri from the University.

Between 30 per cent and 80 per cent of women globally use non-

prescription painkillers in pregnancy to relieve pain for common pregnancy symptoms such as flu, fever, inflammatory or rheumatological conditions.

It should be reinforced that paracetamol in combination with NSAIDs is associated with a higher risk and pregnant women should always consult their doctor or midwife before taking any over-the-counter drugs. We would encourage a strong reinforcement of the official advice for pregnant women

AIKATERINI ZAFEIRI | RESEARCHER, UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN, UK

However, current evidence regarding safety of use during pregnancy varies widely, with some drugs considered safe and others not.

Overall, nearly three in ten women have taken over-the-counter analgesics during pregnancy, a figure which more than doubled to 60 per cent during the last seven years of the 30-year study period. This suggests use is growing rapidly.

"In light of the study findings, the ease of access to non-prescription painkillers, in combination with availability of misinformation as well as correct information through the internet, raises safety concerns," Zafeiri said.

"This is especially when misinformed or partially-informed self-medication decisions are taken during pregnancy without medical advice," she added.

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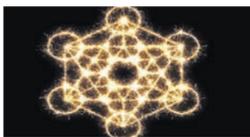
NEWS IN BRIEF

Youth killed after spat over music

Polsara: A youth was killed following a quarrel over alleged disturbance during a religious ritual at Kalamba under Polsara police limits in Ganjam, late Saturday night. The deceased was identified as Bikash Sahu (28). Reports said, villagers had organised 'yajna' ceremony for temple installation from May 6 to 10. Allegedly, some youths were loudly playing a musical instrument which was disturbing the rituals. Bikash had advised the youths to refrain from creating noise. This led to a wordy duel between the two sides. However, the youths had grudge against Bikash. They went to Bikash's house and hurled abuses at his family members Saturday night. Later, the youths allegedly murdered him by slitting his throat near the village school. The family of the deceased filed a complaint at the police station in this regard. Police rushed to the spot and seized the body. A case was registered and an investigation is underway.

Man, woman roughed up over witchcraft fear

Locals detain the duo and break their teeth



POST NEWS NETWORK

Ganjam, May 15: In a shocking incident, locals brutally assaulted two fellow villagers and broke their teeth over suspected practice of witchcraft and sorcery at Gadahuma village under Rambha police limits in Ganjam district, late Saturday night. The victims were identified as Kishor Das and a woman Ranju Das in the village. They were busy performing some rituals at Satabhauni temple near the village when the villagers caught the two and brutally assaulted them, late Saturday night.

Later, they detained them the whole night. The incident has sparked tension in the area.

On being informed, Rambha police IIC P Swaroop Kishan, his Chhatrapur counterpart Satya Ranjan Pradhan and Huma OIC Debadutta Priyadarshi rushed to the spot and rescued the two from detention and admitted them in Chhatrapur hospital for treatment. Tension was palpable in the area when reports last came in.

The two persons were on the scanner of the villagers after two children of an ex-serviceman died a few months back and the death of a 22-year-old youth, 20 days back. Subsequently, two persons had vomited and fallen sick during a religious festival some days ago in the village strengthening the suspicion among the villagers that the two are cause of all the misfortunes through their act of sorcery.

FOR A LIVING



Fishermen fishing in Mahanadi river in Sonepur as sun sets on the western horizon

OP PHOTO

BJARAJNAGAR SET FOR A TRIANGULAR TUSSLE

BJD brainstorms for winning strategies

POST NEWS NETWORK

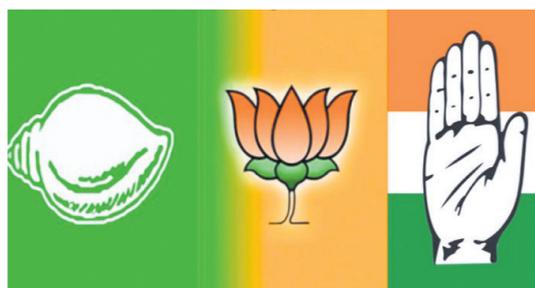
Brajaraj Nagar, May 15: The political atmosphere is getting warmer by the day in Brajaraj Nagar Assembly constituency segment as leaders of three major political parties - BJD, BJP and Congress - are busy drawing up their own strategies. Electioneering for the bypoll has also intensified with prominent leaders canvassing for their nominees.

The three major parties are expected to have a triangular contest for obtaining the mandates of local voters, some observers opined. Notably, the date of polling has been fixed May 31, 2022.

The three major political parties in Odisha, namely BJD, BJP and Congress, have intensified their electioneering for the bypoll.

The ruling party has been in the forefront of the campaigning. BJD's state women's wing president Snehangini Chhuria had held a meeting of party leaders at Belpahar Saturday. Health Minister Naba Das, party's district observer, Cuttack Mayor Subash Singh and deputy observer Bishnu Prasad Kedia held a meeting and brainstormed on strategies to gain support of voters at Belpahar Sunday.

Das reminded the leaders that the party nominee had won the election



by a margin of 70,000 votes in 2019 general elections. He exuded hope that the party nominee Alka Mohanty will win the by-poll by a margin of 50,000 votes.

The 2019 general election had witnessed a tough fight between BJD and BJP here. For quite a long time beforehand, the Assembly constituency was a bastion of CPI. The party candidate and former MLA late Prasanna Panda had won from this seat for six times and represented it in 1961, 1967, 1974, 1985, 1990 and 1995.

Similarly, Congress candidate Upendra Dixit was elected from the seat for three times in 1971, 1977 and 1980. Subsequently, Congress candidate Anup Sai was elected as the legislator from here thrice in between from 2000 to 2009. The first bypoll was held in

favour) and BJP candidate Radharani Panda (who lost with 27,954 votes). However, in 2014 general elections, BJP candidate Radharani won the MLA seat by defeating her nearest contender Anup Sai who had this time fought with a BJD ticket.

In 2019, BJD fielded Kishore Mohanty from Brajaraj Nagar Assembly constituency segment and he won by defeating BJP's Radharani.

This means, CPI has won from Brajaraj Nagar for six times, Congress for seven times and both BJD and BJP once each. The three major political parties have fastened their belts to win popular mandate in the upcoming bypoll in their own favour.

5 Union Mins in BJP's star campaigner list

Jharsuguda: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Sunday announced the list of 40 campaigners including star campaigners of the party for the upcoming by-election to Brajaraj Nagar Assembly segment. The list of the star campaigners includes five Union Ministers and the state BJP office bearers. Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Bishweswar Tudu, Piyush Goyal, Prahlad Joshi and Aswini Vaishnav will lead the campaign. More over, state party-in-charge D Purandeswari, state BJP president Samir Mohanty, former CM of Chhattisgarh Raman Singh, national vice-president Baijayant Jay Panda, Bijaypal Singh Tomar, Balasore MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi, Bargarh MP Suresh Pujari, Kalahandi MP Basant Panda, Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Bolangir MP Sangeeta Kumari Singh Deo, Manmohan Samal, Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi, national spokesperson Sambit Patra, Sambalpur MP Nitesh Gangdev and MLA Jay Narayan Mishra will campaign for BJP candidate Radharani Panda.

MEDICO'S DEATH AT BBMCH

Inability to make vulgar jokes took Nishant's life, claims father on Twitter

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 15: In a new twist in medico Nishant Kumar's 'suicide' over 'ragging' at Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) in Bolangir, his parents and kin have alleged that he was 'murdered' over obscene jokes.

Family members expressed resentment as there has been no arrest in the case. 22 days have passed, but no action has been taken even after Nishant's father Prof Krishan Kumar tried to draw the attention of PM Modi, NHRC, OHRC, CM Naveen Patnaik and the Bolangir SP.

Meanwhile, another WhatsApp chat of Nishant with a friend has gone viral on social media. In the chat, Nishant has shared that he was made to crack vulgar jokes by three senior students from Rajasthan.

They allegedly tortured him mentally and physically when he failed to crack the jokes. Sharing screenshots of the chats on Twitter, Nishant's father has claimed that parents nowadays also have to teach obscene jokes to their children for them to survive.

"Just teaching good manners



will not help, you should also teach non-veg jokes," tweeted Nishant's father.

It is pertinent to mention that Nishant Kumar, 19, a first year MBBS student from Karnal in Haryana, had taken admission in BBMCH and just joined the hostel 10 days back. He was residing alone in Room-312 of the New Boys' Hostel. After having lunch April 22, Kumar had gone to the roof of the hostel. However, it is not clear what happened on the roof and how he fell off. He was immediately rescued and rushed to the hospital, where the doctors declared him dead upon arrival.

On the other hand, Sabita Mohapatra, the dean of the medical college, has refuted the allegations of ragging.

QUENCHING THIRST



A herd of elephants from Chhattisgarh drinking water from a creek at Sihaba jungle, Sunday. The herd has unleashed a reign of terror by taking lives and destroying properties in the villages of Raigarh block in Nabarangpur district bordering the neighbouring state

Delayed Biju Setus cost state coffers dear

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, May 15: The tardy pace of some Biju Setu s including the one across Sanagenguti river connecting Jagannathpur to Bhuban rural development road in Jajpur have left the Jaraka rural development division fuming. Even though the RD authorities have served show cause notices on the concerned contractor of the Sanagenguti project five times in the past, the bridge work has failed to make any remarkable progress.

The contractor was accused of deliberately delaying the work so as to seek an easy plea later for cost escalation or revised cost estimate of the bridge project. As per sources of the RD department, the project is being executed under Biju Setu Yojana at a cost of ₹5.01 crore. According to the agreement signed with the contractor, the bridge con-



struction started from February 7, 2020 and was supposed to be completed by August 6, 2021. Till date, only ₹2.40 crore has been spent and 47.85 percent of the work has been completed.

The RD department is disappointed over the slow pace of its construction and termed it discouraging. The department has already slapped show-cause notices to the construction firm Bhubaneswari Constructions five times.

In the latest notice issued May

9, the RD authorities have made it clear that the land dispute that existed earlier has been sorted out. Besides, electric lines coming in the way have been shifted. The state government had allowed the construction agency to carry on bridge construction during the pandemic times. Hence, the slow pace of work will not be tolerated, it was said.

The agency has been asked to submit an application for revised work and to finish the work by June 30, 2022. It is clear that if con-

struction work gets delayed, its cost will be revised upward with change in the deadline.

Earlier, costs of two bridge projects under Jaraka RD division had been revised due to construction delay. One project is Bahujanga-Dhaudia bridge across Birupa river and a high level bridge across Sanagenguti river on Shakuntalapur road. Both the projects had inordinately missed deadlines. Construction agencies had applied at the superintending engineer of the RD department for cost escalation to ₹1.61 crore.

There are several other projects getting delayed with escalated costs. Locals alleged that both contractors and engineers used to mint money in the name of construction delay. Executive engineer of the RD division Biswanath Marandi said the contractor has been asked to finish the work. Its cost has been revised as per official norms.

Healthcare haywire due to docs' crunch in Subarnapur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, May 15: Healthcare services in various hospitals of Subarnapur district have been badly affected due to acute shortage of doctors. It is alleged that vacancies have not filled up for a long time, a report said.

According to the report, posts of 74 doctors are lying vacant in most hospitals, leading to people facing a lot of difficulty in availing healthcare services.

There are 152 sanctioned posts of specialists and doctors in the district while only 78 of them are rendering their service.

Moreover, healthcare services in four primary healthcare cen-

tres (PHC) at Kotsamalei under Ullunda block, Bhintikira and Digashira under Dunguripalli block and Hariharjora have gone for a toss as now these facilities do not have doctors at all. In such situation, people have no other way but to seek treatment in Bolangir, Burla and Cuttack, it was alleged.

However, chief district medical officer (CDMO) Dr Pradip Kumar Guru said, "Despite limited number of doctors, we are trying to provide good healthcare services to patients. The government is routinely intimated about the need for filling up vacancies at hospitals in the district."

Kidney disease takes toll on Nayagarh villages

THE DISEASE HAS CLAIMED AS MANY AS 10 LIVES IN THESE TWO VILLAGES IN LAST FIVE YEARS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, May 15: Kidney disease has allegedly been taking a heavy toll on Chadeiyapalli and Osamanna villages under Dasapalla block of Nayagarh district. Though the exact reason for rise of such illness is yet to be ascertained, locals suspect that contaminated water is causing the disease.

In the last five years, as many as 10 people have died of kidney disease in these two villages. Currently, four residents of the two villages affected by kidney disease are battling for their lives.

As the disease is on a killing spree, it has triggered panic in the locality

Locals have demanded that the health department should look into the right cause of the disease and provide free treatment to the people.

Reports said, 15 families of scheduled caste live in Chadeiyapalli while 9 families live in Osamanna. There are two tube wells in the village. "But the water available from the tube wells is unfit for drinking. The water is grey and a thin layer comes up on its surface if it is kept in a pot for minutes. The water may be the reason for such kidney disorders," villagers said.

They alleged that though they had drawn attention of the local leaders and the block administration towards their water woes, no



Two villagers affected by the kidney disease

step has been taken till date. Banchhanidhi Nayak (50) of Chadeiyapalli died of the disease April 29 while Chintamani Nayak (50) and Kanhu Charan Nayak (45) of the same village have been battling for life. Besides, Chaturbhuj

Nayak (50) of Osamanna has died of the disease while Karunakar Nayak (45) is affected by it. Chintamani Nayak and Karunakar Nayak, local residents, say that tube well water has iron particles. "We have no alternative source

Locals held that the contaminated tube well water is responsible for the ailment. The water in the area needs a lab test, they observed

of water. We are bound to use it for our daily needs. We suspect that the water may contain fluoride. There is a need for testing of the water," they lamented. The villagers said that as long as they will be drinking such contaminated water, they would have to bear the brunt of the disease.



The whole world yearns after freedom, yet each creature is in love with his chains; this is the first paradox and inextricable knot of our nature.

