



## ROLE MODEL

Actress Pooja Hegde, who has made her debut at the Cannes, hopes to inspire young Indian girls to dream big

LEISURE P2



## RUSSIA UPS OFFENSIVE

Russia pressed its offensive in eastern Ukraine as Poland's president travelled to Kyiv

INTERNATIONAL P10



## MAIDEN CALL-UP

Pacers Umran Malik and Arshdeep Singh in Indian team for T20 series against South Africa

SPORTS P12



## ALBANESE ELECTED AUSTRALIA'S PM

**SYDNEY:** Australians awoke Sunday to a new Prime Minister in Anthony Albanese, the centre-left Labour Party leader whose ascension to the nation's top job from being raised in social housing by a single mother on a disability pension was said to reflect the changed fabric of the country today. The 59-year-old career politician, who has described himself as the only candidate with a "non-Anglo Celtic name" to run for prime minister in the 121 years the office has existed, referred to his humble upbringing in the inner-Sydney suburb of Camperdown while thanking electors for making him the country's 31st leader.

## LIGHTNING KILLS 4 IN A DAY IN STATE

**CHILIKA/KEONJHAR:** At least four persons were killed while four others suffered severe burn injuries in lightning strikes across the state during the last 24 hours. In the first incident, a fisherman died while two others were injured after lightning struck them near a jetty at Nairi under Chilika block Sunday. In a separate incident, a person was killed while two others sustained injuries at Pansadiha in Keonjhar district. A 23-year-old man was killed in lightning strike in Kaloshirihia in Sundargarh district. A 60-year-old man was charred to death in Kadapani area of Nuagaon block as lightning struck him when he was returning to his house after collecting vegetables from his farm.



## Varsha lodges complaint against hubby Anubhav

AGENCIES

**Cuttack, May 22:** A day after actor-politician Anubhav Mohanty released a video on the social media accusing his wife Varsha Priyadarshini of denying him the conjugal rights he deserved for years, Varsha Sunday lodged a complaint with the Purighat police here accusing the Kendrapara MP of tarnishing her image.

Mohanty had May 19 and 21 released videos on the social media holding Varsha responsible for the marital dispute.

In his latest video, the Parliamentarian said he was the first one to file a petition for divorce. "My only reason for filing the divorce as cited in the petition was non-consummation of marriage. Even after eight years of marriage, my life partner didn't give me the rights that I deserve being a husband," said Mohanty.



He went on to add: "After we got married in 2014, she had said that since childhood she feared physical relationship. She requested me to give her some time to accept me as her husband mentally as well as physically."

In the video shared on social media May 19, Mohanty broke down and poured his heart out over his 'failed' marriage with the actress. Without taking any name, the actor-turned-politician said choosing a life partner was the only mistake he had committed that ruined his life.

## IIT-JEE all set to open for students from 25 countries

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 22:** IIT-JEE (IIT-Joint Entrance Exam) is set to go global with the Indian government planning to hold the exam in 25 countries, right from the US to Vietnam, simultaneously. In Kuala Lumpur and Lagos, these examinations were held last year. Earlier, with the cooperation of the Indian government, the IIT-JEE exams were held in 12 countries.

The countries where the examinations will be conducted are: the US, Australia, South Africa, Singapore, China, Nepal, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, among others.

Around 3,900 Under Graduate and 1,300 Postgraduate seats will be made available for NRIs, Indians and foreign nationals studying abroad. These seats will be reserved in top class engineering institutes of the country.

According to the Union Education Ministry, under Direct Admission of Student Abroad (DASA) scheme, these students will be provided admission in top class institutes of the country.

Foreign students will be able to get admission in National Institute of Technology, National Institute of Information Technology, School of Planning and Architect and other technical institutions funded by the Central government.

## WOODEN MARVEL



Carpenters fixing an axle to wheels as part of chariot construction in Puri, Sunday.

OP PHOTO

## Row over midnight survey

**The Archaeological Survey of India was kept in the dark about the Ground Penetrating Radar Survey conducted around the Srimandir**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Puri, May 22:** The controversy surrounding the Srimandir Heritage Corridor Project has refused to abate with the district administration carrying out Ground Penetrating Radar Survey (GPRS) around the temple in a clandestine manner Saturday midnight.

Meanwhile, the Archaeological Survey of India's circle office at Puri has clarified that it had no prior information about the survey.

Sources from the office said that neither the Odisha Bridge



and Construction Corporation nor the temple or district administration informed it on conducting the survey. No official from ASI was present at the site where the survey was being conducted. However, as per norms, an ASI official is required to be present at the site during survey.

The state government in an affidavit in the Orissa High Court, May 9 had informed the Advocate General that ASI officials will be present in all the works that will be

## Wasn't aware of project: Puri seer

**PURI:** The Shankaracharya of the Govardhan Peeth in Puri, Swami Nischalananda Saraswati, said that he wasn't aware that a project of such scale was being set up in the town. "I was not informed about the Puri Heritage Corridor Project. There is no point in converting the place of meditation into a tourist destination," he added.



taken up for the heritage corridor project. All the works will be implemented with the assistance of ASI, the state government had said.

However, it has deviated in this case. The AMASR Act-1958 speaks the same. It says that survey cannot be conducted without the presence of ASI officials.

As per sources, some people were spotted carrying out inspection near the Meghanad wall of the Srimandir and other nearby spots with some machines on their hands late Saturday night. The

GPRS was not carried out at the excavated site.

The heritage corridor project row is currently sub-judice in the Orissa High Court which has scheduled the next date of hearing in the case June 20. During the last hearing in the case, the Archaeological Survey of India in its joint inspection report had submitted that the Odisha government had not carried out the GPRS around the 12th century temple before executing deep excavation works for the project construction.

## Maha, Kerala, Raj reduce VAT on fuel

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 22:** Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Kerala have decreased VAT on petrol and diesel after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's call to provide further relief to consumers following a cut in excise duty by the Centre, though some other states appeared reluctant citing their inability to take more strain on revenue.

The Shiv Sena-led Maharashtra government slashed the VAT on petrol by ₹2.08 per litre and diesel by ₹1.44 per litre. A statement issued by the government said the state exchequer will have to bear an annual loss of ₹2,500 crore as a result of this decision.

However, the DMK-led government in Tamil Nadu said that it is neither fair nor reasonable to expect states to reduce their taxes.

The Left Democratic Front gov-

ernment in Kerala had Saturday promptly announced a cut in the state tax on the prices of petrol and diesel by ₹2.41 and ₹1.36 per litre respectively, following the reduction in fuel prices by the Centre. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also said the state government will reduce VAT by ₹2.48 per liter on petrol and ₹1.16 per liter on diesel.

In Madhya Pradesh, Congress leader Kamal Nath demanded that the BJP government reduce VAT on petroleum products to further bring down the rates.

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said it was the duty of not only Uttar Pradesh but also of other states to immediately announce a cut in VAT on fuel.

In BJP-ruled Karnataka, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said his government will consider a further cut in fuel tax.

## 4-year-old saves mother from miscreant

**The minor boy gestured towards the neighbours, signaling for their rescue when the miscreant was deep inside the house, attacking his mother**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, May 22:** It may sound strange, but is true. A four-year-old boy, who hardly understands anything around him, saved the life of his mother from a miscreant in Anantapur village under Sadar police limits in Balasure district, Saturday night.

The minor boy mumbled and gestured towards the neighbours, signaling for their rescue when the miscreant was deep inside the house, attacking his mother to loot her jewellery.



Pallabi under treatment at a local hospital; (R) police arrest the accused.



OP PHOTOS

According to reports, Lipun Jena, 28, from Madhupura village went to Ujjwal Jena's house at 9 pm

Saturday and asked for water to drink. Ujjwal's wife Pallabi went inside the house to bring water and

at this time Lipun entered the house and rummaged the cupboards to loot valuables. On seeing this,

Pallabi opposed the act, leading to a tussle between the two. Lipun attacked the woman and tried to snatch away her gold jewellery inside a room.

At this time, Pallabi's four-year-old son could sense the danger on his mother and rushed out of the house repeatedly mumbling and gesturing towards their neighbours to come to their rescue. At first, the neighbours could not understand the minor boy's gestures and told him not to move out of the house at night.

However, the villagers subsequently became suspicious about the unusual behaviour of the toddler and stormed into the house and rescued Pallabi from Lipun. They overpowered Lipun.

Later, the accused was handed over to the police. Pallabi, who had suffered injuries in the attack, was admitted to a local hospital for treatment.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Can you please Google... there must be some important elections in some part of the country in coming months

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX	30.3°C	31.6°C
	MIN	22.2°C	22.0°C
Humidity		100%	95%
Rainfall		36.2mm	31.4mm
			very likely

# leisure



## POP ICON MADONNA BANNED FROM INSTAGRAM LIVE FOR SHARING NUDITY

Pop icon Madonna has been banned from Instagram Live for sharing nude snaps on the platform. The 63-year-old received a notification claiming she had violated community guidelines when attempting to go live to her 18 million followers.

## DOJA CAT TO QUIT VAPING AFTER UNDERGOING TONSIL SURGERY

Pop star Doja Cat ended up in hospital recently to have an abscess removed from her left tonsil but reportedly cried for hours after the surgery and the next day vowed to give up using electronic cigarettes.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
If you are a gadget freak, today you will have enough opportunity to flaunt your knowledge and impress everyone else. Students with a scientific bent of mind will excel in studies. Ganesh advises housewives to experiment with their own recipes, and not to worry about the oven - it will not burst.

**TAURUS**  
You will not lose your cool today despite the overwhelming odds, feels Ganesh. Rationale and reason will be the rhyme of your attitude as you diagnose the problems and uproot them successfully. Success beckons and you are ready to reach out and grab it by hook or by crook. Guard your reputation as your ethics might come under the scanner, says Ganesh.

**GEMINI**  
You will ponder over religious and social issues and discuss and debate the issue with your family members and make your opinions known to them. This apart, you will probably discuss on issues like law, education, social obligations, and culture with those close to you, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
You may have to give more priority to your job. You will swiftly finish the task entrusted to you with concentration. Your zeal for work will be high. You will give so much importance to friends that you will go out of way to meet them.

**LEO**  
Be it a job or business, you will face severe competition today. You will need to be extra cautious today. You will need to be more serious about whatever it is that you are doing. You will become more influential in your social circle or amongst your colleagues as a result, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Today may prove to be a turning point for you. You will explore the opportunities to secure the money needed to make your future bright. Matters regarding relationships will be on the top of your priority list today. You may feel inclined towards spirituality, and Ganesh says as such you may try doing meditation or yoga.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says your friend who is very influential will be lucky for you. You will be able to start a new joint venture business with out any obstacles. Your efficiency and hard work will be appreciated.

**SCORPIO**  
You reveal your true avatar of being adventurous today, feels Ganesh. It's a favourable day for businessmen as they would make plans that would yield them huge profits. With your great communication and convincing power, you are going to impress your superiors today.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Being a part of all things bright and beautiful will remain the highpoint today, says Ganesh. You may don the hat of an activist and fight injustice and discrimination in the right spirits. Even if you are asked to conquer the world, you will be able to do it today, says Ganesh.

**CAPRICORN**  
You may feel utterly disappointed as all of your hard work and planning will go in vain. You will have difference of opinion with others and at times these differences may turn into heated arguments, predicts Ganesh. Such disharmonious environment will add to your anxiety, but don't lose hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel and you'll surely get through these turbulent times.

**AQUARIUS**  
You have been turning a blind eye towards the pending work you are loaded with. But, today you will take up the challenge of getting done with the pile of work. You may clean your desk at work or room, make payments and purchases, and clear the mess. It will bring clarity to your life. Now it's time to bring clarity to your mind as well, suggests Ganesh.

**PISCES**  
It is important to plan your finances in life, and you will devote your energies towards the same today. You might turn stingy with your money all of a sudden. An unexpected illness in the family will leave you worried.

## Pooja hopes to inspire Indian girls to dream big

**Mumbai:** Pooja Hegde, who has made her debut at the 75th annual Cannes Film Festival, is hoping to inspire young Indian girls to dream big.

Hegde also has a lot more stories to tell, saying "I want to do more films for women because I genuinely think that we are not represented enough. When I see a powerful woman on film, you want to emulate them, you want to be them, and I hope I can be a small part of that in terms of inspiring girls in India to just dream a little bigger and tap their inner potential."

Citing Oscar winner Bong Joon-ho, the actress said: "I think that it's time we stop looking at languages as a barrier; it's like the director of Parasite said at the Oscars that if we get over that one-inch barrier of a subtitle we would be privy to such amazing content across the world, and across India."

India, she noted, is "so culturally diverse and so culturally rich as a country, and I think film is a way to make us understand other people in a much more insightful way and personal way. We have it in us we just need to continue to tell our stories the way we want them to be told."

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## I'm not against divorce: Anil

**Mumbai:** As his upcoming film *Jug Jugg Jeeyo* deals with the divorce of two couples, actor Anil Kapoor shares his opinion on divorce.

The trailer of the film was released Sunday in the presence of the media and the cast, including Varun Dhawan, Kiara Advani and Neetu. When asked about his opinion on the increasing number of divorces in our society, Anil said: "I think everyone should be happy in their own space. I am not against divorce because I think if two people are not happy together, they should part ways amicably, there is nothing wrong with that."

He added: "But if someone wants to stay single forever, that should also not be judged because we are living in a world where mental peace matters."

## Special screening of Odia film *Drustikona*

Popular actress Elina Samantray plays an important role while Leeja Naik is set to make her debut in this Susant Mani directorial



**BHUBANESWAR:** With steady improvement in Covid situation, the producers of Odia film industry have geared up to release their films in theatres. The latest film to hit the big screen is Susant Mani directorial *Drustikona*. Ahead of its release May 27, producer Akshay Kumar Parija arranged a special screening of the film here for the media, Sunday.

The women centric movie showcases how women are still judged by their clothes and look, said Parija. Millions of women face sexual harassment due to such a mindset, he added.

around a girl who is raped and murdered along with her fiancé by three men and the case is cracked within 72 hours.

Popular actress Elina Samantray plays an important role in the film while Leeja Naik is set to make her debut.

linging role and I couldn't have asked for a better debut," said an elated Leeja.

Meanwhile, another Odia movie titled *Aau Gote Love Story* starring Jyoti and Bhoomika premiered at Swati theatre Sunday. Directed by Sanjay Nayak, the film is produced by Ramesh Barik.

## Ray's work inspires projects at Cannes

**Cannes:** A restored version of Indian maestro Satyajit Ray's *The Adversary* (*Pratidwandi* in Bengali) is playing at Cannes Classics this year and films inspired by his works are being planned.

Kolkata-based Indian producer-director Aritra Sen's Roadshow Films and Los Angeles-based British writer-director Alex Harvey's Big Bazaar Films are producing two films this year, which take their inspiration from Ray's life and work, said a report.

First up is feature documentary *Forest of Humans*, which looks at Ray's creative relationship with Kolkata, the city where he lived and worked all his life.

Directed by Harvey and produced by Sen, the documentary explores the many ways in which Ray used Kolkata's diverse humanity to create an entire cinematic world.

"Kolkata endlessly fed Ray's imagination, in return Ray gave the city its sense of self," says Sen.

"His films never try to idealise Kolkata but constantly transform how it is perceived," says Harvey. "Look at *The Adversary*'s disaffected anti-hero who is



seen apart from his city, unable to find solace in its casual pleasures," he added.

Both filmmakers said they are committed to exploring the rich legacy offered by Ray.

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

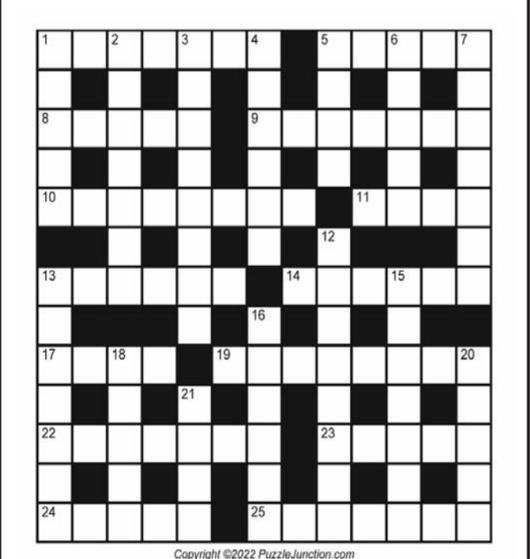


### BREVITY



### FUN post

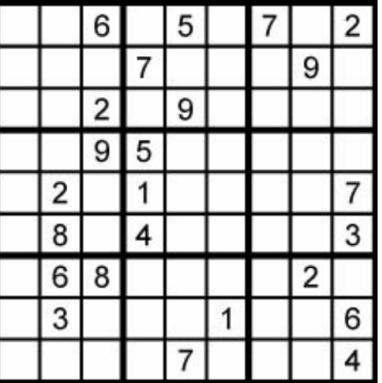
### CROSSWORD



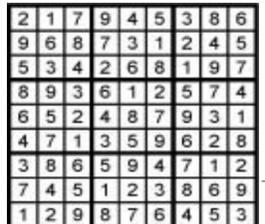
- Across
- 1 Inflexible
  - 5 Post-op time
  - 8 Illegal firing
  - 9 Fragrance
  - 10 Steel-plated
  - 11 Fringe
  - 13 Tempt
  - 14 Word of misgiving
  - 17 Asian staple
  - 19 Precious stones
  - 22 Shoreline problem
  - 23 Neptune's realm
  - 24 Culinary herb
  - 25 Sideways
  - 6 Hunting dog
  - 7 Cocktail
  - additive, at times
  - 12 Irish clover
  - 13 Ness resident?
  - 15 Water holder
  - 16 City on the Danube
  - 18 Sidekick
  - 20 Taste or touch, e.g.
  - 21 Small high-pitched flute
- Down
- 1 Small terrestrial lizard
  - 2 Took for granted
  - 3 Proclaim
  - 4 Pad of paper
  - 5 Defeat decisively

### 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



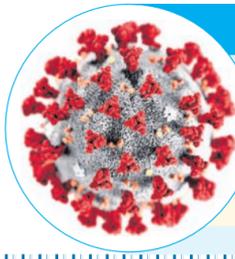
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## CIVIC WOES

The Krushak Bazar at Deula Sahi in Cuttack witnessed waterlogging soon after rain lashed the city, Sunday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	52,73,80,611	49,73,41,739	63,00,088
India	4,31,36,371	4,25,97,003	5,24,413
Odisha	12,88,372	12,79,105	9,126

# Cage fish farming in Hirakud a success: CS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Cage fish farming in the Hirakud reservoir is a successful model and it will soon raise freshwater fish production in state, said Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra Sunday.

"The state government has taken steps for creation of infrastructure like fish landing jetty, common facility centre and inland fisheries research laboratory to boost cage fish farming in Hirakud. These initiatives will augment freshwater fish production in Odisha," Mahapatra said while visiting the site.

The Chief Secretary interacted with fishermen, entrepreneurs and officials of the Fisheries department while inspecting cage fish farming in the reservoir.

Expressing satisfaction with the progress of the field-level work, Mahapatra directed the departmental officials to expedite work for the common facility center, fishery research laboratory and the fish landing jetty.

He also assured the entrepreneurs that the state government would provide the necessary in-



Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra inspects cage fish farming in Hirakud reservoir

frastructure and support for the development of cage fish farming in Odisha.

The common facility centre will help the farmers in the marketing of fish. The centre will have drinking water, electricity and toilet facilities for the farmers, said the Chief Secretary.

Similarly, the fisheries research

laboratory will assist in the monitoring of growth of fish seedlings. Fishermen can check the growth of fish seedlings at the centre and take the necessary steps to produce quality products, he added.

Hirakud reservoir has the vast potential for cage fish farming. It would accommodate 1,875 circular cages or 15,000 rec-

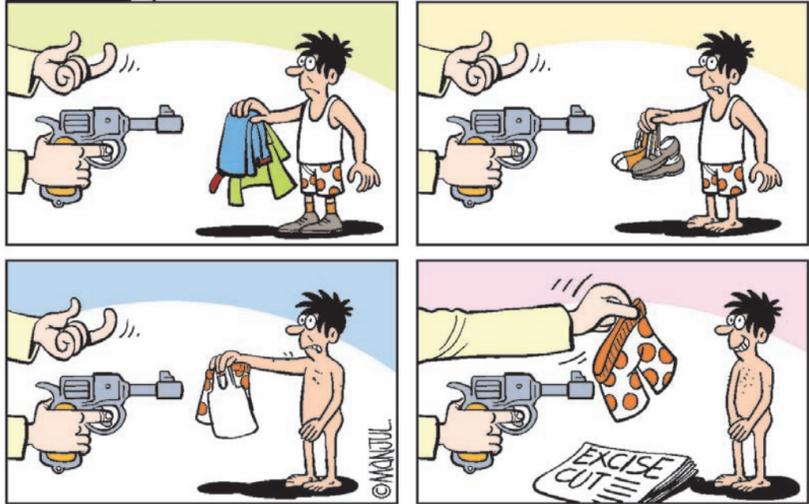
**H**irakud reservoir has the vast potential for cage fish farming. It would accommodate 1,875 circular cages or 15,000 rectangular cages with a production potential of more than 45,000 tonnes of fish. Each circular cage can produce around 25 to 30 tonnes of fish.

**W**ith the installation of cages in 101 allotted subzones over the next six months, one could expect a bumper production of around 14,500 tonnes of freshwater fish in each harvesting cycle. There could be two harvesting cycles in a year

tangular cages with a production potential of more than 45,000 tonne of fish. Each circular cage can produce around 25 to 30 tonne of fish.

Different fish species could be grown in the cage culture technique. With the installation of cages in 101 allotted subzones over the next six months, one could expect a bumper production of around 14,500 tonne of freshwater fish in each harvesting cycle. There could be two harvesting cycles in a year, sources said.

## POLITICKLE BY MANJUL



# 3,500 women SHGs involved in various projects, says BMC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Mayor Sulochana Das Sunday put emphasis on the need for income generation for women for their empowerment in the society.

Das highlighted various measures undertaken by the state government and the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) to empower women in the capital city.

The BMC has decided to treat members of self-help groups (SHGs) and area level federations (ALFs) of Mission Shakti as implementation partners in different projects to provide earning opportunities to the women, Das said.

"Women empowerment is a priority area for the state government and the BMC. The civic authorities in the capital city have ensured women's participation in sanitation, protection of environment, beautification, construction, revenue collection and recreation activities," Das said.

Moreover, the BMC has involved 623 SHGs under Mukhya Mantri Karma Tatpara Aviyan (MUKTA) scheme of the state government. According to sources, more than 500 SHGs have been involved as the



The BMC has decided to treat members of self-help groups (SHGs) and area level federations (ALFs) of Mission Shakti as implementation partners in different projects to provide earning opportunities to the women

implementation partners for the rainwater harvesting projects under the MUKTA scheme. The SHGs have also been involved as partners in projects including roadside open-air gyms and development of parking spaces in the city, sources said.

"Women's participation in sanitation work is commendable. More than 600 women of at least 117 SHGs and five ALFs have been deployed as Swachha Sathis and Swachha Karmis to manage micro composting centers (MCCs) and material recovery facilities (MRFs) in the capital city," said a BMC official.

Similarly, the members of the SHGs also manage several Colony Parks in the city. Out of 77 Colony Parks, at least 40 are managed by the women SHGs, said the official. Moreover, the members of at least

67 SHGs have been assigned the task of collection of holding tax and other dues from the residents while those of another 67 have been working as Jala Sathis, sources said.

BMC sources claimed that more than 3,500 women SHGs are directly and indirectly involved with the civic authorities in the implementation of various projects and the number is expected to double by the end of this year.

There are 5,032 registered women SHGs in the capital city. Out of this, at least 3,757 groups have already received ₹10,000 each for their involvement in different projects. Moreover, various business loans have been disbursed to 3,658 groups. This has promoted entrepreneurship and self-reliance among the group members, sources said.

## PANGOLIN RESCUED; ONE ARRESTED



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** The Special Task Force (STF) of the state Crime Branch has rescued a pangolin, and arrested a man on charges of wildlife trafficking in Kalahandi, an official said Sunday.

Acting on a tipoff, a team of STF with the help of Kalahandi Forest officials raided a place at Karni Khunti village under Narla police limits in Kalahandi Saturday evening and recovered a pangolin weighing 13.3kg from the possession of Jitendra Kumar, said an official.

"As Jitendra, a resident of Tagarla under Kesinga police limits in Kalahandi, could not produce any document in favour of possession of the pangolin—a Schedule 1, Part 1 species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, he was taken into custody," added the official.

The scaled mammal has been handed over to the Kalahandi divisional forest officer, while officials of M Rampur Forest under Kalahandi Forest Division have taken Jitendra into custody for necessary legal action, said the official.

Since 2020, the STF has seized 28 leopard skins, as many elephant tusks, seven deer skins, 14 live pangolins, over 30kg pangolin scales, two leopard teeth and 29 leopard claws.

The agency has also arrested 69 wildlife traffickers.

## Traffic restriction on Khandagiri flyover

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** The twin city Commissionerate Police has decided to impose traffic restrictions on Khandagiri flyover here till June 5 this year owing to maintenance work, an official said Sunday.

The restriction will remain in force for maintenance work of main carriage way on RHS (BBSR-Khurda) of Khandagiri flyover, said the official.

As per a notice issued by the Commissionerate Police, all vehicles intending to go towards Khurda side from Bhubaneswar shall not avail the RHS flyover of Khandagiri and will be diverted through the service road on RHS, it was learnt.

# CITY MAN LOSES HIS CAR TO FRAUDSTER, FILES COMPLAINT

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** A man in the capital city here reportedly lost his car to a fraudster after renting out the vehicle to the latter recently.

Victim Satyajit Mohanty filed a complaint in this regard with the Airfield police. The police have registered case and launched a manhunt to nab the accused, sources said.

Mohanty, a resident of Old Town area in the city here, is now residing in an apartment in Sundarapada area under Airfield police limits. He had recently published an advertisement on internet to rent out his car to any interested party.

Subsequently, accused Manas Ranjan Biswal contacted Mohanty and expressed his interest to take the vehicle on rent



VICTIM SATYAJIT MOHANTY FILED A COMPLAINT IN THIS REGARD WITH THE AIRFIELD POLICE

THE POLICE HAVE REGISTERED CASE AND LAUNCHED A MANHUNT TO NAB THE ACCUSED

by paying ₹25,000 per month. Mohanty met Biswal at Bhimtangi May 8 and handed over the car to the latter after getting a post dated cheque of ₹50,000.

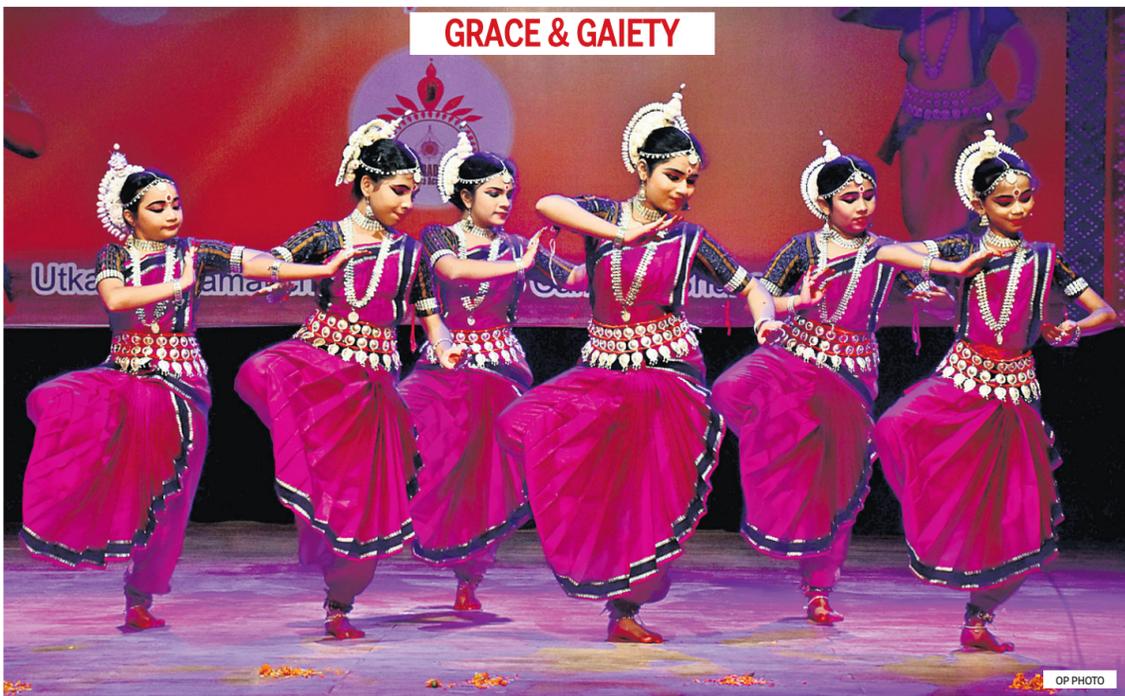
They agreed to execute the deal officially in a local court the next day. However, Biswal did not turn up in the court. He also did not respond to the phone calls by Mohanty.

Later, Biswal called back to Mohanty and assured him to reach the court May 11 to execute the

deal. However, he did not keep his words, said the complaint.

Mohanty, meanwhile, came to know that Biswal had given him a fake address while taking out the car on rent. He also found that Biswal, a resident of Simulia in Balasore, had earlier been arrested by Nayapalli police for cheating several car owners, sources said.

Finding no other way, Mohanty sought police help to get back his vehicle from the fraudster.



Artistes of Sai Aradhana Dance Academy perform Odissi during Nrutya Mohini-2022 at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

# 'Monkeypox patients could be infectious for up to 4 weeks'

People who catch the virus initially suffer a fever before rashes and skin lesions appear on the face and body. The virus can then be passed on through touching the affected areas or via droplets expelled in coughs and sneezes

**H**ealth experts have reportedly said that monkeypox patients could pass on the disease for up to four weeks after symptoms appear.

Amesh Adalja, an emerging infectious diseases expert at John Hopkins University, made the warning in an interview that monkeypox patients could be infectious for up to four weeks, reports the DailyMail.

People who catch the virus initially suffer a fever before rashes and skin lesions appear on the face and body. The virus can then be passed on through touching the



affected areas or via droplets expelled in coughs and sneezes. "It can take a few weeks for the

Michael Head, a global health expert at Southampton University in England, agreed with his assertion, the report said.

"Based on previous monkeypox outbreaks and guidance from [UK health authorities] and WHO, the infectious period (i.e. when the virus can be transmitted to another person) can be comparable to the time period where the rash and blisters are present," Head said.

"This may be for two weeks, and may be longer," he added.

The month-long infectious period raises the likelihood that the virus could be passed on by in-

fectured patients to others.

More than 80 cases of monkeypox have been confirmed in at least 12 countries, the WHO has said.

The WHO mentioned another 50 suspected cases are being investigated, without naming any countries, and warned that more cases are likely to be reported. Infections have been confirmed in nine European countries, as well as the US, Canada and Australia.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a smallpox drug to treat monkeypox patients, while the WHO revealed it will hold daily meetings as the situation unfolds.

# Temperature plunges in state with overnight rain



Jajpur, Cuttack, Sambalpur, Balasore and Bhadrak were among the several other districts where precipitation was moderate.

The mercury level in the capital Bhubaneswar dropped to 30.3°C, seven notches below the average, while it fell by six notches to settle at 31.6°C in Cuttack, it said.

Boudh recorded 43°C, the highest in the state, followed by 42°C in Malkangiri and 41.8°C in Titlagarh, the department said.

Meanwhile, the regional centre of IMD in Bhubaneswar predicted that there would be no impact of nor'wester for two days till Tuesday. "Most places of coastal Odisha are likely to witness light to moderate rainfall Sunday. One or two places of interior Odisha may witness rainfall," said Bhubaneswar Met Centre scientist Uma Shankar Das.

"The intensity of rain will decrease from Monday. But the nor'wester is likely to become active once again May 24 and consequently, there will be a slight drop in the temperature. But, overall, there would be no significant change in maximum temperature," Das added.

There will be "no large change in the maximum temperature" in interior Odisha during the next four-five days. It may fall by 3-4°C across the coastal region during the next 24 hours.

"Scattered to widespread light or moderate rain is likely in Odisha over the next five days," the weather office added.

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Scattered to widespread light or moderate rain is likely in Odisha over the next five days

rainfall of 36.2mm and 35.3mm in Bhubaneswar and Puri respectively

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

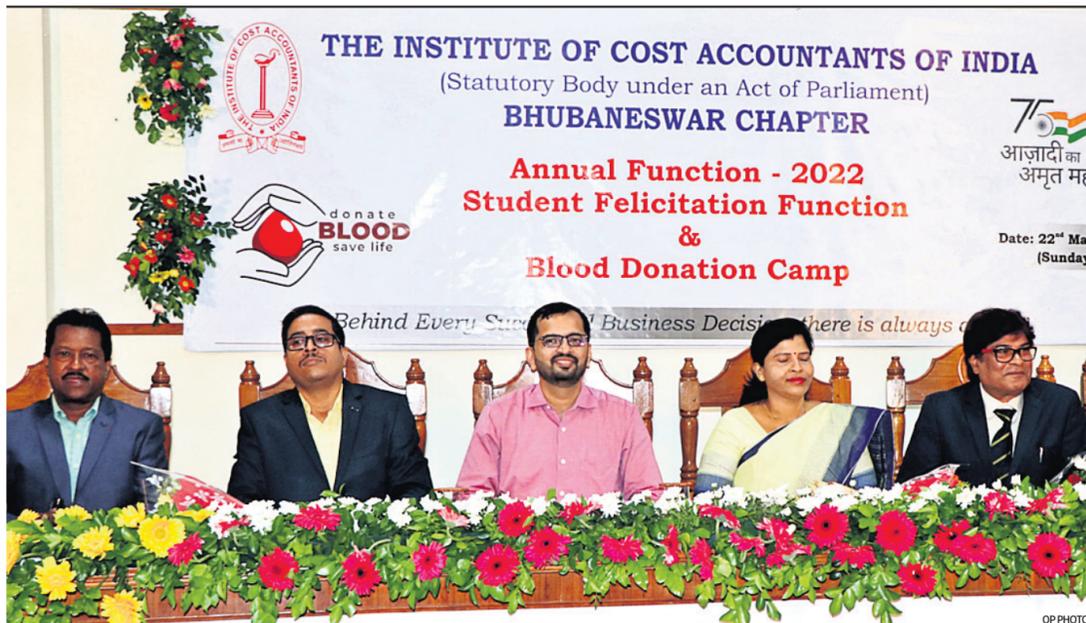
**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Odisha experienced pleasant weather Sunday with overnight rain leading to a considerable drop in the mercury level, the Met office said.

The maximum temperature fell by around 2-4°C at most places and was significantly below normal in many areas. Only six weather stations, as compared to 18 the previous day, recorded a temperature of over 40°C with an overcast sky in several districts, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said.

Light to moderate rain occurred at most places in coastal Odisha and a few areas in the interior parts of the state.

Ghasipura in Keonjhar received 62.1mm of rain from Saturday evening till 8.30am May 22, the highest in the state, according to a bulletin. There was moderate

## ACCOUNTANTS' ANNUAL DAY



The Institute of Cost Accountants of India's Bhubaneswar Chapter held its annual function and a blood donation camp at the CMA Bhawan in the City, Sunday

THE INSTITUTE OF COST ACCOUNTANTS OF INDIA  
(Statutory Body under an Act of Parliament)  
BHUBANESWAR CHAPTER

Annual Function - 2022  
Student Felicitation Function  
&  
Blood Donation Camp

75  
आजादी का  
अमृत महोत्सव

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> May  
(Sunday)

# City youth held over extortion charges

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** The Commissionerate police Sunday arrested a 23-year-old youth for allegedly demanding extortion worth ₹1 lakh by giving death threats to a restaurant owner at Nuagaon Square in City.

The accused identified as Nilu Nayak is a resident of Bhoi Sahi area of Nuagaon under Bharatpur Police limits.

Police sources said that Nayak along with his elder brother used

to collect extortion from various businessmen in the Nuagaon market for the past few years.

The sibling had earlier extorted ₹50,000 from the owner of Mishra Restaurant at the Nuagaon Square too.

However, Nayak again reached the complainant's restaurant Saturday morning and asked him to pay ₹1 lakh.

When the victim refused pay the same, Nayak reportedly threatened to shoot him and his family members to death. Later,



Nayak left the spot asking the restaurant owner to pay ₹1 lakh

by 10pm that day.

Police subsequently registered a case (200/22) on the basis of the complaint lodged by the victim and arrested the accused immediately.

Nayak was Sunday produced before the court that later sent him to judicial custody. He is also involved three more cases of similar nature registered at Khandagiri and Bharatpur police stations. Police have been taking steps to book the accused under section 110 of the CrPC.

## TRIBAL FEST



Visitors to the tribal festival being organised at Bali Yatra Ground in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

# International Day for Biological Diversity celebrated at IMAGE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Like every year, Odisha Biodiversity Board celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity Sunday at the Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE) in Siripur here.

The state level event saw the participation of officers from Forest, Environment & Climate Change department, members of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) from all 30 districts of the Odisha, students and professors from state universities, traditional knowledge holders and practitioners, media persons and other stakeholders.