SRI AUROBINDO



Putin's Problems

The irony of Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision to invade Ukraine in February is that the enemy he wanted to ward off from its border by declaring war against one country is now all set to come closer to its border because of that very invasion. The enemy is obviously NATO whose intention to give membership to Ukraine and thereby deploy its arsenal close to Russia's border was Putin's ostensible reason for invading the country. But, the havoc caused to Ukraine has so unnerved other neighbours that Finland and the country to its western border, Sweden, both democratic countries, have announced their eagerness to join NATO without any further delay. Traditionally, these two countries have always maintained neutrality, refusing to join either the US-led Western forces or the erstwhile Soviet Union or now Russia. Since the formation of NATO in 1949, these two neighbours of the former Soviet Union have been following independent policies. Finland in particular has friendly relations with Russia which supplies to it 10 per cent of its energy needs. It has over 1,300-kilometer (810-mile) border with Russia, the longest by any European Union member. Sweden is not exposed to Russia in the same manner as Finland is, since Finland to its east acts like a buffer. But, Sweden often follows steps Finland takes to formulate its geopolitical strategy. The dramatic change of their position of neutrality has occurred the moment Russia invaded Ukraine. What has caused alarm bells in the two countries is the fact that Russia could actually invade Ukraine, a country with 44 million people, a GDP of 15,392 crore USD (2019), and armed forces of 200,000 active troops. Compared to Ukraine, Finland and Sweden are smaller countries.

Finland therefore is on the cusp of joining NATO within a few days, while Sweden is going to follow suit. Things have been moving fast for the past few days. Finnish President Sauli Niinisto told Putin May 14 his country "will decide to apply for NATO membership in the coming days." He is one of few Western leaders who has held regular dialogue with Putin over the past ten years. In fact, at their first meeting in 2012 Niinisto made his stand clear that "each independent nation would maximise its own security." That position, he told Putin this time, is still the case and that by joining NATO Finland will strengthen its own security and assume its responsibilities. It speaks volumes for the courage and foresight of the Finnish President that he did not forget to tell Putin that despite its likely future membership in NATO, Finland wants to continue to deal with Russia bilaterally in "practical issues generated by the border neighbourhood." He said he hopes to engage with Moscow "in a professional manner." However meanwhile, Russian energy supplier RAO Nordic has announced it will suspend deliveries of electricity to Finland from Saturday, citing problems with payments.

Neighbouring Sweden is also moving with right earnest towards deciding on its position on NATO at a meeting of the ruling Social Democratic Party led by Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson scheduled May 15. In a highly significant move US President Joe Biden made a joint call May 13 with both Niinisto and Andersson where, according to a White House statement, he underscored his support for NATO's Open Door policy and for the right of Finland and Sweden to decide their own future, foreign policy and security arrangements. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine public support for joining NATO in Finland has gone up from around 30 per cent to nearly 80 per cent in some polls. The majority of Swedes also approve of their country joining the alliance, according to opinion polls there.

It appears the USA and the West have realised their mistake of dillydallying over the decision to accord NATO membership to Ukraine. For this, the US President has talked about an arrangement to provide security cover to Finland and Sweden during the 'waiting' period before they are inducted into NATO. It takes months before the crucial decision is taken with the concurrence of all the 30 members of the bloc. Turkey is reluctant to include the two countries into NATO for it suspects the two countries, which have a small segment of Kurds in their population, have been aiding and abetting militant Kurdish groups operating in Turkey against the current regime. It is yet to reveal the basis of its suspicion and for this it has indicated it is willing to talk to the top leadership of the two countries.

Viewed in the light of the latest developments, Putin's adventure in Ukraine may prove too costly and counterproductive for Russia. Any country waging war today has to consider the aftermath of such a horrific military experiment. Whatever the final outcome maybe, it is evident that Ukraine has already won a war, the end of which is not visible to anyone. By lasting out from Thursday 24 February 2022 till now, in itself, is victory for a small country like Ukraine against a global military power. Putin has also thoroughly exposed the incapability of the Russian armed forces to achieve decisive victory in a short period of time. The world had forgotten the inefficient Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and how the Communist country was forced to run for its life, with some similarities to what happened to the Americans 15 August 2021. If Putin's adventure fails, as it has started to look now, Russia might go through internal political changes that could affect the global geopolitical situation that has evolved lately, after the invasion of Ukraine.

WISDOM CORNER

- Education beats the beauty and the youth. **CHANAKYA**
- It is very simple to be happy, but it is very difficult to be simple. **RABINDRANATH TAGORE**
- The ability to observe without evaluating is the highest form of intelligence. **JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI**

WORDSWORTH

Swag
Swag has a surprising number of meanings. It has been around for at least 200 years for a thief's plunder or booty, the sense that CS Lewis was using. The idea of give-aways is more recent, but even that has a longer history than one might guess from the comparatively recent American usage you quote. And, of course, among other meanings, swag is also the Australian word for a bundle of personal belongings, especially a bedroll, carried by a traveller, tramp, or swagman. It looks as though all these can be traced back to a word imported into Middle English from Scandinavian svagga, to sway (in fact, it's the origin of sway as well). At first, the verb meant to rock unsteadily or lurch, but evolved into that of hanging loosely or heavily, to sag. Another sense of swag comes from the same idea — for an ornamental festoon, or for fabric fastened so it hangs in a drooping curve; this was first recorded at the end of the eighteenth century. It's also the origin of the American swag lamp sense you mention, in which the lamp's electrical cable hangs in a swag. Originally, a thief's swag was a bag of stolen clothes or the like. This and the Australian swag derive from the idea of a bundle that sags or hangs down. Think of the stereotypical image of a tramp with his swag hanging from a pole over his shoulder; it's not accidental that in cartoons the thief's swag is always shown in a sack. However, there's some suggestion there was another word involved, also Scandinavian, the one that led to a citation for swag in the Oxford English Dictionary from 1303. In that it meant a bulgy bag. The evidence suggests it didn't survive in its own right, but it's possible that it influenced later senses. One early glossary says that swag referred to any stolen goods except money, but the evidence suggests it altered through the nineteenth century until it meant small valuable items that could be easily disposed of, such as silverware. That idea seems to have been picked up in North American youth slang comparatively recently to mean valuables or money. The sense of freebie stuff might seem to be a development of that. However, Jonathon Green, the author of the Cassell Dictionary of Slang, has pointed out to me a book of about 1921 by Tom Norman, a travelling fairground showman in Britain, entitled The Penny Showman. He wrote about a stall that was: "set out with the usual showman's swag, such as fancy cups and saucers, gaudy vases, shaving mugs, etc", that is, the cheap and tawdry prizes that might be won. Eric Partridge, in his Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English, also gives this showman's sense, suggesting it dates from the end of the nineteenth century. This is not so far distant from the advertising give-aways you mention, and may indeed be its direct ancestor.



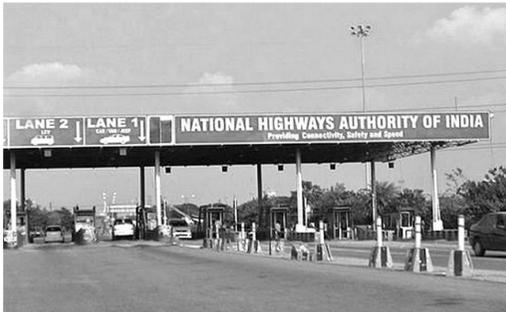
Shivaji Sarkar

THE RISING RUPEE AGAINST THE DOLLAR OR FEAR OF CONTRACTION OF RUPEE IS WORRISOME AS THE FOREX KITTY HAS SHRUNK TO \$597 BILLION FROM \$642 BILLION

Gallop inflation needs to be immediately checked. It hurts the government more than the common man, creating a cycle that hits everyone and adding further to the inflation. Retail inflation touches 7.79 per cent, the highest since September 2014 and the wholesale index remains over 14 per cent. It has made food inflation go beyond tolerable limit and so too the travel and transportation expenses. The policies need scrutiny as the subsidy regime is reversed by high taxes on fuel, road sector and commodities through various instruments such as GST, excise duties, VAT, road, agriculture and other cesses, toll and consequent rise in prices. The policymakers blame it on international factors like the Ukraine war but are unable to explain how it causes severe rise in vegetable prices, home grown wheat flour and myriad such products. Pulses price rises by 17 per cent. The government itself is in a quandary on the prices and needs to discuss issues that can bring down its bill on expenditure and cost of investments. That is possible through moderation of prices. On an average it has gone beyond the Reserve Bank of India's tolerance limit reset at 6 per cent. Rapid, sustained inflation harms families by wiping out their wage gains and eroding savings. It also rocks consumer confidence, and businesses. The rupee falling against the dollar is yet another cause for concern. It virtually imports inflation, and this is difficult to contain unless domestic steps raise the purchasing power of the rupee. Instead that is being eroded, as the rupee touches Rs 77.34 to a dollar. It makes petrol, coal and essential imports expensive. Freight rates on grand trunk routes have already shot up by an average 3-4 per cent month-on-month, according to the Indian Foundation of Transport Research & Training. The recurrent increase in the fuel prices singe into the margins of small and large transporters and will force them to pass on the hike to their customers. This in turn is set to make the prices of daily consumables and

FOCUS INFLATION

REVIEW TAXES, TOLLS



The government is collecting on an average ₹3.6 lakh crore through various petrol cesses and as per National Highways Authority of India, it directly collects ₹38,000 crore at toll gates a year

other goods dearer, impact consumption and slow the economic growth, the study says.

An Indonesian study finds that the increasing fuel prices have a devastating impact on the transport sector. If we do not check this, the rising oil prices would cause a slowdown. Of course, a small correction has been made to the monetary policy by a small raise in repo rates. As per RBI's own calculations, almost every 3 per cent depreciation in the rupee adds about 10-15 bps to the inflation. The RBI move to check it also has a cost to it.

Transportation and input costs have hit even the FMCG giant Unilever. It is seen reducing the size and quantity in each of the small packs of its products. A 10-rupee dish cleaner now has 135 grams against 155 grams three months ago or so. A Haldiiram 'aloo bhujia' now has 42 grams against 55 grams. Dabur has also reduced grammage. Britannia has passed on 65 per cent of incremental input costs all through 2021-22. Every category has had inflationary headwinds, says Sanjay Singhal of ITC's dairy and beverages unit. The manufacturers are hit by the cycle of price rises from petroleum, toll, transport to edible oil and other input costs. They transfer it to the

consumers, who respond by a further stickier consumption.

Despite a \$400 million export, the RBI is concerned as global price rises may lower demands. Imports have surged. The balance of trade is unfavourable and reducing imports is difficult. The rising rupee against the dollar or fear of contraction of rupee is worrisome as the forex kitty has shrunk to \$597 billion from \$642 billion. In the week ending April 29, foreign currency assets fell by \$1.110 billion to \$532.82 billion. Meanwhile, gold reserves dipped by \$1.164 billion to \$41.60 billion. The SDR reserves stood at \$18.3 billion lower by \$362 million. The country's reserve position in International Monetary Fund is at \$5,001 billion lower by \$59 million in the week ending April 29.

A 10 per cent rise in fuel prices raises 12.78 per cent of production costs in the road transport sector, says study of Dhani Setyawan of Indonesian Ministry of Finance. In addition, there is also indirect impact to the sector by 5.13 per cent. The indirect impact is induced by the changes of other sector product prices.

The Fitch rating agency says that the hiking of natural gas prices for ONGC and Oil India to \$6.1 per million British thermal

unit from \$2.1 may be good news as their profitability would increase. Reliance would have higher profitability as the rate of KG-D6 has gone up to \$ 9.9 per mmBtu from \$6.1. Once again it will have deleterious impact on transport costs.

A study on impact of toll system by Kedar Nath Pande in the International Advanced Research Journal, says, according to the National Motorists Association it is an inefficient approach, worse it fosters corruption, political patronage and discourages needed improvements on the rest of the non-toll highway system. Toll is the second largest expense of transporters at Rs 4 to 5 lakh a year per truck. The average usage of truck has remained the same whereas costs have increased, and transporter margins are at an all-time low, Pande says much of it due to the tolls. But NH Fee rules 2008 of reducing tax after 60 per cent cost realisation is never implemented.

The DNA story observes that toll collection is a huge profit-making mechanism, as per the police. It cites the instance of Pune-Ahmednagar toll gate at Perne Phata. The government's investment on the stretch was about Rs 10 crore. The road was started with an expected profit of Rs 24 crore in 10 years. It collected Rs 394 crore as toll and has paid Rs 1.55 crore to the government. Similar irregularities were detected in Tamil Nadu. The government is collecting on an average Rs 3.6 lakh crore through various petrol cesses and as per National Highways Authority of India, it directly collects Rs 38,000 crore at toll gates a year.

Each of these also impact government expenses. These go up every year following a myth that inflation helps government earn more. In reality, there is more erosion to revenue, increased hardships at every level and the resultant slowdown adds to the problems. Lower the inflation, higher the demand and happiness in the country. Reviewing taxes and tolls will help the government earn more.

INF A

SPECTRUM AGRICULTURE

Creating a seamless farmers' database

The challenge in our agricultural landscape has seen a marked shift. From who is a farmer in India to how we collate the data on every farmer in India. Now, governments are beset with an even bigger challenge of profiling farmers in India. Or creating a seamless, unified farmers' database. The Indian government has big stakes in this integrated farmers' repository. Imbued with the vision for an India Digital Ecosystem for Agriculture (IDEA), the government is thinking aloud and building the national farmers' database with great fervour. I hail it as a laudable initiative, promising to energise our digital farm economy and prepare our farmers for Agriculture 4.0. In the same vein, I'm a trifle concerned, if not sceptical, about how we are sourcing data.

India plans to create a massive database for some 150 million farmers. The database will connect crucial data points - the number of occupational farmers, how much land they own and where, what they grow, and which agro-climatic zones they fall in. This database can bring in benefits galore for the entire agriculture value chain. Agribusinesses can use the hi-tech database to gain unparalleled

insights into the rural economy and even specific land parcels, allowing them to create tailored products for farmers. The government has signed contracts with CISCO, Ninjacart, Jio Platforms Limited, ITC Limited and NCDEX e-Markets Limited to develop the database.

The digital repository will aid precise targeting of subsidies, services and policies, help raise farmers' income and digitally connect the growers with agri-insurance companies, supermarkets, seed suppliers, agri-tech companies. Also, the platform can be used by lending institutions to determine a farmer's creditworthiness.