PCCF-cum-Chairman of Odisha Biodiversity Board, Rajiv Kumar (IFS) in his welcome address briefed about the programme and spoke on the achievements of the board. He also highlighted various activities



undertaken by the board towards the implementation of the Biological Diversity Act 2002.

Former state Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of the Forest Force, Sandeep Tripathy appreciated the board for its efforts to create awareness on biodiversity among people in the grassroots level.

Siddhanta Das, Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority Chairperson and former Director General of Forests, specifically highlighted the role of BMCs in

achieving the three objectives of the Biological Diversity Act 2002.

He praised the board for involving youth from universities in the programme as he foresaw that inculcating conservation mindset among young people would be extremely fruitful to achieve the goals in the long run.

A video on Biological Diversity of Odisha along with books on "Brachyuran Crabs of Devi Estuary" and "Banyajantu Parichalanara Bistruta Margadarshika" were released in the programme.

## State records 15 new Covid cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, May 22:** Odisha Sunday recorded 15 new Covid cases, seven more than the previous day, with the tally rising to 12,88,372, the state Health department said in a bulletin.

Out of the total 15 new infections, ten were reported from quarantine centres while five persons contracted the virus locally.

The death toll remained at 9,126, as no new fatality due to the infection was reported in the last 24 hours, the bulletin said.

Khurda registered the highest number of new cases at nine, followed by Balasore with two new infections. Sambalpur and Sundargarh reported one new case each.

Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far in state, it added.

Odisha now has 110 active cases, while 12,79,083 patients have recovered, including 21 Saturday.

# Grunt, hoo, pant, scream: Chimps use complex vocal communication

It is not a language but it is amongst the most complex forms of communication described in a non-human animal

CÉDRIC GIRARD-BUTTOZ | BEHAVIORAL ECOLOGIST

Scientists exploring the evolutionary origin of language have detected a vocal communication system among wild chimpanzees more complex and structured than previously known, with a dozen call types combined into hundreds of different sequences.

The researchers made more than 4,800 recordings of vocalisations produced by members of three groups of chimpanzees inhabiting Ivory Coast's Tai National Park, one of the last major remnants of old-growth tropical forest in West Africa and home to a rich array of plants and animals.

Chimpanzees, which along with

their cousins the bonobos are the closest living genetic relatives to people, are intelligent and highly social apes that make and utilize tools and can be taught some basic human signing from sign language.

Scientists have long known that chimpanzees use various vocalizations in the wild, but the new study offered a comprehensive examination of this intra-species communication.

"It is not a language but it is amongst the most complex forms of communication described in a non-human animal," said behavioral ecologist Cédric Girard-Buttoz of French research agency CNRS's Institute for Cognitive Science and lead author of the study published this week in the journal Communications Biology.

The call types included a grunt, a panted grunt, a hoo sound, a pant hoot, a bark sound, a panted bark, a pant, a scream, a panted scream, a whimper, a panted roar and the non-vocal lip smack and raspberry



A wild female chimpanzee produces vocalisation in the Tai National Park in Ivory Coast in this undated handout image

REUTERS

sounds. The researchers determined that these call types were used in 390 different sequences.

The order in which the chimpanzees produced the calls ap-

peared to follow rules and structure, though the study did not include conclusions about any potential meanings.

"The key finding is the ability of

a primate other than humans to produce several structured vocal sequences and to recombine small sequences with two calls into longer sequences by adding calls to it. It is important because it shows the premise of structured communication which could have been the foundation of the evolution towards syntax in our language," Girard-Buttoz said.

Syntax refers to the arrangement of words and phrases to construct understandable sentences.

"One of the most common sequences is the well-described 'pant hoot' sequence either as 'hoo' plus 'pant hoot' or 'hoo' plus 'pant hoot' plus 'pant scream' or 'pant bark'. But other sequences are also frequent like 'hoo' plus 'pant grunt' or 'grunt' plus 'pant grunt'. In general 'pant grunt' and 'pant hoot' are the most common calls used in these sequences," Girard-Buttoz said.

The researchers want to learn whether the various sequences communicate a wider range of

meanings in the complex social environment of the chimpanzees. They have suspicions about the potential meanings of certain vocalisations.

"We need to explore in detail the contexts of emission of these vocalizations to see if it shifts between single calls and sequences," Girard-Buttoz said. "Then we need to conduct playback experiments to see if the suspected meaning matches with the behavioral reaction of chimpanzees when they hear the call."

The researchers are not certain whether chimpanzee vocal communication may be similar to the beginnings of language in the human evolutionary lineage. Humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor but split into separate lineages perhaps 7 million years ago.

"Protolanguage was probably in between what chimpanzees do and what humans do," Girard-Buttoz said.

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SHORT TAKES

144 clamped on church premises

**Bhadrak:** The district administration Sunday clamped prohibitory orders under CrPC section 144 on the premises of a church at Geltua under Sadar block in this district for an indefinite period. Sources said the step was taken to avoid communal violence and clashes in the area. Repeated incidents of communal disturbances have affected the peace and tranquility in the area. Acting on the orders of sub-collector Manoj Patra, officials put a lock on the church gate in the presence of Bhadrak tehsildar. The section prohibits the assembly of four or more people on and around the church premises.

Woman critical in bear attack

**Nilagiri:** A woman sustained critical injuries after being mauled by a stray bear near a school in Salabani village under this block in Balasore district in the wee hours of Sunday. In the attack, the woman identified as Chandramani sustained critical injuries on her thighs and neck as family members rescued her and admitted to Nilagiri hospital. When she was out to attend nature's call in early morning, one three bears roaming outside pounced on her and mauled her critically.

HM arrested for harassing girls

**Bhawanipatna:** The headmaster of an upper primary school was arrested by police Sunday for sexually harassing some girl inmates at its 100-bed tribal hostel in Gopinathpur under Thuamul Rampur block of Kalahandi. The hostel is being run by the ST and SC Development department. An FIR lodged by at least six girls stated that the accused identified as Sashidhar Nayak used to indecently touch them and threatened them to rusticate from the school in case they disclose the matter before parents.

# Govt sits tight over solar-run PWS projects

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, May 22:** The ambitious solar-powered piped water supply (PWS) projects in nine coastal districts affected by floods and cyclones have not yet started. The proposal to this effect has remained non-starter.

According to reports, in May, 2019, the engineer-in-chief of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) department made a proposal to the Panchayati Raj department to run PWS projects with both electricity and solar power at places where electricity is inaccessible.

It was stated that 4,315 PWS projects will be implemented in Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Ganjam, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda and Puri districts at an estimated cost of ₹345.20 crore which will be funded by the World Bank.

Nearly ₹0.08 crore will be spent for each project. Three years have passed since the RWSS moved this proposal, but the state government has not taken any step on it.

Each year, people of these coastal districts are affected with floods and cyclones. Power supply gets disrupted for days together worsening the plight of the people in the flood-hit pockets when they struggle to get safe drinking water in these areas.

Keeping this problem in view, the RWSS had taken a far-sighted proposal to harness solar energy in these flood-prone areas to ensure safe drinking water. However, the proposal has remained confined to the administrative red tape.

On the other hand, as many as

200 solar-run piped drinking water projects have been set up in three phases in Jajpur. However, most of the projects are not working due to use of sub-standard equipment and machinery. The construction agency allegedly got away with money by compromising with quality of work. Most of the projects fail to cater to the drinking water needs of the locals.

Last year, Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA) had conducted a survey on effective public utility of solar projects in Jajpur.

In the survey, it was found that some projects had functioned for a maximum of 281 days since the day of commissioning. Some projects even went defunct within 15 days of operation.

In Dharmasala block, a solar powered drinking water project at Endalaba Bichhakhanda Mundasahi had run for 219 days before going kaput. Similarly, Patapur Harijanasahi project had run for 218 days and Patapur Badabarisahi project for 13 days only.

In Sukinda block, Gobarakhati Mirgichar project ran for 177 days; Chingudipal Chhatanagar Mundasahi project for 169 days and Kharadi project for 211 days.

In Barchana block, Paria Sabarsahi project was effective for 281 days, Bhusandhapur Adabashisahi project for 131 days and Charinangal Jharkul project for 13 days. It was alleged that solar-powered pump sets used for these projects were of poor quality.

Executive engineer of the Jajpur RWSS division, Sushant Kumar Ghadei was contacted over phone but he did not pick up the call.



## TRAINING CAMP



A hockey training camp for schoolchildren was organised on the premises of Tarlokota High School under Korukonda block of Malkangiri

OP PHOTO

### Mafia destroy sand dunes along coast

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kujang, May 22:** Some local mafia gangs, instead of quarrying sand from a nearby private land for which they pay royalty, have been smuggling the minor mineral from natural dunes near seashore in Abhayachandpur mouza under Erasama tehsil of Jagatsinghpur district.

Although hundreds of heavy vehicles are engaged in the illegal activity every day, the Revenue department does not bother to verify if sand is actually being quarried from private land or from the dunes. They have no information as to how much of sand is being quarried every day. This helps the smugglers fill their pockets heavily. The state exchequer also loses crores of rupees, villagers from Dhinkia alleged.

"Naturally formed sand dunes acted as a bulwark against the surging tidal wave in Bay of Bengal during 1999 super cyclone. Lives and properties in Dhinkia, Mahala and Trilochanpur villages were saved owing to the dunes," Bibeknanda Swain from Dhinkia stated.

When contacted, Erasama tehsildar Prajnyananda Das said, "Action will be taken against the guilty if it is found that sand is being lifted from any place other than the lease area."

### Series accident: Family alleges murder bid over land dispute



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, May 22:** A road accident which claimed the life of a youth and rendered two others critical before the RTO office here Saturday, took a curious turn Sunday as the CCTV footage featuring the scene has revealed that the accident was nothing but a pre-planned murder over past enmity and property dispute.

The matter came to the fore after the CCTV footage of the accident went viral on social media platforms. The deceased was identified as Srikant Bagh, 30 and the injured as Sanu Nayak, a hotel owner.

The second injured person is the accused Chittaranjan Mohanty who was driving the mini-truck. He is undergoing treatment at a private hospital near the Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) under police custody.

The deceased Srikant and injured Sanu's family members have alleged that the accused tried to

mow them down under the wheels of the truck over past enmity.

The incident has sent shockwaves in the town as police detained Chittaranjan Mohanty including two others and interrogated them in this connection. Sources said that family members of Sanu and Chittaranjan were on loggerheads over acquiring of IDCO and government lands.

Acting on the allegations of the family members of the deceased and the injured Sanu, Bolangir police seized the CCTV footage and launched further investigation into the matter.

The series accidents occurred at RTO Office Square on NH-26 at 11:26am Saturday. A mini truck from Titlagarh end came rushing at great speed and rammed a bike and then hit a tree on roadside and then a cow and finally a truck in front.

Srikant Bag who was riding as pillion on the bike succumbed to head injuries while two others, Sanu and Chittaranjan were critical after a 407 truck hit their bike near the Bolangir RTO office, Saturday.

However, a few locals who witnessed the accident from close quarters smelt something unusual from the truck driver's activity. Meanwhile, Sanu's father and the kin of the deceased suspected a foul play and lodged complaints with the police.

### Graft: Forester, guard suspended

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Patnagarh, May 22:** The Bolangir divisional forest officer (DFO) has suspended forester of Laramba section Bagawat Das and forest guard Gopal Gadia on charges of corrupt practices.

Reports said that the forester Das had seized the tractor of Karuna Mishra, a resident of Bahal village, February 22 citing that his tractor was engaged in timber smuggling. He had also registered a case against Mishra's elder brother.



Karuna Mishra had offered ₹20,000 to the forester and ₹5,000 to the guard to release his tractor and to relax the charges against his brother in the charge sheet. A video of the bribery had gone viral a few days ago.

On the basis of the video clips, the Bolangir DFO placed the two staffers under suspension.

## Hardcore Maoist bids adieu to arms in Kandhamal dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Phulbani, May 22:** A member of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) carrying a huge bounty on his head surrendered before Kandhamal police, an officer said Sunday. The surrendered Maoist identified as Ashok Pune belongs to Chhattisgarh's Dala village.

He surrendered before Kandhamal SP Vinit Agarwal who welcomed his decision by felicitating him with a bouquet of flowers. He had joined the banned outfit six to seven years ago and had shifted to Odisha. Since then, he was operating in KKBN (Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh) division of Odisha State Committee as the area committee member.

Pune said that he took the noble step as he was deeply influenced by the government's development works in his native place. He also vowed to join the mainstream of the society. "I and my friend decided to surrender. But, my friend is yet to surrender. I request other fellow comrades to surrender and live a normal life," Pune said.

He is being interrogated to as-



certain his involvement in other offences. He will be rehabilitated as per the surrender and rehabilitation policy of the state government and will be provided financial assistance of ₹5 lakh besides homestead plot with building assistance, marriage allowance, study allowance of ₹3,000 per month and vocational training, reports said.

Steps will be taken for his gainful employment, the SP said, adding that at least 10 Maoist cadres have surrendered in Kandhamal district. They have been provided rehabilitation assistance.

The police added that the surrender of the cadres would land a serious blow to the Maoists' plan and designs in north Kandhamal and adjoining axis.

## Clamour for revival of old fish spawn centre

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhanjanagar, May 22:** The fish farmers here have long been demanding revival of an old fish fingerling production centre near the College Road under this NAC of Ganjam district which has been lying unused for over three decades.

Sources said the facility has turned into a dumping yard and is thronged by anti-social elements during night.

Though the farmers have been demanding revival of the fish production centre, the fisheries department has taken no step in the regard.

While the staff quarters at this facility are in decrepit condition, the fingerling production centre has almost lost its existence amid piles of garbage, plastic materials and solid waste dumped by the civic body.

The fisheries department had thought of revival of the centre in July 2021 with the thrust of the state government on boosting farmers' income through



fish production.

The then director of fisheries department Smrutiranjana Pradhan had visited Bhanjanagar and directed the officials to take steps for restoration of the old fish spawn production centre. However, no step in this direction was taken though 10 months have passed since the visit of the fisheries director, locals alleged.

They also said that if the facility is left unused, the land may be encroached by mafia.

Notably, the fish spawn production centre was shifted near Biju Patnaik Children's Park in 1984. Earlier, it was set up on 22 acre land near College Road. However, over the years this facility became a victim

of faulty management while its ponds could not be restored, leading to its gradual closure. Now, the centre near Biju Patnaik Children's Park is being renovated at an expense of ₹4 crore.

Local farmers are of the view that the old facility can be used for fish production to cater to the growing need for fish farmers. The government should focus on the renovation of the old fish production centre. It will create scope of direct and indirect employment to the locals, they added.

Block fisheries officer Sudhansu Sahu said, "A proposal was sent to the government for revival of the old fish production centre, but funds have not been made available."

## Auto-rickshaw driver returns gold necklace to woman passenger

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, May 22:** A 35-year-old auto-rickshaw driver here in Ganjam district has won accolades for returning a gold necklace worth around ₹1.6 lakh to a female passenger who had accidentally left it in his vehicle a few days ago.

The auto-rickshaw driver identified as Pankaj Behera found the ornament weighing around 30 gram underneath the passenger seat while cleaning his vehicle Friday.

He handed it over to the woman, Narmada Behera, at New Bus Stand Police Outpost Saturday in the presence of law enforcers and some members of the local auto drivers' association.

The auto-rickshaw driver had ferried the 30-year-old woman and her family members from New Bus Stand to Gopalpur Wednesday.

Behera had kept the gold ornament in her purse but it might have accidentally fallen in the vehicle without her knowledge, a police officer said.



She realised that the necklace was not in her purse after she reached home and immediately called up the auto-rickshaw driver, whom she knew beforehand. He checked the vehicle but did not find it that day.

"After finding the necklace while cleaning my auto-rickshaw, I informed the police and the woman's family," the driver said.

Narayan Swain, the office-in-charge of the police outpost appreciated the honesty of the driver.

The woman was also relieved after getting her ornament back.

"I had spent sleepless nights in the last few days. Now, I am very happy and thankful to the auto-rickshaw driver," she said.

## RURAL ELECTRIFICATION GOES FOR A TOSS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nabarangpur, May 22:** As many as 315 villages in this district are yet to be connected with power supply due to sheer negligence of the Energy department and power distribution companies.

This is the sad state of affairs in this tribal dominated district even after 73 years of independence and this has come at a time when the Centre and state governments are spending a lot to make power supply available to every household.

As a result, residents in these 315 villages are spending their lives in darkness, deprived of even basic amenities. Lack of power supply in these remote and underdeveloped areas of the district paints a sorry picture of government and departmental apathy.

Reports said that the Chief



Minister had directed the administrative and people's representatives to ensure that all the plans and programmes of the government should be for the benefit of the people. However, a basic need such as power supply is yet to be made available for 315 villages out of the district's 891 villages.

The district has witnessed the implementation of three power supply schemes like Rajiv Gandhi Vidyutikaran Yojana of the previous UPA government, state sponsored Biju Grama Jyoti Yojana and Saubhagya Yojana after BJP-led NDA government came to power. The phase one of the Saubhagya

■ VILLAGERS ATTRIBUTED THE FAILURE IN PROPER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME TO THE SERIAL HANDOVER OF THE POWER DEPARTMENT TO THE PRIVATE FIRMS

■ ALL REVENUE VILLAGES ARE BEING ELECTRIFIED WHILE THE HAMLETS ARE GETTING DEPRIVED, THE VILLAGERS LAMENTED

Yojana has concluded and the phase 2 started. However, these villages are yet to receive power supply to their households.

Residents attributed the failure in proper implementation of the scheme to the serial handover of the power department to the private firms. All revenue villages are

being electrified while the hamlets are getting deprived, they lamented.

When contacted, a senior power official said that the 315 hamlets which are yet to be electrified due to various reasons will soon be included under Biju Grama Jyoti Yojana and Saubhagya Yojana phase-2.

Moreover, the state government has engaged Odisha Renewable Energy Development Authority (OREDA) to supply power through solar channels to those villages where commuting is not a problem.

The state government has informed in writing to the zilla parishad May 4 and District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), he said. However, it remains to be seen when these villages are being connected with power supply.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION-II, CUTTACK**  
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5. Date & time of opening of bids	-: 09.06.22 at 11:30 AM
6. Name and address of Inviting Officer	-: Superintending Engineer, R. W. Division-II, Cuttack, Nayabazar, Cuttack-753004

Further details can be seen from the State Govt. portal  
<https://tendersorissa.gov.in>  
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, R.W.Division-II, Cuttack  
OIPR-25095/11/0001/2223

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

# THE GLOBAL HUNGER CRISIS



**A more resilient, sustainable, and equitable food system must be a pillar of any climate mitigation or adaptation agenda. But the barriers to building one should not be underestimated, especially for countries and regions where soil is poor, land has little agricultural value, and other natural resources, such as water, are limited or degraded**

more than 80% of their needs. But pandemic- and war-related disruptions, together with the price increases they have fueled, have shown just how vulnerable such countries are. According to the FAO's State of Food and Agriculture 2021 report, an additional 161 million people were affected by hunger in 2020, compared with 2019. And the World Food Programme is now cautioning that the combination of conflict, COVID, the climate crisis, and rising costs has pushed 44 million people in 38 countries to the edge of famine.

With countries struggling to secure enough food to meet their populations' nutritional needs, many are now re-evaluating their food dependencies and seeking to expand local production. But unless sustainability is taken into account, efforts to increase short-term resilience by shortening supply chains could undermine medium- and long-term resilience by further depleting agricultural resources like soil and water.

Sustainability isn't cheap. Efficient production amid biophysical and climate constraints requires investment in costly technologies. But poor governance structures, limited growth prospects, and high debts pose major challenges for many countries. The pandemic has placed massive strain on public budgets, and debt crises loom for many governments, as loans taken out to address the pandemic come due.

Poor and vulnerable countries cannot be expected to address the myriad interconnected challenges they face, from pollution and biodiversity loss to hunger and poverty, without help. To bolster long-term food and nutritional security, we must look beyond country-level solutions to regional and international ones that consider the needs of communities living in marginal environments. Otherwise, there will be no escaping destabilising cycles of hunger, migration, and violence.

*The writer is Founder and CEO of Thriving Solutions.*

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Global food prices are soaring. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation's Food Price Index – which covers a basket of basic food commodities (cereals, meat, dairy, vegetable oils, and sugar) – reached an all-time high of 159.7 in March, up from 141.1 the previous month. While it declined slightly in April, to 158.5, ongoing developments – not least Russia's war in Ukraine – are set to keep driving prices to new highs, with devastating implications for global hunger.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility and dysfunctionality of the world's food systems, with movement restrictions and supply-chain disruptions driving up prices, damaging rural livelihoods, and exacerbating food insecurity, especially for the poor. Now, the war in Ukraine is compounding these challenges, because both sides are major exporters of food, fuel, and fertilizer.

Moreover, climate change poses an even larger threat to global food security. Already, extreme weather like heatwaves, floods, and prolonged droughts has triggered shocks to agricultural production and food availability. As temperatures rise, these shocks will become increasingly frequent and powerful. If global warming crosses the 1.5° Celsius threshold (relative to Earth's pre-industrial temperature), they are likely to become catastrophic.

As the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report shows, avoiding the threshold will require immediate and drastic action. But mitigation is only part of the challenge. Large-scale investments in adaptation will also be needed to protect vulnerable communities from the warming that is already locked in.

Even under the most optimistic mitigation scenario, global warming is expected to hit the 1.5°C threshold in a decade, before receding. This will result in shifts in climatic zones, rising sea levels, and disruptions to the water cycle that increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather. Beyond raising economic and

health risks, the resulting disruptions to food and water supplies are likely to drive social and political upheaval, fueling a vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, instability, and even conflict, accompanied by sharp rise in migration.

A more resilient, sustainable, and equitable food system must be a pillar of any climate mitigation or adaptation agenda. But the barriers to building such a system should not be underestimated, especially for countries and regions where soil is poor, land has little agricultural value, other natural resources, such as water, are limited or degraded, and socioeconomic conditions are difficult.

Given the low productivity of their agricultural land, such marginal environments are unable to support the sustainable production

of sufficient food to meet local people's nutritional needs. In fact, while marginal environments are home to less than 25% of the global population – an estimated 1.7 billion people – they account for 70% of the world's poor and most of its malnourished.

Poverty and hunger can lead farmers to overuse fragile environmental resources in order to ensure their short-term survival, even at the cost of long-term depletion of their lands and impoverishment of their households and communities. Those living in remote areas with minimal infrastructure, few alternative economic opportunities, and limited market access are particularly likely to make such choices.

Given this, countries with significant marginal lands rely on food imports – in some cases for



Seta Tutundjian

**THE COMBINATION OF CONFLICT, COVID, THE CLIMATE CRISIS, AND RISING COSTS HAS PUSHED 44 MILLION PEOPLE IN 38 COUNTRIES TO THE EDGE OF FAMINE**

## Zelenskyy & Chaplin

It is an old debate whether art should be used as a tool for political causes or it should reflect life as it is without any intention to overtly preach any doctrine or political message. But, the debate has gained a new currency at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival which has been turned into a new theatre of war between Russia and Ukraine. The 75th Cannes Film Festival opened last week against a backdrop of international crisis. The first question jury president Vincent Lindon had to answer to the world was whether the event should at all take place when thousands are dying in Ukraine and the brute Russian war machine, under the dictatorial President Vladimir Putin, is crushing life out of innocent people. Acknowledging the rumbling noises of war drums, the French actor said that given the "turbulent times" in the world at large, the festival's role was more vital than ever: "Do you think the world will change if we stop Cannes (festival)?" he asked, making an impassioned plea. "No. If it would, then I am sure we would stop Cannes. But I think the opposite. At this festival we can be a mirror," he said, arguing that culture is the most crucial piece of proof or evidence of what the world is like when we are living in it.

In a sense, this year's Cannes is a rebirth of sorts after its last-minute cancellation in 2020 and a compromised, COVID-shadowed edition last summer. But, during the rebirth it has gone back to its old combative spirit taking up the cause of freedom of speech, art and expression. In a show of support for the conflict in Ukraine, the organisers have banned official Russian delegations while opening its doors to individual artists, many of whom are at odds with the Putin regime. The dissident Russian director Kirill Serebrennikov, who was recently released from house arrest, has a film – Tchaikovsky's Wife – screening in the main competition. But, the surprise of surprises was the selection of the guest of honour at the opening ceremony who was no other than Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who addressed the audience by video link.

In his address Zelenskyy said, "We have no choice but to continue fighting for our freedom" and explained there is nothing amiss in mixing filmmaking with fighting for a cause. He cited Charlie Chaplin as a glorious and shining example of his conception of the deep connection between cinema and political fight. He spoke about Chaplin's film, The Great Dictator; to draw parallels between fictional war and dictators and the one Ukraine now faces. "Hundreds of people are dying every day. They won't get up again after the clapping at the end," he told the audience. He asked filmmakers and actors present at the festival whether cinema will "keep quiet" or speak up. "If there is a dictator, if there is a war for freedom, once again, everything depends on our unity. Can cinema stay outside of this unity?" Zelenskyy said. He referred to the power of cinema during World War II, including the 1940 Chaplin film The Great Dictator which mocked Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. Chaplin's dictator did not destroy the real dictator, but thanks to cinema, thanks to that film, cinema did not stay quiet, Zelenskyy said, underscoring the need for cinema taking up political positions. His final message was: "We need a new Chaplin to prove today that cinema is not mute."

His speech received a standing ovation from the crowd in the southern French resort town's Palais des Festivals.

But, there were contrary noises as well about the festival's ban on official Russian entries. And that too from a film director from Russia itself, Serebrennikov, who has been invited to the festival for his persistent stand against Putin. For this he was kept in house arrest and released only weeks before the Cannes festival. He sparked off a controversy in a 19 May Press conference when he said, "We should not boycott language, we should not boycott Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Tchaikovsky, deprive people of music, theatre, cinema. On the contrary, this is what makes people feel alive." In the same breath he emphasised he could fully understand the people's anger who are so pained and hurt by what is happening in Russia. He has called the war in Ukraine a "total catastrophe" and believes that art has no frontiers.

Another film, a documentary, Mariupolis 2, selected for special screening, is on the armed conflict in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. The Lithuanian director Mantas Kvedaravicius was allegedly killed by Russian forces when he was making the documentary in Mariupol, which had, till recently, been facing the brunt of Russian attack. His fiancée, Hanna Bilobrova, who was with him in Mariupol, was able to bring back the footage filmed and edited it.

The festival, almost in keeping with its spirit of political activism, witnessed an unidentified woman appearing on the red carpet. Seconds later she ripped off her gown, revealing the Ukraine flag painted on her bare chest with the words "stop raping us" written on her abdomen while other parts of her body flashed red handprints. The woman kept yelling, "Don't rape us," as security quickly encircled her and took her off the red carpet.

Such acts prove that politics has always been a part of human existence and the borderline between art and politics is blurred.

### WISDOM CORNER

Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage. LAO TZU

Forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair. KAHILIL GIBRAN

You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want. ZIG ZIGLAR

### WORDSWORTH

#### Symploce

Symploce is a combination of anaphora and epistrophe. The first of these, anaphora, has more than one sense; in this case it refers to an oratorical device by which the first words of a section of prose are repeated. Hillary Clinton's speech to the 1996 Democratic National Convention is a good example: "To raise a happy, healthy, and hopeful child, it takes a family; it takes teachers; it takes clergy; it takes business people; it takes community leaders; it takes those who protect our health and safety. It takes all of us." In epistrophe the repetition occurs at the end of phrases. One of the best-known examples is in Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address in which he speaks of government "of the people, by the people, for the people." Another appears in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in the King James's Bible: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child." With symploce, the repetition occurs at both the beginnings and the ends of lines. A much-quoted example is in Anne Morrow Lindbergh's book of 1955, Gift from the Sea: "Perhaps this is the most important thing for me to take back from beach-living: simply the memory that each cycle of the tide is valid, each cycle of the wave is valid, each cycle of a relationship is valid." All three words derive from Greek, though not altogether obviously. Anaphora combines ana-, back, with pherein, to bear (in other words, to repeat); epistrophe is from epistrephein, to turn around; symploce derives from symplekein, to weave together.

### LOL

#### A good chess player

A man went to visit a friend and was amazed to find him playing chess with his dog. He watched the game in astonishment for a while. "I can hardly believe my eyes!" he exclaimed. "That's the smartest dog



I've never seen." "Nah, he's not so smart," the friend replied. "I've beaten him three games out of five."

### SPECTRUM NATION

## Temple economy: \$4 billion at stake!



Shivaji Sarkar

**INDIANS DO MORE PILGRIMAGE THAN BUSINESS TRIPS AND SPEND MORE ON PILGRIMAGE THAN TRAVELING FOR EDUCATION PURPOSE**

The temple economy is as large as the Indian budget sustaining the country. Its contours across religious denominations of Hindu, Muslim and Christians, are much wider than perceived. This is changing society and its financial parameters. An NSSO survey estimates that temple economy is worth ₹3.02 lakh crore or about \$40 billion and 2.32 per cent of the GDP. In reality it may be larger. It includes everything - flowers, oil, lamps, perfumes, bangles, vermilion, images and puja clothes.

Donations in 2021 collected for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya were ₹5450 crore, almost equal to ₹5000 crore of the country's defence budget. Others are Tirumala Tirupati ₹3023 crore; Vaishno Devi ₹2000 crore, Ambaji ₹4134 crore (₹5163 crore in 2019-20), Dwarkadhish ₹1172 crore, Somnath ₹1205, Golden Temple ₹690 crore. Donations to Kamakhya temple in Guwahati; Krishna Janmabhoomi, Mathura; Banke Bihari Mandir in Vrindavan, Padmanabha mandir, Siddhivinayak mandir and Kashi Vishvanath mandir have similar huge earnings.

The Pew Global Attitude sur-

veys reveals that over 25 per cent of Indians are reported to have become more religious over the past four-five years. Between 2007 and 2015, the share of respondents in India, who perceived religion to be very important, increased by 11 per cent to 80 per cent now.

It can be said that the Ram Mandir movement and the court verdict have been a game changer. It has poured in huge funding into a region that was one of the most backward. It boosted funding for mosques and Islamic shrines as well. During the pandemic the silent real estate boom took place in Ayodhya, Varanasi, Vindhyachal, Mirzapur and Mathura. Land prices soared in the most backward places and the premium on land is unprecedented.

Whether religious activities can sustain such places would be interesting to observe. The enthusiasm is high but would it surpass the next industrial revival? Domestic religious tourism is surpassing the number of foreign visitors. Over 100 crore domestic visits to new destinations suggest there is a churning beyond the Delhi-Agra-Jaipur golden triangle. Even 20 per cent of nine crore foreign tourists are visiting Madurai and

Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu and Tirupati, in Andhra Pradesh.

The NSSO figures suggest that 55 per cent of Hindus undertake religious pilgrimages, patronising mid and small sized hotels, after two years of the pandemic slump. This NSSO data says that Indians do more pilgrimage than business trips and spend more on pilgrimage than traveling for education purpose.

The government has chalked out religious circuit tourism. The Ramayana circuit is over the life philosophy of Lord Ram. Along with this, the Char Dham road project has also been prepared. The government has also strengthened the Buddha circuit. Apart from this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi relaunched the Varanasi corridor, Kedardham and Badridham. Not only this, the government is renovating about 50,000 temples in Jammu and Kashmir. No other Prime Minister made a visit to religious shrines an event. Indira Gandhi used to visit such places and saints but often kept it low profile, perhaps even at the dead of night, away from the public glare.

The dargahs of Chhisti, Aulia, Charar-e-Sharif, Jama Masjid of

Bhopal, Delhi and other shrines have large income in cash and kind. Similarly various churches have decent incomes. The enormous 'donations' reaching various small and big organisations are used for many activities in places like

Hardwar, Vrindavan, Ayodhya and Ujjain and even non-descript places such as Deoband. One particular activity is to launder the funds by issuing donation cheques at cuts of 20 to 60 per cent depending on the exigencies. It ensures that illicit or non-tax paid money is channeled back to the system. Many institutions have a "secular" approach in dealing with money. During demonetisation some heads of mutts were in the news for their wide connections and effective delivery. Their services were not limited to India alone. They could deliver new currency notes with ease even in dollars to Dubai, Canada, England or other destinations at premium price. The hawala linkages helped. Plus, they are good at balance sheet manipulations for whatever the amount may be for turning black into white. Even scrapped notes were equally exchanged with élan. Adjusting 'murky' money is no longer difficult.

INF A

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

**OrissaPOST**  
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

#### Boost soil health

Sir, Despite its low position in the food chain, the soil is one of the planet's most biodiverse ecosystems and the source of all life. All living things depend on healthy soil to survive. Agriculture is the only major industry in which soils produce 95% of the food. Despite its strengths, the soil is in peril. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), soil erosion is one of the world's most serious issues. It has the potential to have long-term implications. Soil erosion reduces soil health and productivity by exposing the residual soil and removing the very fertile topsoil. Unfortunately, 33 per cent of the world's topsoil is already degraded. The removal of important topsoil will not only wash away all of the nutrients but will have a significant impact on the structure and stability of the soil. Soil erosion diminishes agricultural productivity, has an impact on ecosystem functioning and raises hydro-geological threats such as landslides and floods. Natural erosion poses a threat to soil on all continents, according to FAO. Soil is crucial for human well-being and the sustainability of life on the planet. Soil preservation is a significant and important issue that requires everyone's attention. **Krishna Kumar Vepakomma**, HYDERABAD

#### Press freedom

Sir, Democracy craves for a reliable and impartial Press because free and independent media underpin a vibrant democracy. Post-Emergency, when the Press was browbeaten and mocked at, the media has assiduously cultivated its image as a do-gooder, thanks to brave scribes who could, with their courage of conviction, resist being drawn into submission. Meanwhile, India has ranked 150 out of 180 countries in the annual World Press Freedom Index as per the Paris based Reporters Without Borders. As compared to last year, India has dropped two places. This ranking is based on the governmental policies to respect the degree of freedom enjoyed by journalists, news bureaus, and netizens of a country. Journalists in the country are facing threats and harassment from various quarters including the authorities. Quite a few reporters are imprisoned by the government for varied reasons. The report says Indian Press' image of being "pluralist" is seriously endangered. Security of knowing that the government and the Press are performing to the people's betterment soothes the nerves of a common man. But when this "security" is breached, the common man is unnerved. The Press cannot let the people down because after the judiciary, people look up to the Press as a harbinger of change in the society at large. **Ganapathi Bhat**, AKOLA



**The people in our country are scared and not ready to speak the truth. Anyone who speaks against the Union government faces a series of probes from the central agencies**  
SANJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA LEADER

## UNIFIED MCD COMES INTO EFFECT

The new unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi, comprising the civic bodies of the national capital, came into effect on Sunday, with the newly-appointed Special Officer and Commissioner also assuming the post with immediate effect



## of the day quote

The inter-state boundary dispute between Arunachal Pradesh and Assam is likely to be resolved by next year  
AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Like everyone else, education is a basic right of tribals. The state government is making every effort to bring the students from tribal areas at par with those residing in cities and towns  
AJIT PAWAR | MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

India's step to BS-VI standard and the adoption of its norms for fuel and vehicles is a landmark policy decision towards combating air pollution  
BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE

## SHORT TAKES

### Vivek appointed as PS to Modi

**New Delhi:** Indian Forest Service (IFS) Officer, Vivek Kumar was appointed as the Personal Secretary (PS) to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Joint Secretary level Saturday. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved the proposal for the appointment of Vivek Kumar as PS to Modi. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the proposal for appointment of Vivek Kumar, IFS (2004) as PS to Prime Minister at the Joint Secretary level in the Prime Minister's Office with pay at level 14 of the pay matrix," said a release from the Department of Personnel and Training. Vivek Kumar is an IFS officer of 2004 batch, who joined the Prime Minister's Office as a Deputy Secretary in 2014.

### 4 robbers nabbed

**Gurugram:** A crime branch unit of Gurugram police nabbed four robbers including two juveniles for looting over Rs 6.64 lakh from a cash collection agent, the police said Sunday. The police have recovered Rs 4.8 lakh, 2 iPhones, clothes, shoes, documents and a motorcycle used in the crime. According to the police, the complainant told the police that on Saturday around 3.40 p.m., he was going to Udyog Vihar after collecting cash. When he reached Belvedere Rapid Metro Station, three men riding a motorcycle snatched his bag which contained Rs 6, 64,413 cash, his wallet and other belongings.

### 50 sheep killed

**Srinagar:** A total of 50 sheep were killed when lightning struck the flock in J&K's Ganderbal district Sunday, officials said. District administration sources said that local shepherd, Abdul Salam Chopan of Haknar village in Gund area of Ganderbal, had taken out his animals for grazing when lightning hit the area during rains. "Fifty sheep were killed in this incident. Rescue teams were deputed to the area," a source said.

### 6 die, 7.2 lakh hit

**Guwahati:** The flood situation in Assam deteriorated on Sunday with six more persons, including two children, losing their lives and nearly 7.2 lakh people coming under the impact of the deluge across 22 districts. According to the daily flood report of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), four persons drowned in Kamrup revenue circle of Nagoan district. One person at Doboka in Hojai district and a child at Silchar in Cachar district, too, died due to the flood, it said.

## DELHI TRIPLE SUICIDE

# Room sealed with foils, suicide note affixed on wall



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 22:** As investigations continued Sunday into the triple suicide case in Delhi, more details have come to the fore.