It makes ample sense to harness data to revamp the culture of agriculture. According to a recent EY report, India's farm economy is projected to grow to \$24 billion by 2025, fuelled by agri-tech adoption. The national farmers' database, an effort towards building the IDEA, is extracting data from PM-KISAN, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) and the soil health cards. But how credible is the data pool?

The absence of a single version of the truth has created inconveniences for farmers and policymakers alike. Farmers lack a mech-

anism to figure out their eligibility for different schemes. Owing to this, they need to provide the same set of information each time for multiple schemes. That apart, the burden is on the farmer to validate his identity every time while applying for each scheme. For officials, identifying the right beneficiaries gets cumbersome when there is a lack of consolidated farmer data. Moreover, data entry issues at the ground level lead to scheme delivery delays.

Overcoming legacy problems in the farm-to-fork chain needs a golden records database with an immersive 3600 profiling of a farmer's demographics. A digital solution that aggregates information with the farmer as the premise and not his family. This system can have more efficacy than the normative land records databases and farm registries with 100 per cent Aadhaar seeding and authenticated bank details of the farmers. A consummate database populated with details of all categories of farmers - cultivators and sharecroppers, landless labourers, livestock and fishery farmers and forestry farmers. Such a system can also be seamlessly integrated with external databases like Procurement Automation

System, Aadhaar, land records, seed supply, fertilizer management, soil health card and schemes like PMFBY. The system can capture multiple data points of farmers like demographics, occupation, crop and generate a unique application id for each. And an outcome-driven Decision Support System embedded into the solution can serve as a lodestar for policymakers.

Government officials can leverage the digital system to identify beneficiaries, detect anomalies, policy formulation and budgeting, farming advisory service deliveries and impact assessment of schemes. It can make the Minimum Support Price regime more effective and transparent with better mapping of genuine beneficiaries. At the same time the banks and insurance companies can use the data while approving any farm loan. Farmers' datasets can be leveraged to incentivise them and move away many from the rice-wheat monoculture to high-value agriculture.

Creating a golden records database of farmers is like building the core of IDEA.

The writer is Founder & CEO, CSM Technologies. Views are personal.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa POST are most welcome to contribute letters (200 words), articles and columns (between 750-1250 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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Social evil

Sir, Female foeticide is a standing stigma of our society. It is a crime against humanity and shows that we don't practise what we preach. We debate much about the protection of girl child, but, we do ultrasound in a far off hospital to get rid of it. We worship Goddess Laxmi, Parvati, Saraswati, Santoshi Ma as divine incarnations of the girl child. Yet, we want to get rid of the girl child. Whether it will be a girl or boy it depends on the chromosome of the male. And, it is foolish to make a woman responsible for this. A change in mindset is essential. This is the order of the day.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR

Proud moment

Sir, In the 73 years of Thomas Cup Badminton history India lift its maiden cup at Bangkok Sunday, beating fourteen time champion Indonesia in straight three sets. A proud moment for all Indians! The credit goes to the team and its head coach. Our sport bodies should come forward for proper guidance and financial support so that this sport gets proper impetus in the future especially in the Asian Games and the Olympics. The team has made our Tricolour hurl with pride in the prestigious shuttle tournament. Kudos to Kidambi Srikanth and company, and chief coach Pullela Gopichand.

Sanjib Kumar Das, CUTTACK

Adieu Symonds

Sir, One can only say that some bad omen seems to have afflicted Australian cricket in recent days. If it has lost the two former greats - Rod Marsh and Shane Warne - on a single day in March this year, now Andrew Symonds' shocking death in tragic circumstances of a car accident adds more melancholy, leaving the cricket nation in a deep state of shock and terribly woebegone. Symonds was a vital cog in Australia's ODI cricket, who could bat at any position and bowl seam up or spin. He was one of the key members of the Australian team that dominated world cricket in the early 2000s. Symonds was also part of Ricky Ponting's side that won two back-to-back ODI world cups in 2003 and 2007 without losing a single match.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

national



Ambitious implementation of climate actions by developing countries is contingent on the adequate delivery of climate finance, technology transfer, and other support
BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

ON CARDS

A new initiative can be taken soon to promote Vedic education in the country. The Union Education Ministry is going to recognise the Veda-based education board, which would work like any other education board



of the day quote

The people are frightened to go outside Jammu and Kashmir because of the prevailing situation in the country, where the first person under attack is a Muslim... A dangerous game is being played by exploiting the sentiments of a particular community (against another)

OMAR ABDULLAH | NC VICE PRESIDENT

Roads are the lifelines of a developing nation that brings benefits in various sectors like education, health, marketing of agricultural produce and also brings other social benefits as well

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

BJP had given loudspeakers to its A, B, and C teams and asked them to visit Aurangzeb's tomb and recite Hanuman Chalisa. While BJP will watch the tamasha and address press conferences

UDDHAV THACKERAY | MAHARASHTRA CM

SHORT TAKES

Russian held

New Delhi: A Russian national has been arrested by the Customs officials at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport here for smuggling antlers of Sambar, officials said Sunday. A senior Customs official said that on the basis of baggage scanning by the airport security staff, the man was held. He wanted to board a flight bound for Moscow on May 13. "He was intercepted by the DIAL security staff during the scanning of baggage, and was handed over to Customs. Upon the detailed search, two antlers of Sambar were recovered from his baggage," the Customs official said.

BKU splits

Lucknow: The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) has split with a breakaway group, claiming to be the 'real' organisation, appointing Rajesh Chauhan as the new chief. Naresh Tikait has been removed from the president's post and so has BKU spokesman Rakesh Tikait. The development took place on the death anniversary of BKU founder Mahendra Singh Tikait in Lucknow. Rajesh Chauhan said that the Tikait brothers were trying to politicise the organisation which was unacceptable to farmers. "We are an apolitical organisation and will remain so," said Chauhan.

Actor found dead

Kolkata: Popular actress of Bengali television serials, Pallabi Dey, was found dead on Sunday under mysterious circumstances at her rented accommodation in South Kolkata where she used to stay with her friend Shaqnik Chakraborty. Her hanging body was first discovered by Chakraborty, who informed the police. He told the police that Sunday morning, he went outside to purchase some cigarettes. After coming back, he discovered her hanging body. The police have sent the body for post-mortem.

Civilian killed

Srinagar: A civilian was killed on Sunday in cross-firing between the terrorists and the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district. The civilian, identified as Shoab Ahmad Ganai, was injured when he was caught in a chance encounter between the terrorists and the security forces in the Turkwangam village of Shopian district.

Cong announces major reforms



Sonia Gandhi with senior party leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, P Chidambaram, Bhupinder Hooda and others during submission of reports by convenors of the coordination panels in Udaipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Udaipur, May 15: After a three-day brainstorming session, the Congress Sunday decided to focus on re-establishing the lost connect with people and resolved to usher in a host of organisational reforms, including "one family, one ticket" and fielding those below 50 years of age in half of the seats from 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The Congress' 'Chintan Shivir' concluded with a call for a "Bharat Jodo" (unite India) campaign and party president Sonia Gandhi announced a mass contact programme from Kanyakumari to Kashmir starting October 2, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, to reach out at the grassroots. She said senior leaders like her will also participate in the yatra.

The party adopted the "Nav Sankalp" declaration in which it decided to herald path-breaking changes like putting a cap of five years on leaders holding a particular post, allocating 50 per cent of the posts in the organisation to those below 50 years of age and calling for fixing of retirement age for those in Parliament, state legislatures and other elected posts.

The decision to bank on youth comes after a prolonged old-versus-new tussle and a series of exits of young leaders from the Congress in recent years that had been attributed to the party's old guard failing to address the aspirations of the so-called 'gen-next' leaders.

The reforms that are aimed at helping reboot the Congress and making it battle-ready for upcoming elections, come in the wake of the series of electoral reverses for the party in the last eight years after it was ousted from power in 2014.

However, the party has added a caveat to the 'one family, one ticket' formula stating that if another member in one's family is politically active, then only after five years of organisational experience that person should be considered eligible for a Congress ticket.

The Congress also said it was committed to establishing a dialogue with all like-minded parties to protect the spirit of nationalism and democracy and would keep open avenues for forging alliances according to political circumstances. In his concluding remarks, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi acknowledged that the Congress' connection with people has been "broken" and urged leaders to shift focus from internal matters and re-establish the connect with the public, saying there are no shortcuts and it can be achieved only through hard work and by the sweat of their brow.

Sonia Gandhi also announced the setting up of a task force to implement the reforms and an advisory committee of CWC members headed by her to deliberate on political issues, while making it clear that it will not be a collective decision-making body.

Tripura gets another 'Manik'

Sources said the move comes after an analysis sent by the RSS to the BJP's central leadership indicated there was a need for a change of guard in the party and the government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, May 15: BJP state president Manik Saha was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Tripura Sunday morning.

Governor SN Arya administered the oath to Saha, a Rajya Sabha MP, at the Raj Bhavan here. Former Chief Minister Biplab Deb, whose sudden resignation on Saturday evening got Saha the top job, was present at the ceremony along with BJP MLAs and state ministers.

Union minister Pratima Bhoumik also attended the swearing-in programme. Deputy Chief Minister Jishnu Dev Varma and minister Ram Prasad Paul, who broke chairs during the BJP's legislative party meeting on Saturday



protesting Saha's appointment as the chief minister, arrived at the Raj Bhavan moments after the swearing-in ceremony ended.

"Will work for the people of Tripura, taking further the development agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Will focus on the law and order situation," Saha said after the swearing-in ceremony. "There are no challenges," he said, when asked about the change of guard in the state months ahead of the assembly elections.

The opposition CPI(M) MLAs boycotted the programme, alleging "fascist-style violence" in

India adds 8.8 mn jobs in April: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 15: In one of the largest expansions in the labour market since the beginning of the pandemic, 8.8 million people joined the country's workforce in April, as per data provided by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

However, the jobs that became available were inadequate compared to the demand, it said. India's labour force increased by 8.8 million to 437.2 million in April, one of the largest monthly increases since the beginning of the pandemic. CMIE Managing Director and CEO Mahesh Vyas said.

The country's labour market was at 428.4 million in March, he added. In 2021-22, the average monthly increase in the country's labour force was 0.2 million, as per the data. The report said that an 8.8 million increase in labour force participation was only possible if some working-age people who were out of jobs joined the working population in April.

This is because the working-age population cannot grow by more than two million per month and any rise beyond that implies that those who were out of jobs returned to the workforce, the report said.

It may be useful to note that the 8.8 million increase in April comes after a 12 million fall during the preceding three months, it said. Vyas said the labour market is dynamic with the workforce moving in and out, presumably depending upon the demand at a given point of time.

The increase in employment in April was in industry and in services.

Industry added 5.5 million jobs and services added another 6.7 million jobs, as per the data. Within industry, 3 million jobs were generated in manufacturing, while construction added nearly 4 million opportunities.

Employment in the agricultural sector fell by 5.2 million, CMIE data showed. Part of the decline in farm sector opportunities could be a reflection of the winding down of the rabi harvesting season, the report said.

GIGANTIC RESPONSIBILITY



Rajiv Kumar takes charge as the new Chief Election Commissioner at Election Commission office in New Delhi

India fumes over killing of two Sikhs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: India Sunday asked Pakistan to sincerely investigate the "brutal" killing of two Sikh traders in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and take strict action against those responsible for the "shocking" and "deplorable" incident.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India has registered its "strong protest" with Pakistan on the continued "targeting" of members of the minority community in that country.

India's strong reaction came hours after Saljeet Singh (42) and Ranjeet Singh (38) were shot dead by two bike-borne assailants in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the latest targeted killing of the minority community members.

Responding to media queries



I strongly condemn the gruesome killing of two Sikh youths in Peshawar. I also request our Foreign Minister @DrJaishankar ji to speak to Pakistan to raise the concern and ensure the safety of Hindu and Sikh minorities residing in Pakistan

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

on the incident, Bagchi said India expects the Pakistan government to ensure the safety, security and well-being of its minority communities. "We have seen the reports on brutal killing of two Sikh traders by unidentified armed men in Peshawar. Sadly, this is not the first such case or a rare occurrence," Bagchi said.

He said "grave concerns" have been expressed by various quarters of the Indian civil society and the Sikh community at this shocking and deplorable incident. "We have registered our strong protest with the Government of Pakistan on continued targeting of members of the minority community in Pakistan," Bagchi said.

"We call upon the authorities concerned to sincerely investigate the matter and take strict action against those responsible for this deplorable incident," he said. According to police, both the businessmen died on the spot after being attacked by two bike-borne assailants in the morning.

Delhi fire: Building owner held

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 15: The police have arrested three persons in connection with the fire accident at a multi-storey building on May 13 here in Mundka that left at least 27 people dead.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Manish Lakra - the owner of the building, and Harish Goel and Varun Goel - owners of a firm named Cofe Impax Pvt Ltd., the police said Sunday.

So far, only eight of the 27 bodies have been identified. The eight deceased have been identified as Tania Bhushan, Mohini Pal, Yashoda Devi, Ranju Devi, Vishal, Drishti, Kailash Jyani and Amit Jyani.

Officials said that most of the bodies were burnt to such an extent that even it was difficult to establish whether the charred remains were of a man or a woman. However, two days after the incident, the medicines have now found that of the 27 dead, 14 are females and three males.

The unidentified bodies have been placed in the Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital's Mortuary here in Mangolpuri. "We have collected the DNA samples of the rest of the bodies. As soon as DNA matching is completed, we will get to know their identities," Deputy Commissioner of Police Sameer



Sharma said, adding it might take 4-5 days more.

"On the fateful day, a sales motivational programme was conducted by the said company and at about 4 p.m., all employees were on the 2nd floor. Due to the sudden fire break-out many people got trapped and could not come out as there was a lot of fire and smoke inside the building," the police officer said.

During the rescue operation, 50-60 people were safely rescued jointly by the police, Fire Department and the local people.

Later, the police registered an FIR under sections 304 (Punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 308 (Attempt to commit culpable homicide), 120 (Concealing design to commit offence punishable with imprisonment) and 34 (Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

Bus blaze: JKFF claims responsibility

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Jammu, May 15: After a lesser known terror group claimed the responsibility for the attack on a bus carrying Mata Vaishno Devi shrine pilgrims on May 13 in which four persons were killed and 20 injured, police and the NIA are investigating the incident to ascertain the veracity of the terrorists' claim.