Saturday, a 55-year-old woman and her two daughters aged 30 and 26 years were found dead at their House no.207, Vasant Apartment, Vasant Vihar. The deceased were identified as Manju Srivastva (mother) and two daughters -- Anshika and Anku.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C said a local resident made a PCR call at Vasant Vihar police station around 8.55 p.m. Saturday stating that the said house is locked from inside and the people are not opening the door.

The police immediately swung into action and the Station House Officer along with other staff reached the spot and found the doors and windows closed on all sides, and the flat locked from inside. "The police managed to open the door and found that a gas cylinder was partially opened and there was also a suicide note," the DCP said.

As the police went further to check the rooms, they found three bodies lying on the bed, along with

four small traditional hearths.

The room was completely sealed with foils to prevent the fumes from the hearth leaving the room, making it impossible for the three women to escape the toxic fumes, just like a 'gas chamber death'. "Most likely they died due to suffocation," the senior official said.

It was also learnt that the a few pages of the suicide note were affixed on the wall of the room, however, the police refrained to share the content. "The content and veracity of the note are yet to be verified and are still under investigation," the official said, adding the inquest proceedings have been initiated.

The preliminary probe revealed that the owner of the house, Umesh Srivastva died in April 2021 due to Covid and since then the family was in depression as the mother, Manju, was bedridden due to illness. Though there are three casualties in this particular incident, yet, it has brought the horrific memories of the Burari suicide case in which 11 members of a family died by suicide in 2018. Ten people were found hanged, while the oldest family member, the grandmother, was strangled

# Jolt to BJP: Arjun Singh rejoins Trinamool

The development comes as a setback for the BJP against the backdrop of the Bengal Panchayat polls in 2023 and the Lok Sabha polls in 2024, as Singh was an important pillar in expanding its organisational base in North 24 Parganas district

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, May 22:** Bringing an end to all speculations and in another jolt to the BJP, BJP's Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh rejoined West Bengal's Trinamool Congress Sunday evening.

He was greeted back into the party by Trinamool General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee at the party office at Camac Street

in central Kolkata. Other top Trinamool leaders, MLAs, and ministers from the North 24 Parganas district were present on the occasion.

The development comes as another setback for the BJP against the backdrop of the West Bengal Panchayat polls in 2023 and the Lok Sabha polls in 2024, as Singh was an important pillar in expanding its organisational base in North 24 Parganas district, especially in the Barrackpore, area since 2019.

Speculations were rife for quite some time that Singh might come back to Trinamool as he continued with his salvos against the Union government on the issue of fixing the price of jute. Recently Singh also became vocal against the state leadership of BJP claiming that the latter has become social media-oriented instead of focusing on grassroots level organisation.

Union Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal and BJP's national President J.P. Nadda even had separate meet-



ings with Singh in New Delhi to address his grievances. However, as the latest developments show, those did not prove to be fruitful.

After rejoining, Singh said that he had switched over to the Trinamool leadership.

"But after joining BJP, I faced hurdles in acting independently as an elected Lok Sabha member from the state. I tried hard to settle the jute price issue and there too

I faced hurdles. So, I decided to join back..." he said.

Asked whether he would resign as a Lok Sabha member on moral grounds, Singh said that currently there are two Lok Sabha members from Bengal, who are officially Trinamool MPs, but are actually with the BJP.

"The day these two MPs resign on moral grounds, I will also resign within an hour and face fresh elections," he said.

His clear hints were towards the Leader of Opposition in Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari's father, Sisir Adhikari, the Trinamool MP from Kanthi and brother, Dibyendu Adhikari, the Trinamool MP from Tamluk. Both these constituencies are in East Midnapore district.

Reacting to Arjun Singh's exit, BJP's national Vice President, Dilip Ghosh said that Singh was unable to bear the administrative and police pressure on him since the time he was elected on behalf of the BJP from Barrackpore.

## REFRESHING DRINK



A monkey sips juice inside an enclosure on a hot day, at National Zoological Park in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

## SUV CRASH KILLS 8 IN UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Siddharthnagar (UP), May 22:** An SUV carrying a marriage party rammed into a stationary truck here killing eight people and injuring three, police said Sunday.

The incident occurred around 1 am near Katya village in the Jogia Udaypur area. The SUV was returning to Mahla village from a wedding ceremony at Mahuwara in Shivnagar, they said. Of the 11 people travelling in the car, four died on the spot and others were rushed to a hospital, where four more died during treatment.

Those killed have been identified as Sachin Pal (16), Mukesh Pal (35), Lalaram Paswan (26), Shiv Sagar (18), Ravi Paswan (19), Pintu Gupta (25), Ram Baran (35), and driver Gaurav Maurya (22), police said. Ram Baran was admitted to the medical college in Gorakhpur where he died.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives in the accident and announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the kin of the deceased.



"The road accident in Siddharthnagar, Uttar Pradesh, is very painful. My condolences are with the bereaved families. May God give them the strength to bear this immense sorrow," Modi was quoted as saying by his office.

The prime minister also wished a speedy recovery to all the injured. "The prime minister has announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from PMNRF for the next of kin of those who lost their lives in an accident in Siddharthnagar, UP. The injured would be given Rs 50,000 each," the Prime Minister's Office said in a tweet.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has also condoled the death and directed officials to ensure the best treatment for the injured.

## BOY FALLS INTO BOREWELL, DIES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chandigarh, May 22:** The six-year-old boy who was pulled out Sunday from a 100-foot-deep abandoned borewell in a village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district after eight-hours rescue operation died, authorities said.

The child, Hritik, was immediately rushed to the hospital soon after he was retrieved from the well where he was declared dead, officials said. The boy climbed a borewell shaft when stray dogs were chasing him. The shaft, covered with a jute bag, collapsed and the boy fell into the well in a village in Dasuya subdivision. The parents of the boy are migrant labourers.

Teams of the district administration, including Deputy Commissioner Sandeep Hans, and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were at the site. Medical teams were also deployed.

A camera was put inside the borewell to monitor the boy's condition, said officials, adding that high oxygen flow was also provided through pipes. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was in constant touch with the district authorities.

# Farmers can change govt, says KCR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, May 22:** Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao Sunday reached out to farmers in Punjab and Haryana, saying they can change government if they want and should keep fighting till they get a constitutional guarantee for remunerative prices of their crops.

The Telangana Chief Minister also paid tributes to the farmers who died during the course of the agitation against the Centre's now-repealed farm laws and said he bows to their grit and determination. "If farmers want, they can change government. It is not a big thing. From where the power comes, it comes from us. The agitation should continue till farmers get the right price and there is a constitutional guarantee for it," he said.

He urged farmers that their next agitation should be throughout the country. "Farmers from north, south, east and west should fight together," said the chief minister, who is visiting multiple states apparently eyeing a role in the national politics.



Telangana CM K Chandrashekar Rao, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann during a function to provide financial assistance to the kin of the farmers, who died during the protest over farm reform laws, in Chandigarh

PTI PHOTO

He met Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav Saturday and had a lunch with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Sunday. Rao, also called KCR, is scheduled to visit Bihar and West Bengal in coming days.

In Chandigarh, he was accompanied on the dais by Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and farmer leader Rakesh Tikait. Without

naming the BJP-led Centre, Rao said it does not like it if any state or a chief minister does something for farmers as he addressed the kin of those who died during the stir against the farm laws.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's announcement of giving minimum support price on moong was also not liked by them, he said. "We give food to the country after toiling hard in the fields. There

**THE TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER PAID TRIBUTES TO THE FARMERS WHO DIED DURING THE COURSE OF THE AGITATION AGAINST THE CENTRE'S NOW-REPEALED FARM LAWS AND SAID HE BOWS TO THEIR GRIT AND DETERMINATION**

**RAO, ALSO CALLED KCR, IS SCHEDULED TO VISIT BIHAR AND WEST BENGAL IN COMING DAYS**

**HE MET SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV SATURDAY AND HAD A LUNCH WITH DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL SUNDAY**

should be justice with us. There should not be such a painful situation," he added.

"If any state or CM does anything for farmers' welfare, they do not like it. They put pressure on you," Rao said. Referring to the stir against the central laws, he said farmers were called Khalistani and traitors.

"Eyes well up. It is painful. Why is our country such? There is a need to worry about it," he said.

# 29 children in MP, 14 in Raj went missing per day in 2021: Report

The report revealed that the number of missing girls in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan was reported five times higher than that of boys in 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** On an average, 29 children in Madhya Pradesh and 14 in Rajasthan went missing every day in 2021, according to a new report of child rights NGO CRY, which revealed that there was a significant increase in the number of missing children cases in four major states of north India.

Also, five children went missing per day in Delhi in 2021 in eight police districts, according to the "Status Report on Missing Children"

report of Child Rights and You (CRY), which also said on an average, eight children -- six girls and two boys -- went missing per day from 58 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

The report revealed that the number of missing girls in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan was reported five times higher than that of boys in 2021. While 8,751 cases of missing children were registered in Madhya Pradesh and 3,179 in Rajasthan (National Crime Records Bureau, 2020), the figures increased to 10,648 in Madhya



Pradesh and 5,354 in Rajasthan in 2021, as revealed by the state governments in response to RTI applications filed by the CRY's part-

ner organisations.

The data received from Madhya Pradesh shows that the number of missing girls over a period of 11

months is about five times higher than that of the boys. The data collected through RTI applications shows that the top five districts in terms of number of missing children are Indore, Bhopal, Dhar, Jabalpur and Rewa.

"On an average, 29 children, including 24 girls and five boys, went missing per day from Madhya Pradesh," the report said. A total of 2,998 children -- 835 boys and 2,163 girls -- were reported missing in Uttar Pradesh in 2021 (data of 58 of the 75 districts). About

88.9 per cent of the children reported missing in the state belonged to the age group of 12-18 years. The data shows that the top five districts in Uttar Pradesh in terms of number of missing children are Lucknow, Moradabad, Kanpur Nagar, Meerut and Maharajganj. The report said five children went missing per day in Delhi in 2021 in the districts for which data was available and a total of 1,641 children were reported missing in eight districts of the national capital in 2021.



## ON BULLDOZERS' BLIND SPOT

# Delhi's illegal factories ticking time bombs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 22:** Those who are not residents of Delhi get astonished whenever they walk down the narrow streets of the national capital's congested areas and suddenly encounter a small-scale industry.

People usually visualise a factory as a big building in an open space with a chimney on the top, but the reality bites in Delhi, and one wonders why these are not on the radar of bulldozers.

The city is the epicentre of thousands of such factories which are ticking time bombs. When IANS compiled the data of major fire accidents that have occurred in the past couple of years, the factories being run without fire safety standards were found to be a substantial part of such incidents.

Twenty seven human lives perished May 13 in one of the deadliest tragedies the national capital has seen in the recent years. A massive fire gutted a four-storey building near a metro station, charring to



death 27 and wounding 12 in west Delhi's Mundka.

In December 2019, 44 died after a fire broke out in an illegal factory at Anaj Mandi. A firecracker storage unit in Bawana killed 17 persons, including 10 women, in January 2018. If we do not go by the number of casualties, then fire breaks out every now and then in some Delhi factory.

Every year, the Delhi Fire Service provides a Fire No Objection Certificate (NOC) to around 50-70 factories, however, several still run unnoticed. A senior fire depart-

ment official told IANS that they do not directly deal with the public to provide an NOC.

"We are not a licensing authority to do that. It is the duty of the building authority or the civic agency to refer the case to us before permitting or giving a license to a building or even a factory," the official said.

Most of the buildings gutted in fire incidents lack fire safety standards and most importantly a Fire NOC. A Fire NOC certifies that a building complies with the fire prevention and fire safety require-

EVERY YEAR, THE DELHI FIRE SERVICE PROVIDES A FIRE NO OBJECTION CERTIFICATE (NOC) TO AROUND 50-70 FACTORIES, HOWEVER, SEVERAL STILL RUN UNNOTICED

MOST OF THE BUILDINGS GUTTED IN FIRE INCIDENTS LACK FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS AND MOST IMPORTANTLY A FIRE NOC

A FIRE NOC CERTIFIES THAT A BUILDING COMPLIES WITH THE FIRE PREVENTION AND FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 33 OF THE DELHI FIRE SERVICE RULES

when compared to the previous years. Not just the number of casualties, the Fire calls also soared by 49 per cent this year in May.

In 2020, as many as 1,432 calls were received till May 19 while this year so far 2,145 calls were attended by the DFS, i.e. over 2,000 incidents were reported in just the first 19 days of the month.

Delhi Fire Service is constantly upgrading itself both technically and manually, but the rising levels of temperature and population of the workers in the alleged factories are adding to the woes. Every year, lakhs of poor people come to Delhi to improve their living conditions and finally get trapped in these factories as workers.

The gut-wrenching audio clip of a phone call between two brothers, where the one who was trapped inside the building told the other that he won't survive and to take care of his family, during the Anaj Mandi blaze in 2019 was a wakeup call for the authorities but even now, three years later, such incidents continue to happen.

ments in accordance with Rule 33 of the Delhi Fire Service Rules.

Delhi Fire Service chief Atul Garg, while speaking to IANS, informed that till now 42 people have died in May alone while 117 have suffered injuries. The casualties in previous years during the month of May are 41 in 2021, 10 in 2020 and 18 in 2019. Clearly, the numbers have risen

# Gehlot approval to new urban job scheme rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, May 22:** Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has approved new guidelines for the implementation of the 'Indira Gandhi Shahari Rozgar Yojana'.

The scheme, intended to provide employment in urban areas on the lines of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), was announced by Gehlot in the 2022-23 budget.

Under the new urban employment scheme, 100 days of employment per year will be provided to the families residing in urban areas. The state government will spend Rs 800 crore per year on this ambitious scheme, an official statement said.

According to the new guidelines, under the scheme, the people in the age group of 18 to 60 years residing in the urban local body area



Under this scheme, people in the age group of 18 to 60 years residing in the urban local body areas will be registered on the basis of Jan Aadhaar card

The work will be approved and executed through committees at the state and district levels under the scheme

will be registered on the basis of Jan Aadhaar card.

The work will be approved and executed through committees at the state and district levels under the scheme, the statement said.

# Delhi 'won't get' extra water from HP & UP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have "backed out" from plans to give extra water to Delhi, while Haryana is not keen to pursue a water exchange proposal with the national capital, according to officials.

Proposals involving Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were being pursued since 2019. The two states pulled out around six to eight months ago, they said.

Delhi had a plan to exchange 140 million gallons a day (MGD) of treated wastewater for freshwater from Uttar Pradesh.

"Uttar Pradesh said it could share 270 cusecs of water from the Ganga through the Murad Nagar regulator and Delhi had promised to release an equal amount of treated wastewater to UP from Okhla for irrigation purposes. After multiple meetings and field inspections, Uttar Pradesh wrote to us around six months ago that the idea has been dropped," an official said on condition of anonymity. The Centre was in favour of the proposal but Uttar Pradesh denied it. They did not give any reason for doing so, he said.

Delhi also held deliberations with Haryana on a proposal to share 20 MGD of treated wastewater for irrigation through Jaunti and Auchandi regulators in lieu of freshwater through Carrier Lined Canal (CLC) and Delhi Sub Branch (DSB). "Haryana has not agreed to the proposal yet. There is a very slim chance of it happening now," the official said.

Another official said the proposal for a water exchange with

Haryana is pending at the level of the Upper Yamuna River Board.

Delhi generates around 770 MGD of wastewater. The 34 sewage treatment plants located at 20 locations across the city treat up to 570 MGD of sewage. Around 90 MGD of treated wastewater is being utilised for horticulture in parks and forests, irrigation and DTC depots. The capital is obligated to release 267 MGD of treated wastewater into the Yamuna to maintain the environmental flow.

In December 2019, Himachal Pradesh signed a MoU to sell its share of Yamuna water to Delhi at Rs 21 crore per annum. Water had to be delivered at Tajewala, Haryana, to Delhi.

According to a statement released at that time, Himachal Pradesh was supposed to "provide regular, daily supply of 368 cusecs (198 MGD) from November to February and 268 cusecs (144 MGD) from March to June every year".

According to a multi-state agreement signed in 1994, Himachal Pradesh gets a three per cent share of Yamuna water. This share has remained unclaimed since then.

It was Haryana which had first opposed the Himachal Pradesh's plan to sell its share of Yamuna water to Delhi. Haryana contended that its "canals did not have the capacity to carry extra water from Himachal Pradesh to Delhi", another official said.

Thereafter, Himachal Pradesh also "backed out" from the agreement around six months ago. An official said, "Our engineers worked really hard to turn these plans into reality, but the neighbouring states backed out due to political reasons."

# Children at Delhi landfills have little to do but sort litter



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 22:** Despite Sarva Shiksha and Beti Padhao Beti Bachao Abhiyan, thousands of children in the national capital are living in garbage dumps with no future in sight. These children run their homes with garbage. While they may stand explained by the Utilitarian principle, it is the apathy of the government towards this class that is hollowing out a progressive society.

This issue, however, is not new. Many incidents of fire in landfill sites of Delhi have made headlines. It is mostly children who work at these landfills, picking up plastic, iron and other metal pieces, and anything else of any value in the market. This is a means of livelihood for these children and their families.

Delhi has 3 large litter 'hills' at Okhla, Bhalswa, and Ghazipur landfill sites around which, slums have been built. There are 40-50 huts near each garbage hill which is home to children that work in these landfills. Even while the garbage hill is on fire, these children continue to work as usual, knowing well that the gases released are toxic and suffocating. One can barely imagine how difficult it must be to choose between being hungry and breathing healthy. As the saying goes, the finest steel has to go through the hottest fire, but the future of these children in this fire has no end in sight.

Toxic gases like methane and hydrogen sulfide keep emanating from the garbage. When they burn,

carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide are also released. Methane is flammable.

A similar fire broke out at Bhalswa garbage mound and blazed for two weeks at stretch. The 12-year-old Satara residing there said that he studied till class VI but has been working as a waste-picker for the last two years. After the death of his parents, he quit studies and began working to run his household and get his sister married.

Neha, a resident of Ghazipur slum, said that she has been doing this work for the last 3 years. The 8-year-old Neha has never been to school. Her elder sister worked as a waste-picker earlier and Neha joined her at the garbage mound every day, picking up iron and plastic.

Many claims have been made by Delhi and Central governments regarding eradication of poverty, education, and health. Yet, 14-year-old Manju could never study, despite being very desirous of going to school because no school admitted her. Her entire family also is engaged in picking and sorting waste from sun rise to sunset.

These kids spend all day at the garbage dump and have remained too distant from books. Delhi and the Central government claim their respective figures. The Delhi government has announced the opening of 11 more schools in the Budget for the year 2022. This year, the maximum chunk of the Budget (Rs 16,278 crore) has been allocated for education. According to the ruling Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi, the standard of education in Delhi has improved in the last few years.

According to the Central government, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, children between 6-14 years of age have a Fundamental Right to Education. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has also started many schemes to provide education to poor girls.

Opening up more schools and devising means of education for these children have so far not done enough to secure their future. The truth is that these children need the support of the society to undertake the journey from mountains of garbage to a school.



## INT'L DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



A tigress runs inside her enclosure at Nahargarh Biological Park, on a hot summer day in Jaipur, Sunday



A peacock roams at a park in New Delhi, Sunday

PTI PHOTOS

# Jaipur gems and jewellery museum to open soon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, May 22:** India's first international standard gems and jewellery museum is set to open for tourists by mid June in Jaipur.

The first of its kind museum will feature the Optical Glass Maze, where one may feel hypnotised with real optical illusions.

Also, one will experience disbelief in looking at the replicas of the "Floating Stones" used by Lord Ram and his army to build the "Ram Setu" to Lanka.

Bird lovers can see and experience a variety of birds, including beautiful peacocks in the natural setting of Khazana Mahal.

Situated at Gurjar Ghati near Jalmahal, Jaipur, this museum will take people through a magical journey of gems, jewellery, crafts, heritage, history, folklore and tradition in the 100 year old Heritage Haveli set in the pristine Aravalli hills.

Visitors will be able to see replicas of the Kohinoor diamond, a

dinosaur bone, shark teeth, big diamonds and the "Floating Stones" used by Lord Ram and his army to build the "Ram Setu" to Lanka.

The largest finger ring in the world, a piece of a real shooting star, the incredible floating stones, the world's largest and most unique collection of stamps and postcards that commemorate a gem or a jewel have been displayed here.

Due to the valuable, rare and

expensive display, tight security arrangements have been made.

"This is situated close to the historically famous Parshuram Dwar, where the Ashwamedha Yagya was performed initially by Lord Ram and then in 1734 by Raja Sawai Jai Singh the second. Khazana Mahal showcases more than 2000 pieces of real and rare gemstones and jewellery across 50+ different types and categories," Says Anup



Shrivastav, who has designed the museum along with the founder of the Museum of Gem and Jewellery Federation Dr Rajnikant Shah.

Each of these, be it a historical artifact, rare gem, ancient statue, mesmerising painting or an exquisite piece of jewellery, comes with a story and history that defines the character of each unique piece. These range from myths, historical facts and even their use and importance in Bollywood.

The museum gives visitors an op-

portunity to dress up like a real Queen or King with its royalty replica dresses.

"We have tied up with travel agents and shall soon tie up with Rajasthan Tourism too," said Shrivastav adding, "As the collection is exquisite, expensive and unique, we shall allow only 21 people to visit the museum at a time."

"The entry fee for Indian tourists is Rs 500 while Rs 1,500 shall be charged from foreign tourists," he said.

## of the day quote

Patience and decency are the virtues that help one progress in public life

**YOGI ADITYANATH** | UP CM

With good inflows into the Mettur Dam, the Tamil Nadu government should open the shutters for agriculture and not wait till June 12

**ANBUMANI RAMADOSS** | PMK LEADER

The state's first helicopter service will help connect it with neighbouring cities for medical emergencies as well as expand the bouquet of tourism offerings

**PRAMOD SAWANT** | GOA CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Couple found dead

**Udupi (Karnataka):** A young couple was found charred to death inside a car in Karnataka's Udupi district on Sunday, police said. The deceased were identified as Yashwanth (23) and Jyothi (23). Police sources said that the couple had sent messages to their families that 'they were ending their lives'. However, the police are verifying this and will ascertain the exact cause of the death. According to police, the two lived in the R.T. Nagar locality of Bengaluru. The burning car was found around 3 a.m. by the local people. After the police arrived, they found the burnt bodies of a young man and woman.

### 4 drown in Patna

**Patna:** Four teenagers, all sons of police personnel, drowned in the Ganga river off Patna's LCT Ghat Sunday, police said. The four were part of six teenagers who went to the river banks at LCT Ghat under Buddha Colony police station to play cricket in the morning. The accident occurred around 11.30 a.m. "There were six teenagers, all belonging to police families, who went to the LCT Ghat to play cricket. After the end of the game, five of them decided to take a bath in the river. While bathing, one of them started drowning. Four others who were in the river tried to save him but they also started drowning. One of the victims managed to swim out but the other four disappeared in the water," Buddha Colony SHO, Nihar Bhushan, said.

### Racket busted

**New Delhi:** Delhi Police has busted an Indian Premier League (IPL) gambling racket and arrested six people in connection, an official said Sunday. Furnishing details, Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer district) Sameer Sharma said a tip-off was received May 15 that gambling activities on the IPL cricket matches were going on at Chander Vihar, Phase-III, Nihal Vihar and if timely raid be conducted they can be arrested red-handed.

### Locals loot oil

**Palghar:** A tanker carrying edible oil overturned on the busy Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway here in Maharashtra, disrupting traffic movement on the road for about three hours, police said Sunday. After the accident took place on Saturday, a number of locals rushed to the spot and looted the oil overflowing from the tanker, they said. The driver of the tanker, carrying 12,000 litres of edible oil for processing from Surat in Gujarat to neighbouring Mumbai, lost control over the wheels near Tawa village. As a result, the vehicle overturned and the oil leaked from it.

## ENCOUNTER KILLINGS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** The alleged encounter killing of four suspects in the gang-rape and murder case of a veterinarian in Hyderabad in 2019 is not the only incident where fingers have been pointed out at the police, with there being several other such instances including the 2009 Dehradun encounter case that left an MBA student dead and the 1997 Connaught Place shootout in which two people were killed. Recently, a three-member inquiry commission headed by a retired Supreme Court judge on the Hyderabad encounter submitted that the firing by the police personnel was allegedly deliberate and that three of the deceased were minor at the time of death. Some of the other encounters where police officials have been

found on the wrong side of the law either by a commission or a court, include that of Sadiq Jamal, who was shot dead by Gujarat Police.

In 2003, the Gujarat Police shot dead Jamal, claiming to have information that he was planning an attack on the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi and other top BJP leaders. According to an investigation by the CBI, not only was Jamal shot dead by the police in an alleged fake encounter, but also that the Intelligence Bureau played a role in it. Many police inspectors and top IB officials were questioned and later accused in the case of his 'encounter'.

In 2006, Tulsiram Prajapati, known to be an associate of Sohrabuddin Sheikh, was killed in an alleged fake encounter. According to the CBI, Prajapati was with Sheikh and Kausar Bi



when the Gujarat Police caught them. Prajapati was shown to be arrested in Rajasthan and later killed. Similarly, Sohrabuddin Sheikh, who the Gujarat Police claimed was also a terrorist, was killed in an alleged fake encounter by the Gujarat and Rajasthan police in 2005.

His wife Kausar Bi disappeared, and was alleged to have been elim-

inated by police.

In December 2018, a special court in Mumbai had acquitted all the 22 accused, including 21 policemen in the case. In the case of Ishrat Jahan, who was killed along with Javed Shaikh, Amjadali Akbarali Rana and Zeeshan Johar by Gujarat Police in an encounter near Ahmedabad in June 15, 2004, the police had claimed that the four were terrorists who were planning to assassinate then Gujarat Chief Minister Modi.

A high court-appointed Special Investigation Team concluded that the encounter of Ishrat Jahan was "fake".

However, a special court in Ahmedabad discharged three police officials in the case in March 2021. Ram Narayan Gupta alias 'Lakhan Bhैया', who was allegedly an aide to gangster Chhota Rajan, was shot

dead in 2006 by the Mumbai Police when he was picked up from Vashi and killed in a purportedly staged encounter in Versova.

Following the encounter, a Mumbai sessions court had sentenced 21 people, including 13 policemen, to life imprisonment in 2013 for killing Gupta while holding them guilty of conspiring and kidnapping him. However, one of the accused, encounter specialist Pradeep Sharma, was acquitted.

Another case which grabbed headlines was that of MBA student Ranbir Singh.

In this encounter case, the Delhi High Court in February 2018 had upheld a trial court's order convicting and awarding life terms to seven policemen for killing the 22-year-old in a staged shootout in Dehradun in 2009, while describing the matter as "a tragic case."

## Role of police under scanner in several cases

## Committee formed to probe tunnel collapse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** The Centre has constituted a committee of 3 independent experts to investigate the reasons for recent collapse of a part of under-construction tunnel in Ramban on Jammu-Srinagar highway and suggest remedial measures.



State-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has already initiated process to handle such emergency situation and also taking all possible measures to avoid such incidents in future, an official statement said Sunday.

A committee of 3 independent eminent experts has been constituted by the central government which has already moved to the site to investigate the reasons for slide/collapse and remedial measures thereof... Further action will be taken based on report of committee," it said.

According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) office order, Professor J T Sahu of IIT Delhi will be the chairman of the committee, and it will submit the report to the ministry within 10 days.

According to the official statement, the stretch between Digdole and Khooni Nallah of Ramban Banihal section is prone to frequent landslide and shooting stones due to fragile geology.

## Dominica drops illegal entry charges against Mehul Choksi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** In a relief to PNB bank scam accused diamondaire Mehul Choksi, the Dominica government has dropped "all charges" related to his mysterious unlawful entry from Antigua and Barbuda in May last year, according to his spokesperson from London.



Choksi was taken into custody in Dominica, the Caribbean island country, in May last year after he went missing from Antigua and Barbuda where he had taken citizenship before allegedly escaping from India to avoid charges of orchestrating Rs 13,500 crore scam in Punjab National Bank in which his nephew Nirav Modi is a co-accused.

He was left on bail after 51 days by the Dominica High Court there. During the period, India made desperate attempts to bring him back with a CBI team stationed there with a private jet. His lawyers however had alleged that he was abducted from Antigua by "Indian looking men" who had brought him to Dominica.

## The BJP's move to organise its national office-bearers meet in Jaipur soon after the conclusion of Congress' Chintan Shivir in Udaipur is a sign of nervousness

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CM



## AWARENESS RALLY

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Sunday led more than 15,000 cyclists in a drug awareness rally. He said the aim of this rally was to create awareness against drug menace and wean away youth, who fell prey to drugs



## 'Quad Summit will review progress'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** The second in-person Quad Leaders' Summit in Japan will provide an opportunity for leaders of four countries to review the progress of the grouping's initiatives and exchange views on developments in the Indo-Pacific as well as on global issues of mutual interest, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday.

In his departure statement ahead of his visit to Japan from May 23-24, Modi said during his visit he will also hold a bilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden, where they will discuss further consolidation of the multi-faceted bilateral relations.

"We will also continue our dialogue on regional developments and contemporary global issues," he said. Modi said he will be visiting Tokyo at the invitation of his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida, and noted that in March 2022, he had hosted Kishida for the 14th India-Japan Annual Summit. "During my visit to Tokyo, I look forward to continuing our conversation further, with an aim to strengthen the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership," he said. In Japan, Modi said, he will also participate in the second in-person Quad Leaders' Summit, which will provide an opportunity for the leaders of the four Quad countries to



review the progress of initiatives taken by the grouping. "We will also exchange views about developments in the Indo-Pacific region and global issues of mutual interest," Modi said.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprises India, the US, Japan and Australia. Modi also noted that the newly-elected Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will be joining the Quad Leaders' Summit for the first time.

"I look forward to a bilateral meeting with him during which the multifaceted cooperation between India and Australia under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and regional and global issues of mutual interest will be discussed," Modi said. In his statement, the prime minister also said economic cooperation between India and Japan is an im-

portant aspect of their Special Strategic and Global Partnership. "During the March Summit, PM Kishida and I had announced our intention to realize JPY 5 trillion in public and private investment and financing over the next five years from Japan to India," Modi said. "During the forthcoming visit, I will meet with Japanese business leaders with the goal of further strengthening economic linkages between our countries, in pursuit of this objective," he said.

Noting that Japan is home to nearly 40,000 members of the Indian diaspora, who are an important anchor in our relations with Japan, Modi said he looks forward to interacting with them.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan on May 23 and 24 to attend the summit is taking place under the shadow of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Addressing an indoor rally at a hall in Pune city of Maharashtra, Thackeray said he has to undergo a surgery on June 1 and after recovering from it, he would again address a public meeting. He reiterated that the MNS workers will resume agitation if loudspeakers atop mosques do not follow the noise rules. Thackeray had earlier asked his partymen to play Hanuman Chalisa outside mosques where loudspeakers play 'azaan'.

Amid the controversy over an AIMIM leader's recent visit to Mughal ruler Aurangzeb's tomb in Aurangabad city of Maharashtra, the MNS leader appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Centre to change the name of Aurangabad to Sambhaji Nagar and to bring the Uniform Civil Code.

Taking a swipe at NCP chief who had addressed a rally braving rain before the Maharashtra Assembly polls in 2019, Thackeray

## Delayed Ayodhya visit after sensing trap: Raj

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, May 22:** MNS chief Raj Thackeray Sunday claimed that political developments around his proposed Ayodhya visit were a ploy to "trap" his party workers into legal tangles and hence, he decided to defer his trip to the Uttar Pradesh city.

Addressing an indoor rally at a hall in Pune city of Maharashtra, Thackeray said he has to undergo a surgery on June 1 and after recovering from it, he would again address a public meeting. He reiterated that the MNS workers will resume agitation if loudspeakers atop mosques do not follow the noise rules. Thackeray had earlier asked his partymen to play Hanuman Chalisa outside mosques where loudspeakers play 'azaan'.

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said, "We were planning a gathering in an open space, but considering the possibility of rain, we decided to hold it indoors. Also, there are no elections nearby to stand in rain for giving a speech." On Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray recently slamming the BJP's "fake Hindutva", the MNS president said, "The CM claimed their Hindutva is real. Are they talking about a washing powder, like who's detergent is better than the other?"

## Woman ends life in Gujarat police station

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Rajkot (Gujarat), May 22:** A married woman committed suicide in a police station in Gujarat's Rajkot early on Sunday after she was summoned to record her statement, police said.



The Rajkot police have initiated an inquiry into the incident and have also informed the state and National Human Rights Commission.

Nayna, who was in her late 20s, was summoned by the Aji Dam police station Saturday evening to

record her statement in connection with some offence. On Sunday morning, she requested that she be allowed to freshen up, went to women's toilet in the police station, and hanged herself. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone-1, Praveen Kumar Meena, said.

The official also revealed that Nayna had an extra-marital affair with Mukesh, who is arrested by the Aji Dam police under the Indian Penal Code for voluntarily causing hurt with a dangerous weapon, and it was in this connection, she was called for recording her statement.

Though the process was completed around 8 p.m. on Saturday, the woman, fearing that if she returned home late night, her husband will inquire and may scold her, so she decided to stay back in the police station overnight, and in morning, she committed suicide.

## HEALTH IS WEALTH



People participate in a yoga session organised in Varanasi

PTI PHOTO



## Battle begins for Prez polls

With the Opposition parties inclined to put up a Presidential candidate in July, the BJP has swung into action to ensure support of NDA and non-NDA parties. While the BJD president and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik gave a hint of lending support to a party

only after seeing the candidate, Andhra Chief Minister Jagannathan Reddy had already decided to go with the NDA. The BJP is working hard to win these two non-NDA allies so that it consolidates its position. Recently, the BJP leadership tried to soothe the hurt feelings of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar when Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan flew to Patna and held a two-hour private meeting with him. What transpired between the two is not known as both were not available for comments after meeting in Patna on Thursday night. But sources say that the decision to send Pradhan was taken as part of BJP's exercise to contact some of the Chief Ministers as part of garnering support for the Presidential candidates. Though the NDA has more than 45% votes in the kitty and if it gets the support of the regional parties, it will cross the hump very easily.

## VP post: Anandiben in race

There is a growing feeling that a woman will be made Vice President this time. Insiders say that Anandiben Patel has a bigger claim to the post among other women candidates. She was removed as Chief Minister of Gujarat prematurely and PM Modi inducted her as Governor of Madhya Pradesh and later shifted to UP. She belongs to the powerful Patel community. BJP desperately needs Patidar votes in Gujarat Assembly polls. There are reports that powerful Patel leader from Gujarat, Naresh Patel may join the Congress. He has not opened his cards so far. But the BJP is also wooing him. If he goes to the Congress or AAP, then BJP has reasons to worry. Bhupendra Patel, Gujarat's new CM has not been able to make any mark in the state. Therefore, the importance of Anandiben Patel has gained ground.

## 100 Cong rebels in line?

After a gentle rebuff to the Group of 23 leaders at the Chintan Shivir where none of their key demands was accepted, the battle lines seem to have been drawn. The dissidents may at best wait until May 31, the last date of filing nomination for the 57 Rajya Sabha seats. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Kapil Sibal, Vivek Tankha and many others are waiting to hear from the high command about their re-nomination. Sonia Gandhi has already told partymen that the party has given them enough and now it's time to repay the debt. The hint is clear. Meanwhile, the BJP has a twin strategy to give the Congress a body blow. If it is wooing Congress leaders in states at every level to switch sides, it is also impressing upon heavyweights to create a "ginger group". Sources in the BJP say that it wants a ginger group of 100 leaders to be formed first. This non-

political forum will raise issues of importance to embarrass the Gandhis.

## One RS seat, 3 claimants

After sulking for the past two years, a former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda finally got the command of the state from the Gandhis. He succeeded and succeeded in dislodging Kumari Selja with his protégé Uday Bhan Haryana Congress Chief. He himself is Congress Legislature Party leader and his son is a sitting Rajya Sabha MP. After consolidating his position, Hooda now wants the high command that the Rajya Sabha seat be given to either senior party leader Anand Sharma or another non-Jat leader. On the other hand, Selja is saying that she has quit her PCC post and needs to be compensated with a Rajya Sabha seat. The biennial polls for the two Rajya Sabha seats in Haryana is due this month end.

# international



**Biodiversity is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, ending the existential threat of climate change, halting land degradation, building food security and supporting advances in human health**  
ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

## BANGKOK VOTES FOR NEW GUV

Voters in the Thai capital headed to the polls Sunday to elect a new Governor in a contest delayed by a military coup that still reflects a divided country with main candidates either supported by the conservative establishment or the liberal opposition



## of the day quote

We are looking to deepen our economic partnership with Taiwan including on high technology issues, including on semiconductor supply

JAKE SULLIVAN | WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

Pakistan's interest was supreme but unfortunately the local Mir Jafars & Mir Sadiqs bowed to external pressure, forcing a regime change and are now running around like a headless chicken with the economy in a tailspin

IMRAN KHAN | PAKISTAN'S OUSTED PM

It has been reported that organised groups are preventing fuel trucks to pass certain areas demanding they be unloaded at different fuel stations and threatening to set fire to them. If this continues, we will have to suspend deliveries for the safety of the transport workforce

KANCHANA WIJESEKERA | LANKAN MINISTER OF POWER AND ENERGY

## SHORT TAKES

### Israel reports 1st monkeypox case

**Tel Aviv:** Israeli authorities say they have detected the country's first case of monkeypox in a man who returned from abroad and were looking into other suspected cases. Israel's Health Ministry said late Saturday the man was in a Tel Aviv hospital in good condition. It called on anyone returning from abroad with fever and lesions to see a doctor.