A bus carrying pilgrims of Mata Vaishno Devi shrine had caught fire in Katra area on Friday resulting in the death of four and burn injuries to 20 pilgrims. A lesser known terror outfit, Jammu and Kashmir freedom fighters (JKFF) later claimed responsibility for the attack saying that the bus had been targeted with an improvised explosive device (IED).

It is not unusual for known terror groups like the LeT and the JeM to carry out attacks and then claim responsibility through outfits which do not exist on ground, a senior police officer said when asked about the veracity of the terrorists' claim.

"We have collected forensic and other evidence. Every possible angle is being looked into. It would be premature to comment on the claim made by this lesser known terrorist group unless we get corroborative evidence."

Calcutta HC saddled with more than 2 lakh pending cases

LEGAL LUMINARIES SAY THAT THE NUMBER OF JUDGES NEEDS TO BE INCREASED TO DEAL WITH THE BACKLOG AS WELL AS NEWLY FILED PETITIONS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 15: Functioning with only 39 judges out of a sanctioned strength of 72 judges, the Calcutta High Court is saddled with more than two lakh pending cases.

The Union Law and Justice Ministry on Saturday announced the appointment of three more additional judges to the Calcutta High Court, which will take the number to 42. Legal luminaries say that the number of judges needs to be increased further as soon as possible to deal with the backlog as well as newly filed petitions.

A total of 2,34,539 cases are pending

before the high court despite efforts by the judiciary to reduce the backlog. The Calcutta High Court, which has a sanctioned strength of 72 judges, is functioning with only 39 judges, according to data provided on its website.

After the three newly-appointed judges take oath, the number will increase to 42, but will still remain short of the sanctioned strength by 30 or 41.66 per cent. Former Supreme Court judge Justice (ret'd) Ashok Ganguly said that the number of judges should be increased immediately to at least the full strength of the high court, and the sub-divisional and district courts, which are also facing similar issues.



Of the 2,34,539 cases pending as on February 28 according to the data, civil cases form the lion's share at 1,97,184, while the number

of criminal cases awaiting disposal stand at 37,355 on that date.

While the seat of the high court is in Kolkata, it has permanent

circuit benches at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and at Jalpaiguri in north Bengal. "Even with full strength, the number of judges is inadequate and so with over 40 per cent less it is far more difficult to reduce the backlog," Ganguly said.

He said that the number of new cases before the court is increasing as people have nowhere else to go for getting justice. "Number of cases is increasing while judges' strength is going down; governments need to expedite appointments of new judges," he said.

Holding that both the central and state governments need to

put in more effort to alleviate the situation, Ganguly said there are huge vacancies in the lower judiciary also, which need to be filled up. A total of 26,64,284 cases are pending in different courts in West Bengal till May 14, as per the National Judicial Data Grid.

Of these, 20,47,901 are criminal, while 6,16,383 are civil cases, according to the data. Ganguly said that litigants are facing immense hardship owing to the situation leading from lack of an adequate number of judges and huge pendency of cases. He said that lawyers also need to put in extra effort to ensure that litigants get justice in time.

TN DICHOTOMY

CM pitches for trillion-\$ economy, but caste atrocities pull state down

The DMK government is embarrassed at the injustice being meted out to the Dalit community in the state

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 15: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin during the first anniversary of his government May 7 reiterated his dream of pushing the state towards a trillion-dollar economy by 2030. During the anniversary celebrations, a confident and beaming Stalin stated that the Dravidian model of administration is taking his government towards the cherished dream of a trillion-dollar economy.

There is no doubt that the government fared better than expected with an economy mired in the severe backlash of shutdowns and lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic. The loss of a magnetic personality and a shrewd administrator, Stalin's father and former CM Kalaingar Karunanidhi was a factor that pulled Stalin and his government back.

Undeterred, the Chief Minister moved ahead overcoming difficulties but the government and Stalin are embarrassed at the injustice being meted out to the Dalit community in the state. While there were back to back killings in Tirunelveli district in July and August 2021, tough measures were



taken by the police with the DGP, C. Sylendrakumar, a South Tamilian who knows the ins and outs of the caste politics of the state, camping at Madurai and tackling the criminals with an iron hand.

Recently a Class 6 student at Tindivanam was subjected to a caste slur by upper caste students. The 11-year-old Dalit boy on a holiday was going to his relatives' place when three upper caste boys from the Kattuchiviri government school, the same school where the 11-year-old is studying, hurled abuses at him and later pushed him into a bush fire. He suffered serious burn injuries but escaped with his life as he jumped into a nearby water tank.

His father promptly complained to the Tindivanam police who registered a case under Section 324 and also under the SC/ST atrocities prevention Act. The boys were

arrested and put in a rehabilitation centre at Killi.

In another incident that took place at Government Elementary School, Semmedu in Coimbatore, the headmistress and a teacher of the school were booked after an 8-year-old Dalit student who defecated in his school uniform was allegedly forced to clean the toilet of the school. The boy who was in Class III was then forced to clean the stain on his clothes and was made to stand outside to sun-dry his clothes.

Sreeraghavan K, a social activist and researcher on Dalit studies from Kanniyakumari, told IANS: "The trillion-dollar economy idea is good but until social issues like Dalit atrocities are not addressed, forget a trillion dollar economy, the state will stumble midway through in normal development."

Delhi faces water crunch amid heatwave

CITY REQUIRES AROUND 1,200 MGD OF WATER, WHILE THE DJB SUPPLIES AROUND 950 MGD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: With the Yamuna drying up under the blazing sun and Haryana not responding to SOS calls, authorities in Delhi are barely meeting the drinking water demand in several areas, officials said.

The level in the Wazirabad pond has dropped to 670.70 feet, the lowest this year. It was 671.80 feet Thursday. The pond level had dropped to 667 feet July 11 last year, prompting the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to move the Supreme Court seeking directions to Haryana to release additional water in the Yamuna.

The DJB has thrice written to the Haryana Irrigation Department in this connection in a fortnight - May 12, May 3 and April 30.

"Even flow via CLC (Carrier-Lined Channel) and DSB (Delhi Sub-Branch) is fluctuating... The lifting of 120 cusec of water from the Wazirabad pond is affected due to low pond level. This will affect water production adversely. Due to peak summer, the water requirement is more," the SOS sent Thursday read.

"It is requested to supply 150 cusec of raw water additionally through DD-8/river route, so as to ensure that 120 cusec of raw water reaches the Wazirabad pond in this time of crisis, till the arrival of monsoon," it read.

According to officials, there has been no response from the neighbouring state whatsoever, leaving Delhi to fend for itself.

The production capacity at Wazirabad, Chandrawal and Okhla water treatment plants has reduced to 85 per cent.



It could further decrease, a DJB official said on condition of anonymity.

"We have resorted to water rationing and have been able to meet the demand so far. However, the situation could turn worse if Haryana does not respond and release additional water in the river," the official said.

Adhering to its Summer Action Plan, the DJB has deployed extra tankers to cater to areas facing water shortage and is trying to augment water supply through tube wells.

The Delhi government last month said it will supply around 1,000 million gallons of drinking water every day during the summer season as against 935 MGD earlier to meet the rising demand.

It had said 1,198 water tankers

will be deployed across the capital during the peak season (April-July) to prevent water scarcity.

Haryana supplies a total of 610 million gallons of water a day to Delhi through two canals - CLC and DSB - and the Yamuna.

The CLC and the DSB are supplied water from Hathni Kund via Munak canal and the Bhakra Beas Management Board.

Besides, Delhi receives 253 MGD from Uttar Pradesh through the Upper Ganga Canal, and 90 MGD is drawn from ranney wells and tube wells installed across the city.

The Chandrawal and Wazirabad water treatment plants have a capacity of 90 MGD and 135 MGD, respectively.

The two plants lift raw water from the Wazirabad pond, treat it

and supply to northeast Delhi, west Delhi, north Delhi, central Delhi, south Delhi, including Delhi Cantonment, and New Delhi Municipal Council areas.

Delhi requires around 1,200 MGD of water, while the DJB supplies around 950 MGD.

The government has targeted increasing the water supply to 1,180 MGD by June 2023.

A punishing heatwave turned Delhi into a hot cauldron Saturday, pushing the mercury to an unbearable high of 47.2 degrees Celsius at Mungeshpur and 47 degrees Celsius at Najafgarh.

The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's base station, recorded a maximum temperature of 44.2 degrees Celsius, which was five notches above normal and the highest this season so far.

DELHI TURNS INTO HOT CAULDRON



A tormenting heatwave swept through the national capital and its neighbouring areas Sunday with the mercury leaping to 49.2 degrees Celsius at Mungeshpur in northwest Delhi and 49.1 degrees Celsius at Najafgarh in the southwest parts of the city. Maximum temperatures reached unbearable highs of 48.4 degrees Celsius at Sports Complex, 47.5 degrees Celsius at Jafarpur, 47.3 degrees Celsius at Pitampura and 47.2 degrees Celsius at Ridge. At the Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's base station, the maximum temperature rose to 45.6 degrees Celsius, five notches above the normal and the highest this year so far. The primary weather station had recorded a maximum temperature of 44.2 degrees Celsius on Saturday and 42.5 degrees Celsius on Friday. On May 27, 2020, Safdarjung had recorded a maximum temperature of 46 degrees Celsius. The city saw the maximum temperatures rise to 46.8 degrees Celsius at Ayanagar, 46.4 degrees Celsius at Palam and 45.8 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road.

Bulldozer action in Delhi: Where does SC stand?

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 15: The Supreme Court, earlier this week, declined to entertain a plea by the CPI-M against an anti-encroachment drive in Shaheen Bagh carried out by South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC). The top court drew a distinction between the anti-encroachment drive at Jahangirpuri - which was halted until further orders - and at Shaheen Bagh, saying it won't protect encroachment being removed as per law.

A bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai said a political party has filed this case and it would have examined the matter, if people aggrieved with demolition drive were to come to the court, adding that it cannot pass direction at the behest of a political party.

The same bench is also hearing the petitions against demolition drives carried out at Jahangirpuri and in other parts of the country - Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh - where authorities demolished houses of persons allegedly accused in crimes.

The bench rebuked the CPI-M for knocking on its doors without approaching the high court. As counsel for the political party cited the top court's order of directing sta-



tus quo on Jahangirpuri demolition drive, the bench clarified that structures were involved in the Jahangirpuri demolition drive, however at Shaheen Bagh - it was hawkers, who sit on a platform, while encroaching on public places.

The top court said: "We have not given license to anybody to come here to say my house cannot be demolished, even if it is unauthorised."

The municipal authority informed the top court only encroachments were being removed and no houses were being demolished. The top court said: "We are not seized of all encroachments... we need to balance interests... but not when encroachments are being removed."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench that in 2020 and 2021, the Delhi High Court had is-

sued directions to remove encroachments on public roads.

April 21, the top court extended the status quo order in connection with the demolition drive carried out by North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) at Jahangirpuri, until further orders. However, it refused to grant a blanket ban on demolition of encroachments across the country.

The bench said: "We are not considering encroachments across the country. Merely because we are showing indulgence does not mean you can take shelter under our order."

Bulldozers razed concrete and temporary structures, including the outer gate of a mosque at Jahangirpuri. The drive by the BJP-led civic body was carried out days after the northwest Delhi neighbourhood was rocked by communal violence.

High alert ahead of Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 15: Central intelligence agencies have issued warnings against the possibility of former cadres of the now-defunct LTTE trying to regroup and carry out attacks during the Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day May 18, sources in the Tamil Nadu Home Department said.

The Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day is marked annually by the Sri Lankan Tamils on May 18, the date on which the over 25-year-old Civil War in the island nation ended in 2009.

With Sri Lanka undergoing the worst-ever economic crisis since it gained independence in 1948 as well as the recent violence that erupted in the island nation, the possibility of certain Tamil groups, including the former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadres, re-

crossing the International Marine Boundary Line (IMBL) and to report on any suspicious movements.

Former LTTE intelligence operative Satkunam was apprehended last year after he was charged with smuggling narcotic drugs and collecting funds for regrouping the militant group in India.

A woman who was boarding a flight to Mumbai from Chennai was also arrested by Tamil Nadu Police after she was found trying to retrieve a dormant bank account connected to the LTTE.

The Central intelligence agencies have also warned that certain sections of the global Tamil diaspora are supporting the cause of Tamil nationalism and with Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa family on the defensive, the possibility of some unorganised attacks on the island nation is high, the Home Department sources added.

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Mining proposal quashed to protect blackbucks

■ Environmentalists and conservationists are of the opinion that blackbucks are sensitive to environmental pressures

■ They spend the nights outside the sanctuary in the grass fallows and move back in the forest when outside disturbances increase

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, May 15: The State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) of Tamil Nadu has rejected a mining license to establish a large stone quarry in the Thoothukudi district. This is to protect the endangered blackbuck population even though the site is located outside the notified ecologically sensitive zone (ESZ) of Vellanadu



Blackbuck Sanctuary.

The SEAC in a meeting held recently decided not to recommend the proposal for granting environmental clearance. The SEAC in the statement said that it decided not to grant the license even though it was outside the Ecologically Sensitive Zone as the mining will have a damaging effect

on the blackbucks that is an endangered schedule-1 species.

Environmentalists and conservationists are of the opinion that blackbucks are sensitive to environmental pressures. They spend the nights outside the sanctuary in the grass fallows and move back in the forest when outside disturbances increase.

Wildlife Conservationist Sugirtharaj Kovilpillai, while speaking to IANS said, "The preferred habitat of blackbucks lies in the eastern fallow outside the sanctuary and there is evidence of blackbucks foraging and grazing 5 km away from the sanctuary even along with farms, roads, and tanks."

A study on blackbucks published in Indian Forester also says that the open fallow grasslands may serve as important breeding areas for blackbucks and need to be conserved along with the sanctuary.

Going by the opinion of environmentalists and wildlife conservationists, and on the basis of the study, the SEAC decided to withhold environmental clearance for the stone quarry project.