### Tourist plane crashes, 5 dead

**Paris:** A tourist plane crashed near the town of Les Adrets in southeast France, officials said. Five dead bodies, including a child, were discovered at the site of the crash Saturday afternoon, French news channel BFMTV reported. Local media reported that four people were of the same family, Xinhua news agency reported. According to BFMTV, eyewitnesses to the crash tipped off local authorities, and nearly 60 firefighters were deployed to the site to douse the fire.

### IRGC member assassinated

**Tehran:** A senior member of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard was killed outside his home in Tehran Sunday by unidentified gunmen on a motorbike, state TV reported, giving only scant details about the attack. The two assailants shot Col. Hassan Sayad Khodayari five times in his car in the heart of the capital, state media said.

### Quake jolts Japan

**Tokyo:** An earthquake with a magnitude of 5.8 on Sunday struck off Japan's Ibaraki prefecture, but no tsunami warning was issued. According to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), the tremor occurred at 12.24 p.m. at a latitude of 36.8 north and a longitude of 141.5 east and at depth of 30 km, reports Xinhua news agency.

### 30 ultras killed

**Ouagadougou:** At least 30 terrorists were killed in an attack against a military detachment in north-central Burkina Faso, said the Army in a statement. The military detachment of Bourzanga located in Bam province, Center-North Region, "vigorously fought back" an attack against its base on Saturday, the Burkina Army added.

# Russia intensifies offensive as Polish leader visits Kyiv



AGENCIES

**Pokrovsk (Ukraine), May 22:** Russia pressed its offensive in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region on Sunday as Poland's president travelled to Kyiv to support the country's Western aspirations and became the first foreign leader to address the Ukrainian parliament since the start of the war.

Ukrainian lawmakers stood to applaud Polish President Andrzej Duda, who thanked them for the honour of speaking in a place where "the heart of a free, independent and democratic Ukraine beats", according to remarks carried by the Polish state-run news agency PAP.

Duda's visit, his second to Ukraine's capital since April, came as Russian and Ukrainian forces engaged in battles along a 551-kilometre wedge of the country's eastern industrial heartland.

After declaring its full control of a sprawling seaside steel plant that was the last defense hold-out in the port city of Mariupol, the Russian military launched artillery and missile attacks in Ukraine's industrial heartland, seeking to expand the territory Moscow-backed separatists have held since 2014.

In a Saturday night video address to the nation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the situation in the Donbas as "really hard", but he said his country's ability to withstand nearly three months of full-scale war against Russia "is good news". "Every day that our de-

- UKRAINE RULES OUT CEASEFIRE, CONCESSIONS
- RUSSIA LAUNCHES ASSAULT IN LUHANSK, MYKOLAYIV
- UKRAINE MUST DECIDE ITS OWN FUTURE, POLISH PRESIDENT SAYS

fenders take away from these offensive plans of Russia, disrupting them, is a concrete contribution to the approach of the main day. The desired day that we are all looking forward to and fighting for: Victory Day," Zelenskyy said. Zelenskyy stressed Saturday that the 27-member European Union should consider Ukraine's desire to join the bloc as soon as possible within the context of Russia's invasion.

"I want to emphasise that our European integration path is not just about politics," Zelenskyy said. "It's about quality of life. And about the fact that Ukrainians perceive the values of life in the same way as the vast majority of Europeans."

Poland is ramping up efforts to persuade other EU members that are more hesitant about accepting Ukraine as a member. The country's potential candidacy is set to be discussed at a Brussels summit in late June.

"The free world has the face of Ukraine," Duda told the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's legislature, Sunday. "Despite the great destruction, despite the terrible crimes, the great suffering that the Ukrainian nation experiences every day, the Russian invaders did not break you, they did not manage to do it and I believe deeply that they will never succeed," he said.

## Long march to Islamabad from May 25: Imran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Peshawar, May 22:** Pakistan's ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday asked his supporters to march peacefully to Islamabad May 25 to press for the dissolution of the National Assembly and fresh elections in the country.

Khan, 69, who served as Prime Minister for over three and half years, was removed from the position through a no-confidence vote in parliament by the Opposition parties last month. Since his removal, Khan has addressed several rallies in different cities. Addressing a press conference after his party's core committee meeting in Peshawar, Khan said the march would convert into a sit-in and continue until his demands are accepted.

# Biden says 'hello' to North Korea's Kim

REUTERS

**Seoul, May 22:** US President Joe Biden, in Seoul before heading to Japan as part of his first Asia trip as president, had a simple message for North Korea's Kim Jong Un: "Hello... period," he told reporters on the last day of his visit to South Korea Sunday.

Biden said he was "not concerned" about new North Korean nuclear tests, which would be the first in nearly five years.

## North Korea has said the US overtures are insincere because Washington maintains "hostile policies" such as military drills and sanctions

But his wry response when asked what message he had for Kim underscored the administration's low-key approach to the unresolved tensions with North Korea. It is a stark contrast with former President Donald Trump's showy threats, summits, and "love letters" with Kim.

Neither president's approach has led to a major breakthrough,

# TORNADO AFTERMATH



Damage to Hobby Lobby is seen, after a tornado came through the area in Gaylord, Mich

PTI PHOTO



however, and North Korea has resumed testing its largest intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), while intelligence reports suggest it is preparing for a new nuclear test.

"We are prepared for anything North Korea does," Biden said. A day earlier, Biden and his new South Korean counterpart, President Yoon Suk-yeol, agreed to consider bigger military exercises and potentially deploying more nuclear-capable American weapons to the region in response to the North's weapons tests.

North Korea has not responded

to US overtures, including offers of Covid-19 vaccines, Biden said on Saturday, noting that he was willing to sit down with Kim if he thought it would lead to a serious breakthrough.

Covid-19 restrictions may be playing a role in North Korea's lack of response, a senior US administration official said.

North Korea has said the US overtures are insincere because Washington maintains "hostile policies" such as military drills and sanctions.

When asked whether Biden was willing to take concrete steps to

## SK activists hold anti-Biden rallies

**Seoul:** South Korean civic and student activists held rallies against US President Joe Biden throughout his three-day trip in the Asian nation to clamour for peace on the Korean Peninsula. A group of students from the Korean University Progressive Union Sunday held an anti-Biden rally near the US military base in Yongsan, where the President reportedly planned to meet staff members from the American Embassy in Seoul, reports Xinhua news agency.

break the stalemate, the official said that the administration was looking for serious engagement, not grand gestures. "This is a decision that only the DPRK can make," the official said, using the initials of North Korea's official name.

At a US air base south of Seoul, Biden and Yoon toured an air operations centre. American and South Korean troops, behind large computer projectors showing maps of the border separating North and South Korea, are tasked with defending against any missiles the North might launch.

# Thousands of Cov-ve Beijing residents sent to quarantine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**Beijing, May 22:** Thousands of Covid-negative Beijing residents were forcibly relocated to quarantine hotels overnight due to a handful of infections, as the capital begins to take more extreme control measures resembling virus-hit Shanghai. China's strategy to achieve zero Covid cases includes strict border closures, lengthy quarantines, mass testing and rapid, targeted lockdowns.

Over 13,000 residents of the locked-down Nanxinyuan residential compound in southeast Beijing were relocated to quarantine hotels overnight Friday due to



26 new infections discovered in recent days Beijing has been battling its worst outbreak since the pandemic started.

The Omicron variant has infected over 1,300 since late April, leading city restaurants, schools and tourist attractions to be closed indefinitely. "Experts have determined that all Nanxinyuan residents undergo centralised quarantine beginning midnight May 21

for seven days," authorities from Chaoyang district said Friday.

Social media photos showed hundreds of residents with luggage queuing in the dark to board coaches parked outside the compound. Residents were told to pack their clothes and essential belongings, and that their homes would be disinfected afterwards, according to screenshots shared on Weibo.

Last month, thousands of negative Shanghai residents were bussed to makeshift quarantine centres hundreds of kilometres away as the metropolis of 25 million doubled down on efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

## 92 monkeypox cases now in 12 countries

As of Saturday, 92 confirmed cases and 28 suspected cases of monkeypox have been reported from 12 member states that are not endemic for the virus, the World Health Organisation said

REUTERS

**London, May 22:** The World Health Organisation said it expects to identify more cases of monkeypox as it expands surveillance in countries where the disease is not typically found.

"Available information suggests that human-to-human trans-



mission is occurring among people in close physical contact with cases who are symptomatic," the agency added.

Monkeypox is an infectious disease that is usually mild, and is endemic in parts of west and central Africa. It is spread by close contact, so it can be relatively easily contained through such measures as self-isolation and hygiene.

"What seems to be happening now is that it has got into the population as a sexual form, as a gen-

ital form, and is being spread as are sexually transmitted infections, which has amplified its transmission around the world," WHO official David Heymann, an infectious disease specialist, told Reuters.

Heymann said an international committee of experts met via video conference to look at what needed to be studied about the outbreak and communicated to the public, including whether there is any asymptomatic spread, who are at most risk, and the various routes of transmission.

He said the meeting was convened "because of the urgency of the situation". The committee is not the group that would suggest declaring a public health emergency of international concern, WHO's highest form of alert, which applies to the Covid-19 pandemic.

# INDIA@DAVOS

## More investments, less conflicts, Cov-ready infra on leaders' minds

PRES TRUST OF INDIA

**Davos, May 22:** With nearly 100 CEOs and over a dozen government leaders here for a rare spring-time annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, the Indian contingent at this Swiss ski resort town is brimming with confidence when it comes to share their story of fighting the Covid-19 pandemic and attracting more investments.

The government leaders and their associates are also confident that India will be able to tell the world that their approach towards the Ukraine crisis has been the most balanced, even as a vast majority of the world leaders who have congregated here are expected to take on Russia strongly for waging the war. Some are also of the

view that the unfolding political situation back in India in the run up to the general elections of 2024, and various state polls before that, would be of keen interest for the global leaders assembled here, while so could be the issues of societal conflicts as well as income and gender inequalities.

One Indian CEO, however, said almost the entire world is seeing a rising level of polarisation and any India-specific issue should not gather much momentum at a summit the size of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

The Ukraine crisis, climate change and preparing a pandemic-ready world are the three main issues that would dominate the discussions over the next five days here, he added.



Several Indian CEOs as well as government leaders also feel that there is a strong need to focus on creating necessary infrastructure for fighting any future pandemic and also to effectively defeat the existing one

Other key issues, they feel, which will dominate the five-day event include climate change, crypto currencies, role of multilateral institutions and rising costs across the world

The Indian story at Davos this time also has a key component of

various states making their strong respective pitches for investments

and global collaborations.

Prominent among those are Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Among these, the Telangana team led by minister K T Rama Rao will be making a strong pitch for presenting his state as a key investment destination and innovator; while Karnataka Chief Minister B S Bommai has expressed confidence about attracting more investments into the state.

Three union ministers - Piyush Goyal, Mansukh Mandaviya and Hardeep Singh Puri - as well as nearly 100 business leaders from India are also participating in the event. Goyal said India's participation in the WEF Annual Meeting 2022, will help reinforce the country's crucial role as a rising eco-

nomic powerhouse and project it as an attractive hub for business and investment globally. In addition to top industrialists such as Gautam Adani, Sanjiv Bajaj, Hari S Bhartia, Shyam Sunder Bhartia, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Shobana Kamineni, Rajan and Sunil Mittal and Pawan Munjal, a large number of young Indian business leaders are also attending the summit. These include Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla, HCL Tech Chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, CoinSwitch Founder and CEO Ashish Singhal, EaseMyTrip Co-Founder Prashant Pitti, Oyo Rooms CEO Ritesh Agarwal, Ecoware Solutions CEO Rhea Mazumdar Singhal, Trashcon CEO Nivedha RM and BYJU'S founder and CEO Byju Raveendran.

## of the day quote

The market may remain volatile this week due to May month expiry. The movement of the dollar index and commodity prices will be important factors

**SANTOSH MEENA** | HEAD OF RESEARCH, SWASTIKA INVESTMART LTD

We are hoping that this year, there will be no disruption of that nature and also the semiconductor situation might start easing out and it is on the basis of that assumption

**SHAILESH CHANDRA** | MD (PV & EVS), TATA MOTORS

The lender will increase its exposure to secured loans and has set a target to increase disbursements to housing and medium-size MSME loans. Advances to MFIs and small-ticket MSME loans are unsecured

**CHANDRA SHEKHAR GHOSH** | MD & CEO, BANDHAN BANK

## SHORT TAKES

### Infosys reappoints Parekh as CEO, MD

**Bangalore:** In a major development, IT giant Infosys has reappointed Salil Parekh as the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of the company for 5 years. Infosys board Sunday in its public statement to BSE informed about the decision made by the Board of the directors. Infosys in its statement further stated that it may be noted that Salil Parekh has no relationship with any member of the Board of Directors and meets all the criteria to be reappointed as CEO and MD under applicable laws including circulars issued by stock exchanges from time to time.

### Hyundai to invest over \$10bn in US

**Seoul:** Hyundai Motor Group said Sunday it would invest an additional \$5 billion in the United States by 2025 to strengthen collaboration with US firms in advanced technology. The investments, announced during a visit to Seoul by President Joe Biden, are for robotics, urban air mobility, autonomous driving and artificial intelligence, the group said. Hyundai Motor Group, which houses Hyundai Motor Co and Kia Corp, Friday announced plans to invest \$5.5 billion in Georgia to build EV and battery facilities.

### ATM transactions: PNB earns ₹645cr

**New Delhi:** Public sector lender Punjab National Bank has said it earned over ₹645 crore by levying ATM transaction charges on customers during the financial year 2021-22. Revenue earned by PNB from ATM transaction charges stood at ₹645.67 crore in financial year 2021-22, the bank said in response to an application seeking information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Besides, the country's second largest lender collected ₹239.09 crore in the form of penalty imposed on customers who failed to maintain minimum balance or quarterly/monthly average balance in their bank accounts.

### DLF net debt dips 45% to ₹2,680cr

**New Delhi:** Realty major DLF's net debt fell 45 per cent during the last fiscal year to ₹2,680 crore the back of better sales of residential properties that improved its cash flow. According to an investor presentation, DLF's net debt stood at ₹2,680 crore as March 31, 2022. Its net debt stood at ₹4,885 crore at the end of 2020-21 financial year.



**CII welcomes the government's move to cut excise duty on fuel, which will help bring down inflation levels. The government's swift action shows its intent to bring down the burden on the common man, in addition to bringing down input cost for many sectors**

**SANJIV BAJAJ** | PRESIDENT, CII

### "POOR AGAIN"

Changpeng Zhao, the founder of cryptocurrency exchange Binance, tweeted a few days ago that he was "poor again" after losing billions of dollars in cryptocurrency following a market crash, which wiped out the fortunes of many investors. The exchange's assets in the cryptocurrency Luna fell to just \$2,200 from \$1.6 billion, at the token's peak price, a month before



## FUEL EXCISE DUTY CUT

# Burden entirely on Centre: FM

Sitharaman's tweets came as a rebuttal to the Opposition's criticism of the Government's move. Earlier, former Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram and then other Opposition leaders had stated that the reduction in excise duty announced Saturday evening would reduce the share of states in central taxes

(RIC) and Agriculture & Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC) together constitute Excise Duty on petrol and diesel. Basic ED is sharable with states. SAED, RIC & AIDC are non-sharable," she said.

The excise duty reduction of ₹8 per litre on petrol and ₹6 a litre on diesel has entirely been made in RIC. This was the case even in November 2021 when tax on petrol was cut by ₹5 and that on diesel by ₹10, she said.

Petrol commanded ₹13 a litre additional excise duty in form of RIC and ₹8 of such tax was levied on per litre of diesel. This has been cut in Saturday's excise reduction. Only ₹1.40 per litre BED collected on petrol and ₹1.80 on diesel are shared with states.

The SAED, AIDC and

As per the centre-state tax sharing formula, 41 per cent of taxes collected by the Centre go to states. These however do not include collections from levy of cess. Most of the tax on petrol and diesel is made up of cess

While total incidence of central tax on petrol prior to Saturday's cut was ₹27.90 per litre, basic excise duty was only ₹1.40 a litre. Similarly, out of Rs 21.80 a litre total central tax on diesel, basic excise duty was only ₹1.80

Special additional excise duty of ₹11 a litre on petrol and ₹8 per litre on diesel was levied. A Rs 2.50 a litre (AIDC) was levied on petrol and Rs 4 per litre on diesel

RIC are not shared. "Basic ED which is sharable with states has not been touched. Therefore, the entire burden of these two duty cuts (made in Nov, 21 and yesterday) is borne by the Centre," she said.

Chidambaram had Saturday evening stated that the cut in excise duty was "equal to rob Peter more & pay Peter less!"

"FM's exhortation to States is meaningless. When she cuts Central Excise by one rupee, 41 paise of that rupee belongs to the States," he had stated. Sunday, he retracted saying contrary to what he had said Saturday "the

entire burden of the reduction falls on the Centre. To that extent, I stand corrected."

Sitharaman said RBI data shows total developmental expenditure incurred by the Modi government during 2014-22 was ₹90.9 lakh crore.

"In contrast, only ₹49.2 lakh crore was spent on developmental expenditure during 2004-14. The expenditure incurred by our Govt under @PMOIndia @narendramodi includes ₹24.85 lakh crore spent so far on food, fuel and fertiliser subsidies and ₹26.3 lakh crore on capital creation. Over the 10 years of UPA, only ₹13.9 lakh crore was spent on subsidies," she added.

The duty reduction made yesterday has an implication of ₹1,00,000 cr a year for Centre. The duty reduction made in November 21 has an implication of ₹1,20,000 cr a year for Centre. Total revenue implication to Centre, on these two duty cuts is thus Rs 2,20,000 cr a year

**NIRMALA SITHARAMAN** | FINANCE MINISTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Sunday said that the ₹8 a litre cut in petrol and ₹6 reduction in diesel have been done in road and infrastructure cess levied on the two fuels, collection on which was never shared with states.

Taking to Twitter, Sitharaman said she is sharing some useful facts on levies on petrol and diesel for the benefit of all.

"Basic Excise Duty (BED), Special Additional Excise duty (SAED), Road & Infrastructure Cess



## OVER EXPORT TAX

# 'Steelmakers face impact on Europe deals'

REUTERS

**New Delhi, May 22:** Indian steel firms could be forced to cancel European orders and suffer losses after an overnight decision to impose export taxes on steel products, V R Sharma, managing director at Jindal Steel and Power told Reuters.

India imposed an export tax of 15% on eight steel products late Saturday, at a time steelmakers are looking to make up for tepid local demand by increasing mar-

The decision could raise industry costs by as much as \$300 million, said JSPL MD

ket share in Europe, whose supplies have been hit by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"They should have given us at least 2-3 months of time, we did not know about such a substantial policy," Sharma said.

Sharma said Indian steelmakers have about 2 million tonne in pending export orders, mostly to Europe, which are stuck in ports or in various stages of production.

"This could possibly lead to force majeure. And the customer has done no wrong here and he doesn't deserve to be treated that way," he said. "We alone have 260,000 tonne of orders, which were taken when export duty was zero," Sharma said.

# Infra projects over ₹500cr to be routed via GatiShakti panel

The PM GatiShakti plan was announced last year with an aim to break departmental silos and bring in more holistic and integrated planning and execution of projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** All logistics and connectivity infrastructure projects, entailing investment of over ₹500 crore, would now route through the network planning group (NPG) constituted under the PM GatiShakti initiative with the finance ministry issuing the necessary instructions and creation of the national master plan digital platform, an official said.

According to an office memorandum of the department of expenditure dated April 28, a revised format has been issued for Public Investment Board (PIB)/Delegated Investment Board (DIB) project proposals.

"The revised format of the PIB/DIB memorandum... Will apply to all the PIB/DIB proposals for new projects submitted on or after April 28, 2022," it has said.

As per the revised format, proposals should include whether the project has components of logistics or infrastructure connectivity; and whether it has been examined by NPG for convergence and integration at the conceptualisation or feasibility study stage.

This will help bring down the logistics cost and promote effective and efficient planning of infrastructure projects. An integrated infrastructure network planning group (NPG) has been constituted



## Cost overruns of ₹4.83L cr hit 425 infra projects

As many as 425 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of ₹150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than ₹4.83 lakh crore, according to a report. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects of ₹150 crore and above, out of 1,579 projects, 425 projects reported cost overruns and as many as 664 projects were delayed. "Total original cost of implementation of the 1,579 projects was ₹21,95,196.72 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be ₹26,78,365.62 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of ₹4,83,168.90 crore (22.01 per cent of the original cost)," the ministry's latest report for March 2022 said. According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till March 2022 stood at ₹13,88,760.73 crore, which is 51.85 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

which has representations from various connectivity infrastructure ministries/departments involving their heads of network planning division for unified planning and integration of the proposals. "We have created the national master plan digital platform. We have provided training to people

concerned and now we have this mandatory provision from the finance ministry. So, now all logistics and connectivity projects will be approved on the principles of PM GatiShakti. All those projects, costing over ₹500 crore will be considered by NPG," the official said.

# Amazon accuses FRL independent directors of fraud

Future and Amazon have been locked in a bitter legal tussle after the US e-commerce giant dragged Future Group to arbitration at the SIAC in October 2020, arguing that FRL had violated their contract by entering into a deal for the sale of its assets to Reliance Retail on a slump sale basis for ₹24,713 crore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 22:** Amazon has accused independent directors of Future Retail Ltd (FRL) of facilitating "fraudulent stratagem" of transfer of 835 stores to billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance group, saying the narrative of that transfer was on account of failure to pay huge outstanding rent was a "sham" as the retailer had a month prior to such move stated that outstanding rent was only ₹250 crore.

The US retailer wrote May 19 to

independent directors of FRL stated that the firm had in meeting with core lender banks January 1, 2022, "categorically admitted that the unpaid rental dues was ₹250 crore only. FRL further stated that it voluntarily retained the amount."

"Surprisingly, FRL had managed to do so without discontinuing any of its operations or handing over its stores," it wrote. "Consequently, any narrative that there was a purported transfer on account of failure to pay huge outstanding rent for as many as 835 retail stores, that too as quickly as



February 26, 2022, is nothing but a sham and a false narrative to regulators, creditors, the shareholders and the Courts."

The Reliance deal fell last month after the lenders to FRL rejected it. But prior to that, Reliance group, referred to as MDA group by Amazon, took over operations of

dozens of Future stores after the retailer failed to pay rent.

"January 22, 2022, FRL issued a letter to Bank of India, State Bank of India and Saraf and Partners, wherein FRL reiterated its stand on selling the small store formats, in blatant disregard of the binding injunctions operating against it. If the

retail stores were not available with FRL, FRL would be incapacitated from making such a statement," Amazon said. "The purported handover of retail assets of FRL is, thus, not on account of non-payment of outstanding lease rentals."

"The purported handover is nothing but an intentional fraudulent action in furtherance of the stratagem to ostensibly alienate the retail stores, without following the rule of law. It has been carried out without notice to the Courts, regulators, lender banks and solely motivated by the desire to defeat any final award passed in the Arbitration Proceedings in favour of Amazon," it said.

"The stratagem to alienate the retail stores grossly undervalues the retail stores and moreover falls under acts amounting to wrongful trading to defraud creditors," it alleged warning that the promoters, KMPs and directors, including independent, are liable for terms

of imprisonment under various provisions of law including the Companies Act, 2013.

Amazon said FRL had March 9 stated for the first time that termination notices were issued by entities affiliated to the MDA Group. "FRL further went on to disclose that at least 835 retail stores (contributing 55% - 65% of the total revenue of FRL) had been purportedly shut down, possibly making way for stores operated by entities belonging to the MDA Group."

Accusing independent directors of "gross failure" in performing their statutory obligations and duties, the US retailer that, "Your inaction and material omissions have resulted in the execution of this stratagem orchestrated to commit a fraud by FRL, its Promoters, directors and KMPs on various stakeholders inter alia constitutional Courts, regulators, lender banks and its shareholders in collusion and connivance with the MDA Group."

# Modi lauds victorious shuttlers

PLAYERS FEEL DOUBLY MOTIVATED AFTER PM'S ENCOURAGING WORDS AND PROMISE BETTER RESULTS IN FUTURE TOURNAMENTS ALSO



PICTURE PERFECT: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sports Minister Anurag Thakur and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma pose with the victorious Thomas Cup shuttlers at New Delhi, Sunday

**New Delhi, May 22:** This is not a small feat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while hosting the victorious Indian Thomas Cup team here Sunday. The players were also very happy to meet the prime minister. Few days after congratulating the players over telephone for their historic triumph at the prestigious tournament in Bangkok, Modi met in person and interacted with the badminton squads that also included players from the women's Uber Cup team. "I congratulate the whole team on behalf of the nation. This is not a small feat. You have done it. There was a time when we were so behind in these tournaments that no one would know here," Modi pointed out. During his interaction with the

champions, an elated PM relived the memory of the historic Thomas Cup campaign where India clinched gold medal by defeating favourites Indonesia. Modi said that India were able to hoist their flag in the competition after decades and it was not a small achievement. "The 'Yes, we can do it' attitude has become the new strength in the country today. I assure you that the government will give all possible support to our players," said the prime minister. He congratulated senior player Kidambi Srikanth for the manner in which the 29-year-old had shouldered the responsibility of spearheading the Indian challenge, especially in his final match in the championships. "I can very proudly say that no other athlete in the world can boast about this, Sir. Only we have this privilege of talking to you im-

mediately after winning. First of all, thank you so much, sir," Srikanth said. "Athletes will be proud to say that we have the backing of our prime minister," he added. Chief national coach Pullela Gopichand said, "The PM follows the players and the sport, and his thoughts connect with the players." Doubles coach Mathias Boe said he did not expect such a royal treat-

ment. "I have been a player and won medals, but have never been called by my PM (Dendmark)," Boe said. Star shuttler Lakshya Sen gifted the PM Almora's famous 'bal mithai' after the latter expressed his interest to savour the taste of the sweets. "The PM asked for Almora's bal mithai and I got it for him. It is touching that he remembers small things about players," Sen said. "We feel very motivated whenever you meet us, interact with us. I hope I keep winning medals for India, keep meeting you, and keep getting bal mithai for you," the youngster added. India capped off their historic Thomas Cup campaign by blanking 14-time champions Indonesia 3-0 in the final. India had earlier beaten Malaysia and Denmark.

# Umran, Arshdeep get maiden national call for SA T20I series

Selectors have also decided to recall Cheteshwar Pujara to the Test squad

**New Delhi, May 22:** Jammu and Kashmir pace sensation Umran Malik earned an expected call-up in the Indian team for the upcoming five-match

will all fly June 15 to England for the one-off Test at Edgbaston from July 1-5. The selectors have also recalled Cheteshwar Pujara to the 17-member Indian Test squad after

a stupendous show in English County Championship for Sussex. Ditto for all-rounder Hardik Pandya, who has successfully led new franchise Gujarat Titans into IPL playoffs

**T20 International (T20Is) home series against South Africa starting June 9.** Umran has so far picked up 21 wickets in 13 games for Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in the IPL, but his ability to bowl consistently at 95 miles per hour has caught imagination of all and sundry. Along with Umran, Punjab Kings' death overs specialist Arshdeep Singh has also earned his maiden national call-up. Regular captain Rohit Sharma, star batter Virat Kohli, pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami have all been rested for the white-ball series in which Rishabh Pant will be the vice-captain. Rohit, Kohli, Bumrah and Shami



TEST SQUAD
Rohit Sharma (captain), KL Rahul (vice-captain), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Hanuma Vihari, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant (wicket-keeper), KS Bharat (wicket-keeper), Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin, Shardul Thakur, Mohd Shami, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Prasidh Krishna.

T20I SQUAD
KL Rahul (captain), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, Deepak Hooda, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (vice-captain), Dinesh Karthik (wicket-keeper), Hardik Pandya, Venkatesh Iyer, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Harshal Patel, Avesh Khan, Arshdeep Singh and Umran Malik.

## SHORT TAKES

### Gokulam eves blow away Sports Odisha

**Bhubaneswar:** Gokulam Kerala maintained their top spot in the Indian Women's League (IWL) after beating Sports Odisha 7-1 here Sunday. Striker Elshaddai Acheampong scored four goals, while winger Soumya Guguloth netted two and Manisha scored one to help the Malabarians to yet another massive win. The consolation goal for Odisha was scored by Pyari Xaxa. The defending champions made a quick start and took the lead in the first minute with Elshaddai giving the finishing touches to a through ball by Soumya. At half time the winners led 3-1 and added four more goals in the second session.

### Runner collapses, dies after marathon

**New York:** A 30-year-old man crossing the finish line at the "Brooklyn Half Marathon" collapsed and died Saturday morning, officials in New York said. The runner was transported to a nearby hospital where he was pronounced dead, fire department spokesperson Frank Dwyer informed. It was unclear what caused the runner to collapse, though a statement from the non-profit 'New York Road Runners' said it happened after the man finished the race. "Our thoughts and sympathies are with the runner's family and those close to them," said spokesperson Trina Singian. Over 22,000 persons took part in the marathon.

### PBKS triumph

**Mumbai:** Punjab Kings (PBKS) beat Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) by five wickets in an inconsequential last league match of the IPL here Sunday. PBKS chased down the target of 158 with 29 balls to spare. Middle-order batter Liam Livingstone (49, 22b, 2x4, 5x6) led the charge for PBKS while Shikhar Dhawan (39, 32b, 2x4, 2x6) chipped in with a useful knock. For SRH, Fazalhaq Farooqi took two wickets for 32 runs. Earlier SRH had scored 157 for 8 in their 20 overs.

## ASIA CUP DEFENDING CHAMPS FACE PAKISTAN Tough challenge awaits new-look Indian team

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jakarta, May 22:** A second-string Indian men's hockey team will have to tactfully deal with the pressure when they open their title defence against arch rivals Pakistan in the Asia Cup here Monday.

Pakistan also have fielded quite a few new faces for this tournament. However, India will be represented by its 'A' team under the leadership of veteran Birendra Lakra, who came out of retirement after the Tokyo Olympics. For India, the Asia Cup provides a platform to test their bench strength ahead of a busy season that includes the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the FIH World Cup next year for which the Tokyo Olympic bronze medalists have already qualified as the host nation. Pakistan, on the other hand, are

looking at the tournament to make the cut for the 2023 World Cup in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. The top three teams in Asia will qualify directly for the January showpiece. Both India and Pakistan have won the Asia Cup thrice each. India had won the last edition in 2017 by beating Malaysia in the final in Dhaka.

The Indian squad includes another veteran in SV Sunil. There are 10 players who are set to make their senior India debuts, including Yashdeep Siwach, Abhisek Lakra, Manjeet, Vishnukant Singh and Uttam Singh. They were all part of the junior World Cup. The onus would be on the seniors to guide the youngsters in this crucial clash. "It (pressure) is always there (in Pakistan match). But being seniors, if we become too excited, the juniors can come under pressure. So we need to take it as a normal match," Sunil said.

## RCB players thank Mumbai

DC'S LOSS HELPS BANGALORE QUALIFY FOR THE PLAYOFFS IN IPL-2022

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 22:** "Thank you, Mumbai, we will remember this one," said Virat Kohli after Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) sneaked into the playoffs following Mumbai Indians' thrilling five-wicket win over Delhi Capitals (DC) in their last game of the IPL here Saturday. Had DC won they would have played the playoffs and not RCB.

"It was unbelievable. The emotions in the changing room were unbelievable. Thank you, Mumbai, we will remember this one," Kohli said in a release. RCB had defeated table-toppers Gujarat Titans by eight wickets in their final league match to keep their hopes alive for a playoff, which depended on the clash between DC and MI. RCB skipper Faf Du Plessis said the entire team watched the match together and was cheering each and every move made by the Mumbai team. "It was so good, I think first of all it was really nice to see that everyone was here from the start of the game, so we watched it together," Du Plessis said. "We were all shouting for every



Virat Kohli and other players of RCB celebrate after MI's victory over DC Saturday

wicket that Mumbai got and then when they were chasing for every boundary. It's good for everyone to watch together and then the celebration towards the end was awesome to be a part of," the South African added. RCB will now take on May 25 third-placed Lucknow Super Giants

in the 'Eliminator' at Eden Gardens. "The last game we felt almost like we played our best game in this campaign so far. That is how you want to enter the knockout stages, so we needed someone to do us a favour and Mumbai did that for us, we are very thankful for that," Du Plessis said.

## Odisha's Bhagat wins 2 gold medals

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 22:** The Indian para badminton team finished with a rich haul of 23 medals, including seven golds, at the 1st Bahrain Para Badminton International Championships which concluded Sunday in Manama. Odisha's Pramod Bhagat won two medals in the competition.

Promising doubles shuttler Manisha Ramdas shot into limelight with her twin gold medal show, while Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan (WS SH6) and Dhinakaran Pandurangan and Sivrajagan Solaimalai (Doubles SH6) also claimed the other top honours for India. Pairing up with Bhagat, Manisha got the better of Thailand's Siripong Teamarom and Nipada Saensupa 21-14, 21-11 to take the gold in mixed doubles. Manisha also produced a strong show combining with Mandeep Kaur to win the gold in women's doubles SL3-SU5 finals. They took just 23 minutes to defeat the Paralympian pair of Palak Kohli and Parul Dalsukhbhai Parmar 21-11, 21-11. Asian Youth Para Games champion Nithya continued her good run of form to defeat England's Rachel Choong 21-15, 21-15.

## CITY LIGHTS GLOW IN GLORY

MANCHESTER CITY PIP LIVERPOOL TO THE PL TITLE WITH THRILLING 3-2 WIN OVER ASTON VILLA

AGENCIES

**London, May 22:** They were destined to retain the Premier League title and in spite of falling 0-2 behind by the 70th minute, Manchester City conjured up sheer magic in five minutes. In those five minutes, the Blues scored three goals through Ilkay Gundogan (76th and 81st) and Rodri (78th) to go past Aston Villa and win the Premier League title. Pep Guardiola's team did the unthinkable when even their most ardent fans had given up hope. Liverpool were breathing hard on City's neck with just a point separating the two sides before the game began. When Manchester City looked down and out, Liverpool were 2-1 up against the Wolves. It seemed that nothing could catch up. But City players thought otherwise. In a six-minute spell they scripted a turnaround that only



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Ilkay Gundogan (left) wheels away in celebration after scoring Manchester City's third and his second goal against Aston Villa, Sunday

champions can conjure up, that only men of steel can think about. In the end after 38 games of the toughest league in the world, City ended with 93 points to emerge champions while Liverpool missed out finishing on 92 points. And with the results Sunday, Liverpool's hopes of

a quadruple disappeared. They can still make it a treble though if they win the Champions League title beating Liverpool May 28 at Paris. In the Liverpool-Wolves game it was the underdogs who had taken the lead with a third minute goal by Pedro Neto. However, Sadio Mane

(24th) restored parity and then Mo Salah (84th) and Andrew Robertson (89th) ensured all the three points from the game for Liverpool. City looked a completely disjointed in the first half against Villa. Their usual free-flowing passing game was missing. Matty Cash put the visitors ahead in the 37th minute at the Etihad. And then when Philippe Coutinho doubled the tally for Villa in the 70th minute, it seemed that the title was going to Liverpool. However, Gundogan and Rodri thought otherwise. Coming off the bench, Gundogan scored two goals, the second one being a peach. He sped past two Aston Villa defenders as Kevin de Bruyne danced into the Villa box and laid the perfect ball. Gundogan was in flash to poke the ball home. Prior to the winning goal, Rodri had restored parity for City driving the ball home from the edge of the Villa box.

## Jabeur, Thiem suffer first round losses at French Open

AGENCIES

**Paris, May 22:** Tunisian trail-blazer Ons Jabeur crashed out of the French Open at the first hurdle Sunday at the Roland Garros here. Sixth seed Jabeur, seen as a potential champion, despite never having previously got past the fourth round, lost 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5 to Poland's 56th-ranked Magda Linette. Jabeur came into the event with a season-leading 17 wins on clay in 2022 and with the prestigious Madrid title under her belt. However, she was undone Sunday by 24 unforced errors in the two hour 28-minute match. "I just tried to stay focused after the first set and tried to make her uncomfortable. I was happy to fight for every single point," said Linette who needed treatment on a leg injury after dropping the first set. Two-time runner-up Dominic Thiem, whose ranking has slipped

to 194 after a lengthy battle with a wrist injury, was another early casualty, losing 3-6, 2-6, 4-6 to 87th-ranked Hugo Dellien of Bolivia. Thiem, the 2020 US Open champion, is yet to win a match in six attempts since his return to the courts in March. He has now lost 10 tour-level matches in a row. His last victory came in Rome just over a year ago. The 28-year-old Austrian, a former World No. 3 reached at least the quarterfinals at Roland Garros five years running from 2016 to 2020. He finished runner-up to Rafael Nadal in 2018 and 2019. Meanwhile all eyes will be on Spanish teenager Alcaraz after his sensational show this year. He is bidding to become just the eighth teenager to capture a major men's title and is widely tipped to end the dominance of 13-time champion Rafael Nadal and two-time winner Novak Djokovic.