D. Mohanraj had applied for environmental clearance to quarry on 31 acres of land. The appraisal for the project was done in 2019. Terms of Reference was issued and public hearing was conducted November 17, 2020. The proposed project was 1.6 km from the blackbuck sanctuary.

of the day quote

Modi govt is setting up a modern cyber lab ecosystem across the nation. This will help in increasing the conviction rate of cyber crimes

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

All universities of the state should make education available from kindergarten to post-graduation under the new education policy

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

Hyderabad is the only metro city in India to have all the advantages to expand in all directions

KT RAMA RAO | TELANGANA'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT, INDUSTRIES AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Gangster held

New Delhi: The Special Cell of Delhi police late Saturday arrested a dreaded gangster who was involved in multiple criminal cases, including two murders, after a brief exchange of fire during which he received gunshot wound on leg. The gangster was identified as Sunil Raj a.k.a. Kumar Sunil a.k.a. Kala Andaa, 37, a resident of Dakshinpuri in Delhi. He was previously arrested in more than 10 criminal cases of heinous nature including 2 of murder, 5 of attempt to murder, one of MCOCA and others of assault on police and judges, hurt, criminal intimidation, robbery, riots, arms act etc in Delhi during the last 10 years.

Heavy rain in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: Heavy rains continue to lash the state on Sunday also with the state government declaring an Orange alert for six districts. The orange alert is for the districts of Kollam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki and Ernakulam. A yellow alert is issued for 11 districts of the state following rains. The state revenue department has opened a 24-hour control room at Thiruvananthapuram.

Four trapped in TN stone quarry

Chennai: Police in Tamil Nadu's Tirunelveli district Sunday said four workers were trapped 300 feet deep in a stone quarry located in the Muneerpallam area. Police said that six workers were trapped initially, but two were rescued. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team is scheduled to reach the spot soon. The incident occurred when boulders from atop fell into the quarry and blocked the truck's movement, trapping the workers.

Police attacked, six arrested

Bhopal: Six people have been arrested in connection with attacking a police team that was searching for a missing woman in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar village. Three policemen were injured in the incident that took place in Kharaywadi village under Tirla police station, some 35 km from the district headquarters on Saturday, Dhar's Superintendent of Police (SP) Aditya Pratap Singh said. The police team reached the village after getting information that a woman went missing with her child. While exiting the village, the accused Suga Adivasi and his family members attacked the police team and snatched a rifle from them, the SP said.

POLITICS OVER POACHING HEATS UP IN MP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, May 15: The police claimed to have recovered the decapitated carcasses of two blackbucks, four heads and a peacock from the possession of poachers who opened fire on a police team, killing three policemen on the spot in Madhya Pradesh's Guna district Saturday. One of the poachers was also killed in the cross-firing and two of them were arrested by the police. Subsequent to the incident, the state administration ordered the suspension of Gwalior zone IG Anil Sharma with immediate effect for the delay in reaching the spot of the crime. He was replaced by 1997 batch IPS officer D Srinivas Verma.

The policemen killed by the

poachers will be given the status of martyrs and an ex-gratia of ₹one crore for each bereaved family was also announced in an emergency meeting called by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan with state home minister Narottam Mishra, the Director General of Police (DGP) Sudhir Saxena and other top officials.

This incident, however, has once again raised the alarm over the protection of wildlife and also on the movement of poachers in the forests of the state. Madhya Pradesh based wildlife activist Ajay Dube, who had in the past exposed the nexus between poachers and the senior forest officials in the state's Panna tiger reserve, said, "The movement of poachers with arms in Guna's forest area indicates a pos-



sible nexus, which needs to be probed thoroughly."

Dube said that Guna's forest area has always been a target of poachers because of blackbucks and peacocks. "Sagon woods from Guna's forest are often being smuggled despite the claims of high vis-

The bane of Kerala is absolute financial indiscipline, which is at the heart of the state's appalling financial situation

V. MURALEEDHARAN | UNION MINISTER

GREEN MISSION

City people will now have a safe and clean environment as the Uttar Pradesh government has sped up its efforts for creation of 26 urban forests in 13 cities. The plan will be developed in six months



Assam: Many trains cancelled due to rain

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Guwahati, May 15: The IAF and the Northeast Frontier Railways have evacuated over 1,500 stranded passengers while over 25 pairs of trains connecting Tripura, Mizoram and southern Assam had to be cancelled following heavy landslides triggered by incessant rains in Dima Hasao district in Assam, officials said Sunday.

The NFR officials said that most of the stranded passengers were evacuated on Sunday from Ditokcherra by train while the remaining passengers were airlifted to Silchar by IAF choppers.

In view of water logging and landslides due to heavy rain, between Jatinga Lumpur and New Harangajao, and between Bandarkhal and Ditokcherra sections and other several locations in Lumingding-Badarpur hill section of Lumingding division of NFR, services of 25 pairs of trains have been cancelled/ partially cancelled.

"The stranded passengers of these trains are safe. All kinds of essential items like food and drinking water are being arranged by the railway authorities for them," the NFR official said.

A district official of Dima Hasao district said that soils of 100 meter railway tracks at Daotohaja-Phaiding section and similar length of the vital Haflong-Jatinga highway had been washed away due to the non-stop rains, which continued for the past five days.

At least three people were killed following heavy landslides in Dima Hasao district in Assam during the last 24 hours.

Don't leave Valley: PAGD to Pandits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, May 15: The Gupkar alliance of major J&K parties Sunday urged Kashmiri Pandit employees not to leave the Valley as it was their home and it would be "painful for all", after the community demanded their relocation following the killing of a member by terrorists.

The appeal by the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) came after a delegation led by its president Farooq Abdullah met Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at the Raj Bhavan here.

The meeting was over the issue of security of Kashmiri Pandit employees in the aftermath of the killing of Rahul Bhat that has sparked protests by community members. Briefing reporters after the meeting, the spokesperson of the five-party alliance, M Y Tarigami, said the valley is as much the home of Kashmiri Pandits as it is of Kashmiri Muslims.

"We appeal to them that this nation is yours as well as mine. Do not leave your home. It is very painful for you and us," Tarigami said. The alliance spokesperson

said if Kashmiri Pandits want to leave Kashmir in the wake of Bhat's killing, then what about the families of slain Kashmiri Muslims.

"If Rahul was killed, Riyaz (a policeman) was also killed. Where will Riyaz's family and relatives go? You (Kashmiri Pandits) do not have to leave your home. This is your home, this is my home. We will bear this tragedy together and try to safeguard each other," he said. The CPI(M) leader said the alliance raised the issue of the transfer of the employees to safer places.

However, there is no possibility of their transfer outside Kashmir, he said. "We told them (delegation of KP employees which the PAGD leaders met on Saturday) that we cannot afford to let them leave. The LG also agreed to that today," he said.

He said while the protection of the minority communities in every society was the responsibility of the governments, the people "cannot afford to oblige those who want to disturb our unity". The delegation told Sinha that sufficient protection must be provided to the employees at their workplaces as well as wherever they live and all possible assistance be provided to them so that they live here with a sense of security, he said.



Cops leave rape case notice on door

This comes days after a 23-year-old woman from Jaipur has alleged in Delhi that Rohit, the son of Rajasthan Minister for Public Health Engineering, raped her on multiple occasions over a year, following which the Delhi police has registered a zero FIR initially

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur/New Delhi, May 15: Delhi police officials reached Jaipur Sunday trying to arrest Rohit Joshi, Rajasthan minister Mahesh Joshi's son who is accused of rape and has now been asked to appear before them on May 18.

A senior police officer of Delhi police said, "Our team of officers have reached Jaipur in connection with the case to nab Joshi who has been absconding. Our teams are conducting a search to locate and trace him."



This comes days after a 23-year-old woman from Jaipur has alleged in Delhi that Rohit, the son of Rajasthan Minister for Public Health Engineering, raped her on multiple occasions over a year, following which the Delhi Police has registered a zero FIR initially. A zero FIR can be registered anywhere

in the country.

The Delhi Police team visited Joshi's under construction residence in Sen Colony, Jaipur, where it glued a notice for Rohit. "You are hereby informed that a case has been registered against you at PS Sadar Bazar, Delhi. You are hereby directed to appear before the undersigned and to join investigation by May 18 at 1.00 pm at PS Sadar Bazar along with any relevant record/document available with you," the notice states. The team did not visit the official residence of Minister Mahesh Joshi.

2022 UP polls. Since 2004, Rae Bareilly constituency has elected Sonia Gandhi. It is ironic that in the 2022 UP Assembly polls, the Congress lost deposit in 387 assembly constituencies out of 399 it contested. The party polled just 2.4% votes. Sonia Gandhi will have to do some soul-searching to revive the Congress.

Anniversary dilemma

The Modi government is planning a major media blitz as part of its anniversary celebrations to take place this month end. A core group in the government is working over the theme of the blitz

Our ties with Nepal are unparalleled. The civilisational and people-to-people contacts between India and Nepal form the enduring edifice of our close relationship

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister is paying a day-long visit to Lumbini on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. It will be the Prime Minister's fifth visit to Nepal since 2014

The Prime Minister is paying a day-long visit to Lumbini on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. It will be the prime minister's fifth visit to Nepal since 2014. "I look forward to offering prayers at the Mayadevi Temple on the auspicious occasion of Buddha Jayanti. I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of millions of Indians to pay reverence at the sacred site of Lord Buddha's birth," Modi said.

Modi and Deuba will hold talks in Lumbini with a focus on further expanding cooperation in multiple areas including hydropower and connectivity. "I also look forward to meeting Prime Minister Deuba again after our productive discussions during his visit to India last month," Modi said.

"We will continue to build on our shared understanding to expand cooperation in multiple areas, including in hydropower, development and connectivity," he added. The prime minister will also participate in the foundation laying ceremony for the construction of a centre for Buddhist culture and heritage in Lumbini.

"Apart from visiting the holy Mayadevi Temple, I will be participating in 'Shilanyas' ceremony of the India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage in the Lumbini Monastic Zone," Modi said. The prime minister said he will also be attending celebrations to mark the occasion of Buddha Jayanti being organised by the government of Nepal.



A woman collects drinking water from a handpump in the flooded area of Bakula Guri village in Nagaon district

PTI PHOTO



Sonia withdrawing from electoral politics?

The proposal put up before the Congress Working Committee that "one ticket one family" rule be brought in the party to discourage

family monopoly has opened many floodgates. The first and foremost being who will contest from the Gandhi family out of the three Gandhis and son-in-law Robert Vadra. Lately Vadra has indicated his desire to enter the electoral fray in 2024. Whether the proposal goes through or not could be anybody's guess. But of the three Gandhis, Rahul Gandhi alone may contest. In any case, after losing Amethi Lok Sabha seat in 2019, there was always a threat to the Congress' last bastion in UP i.e. Rae Bareilly. In a shocker, the Congress lost all five Assembly seats falling in the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency in the March

which is kept a closely guarded secret. Since the Modi government did not celebrate the first two anniversaries with big fanfare, it wants to go to town this time.

BJP smells blood in Telangana

The BJP is smelling blood in Telangana ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections. Though In 2018, the BJP won just 7% of the votes and one seat in the 119-member assembly, it is buoyed by the outcome of two by-elections for the Assembly seats it won defeating ruling TRS. The BJP also emerged as the second party in the

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections pushing Congress to the third slot. A full-throated campaign has been launched by the BJP against Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao.

Banks continue to bleed

Be it Public Sector Banks (PSBs) or large numbers of private banks, both continue to bleed. Shockingly, these banks wrote off more Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in 2020-21 than they recovered during the same year. What's worrying more the government and the Reserve

Bank of India (RBI) is the fact that new NPA accretion during 2020-21 was far higher than what was written off. The data collated from RBI and parliamentary questions revealed that 12 PSBs recovered ₹83,277 crore during 2020-21 while 60 big and small private banks recovered ₹31,084 crore during the same period. It was a success story for 72 banks in the country that together recovered ₹1,14,361 crore. But surprisingly, these 72 banks together wrote off ₹2,02,782 crore during 2020-21 as the NPAs during the same year. This is almost double the amount than what they recovered.

international



IT companies could emulate the precedent by increasing their customers' outreach
ARIF ALVI | PAKISTANI PRESIDENT

UN LISTS PAK AMONG 23 DROUGHT-HIT COUNTRIES

Pakistan is among 23 countries in the world facing the bleak prospects of drought over the past two years, according to a UN report.



of the day quote

Under the leadership of Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the India-UAE ties prospered greatly to the mutual benefit of the people of the two countries. He took exceptional care of the large Indian community in UAE, who held him in high esteem

ARINDAM BAGCHI | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

I call on the central government to share with the entire nation the significance of Okinawa's reversion and the importance of permanent peace that Okinawans have long craved for

DENNY TAMAKI | OKINAWA GOVERNOR

Resilience is essential in difficult situations. At this juncture, when the country is in dire straits, all the people's representatives must work together immediately for a solution on behalf of all citizens. The true goal should be to reach the desired target without deviating from the primary goal

GOTABAYA RAJAPAKSA | EMBATTLED SL PREZ

SHORT TAKES

Chicago: Teenager gunned down

Chicago: A 16-year-old boy was fatally shot near "The Bean" sculpture in downtown Chicago's Millennium Park, authorities said. Police said the teen was shot in the chest at about 7:30 pm Saturday near the popular tourist attraction. Police have not yet identified the boy. He was taken to Lurie Children's Hospital where he was pronounced dead, police said. At least two suspects were taken in for questioning and at least two weapons were recovered, authorities said.

300 Boko Haram terrorists killed

Lagos: At least 300 militants of the Boko Haram terror group were killed by troops of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) on the fringes of Africa's Lake Chad region, a spokesperson said. In a statement issued in Nigeria's city of Maiduguri, Kamarudeen Adegoke, the MNJTF spokesperson, said the militants were killed in 30 separate encounters in recent weeks, reports Xinhua news agency. Adegoke said an increasing dependence on improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by the insurgents was noted and necessary countermeasures were proffered.

Israeli peace negotiator dies

Tel Aviv: Uri Savir, a prominent Israeli peace negotiator and dogged believer in the need for a settlement with the Palestinians, has died, according to Israeli media reports. He was 69. The reports said he died Friday. No cause of death was given. As director of the country's Foreign Ministry, Savir led an Israeli delegation to negotiate a series of interim agreements with the Palestinians in 1993 that became known as the Oslo Accords.

3 kids among 6 killed in blast

Peshawar: Three children and as many soldiers of the Pakistan Army were killed in a suicide blast Sunday in Pakistan's restive North Waziristan tribal district bordering Afghanistan, the Army said. The incident occurred in the Miran Shah town, some 250 kms from here, the Army's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. The children were aged between 4 to 11 years, it said, adding that three soldiers also died in the incident.

LEBANESE VOTE FOR NEW PARL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beirut, May 15: Lebanese voted for a new parliament Sunday against the backdrop of an economic meltdown that is transforming the country and low expectations that the election would significantly alter the political landscape.

A new crop of candidates from the 2019 protest movement are running against the country's entrenched ruling class that is blamed for the collapse, hoping to unseat them.

But they are divided and lack the money, experience and other advantages held by traditional political rulers with a decades-long grip on power.



People began casting their ballots shortly after the polls opened under the watchful eye of security forces that have fanned out across the country.

Sunday's is the first election since the massive August 2020 explosion at Beirut's port that killed more than 200 people, injured thousands and destroyed parts of Lebanon's capital.

The blast, widely blamed on negligence, was set off by hundreds of tons of poorly stored ammonium nitrate that ignited in a port warehouse after a fire broke out at the facility.

Finland to apply for NATO membership

AGENCIES

Kyiv, May 15: Finland's government declared a "new era" is underway after announcing its intention to seek NATO membership, hours before Sweden's governing party Sunday backed a plan to join the trans-Atlantic alliance amid Russia's war in Ukraine.

Russia has long bristled about NATO moving closer to its borders, so the developments will be sure to further anger Moscow. President Vladimir Putin has already warned his Finnish counterpart Saturday that relations would be "negatively affected."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, speaking Sunday after top diplomats from the alliance's 30 member states met in Berlin, said the process for Finland and Sweden to join could be very quick. He also expressed his hope that Ukraine could win the war as Russian military advances appear to be faltering.

In Finland, President Sauli Niinisto and Prime Minister Sanna Marin made the announcement that their country would seek membership in NATO during a joint news conference at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki. The previously neutral Nordic country shares a long border with Russia.

"This is a historic day. A new era begins," Niinisto said. The Finnish Parliament is expected to endorse the decision in the coming days. A formal membership application will then be submitted to NATO headquarters in Brussels, most likely at some point next week.

Sweden also moved a step closer to applying for NATO membership after the governing Social



Finland's Prime Minister, Sanna Marin (left), and its president, Sauli Niinisto, announcing Finland would apply for Nato membership.

- Russian forces make some advances in Donbas - Ukraine military
- Ukraine says it is on the offensive near Izium
- Nordic country that shares 800-mile border with Russia looks to end decades of non-alignment
- NATO official 'confident' about finding Finland, Sweden consensus

Finland's president confirms bid for NATO membership

Democratic party backed joining the trans-Atlantic alliance.

"At its meeting today, the Social Democrats' party board has decided that the party will work for Sweden to apply for membership in NATO," the party said in a statement. The plan to join the alliance will be discussed in Sweden's parliament Monday, and Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson's Cabinet will make an announcement later that day. "Russia's war in Ukraine is not going as Moscow had planned," Stoltenberg said by video link to the NATO meeting in Berlin as he recovers from a Covid-19 infection. "They failed to take Kyiv. They are pulling back from around Kharkiv. Their major offensive in

Donbas has stalled. Russia is not achieving its strategic objectives."

"Ukraine can win this war," he said, adding that NATO must continue to step up its military support to the country. Sweden has also already taken steps toward joining the alliance, while Georgia's bid is again being discussed despite dire warnings from Moscow about the consequences if its neighbor becomes part of NATO. Nordic NATO member Norway said it strongly welcomed Finland's decision to seek membership. Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt described Helsinki's move as "a turning point" for the Nordic region's defense and security policies. "Finnish membership in



Women dressed as handmaids demonstrate against the infringement of reproductive rights as they join abortion-rights protesters at a rally in Los Angeles City Hall

NK reports over 8L Cov cases, 42 deaths

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Seoul, May 15: North Korea Sunday reported 15 additional deaths from "fever" after the country recently announced its first-ever cases of Covid-19 and ordered nationwide lockdowns.

State media KCNA said a total of 42 people had died, with 8,20,620 cases and at least 324,550 under medical treatment. Leader Kim Jong Un has said the outbreak has caused "great upheaval" in North Korea. KCNA reported that "all provinces, cities and counties of the country have been totally locked

down and working units, production units and residential units closed from each other."

Despite activating its "maximum emergency quarantine system" to slow the spread of disease through its unvaccinated population, North Korea is now reporting large numbers of new cases daily.

North Korea confirmed Thursday that the highly contagious Omicron variant had been detected in the capital Pyongyang, with Kim ordering nationwide lockdowns. It was the government's first official admission of Covid cases and marked the failure of a



two-year coronavirus blockade maintained since the start of the pandemic. "The spread of malignant disease comes to be a great upheaval in our country since the founding of the DPRK," Kim said Saturday, referring to North Korea

by its official name. North Korea has a crumbling health system - one of the worst in the world - and no Covid vaccines, antiviral treatment drugs or mass testing capacity. It has previously turned down offers of Covid vaccines from China and the World Health Organization's Covax scheme, but both Beijing and Seoul have issued fresh offers of aid and vaccines. The KCNA report did not specify whether the new cases and deaths had tested positive for Covid-19, but experts say the country will be struggling to test and diagnose on this scale.

10 killed in US supermarket shooting

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Buffalo (US), May 15: Shoppers out on a weekend afternoon and a retired police officer working as a security guard were among the 10 shot and killed at a Buffalo supermarket by a white teenager who authorities say was motivated by racial hatred.

Police said Payton Gendron shot, in total, 11 Black people and two white people Saturday in a rampage at the Tops Friendly Market that the 18-year-old broadcast live before surrendering to authorities.

Among the dead was security guard Aaron Salter - a retired Buffalo police officer - who fired multiple shots at Gendron, Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia said Saturday.

A bullet hit the gunman's armor, but had no effect. Gendron then killed Salter, before hunting more



victims. Also killed was Ruth Whitfield, 86, the mother of retired Buffalo Fire Commissioner Garnell Whitfield who told the Buffalo News that his "mother was a mother to the motherless." "She was a blessing to us all," he added.

Katherine Massey, who had gone to the store to pick up some groceries, also was killed, according to the newspaper.

It wasn't immediately clear why Gendron had traveled about 200 miles from his Conklin, New York, to Buffalo and that particular grocery store, located in a predomi-

nantly Black neighborhood, but screenshots purporting to be from the Twitch broadcast appear to show a racial epithet scrawled on the rifle used in the attack, as well as the number 14, a likely reference to a white supremacist slogan. At the earlier news briefing, Erie County Sheriff John Garcia pointedly called the shooting a hate crime.

The massacre sent shockwaves through an unsettled nation gripped with racial tensions, gun violence and a spate of hate crimes. In the day prior to the shooting, Dallas police said they were investigating a series of shootings in Korea town as hate crimes. The Buffalo attack came just one month after another mass shooting on a Brooklyn subway train wounded 10 people and just over a year after a mass shooting in a Colorado supermarket killed 10.

'BRUTAL KILLING' OF SIKH TRADERS Protests erupt in Pakistan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Peshawar, May 15: The Peshawar-Islamabad road in front of Qila Bala Hissar was blocked by the members of the Sikh community to register their protest against the killing of two Sikhs in Peshawar in Pakistan.

"Amidst the slogans of 'Bole-So-Nihal, the members of the Sikh community while holding placards in their hands Staging protests on the roads of Peshawar against the brutal killings of two #Sikhs near #Peshawar in #Pakistan,"

Ravinder Singh Robin tweeted.

"My heart and prayers go out to two Sikhs who were shot dead by local extortionists in #Peshawar on Sunday. The members of the Sikh community taking the dead bodies of Ranjit Singh & Kuljit Singh, on their shoulders. Sikhs leaders around the World condemn the cold blooded murder," Robin tweeted.

In a statement, Peshawar Capital City Police Office Ijaz Khan said that the incident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Sarband police station.

Devasahayam Pillai 1st Indian layman to be Catholic saint

AGENCIES

Vatican City/Chennai, May 15: Pope Francis Sunday canonised Devasahayam Pillai, or 'Blessed Lazarus', who became the first layman from India to be granted sainthood.

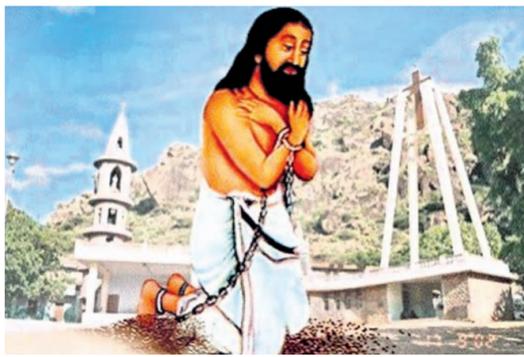
Pillai, a Hindu who converted to Christianity in the 18th century - drawing the ire of the then rulers, was canonised at 2.30 p.m. (IST) at the St Peter's Basilica in Vatican along with nine others. A miracle attributed to him was recognised by Pope Francis in 2014 leading to his canonisation now.

Church records state that Pillai was born as Neelakanda Pillai in Nattalam in the Kanniyakumari district in 1712. Kanniyakumari was then part of the Travancore king-

dom and Pillai's embracing of Christianity in 1745 made the Maharaja angry. An court official, Pillai introduced to Christianity by Dutch naval officer, Captain De Lannoy when he was in Travancore. After his conversion, he assumed the name of 'Lazarus' or 'Devasahayam', meaning 'God is my Help'.

The Travancore Maharaja was, however, furious about his conversion and shot him dead at Aralvaimozhy forest January 14, 1752. Pillai was declared blessed in 2012 in Nagercoil and the Vatican cleared him for sainthood in 2020.

His mortal remains were interred near the altar inside St Xavier's Church, Kottar, Nagercoil which is a diocesan Cathedral now. Special prayers were conducted at churches that are linked



to his life in the Kottar diocese of Kanniyakumari. At Thiruvananthapuram, Bishop Thomas J Netto led prayers at

the St Joseph's Cathedral, Palayam and Neyyatinkara Bishop Vincent Samuel led the Pontifical mass at the St. Devasahayam Church in

Pope Francis, 85, canonised Blessed Devasahayam during the Canonisation Mass held in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican attended by over 50,000 faithful from all over the world as well as government delegations honouring the 10 new saints

Devasahayam was recommended for the process of Beatification by the Vatican in 2004, at the request of the Kottar diocese, Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council and the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India

A miracle attributed to Devasahayam was recognised by Pope Francis in 2014, clearing the path to his canonisation in 2022

Chavallorpatta near Parassala under the Neyyattinkara diocese.

A vehicle rally was held from St Joseph's Cathedral, Palayam, Thiruvananthapuram to the St Antony's Pilgrim Church at Kamukincode Saturday. This was to commemorate the visit of Devasahayam Pillai when he called on those who sought refuge in the locality after fleeing from being persecuted for having con-

verted to Christianity. Catholic Bishop Conference of India (CBCI) laity secretary, VC Sebastian told IANS that the "conferment of sainthood to Devasahayam Pillai will rejuvenate the Christian community in the country, in particular the Catholic laity. The elevation of a layman as a saint or canonisation of a common man has immense relevance to the present times".

of the day quote

Capex right now, our initial estimate will be about ₹350 to ₹400 crore (for FY23) mainly in both capex on the manufacturing side as well as on the product side

BHARAT MADAN | CFO, ESCORTS LTD GROUP

We have got into the NBFC space and it is very big in India... It is a growth sector and we are targeting that as an area that we will be investing more... We have started expanding in Kerala and we will be taking it to other states as well

ADEEB AHAMED | MD, LULU FINANCIAL HOLDINGS

As we continue to work with MSMEs across the country, we remain committed to bringing new tools, technology and innovation that will unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of Indian businesses, boost exports from the country and help create jobs at scale

MANISH TIWARY | COUNTRY MANAGER, AMAZON INDIA

SHORT TAKES

MSI lines up ₹5K cr capex for this fiscal

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) has lined up ₹5,000 crore capex for various initiatives, including new product launches, for the current financial year, according to a senior company official. The country's top carmaker, which had earmarked around ₹4,500 crore in FY22, also believes that parent Suzuki Motor Corp's investment in Gujarat would help in expanding its battery electric vehicles (BEV) range in the country.

Paytm Mall declares pivot to ONDC

New Delhi: Paytm E-commerce Private Limited (PEPL), the parent entity of Paytm Mall, Sunday announced that it will pivot to Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) as its primary focus and explore opportunities in exports business in place of traditional physical goods e-commerce. This move enables the company to create a long-term sustainable business in partnership with ONDC, which aims to democratize the purchase and sale of goods in the Indian market, driving transparency and digital independence for small businesses in the country. Publicly listed One 97 Communications Limited has no direct or indirect shareholding in PEPL.

Mcap of eight of top-10 cos tumbles

New Delhi: Eight of the 10 most valued companies suffered a combined erosion of ₹2,48,372.97 crore in their market valuation last week in line with a weak broader market trend, with Reliance Industries taking the biggest hit. Last week, Sensex lost 2,041.96 points or 3.72 per cent. While Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, HDFC and Bharti Airtel were the laggards, Hindustan Unilever Limited and Kotak Mahindra Bank emerged as gainers.

Paytm says lending biz at ₹20K crore

New Delhi: Digital payments and financial services company Paytm on Sunday said its lending business saw a 449 per cent increase in the number of loans disbursed in April and business now has an annualised run-rate of ₹20,000 crore. In a stock exchange filing, Paytm shared its business operating update for April, as its businesses continue to see an uptick in numbers.



It is never wise to overreact to a first-round shock, even if it follows a series of earlier shocks, especially when the country is in a shaky recovery from a pandemic

ASHIMA GOYAL | MEMBER, MPC

WTO MEET IN JUNE

The commerce ministry has convened an inter-ministerial meeting May 18 to hold consultations on issues that are likely to figure prominently in the forthcoming meeting of the highest decision-making body of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva next month, an official said. The 12th ministerial conference of the WTO is scheduled from June 12-15 in Geneva



FMCG firms opt to cut weight rather than hike prices

INFLATION SOARS

With no sign of inflation coming down in the coming quarters, FMCG firms are fighting back through grammage cuts, launch bridge packs and a single-digit price hike on some large packs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: FMCG manufacturers are opting to reduce

product weight rather than price of items targeted at lower-end consumers, while resorting to single-digit price increase on some large packs and launching 'bridge packs', as they seek to overcome the impact of commodity price rise and unprecedented inflation.

Besides, they are also using economical packaging, recycled products, and cutting spending on advertising and marketing to counter sudden spur in costs due to geopolitical crises such as the Russia-Ukraine War as well as the export ban of Palm oil from Indonesia.

The growing commodity prices and unprecedented inflation touching a new high, has forced the consumers to tighten their purse



strings and opt for the low-unit price (LUP) packs to maintain their household budgets.

Homegrown FMCG maker Dabur India has responded to this challenge with a mix of pricing actions and cost control measures, said its CEO Mohit Malhotra.

"In the urban markets, where the per capita income is higher and consumers have the spending power, we have taken up prices in larger

We have observed that some consumers have shifted to affordable packs or LUPs to manage their monthly grocery budget. We have also increased supplies of LUPs of our key brands across categories to meet this consumer need

MOHIT MALHOTRA | CEO, DABUR INDIA

There are some early signs of downtrading, consumers turning to value packs, as the sale of low unit price packs is slightly going up. In terms of smaller packs, there is a bit of traction happening given the situation

MAYANK SHAH | SENIOR CATEGORY HEAD, PARLE PRODUCTS

packs. In the rural markets, on the other hand, where LUP packs are sold, we have seen grammage reduction to protect sacred price points like Re 1, ₹5 and ₹10," he said.

Leading FMCG maker HUL, in its recent earnings call had said the company will adopt a "bridge-pack

strategy" as it expects to see more sequential inflation. Bakery Foods Company Britannia Industries' LUP of ₹5 and 10 are approximately 50 to 55 per cent of its total mix and will have to nurture that business, said its Managing Director Varun Berry in its recent earnings call.

Adani wins race to buy Holcim India assets for \$10.5bn

REUTERS

New Delhi, May 15: India's Adani Group acquired a controlling stake in Holcim AG's cement businesses in India in a \$10.5 billion deal to become the second biggest cement producer in the country, Adani Group said in a statement Sunday.

Asia's richest person Gautam Adani's conglomerate acquired 63.19% of Ambuja Cements Ltd and its subsidiary ACC in fierce bidding with local companies.

Ambuja and ACC have a combined capacity to produce at least 70 million tonne of cement annually, second to UltraTech Cement which has 120 million tonne capacity. The Adani family, through an offshore special purpose vehicle, had entered into definitive agreements for the acquisition of Switzerland-based Holcim Ltd's entire stake in Ambuja and ACC, the Adani Group said in a statement.

Holcim said in a statement it had signed a binding agreement for the Adani Group to acquire Holcim's business in India, comprising its stake in Ambuja Cement, which owns a 50.05% interest in ACC, as well as its 4.48% direct stake in ACC. Holcim would receive nearly \$6.4 billion for the stakes.

The Adani Group said it will acquire more shares through an open offer. The transaction is expected to close in the second half of 2022, Holcim said.

COAL CATASTROPHE

Steel prices ease but crisis wreaking havoc

Crisil in its latest report said steel prices, which have been on a song for the past two years, are finally set to correct on weak seasonality, and may trade at around ₹60,000 per tonne by the end of the current fiscal year, down from the ₹76,000 per tonne peak it scaled last month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 15: Steel sector players are facing some heat owing to high input commodity prices as finished steel products have begun to decline since April after the Russia-Ukraine war broke out. Prices in the long products segment have declined on an average of 10-15 per cent to ₹57,000 per tonne in Kolkata market from a high of ₹65,000 a tonne. Coal which is a key raw material for the secondary steel producers has turned out to be the major pain point, officials said.

"Steel products, be it construction like TMT bars and structurals have come down between 10 and 15 per cent due to sluggish demand and are expected to ease a little more before it settles. While our costs have soared," Steel Rolling Mills Association chairman Vivek Adukia told PTI.

"Our costs have increased by 50 per cent despite a compromise on quality of inputs, secondary steel producers using Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) require high quality thermal coal to make sponge iron. The imported coal price which was \$120 per tonne had shot up to \$300 per tonne after the war broke out. The price is not sustainable unless passed through," he said.

"Demand has gone up post-Covid because of a lot of spending by various governments. At the same



Steel prices from leading players were higher at ₹75,000-76,000 per tonne at its peak

Companies forced to import coal for survival as Coal India is not lending its ears to their demand

Gas-based power generation which has fallen drastically has aggravated the coal crisis

time, supply had not caught up. So there is a reason why we have seen a very big increase in steel prices. Now we are seeing a slight

correction in steel prices," JSW Steel joint MD Seshagiri Rao had commented recently at the ET Awards ceremony.

'Constraints in availability of domestic coal'

New Delhi: The country is facing constraints in the domestic coal availability and the rest of the dry fuel demand needs to be met with imports, according to the coal ministry. The ministry has also emphasised that coal block holders -- both captive and commercial -- have a major role to play in mitigating the coal shortfall situation. Domestic coal production is about 800 million tonne, according to the coal additional secretary, who is also the chairperson of an inter-ministerial panel on coal linkages for the power sector. The inter-ministerial panel met recently to consider the requests for coal linkages to central/state sector power plants and to review the status of existing coal linkages. The additional coal secretary stated that "there are constraints in domestic coal availability and the domestic coal production is roughly about 800 MT". "Therefore, the rest of the coal demand of the country has to be met through imports from other countries," according to the minutes of the meeting on fuel linkages.

Premature redemption price of SGB fixed at ₹5,115 per unit



Premature redemption of Gold Bond is permitted after the fifth year from the date of issue and the due date of SGB 2016-17, Series III issued Nov 17, 2016 is May 17, 2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 15: The price for premature redemption of sovereign gold bond (SGB) due Tuesday has been fixed at ₹5,115 per unit, an RBI release said.

"Accordingly, the redemption price for the second premature redemption due on May 17, 2022 shall be ₹5,115 per unit of SGB based on the simple average of closing price of gold for the week May 09-13, 2022," the RBI said in a statement.

The issue price of the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2016-17, Series III was ₹2,957 per gram of gold. The nominal value of the bond was fixed on the basis of average closing price for gold of 999 purity (October 17-21, 2016) published by the IBSA at ₹3,007 per gram. The government, in consultation with the RBI, had offered a discount of ₹50 per gram on the nominal value of the sovereign gold bond.

The redemption price of SGB is based on the average closing price of gold of 999 purity of the week (Monday-Friday) preceding the date of redemption as published by the India Bullion and Jewellers Association Ltd (IBJA). The RBI issues the bonds on behalf of the Government of India which are sold through banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post

offices, and NSE and BSE.

As regards taxation, Deepak Jain, Chief Executive, TaxManager.in, a tax e-filing and compliance management portal, said the interest earned from SGB will be taxable as income from other sources while TDS is not applicable on the bond.

He said the rules on the taxation of capital gains on redemption of SGB are very clear that after the maturity of 8 years lock-in period -- the entire gains are exempted or tax free.

However, if the SGB is redeemed after the lock-in period of 5 years and before the maturity period of 8 years, the gains accumulated on the redemption will be long term capital gains and it will be taxed at 20 per cent with indexation benefit, Jain said.

Col Sanjeev Govila (Retd), who runs a Sebi-registered financial advisory firm, Hum Fauji Initiative, opined that SGBs are primarily bought for buying gold as a long-term asset allocation strategy which, apart from the capital appreciation, also gives a 2.5 per cent annual interest.

According to him, SGB 2016-17 Series III bonds have given "very good returns" of about 13.5 per cent annualised including the interest earned. "With the current uncertainty on inflation stickiness and GDP growth outlooks, it would be good to hold on to these SGBs," he added.

FRAUDS IN PSBs DIP 51% 'Cryptos can lead to dollarisation of economy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Public sector banks reported over 51 per cent dip in the amount involved in frauds to ₹40,295.25 crore during the financial year ended March 2022, the Reserve Bank of India has said.

The 12 PSBs (Public Sector Banks) had reported frauds worth ₹81,921.54 crore in preceding fiscal 2020-21, the Reserve Bank has said in response to an application under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

According to the RBI data on frauds reported by PSBs in all categories during FY22, the highest

Number of fraud cases didn't fall at the same pace as a total of 7,940 frauds seen in 2021-22, against 9,933 in FY21

amount of ₹9,528.95 crore was reported by the city-based Punjab National Bank (PNB), involving 431 such incidents.

The country's largest lender State Bank of India reported frauds worth ₹6,932.37 crore in as many as 4,192 cases -- reflecting incidents of a large number of small value frauds.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Cryptocurrencies can lead to "dollarisation" of a part of the economy which would be against India's sovereign interest, top officials of the RBI have told a parliamentary panel, according to sources.

Briefing the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance chaired by former minister of state for finance Jayant Sinha, top officials of the RBI, including its governor Shaktikanta Das, clearly expressed their apprehensions about cryp-

tocurrencies and said these pose challenges to the stability of the financial system, sources said.

"It will seriously undermine the RBI's capacity to determine monetary policy and regulate the monetary system of the country," a member of the panel quoted RBI officials as saying.

Pointing out that cryptocurrencies have the potential to be a medium of exchange and replace the rupee in financial trans-

actions both domestic and cross border, central bank officials said these currencies "can replace a part of monetary system it will also undermine the RBI's capacity to regulate the flow of money in the system".

Cautioning that besides being used for terror financing, money laundering and drug trafficking, cryptos pose a bigger threat to the stability of the financial system of the country, the central bank officials said.

"Almost all cryptocurrencies are dollar-denominated and issued by foreign private entities, it may eventually lead to dollarisation of a part of our economy which will be against the country's sovereign interest," the officials told the members.

Discussing the impacts of cryptocurrency, the RBI officials said it will also have a negative impact on the banking system as these being attractive assets people may invest their hard-earned savings in these currencies which may result in banks having lesser resources to lend.

RIL to buy dozens of brands in \$6.5bn consumer goods play

The consumer goods push under a vertical named Reliance Retail Consumer Brands will come on top of Ambani's brick-and-mortar store network of more than 2,000 grocery outlets and ongoing expansion of "JioMart" e-commerce operations in India's nearly \$900 billion retail market, one of world's biggest

REUTERS

Mumbai, May 15: India's biggest retailer Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) will acquire dozens of small grocery and non-food brands as it targets building its own \$6.5 billion consumer goods business to challenge foreign giants like Unilever; two sources familiar with the plan told Reuters.

Reliance, run by Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani, plans to build a portfolio of 50 to 60 grocery, household and personal care brands within six months and is hiring an army of distributors to take them to mom-and-pop stores and bigger retail outlets across the na-



tion, the sources added. Reliance is in final stages of negotiations with around 30 popular niche local consumer brands to fully acquire them or form joint venture partnerships for sales, said

the first source familiar with its business planning. The total investment outlay planned by the company to acquire brands isn't clear, but the second source said Reliance had set a goal

There is a fair bit of brand value which is attached to the established names and it becomes very difficult to compete with them. If inorganic is the route for Reliance, they will be able to scale up much faster. But they'll need to get the pricing and distribution right to compete with bigger rivals

ALOK SHAH | CONSUMER ANALYST, AMBIT CAPITAL

to achieve ₹500 billion (\$6.5 billion) of annual sales from the business within five years.

"Reliance will become a house of brands. This is an inorganic play," said the person.

With the new business plan, Reliance is seeking to challenge some of the world's biggest consumer groups, like Nestle, Unilever, PepsiCo Inc and Coca-Cola, which have been operating for decades in India, the sources said.

It's a daunting task, though, to beat such well-established foreign companies that have their own manufacturing units in India and thousands of distributors who take their world-famous products like Pond's creams or Maggi noodles across the vast nation of 1.4 billion people, they noted.

Nation lauds shuttlers

INDIA BECOMES ONLY THE 6TH COUNTRY TO WIN THE THOMAS CUP AFTER INDONESIA, CHINA, MALAYSIA, JAPAN AND DENMARK

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 15: The country erupted in celebration after India triumphed Sunday in the prestigious Thomas Cup badminton tournament in Bangkok. India now, can rightly be called the world champions in the team event of the sport. In the final, India blanked 14-time champions Indonesia to bag their maiden Thomas Cup crown. People from all walks of life joyfully exhausted their stock of superlatives to adorn Sunday's heroes.

From Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Olympic gold medalist shooter Abhinav Bindra, the historic feat drew the attention of the

country's political class, sporting fraternity, entertainment industry and the corporate sector, among others. They lavished rich praise on the men who made it possible - Lakshya Sen, Kidambi Srikanth and the doubles duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. Also not forgotten was HS Prannoy who won the decisive matches against Malaysia (quarterfinals) and Denmark (semifinals).

India thus became only the sixth country ever to win the Thomas Cup. They joined Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Japan and Denmark to win the Thomas Cup.

Here's what they had to say on various social media platforms: **Narendra Modi (PM):** The Indian badminton team have scripted history! The entire nation is elated by India winning the Thomas Cup! Congratulations to our accomplished team and best wishes to them for their future endeavours. This win will motivate so many upcoming sports persons.

Anurag Thakur (Sports Minister): HISTORY CREATED! Congratulations to the Indian men's badminton team for winning the Thomas Cup! This extraordinary feat, with successive



victories over Malaysia, Denmark and Indonesia, calls for matching honour by the nation.

Pullela Gopichand (Indian badminton's chief coach):



Lakshya Sen

Winning the Thomas Cup is bigger than the 1983 Cricket World Cup triumph. It is a milestone moment for badminton in India.

Abhinav Bindra (Olympic gold medalist): What a historic day! An incredible achievement by an incredible Team India to win the #ThomasCup for the first time ever!! Bounced back from tough situations on numerous occasions to win gold. Kudos to all the players and coaches. Champions, all of you!

Saina Nehwal (Olympic bronze medalist shuttler): Congratulations TEAM INDIA Men's Team for winning the THOMAS CUP Title ... Great win.

Taapsee Pannu (Actor): History!!!! India win Thomas Cup the first time they reached finals!!! Take a bow boys!!!

Virat Kohli (Cricketer): A historic achievement and a massive moment for Indian badminton. Congratulations Team India on winning the Thomas Cup.

Sunil Chhetri (Footballer): What a moment for Indian sport. We are Thomas Cup champions for the first ever time, and we beat the best to make it happen. Congrats to the players and staff. Some things take time, but don't let anyone tell you it can't be done.

Sachin Tendulkar (Former Indian cricketer): Historic moment for all Indians! What a day for Indian badminton. Congratulations to the whole team on winning our maiden Thomas Cup title.

VVS Laxman (Former Indian cricketer): We've had individual champions but winning as a team and a first-ever title in Thomas Cup is surreal. Kudos to each and everyone in the Indian team for making this dream come true. We are proud of you!

Vimal Kumar (Coach): I have no words to describe the feeling. We always had hopes, the way the players played, they just put up a performance out of the blue. It was really fantastic.

Suresh Raina (Former cricketer): Historic moment in Indian sports. Congratulations to the Indian badminton team on winning the Thomas Cup final.

CASH AWARDS FOR TEAM INDIA

New Delhi: Sports Minister Anurag Thakur announced Sunday a cash award of ₹1 crore to the Indian men's badminton team which created history by winning the coveted Thomas Cup title for the first time. "India's extraordinary feat of winning the Thomas Cup with successive victories over Malaysia, Denmark and Indonesia in the play-offs called for a relaxation of rules," Thakur said in a statement. "It is with pride that I announce the award of ₹1 crore to the team," he added. The BAI also announced a cash award of ₹1 crore.

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Kidambi Srikanth

Titans tame CSK to ensure top-two finish



MATCH-WINNING KNOCK: Wridhiman Saha plays a shot as MS Dhoni watches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 15: Wridhiman Saha's solid unbeaten 67 (57b, 8x4, 1x6) after a top-class bowling performance set up Gujarat 'Titans' (GT) seven-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the IPL here Sunday. The victory ensured that the GT will finish among the top two in the points table.

Gujarat bowlers put up a clinical show to restrict CSK to a below-par 133/5 despite a fine half century by Rituraj Gaikwad (53, 49b, 5x4, 1x6). However, by his own standard, Gaikwad was a tad too slow while batting. However, Saha anchored the chase nicely to get Gujarat home in 19.1 overs.

Saha first added 59 runs in just 7.1 overs with Shubman Gill (18) to lay the foundation of the win. CSK tried to make a mini comeback by grabbing two quick wickets in the middle overs but it was too little and too late.

Saha, who was dropped by Rituraj on 21, went hammer and tongs as he pummeled a listless CSK attack in the power play. The wicketkeeper-batter made his intent clear by striking three boundaries in the opening over off Mukesh Choudhary (0/28) and then played shots at will, including his

only six in the fifth over. However, CSK debutant pacer Matheesha Pathirana (2/24) dismissed both Gill and Hardik Pandya (7) in quick succession as Gujarat slipped to 100/3. But with no run-rate pressure, David Miller (15 n o) and Saha completed the chase without any hiccups.

BRIEF SCORES

CSK 133 for 5 (Rituraj Gaikwad 53, Mohammed Shami 2/19) lost to **GT 137 for 3** in 19.1 overs (Wridhiman Saha 67 n o, Matheesha Pathirana 2/24) by seven wickets.

Earlier, CSK lost opener Dewon Conway (5) in the third over as Mohammed Shami (2/19) gave GT the first breakthrough. Other than Gaikwad, the only other batter to show some intent was Narayan Jagadeesan (39 n o, 33b, 3x4, 1x6). CSK however suffered a middle-order collapse and could add only 24 runs in the last five overs. GT skipper Pandya said he did not favour too many changes in the side even though they have qualified for the play-offs. "The core group needs to play so that we can maintain the winning momentum," Pandya said.

SHORT TAKES

Kimeli, Cheptai win

Bangalore: Kenya's Nicholas Kipkorir Kimeli and Irene Cheptai smashed the course records to win top honours at the TCS World 10K run here Sunday. Kimeli, fourth in the Tokyo Olympics 5000m event, and Cheptai ran course records of 27:38 seconds and 30:35 seconds in men's and women's category respectively. Kimeli reduced the record by six seconds from the previous mark set by his compatriot Geoffrey Kamworor in 2014. Parul Chaudhury was the best Indian in the women's category while Abhishek Pal finished first in the men's segment among the Indian participants.

Shooters shine

New Delhi: India's girls' pistol team affected a clean sweep Sunday of the women's 25m competition in the ISSF Junior World Cup shooting championships in Suhl, Germany. Rhythm Sangwan won gold, Manu Bhaker silver and Naama Kapoor bronze, as India completely dominated the Olympic event. Rhythm topped the qualification round with a score of 588 while Manu was second with 584 and Naama third with 583 and all three easily qualified for the final. In the final Manu led initially, but Rhythm caught up by the seventh round and then sped away to victory.

Rift grows

New Delhi: Commonwealth Games (CWG) Federation president Louise Martin has said that the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is not attending the regional meetings of the international sports body where it could have raised the issue of non-inclusion of certain sports in the event. The IOA, however, said it is difficult to attend these meetings which do not have in the agenda, matters relating to India's grievances of leaving out shooting, wrestling and archery from the CWG roster. IOA secretary-general Rajeev Mehta had earlier written to the CWG Federation requesting it to include shooting, wrestling and archery in 2026 CWG in Australia.

ALL-ROUND SHOW BY RAJASTHAN

RR beat LSG to seal play-off spot

AGENCIES

Mumbai, May 15: Some attacking stroke play by Rajasthan Royals (RR) batters coupled with a disciplined bowling show, helped them beat Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) by 24 runs at the Brabourne Stadium here Sunday.

Electing to bat after winning the toss RR posted 178 for the loss of six wickets riding on good knocks by Yashasvi Jaiswal (41, 29b, 6x4, 1x6), Devdutt Padikkal (39, 18b, 5x4, 2x6) and skipper Sanju Samson (32, 24b, 6x4). Then they bowled with a tight leash to restrict LSG to. Trent Boult (2/18), Prasidh Krishan (2/32) and Obed McCoy (2/35) picked up wickets at regular intervals to stifle the efforts of the LSG batters. LSG could only score 154 eight and they fell short even though the loss probably wouldn't hurt their chances for a play-off berth.

Except for Deepak Hooda (59, 39b, 5x4, 2x6) none of the other LSG batters could pose problems to the RR bowlers. Krunal Pandya (25) and Marcus Stoinis (27, 17b, 1x4,

2x6) did try their best to bring back LSG into the game, but that was not enough. The decision to send Stoinis lower down the order at No.6 continues to baffle many. Keeping in mind his hitting prowess, he could come higher up the order and get more deliveries to play.

Earlier, the quick dismissal of the in-form Jos Buttler did not bother RR much as their other top-order batters took the attack to the opposition. Ravi Bishnoi (2/31) was the most successful bowler for LSG.

Buttler's early dismissal brought Samson into the middle and he and Jaiswal put on 64 runs for the second wicket to steady the ship. Jaiswal was severe on anything shot while Samson played some fluent drives. Jaiswal, who was dropped once made full use of the reprieve, to score 21 runs off a Dushmantha Chameera over.

After Samson's dismissal, Padikkal came and launched a scathing attack, hitting Stoinis for 14 runs in five deliveries. He then hit Pandya for a six also.

Reds chase their quadruple dream

LIVERPOOL WIN FA CUP AFTER 16 YEARS, THEIR 2ND TROPHY THIS SEASON

AGENCIES

London, May 15: Liverpool held their nerves to win the FA Cup for the first time since 2006 after a dramatic penalty shoot-out against Chelsea as the quadruple title-chasers kept their history bid alive Saturday at the Wembley here. Jurgen Klopp's side won 6-5 on penalties as Greek defender Kostas Tsimikas was the unlikely hero with the decisive kick after Alisson Becker kept out Mason Mount's effort.

A hard-fought final had finished a 0-0 draw after extra-time, setting the stage for a nerve-jangling shootout that featured misses by Chelsea's Cesar Azpilicueta and Liverpool's Sadio Mane, whose shot was saved by Edouard Mendy when he had a chance to clinch the trophy.

For the second time this season, Liverpool emerged victorious against Chelsea on penalties, having already beaten them 11-10 following another 0-0 draw in the League Cup final in February. Liverpool's triumph keeps them in the hunt to become the first English team to win all four major trophies in a single season.

With two prizes already secured, the Reds will hope for a slip from Premier League leaders Manchester City, who are three points clear of



MOMENT OF ECSTASY: Liverpool's captain Jordan Henderson holds aloft the FA Cup as teammates rejoice at the Wembley Stadium, Saturday

them in the title race with two games left for both teams. Even if Liverpool are unable to win a second English title in three seasons, they could still cap an astonishing campaign by winning the Champions League final May 28 against Real Madrid in Paris.

With that ambition in mind, Klopp's only concern as he danced jubilantly in front of the Liverpool supporters amid a swirling mist of red flare smoke was whether his team will be at full strength against Real.

Liverpool lost Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk to injuries that could rule them out of their last two Premier League games next week

and will spark fears about their ability to recover in time for the Champions League final. However, Klopp said there is nothing to worry. "Both are really okay," Klopp said. "It's not a big thing."

For Chelsea, it was a painful third successive FA Cup final defeat after previous losses to Leicester and Arsenal.

Liverpool made a blistering start as they swarmed forward in a blur of swift passes and relentless pressing. However, it must be said that if the first half belonged to Liverpool, then Chelsea were unlucky not to score in the second when Alonzo's free-kick cannoned off the bar.

West Ham open up PL title race, hold Man City

AGENCIES

London, May 15: Manchester City were Sunday held to a 2-2 draw at West Ham, and certainly the result brought fresh hopes to Liverpool who chase their elusive quadruple dream. Man City are now on 90 points from 37 games while Liverpool are on 86 from 36 matches. So if Liverpool win their remaining two games and if Man City are held to a draw or beaten by Aston Villa, then certainly it will be déjà vu for the Reds.

City played lethargic football in the first half and were two goals down as Jarrod Bowen struck twice. However, the second half was quite different as City came back strongly. Jack Grealish got a goal three minutes after the restart and a Vladimir Coufal own goal had the City fans screaming for more. They could have sealed up the match if Riyad Mahrez could have converted the spot-kick a few minutes before the final whistle. He missed and with it went City's chances of scripting an amazing turnaround.

Most of the time, Man City controlled proceedings. However, whenever West Ham attacked on the counter with speed, City found themselves in a problem.

FLAWED GENIUS WHO ENTERTAINED ALL

UNTIMELY DEMISE OF SYMONDS IN A CAR CRASH STUNS CRICKET FRATERNITY

AGENCIES

Sydney, May 15: Former Australia cricketer Andrew Symonds, one of the finest all-rounders and a two-time World Cup winner, has died in a tragic car accident, leaving the cricketing world in shock. He was 46 and is survived by his wife and two young children.

According to a statement issued by Queensland police, the accident happened Saturday night in Hervey Range Road, about 50km outside Townsville in northeast Australia. The accident happened around 11.00pm in the night.

Symonds featured in 26 Tests, 198 ODIs and 14 T20Is in a successful career between 1998 and 2009. He helped Australia win the ODI world Cups in 2003 and 2007 and was one of the key members of

Australia's Test side in the 2000s. Symonds, lovingly known as 'Roy', also had his share of controversies. He was axed from the two ODIs during Australia's tour of England in 2005 after he turned up drunk for a match against Bangladesh. Three years later, Symonds missed a team meeting after going for fishing in Darwin and was sent back home.

From former Australian wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist and pacer Jason Gillespie to India's Harbhajan Singh and Sachin Tendulkar, tributes poured in for the flamboyant all-rounder.

"Think of your most loyal, fun-loving friend who would do anything for you. That's Roy," Gilchrist, who was part of the World Cup 2003 squad, wrote on his Twitter handle. "This really hurts."

Gillespie, tweeted: "Horrendous news to wake up to. Utterly devastated. We are all gonna miss you mate."

Harbhajan, Tendulkar and Anil Kumble also paid their tributes. "Shocked to hear about the sudden demise of Andrew Symonds. Gone too soon. Heartfelt condolences to the family and friends. Prayers for the departed soul," wrote Harbhajan, who was part of the infamous 2008 Sydney Test when the 'Monkeygate' incident happened.

"Andrew Symond's demise is shocking news for all of us to absorb. Not only was he a brilliant all-rounder, but also a live-wire on the field. I have fond memories of the time we spent together in Mumbai Indians. May his soul rest in peace, condolences to his family & friends," said Tendulkar.



Djokovic breezes to year's 1st title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, May 15: Just in time. Novak Djokovic raised his first trophy of the year at the Italian Open tennis tournament here Sunday and showed that he's back in top form exactly a week before the French Open starts. The top-ranked Djokovic beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-0, 7-6 (7-5) for his sixth Rome title.

"I've been building my form the last few weeks," Djokovic said. "It couldn't be better timing coming into Roland Garros. Perfect scenario for me," Djokovic added.

Earlier on the red clay, Iga Swiatek defended the women's title by overwhelming Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2 to extend her winning streak to 28 matches.

Djokovic didn't drop a set all week, having won his 1,000th career match over Casper Ruud in the semifinals. Djokovic, who was deported because of his unvaccinated status ahead of the Australian Open, hadn't won a tournament since raising the Paris Masters trophy in November.

Djokovic needed only 30 minutes to win the opening set, during which Tsitsipas got so frustrated at one point that he banged his racket against his bag during a changeover. After falling behind early in the second set, Djokovic stepped up his game when Tsitsipas was serving for the set at 5-3. He broke back to take the set to a tie-break and won comfortably.