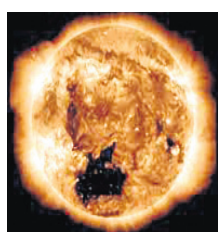




B-TOWN BEEF

Priyanka Chopra Jonas spills the beans on her leaving the Hindi film industry and settling down in the US

LEISURE P2



GIANT HOLE ON US

A massive hole 20 times larger than Earth has ripped through the Sun, the second such incident in a week

INTERNATIONAL P10



RYBAKINA ENTERS SEMIS

Elena Rybakina extends her winning streak to 12 matches after defeating Martina Trevisan in Miami

SPORTS P12

5k lightning strikes in Bhadrak; 5 dead

Bhadrak: Five persons were killed Wednesday in separate incidents of lightning strike in Basudevpur locality of Bhadrak district. The Basudevpur locality was hit by 5,000 lightning strikes in just 30 minutes, informed Umasankar Das of the IMD regional centre in Bhubaneswar. "More than 5,000 lightning strikes today just in 30 minutes near Basudevpur of Bhadrak. It is beyond one's imagination the vulnerability associated with the thundercloud and how fatal it could be!!," Das said in a Twitter post. "As per local information, five people died because of this severe lightning," he said in another tweet.

Man held for thrashing BDO daughter in Koida

Sundargarh: Police arrested Wednesday the father of Koida block development officer Pallabi Rani Raj for allegedly assaulting her. The development took place after the OAS officer filed a complaint against her father Ramesh Chandra and brother Sangram Kumar at the police station here Tuesday. In her complaint, Rani alleged that the two had entered her official flat Tuesday evening and had thrashed her and an assistant engineer over payment of some pending bills. She told the police that since she had not passed some bills generated by her contractor brother, he and her dad had assaulted her.



SOAKED IN DEVOTION: Devotees pull the chariot of Lord Lingaraj on the occasion of Rukuna Rath Yatra in Old Town area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday OP PHOTO

No charge on normal UPI transactions: NPCI

Customers feel that to negate the extra charges, the merchants may hike the price of products in the near future

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 29: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) said Wednesday that there is no charge for bank account to bank account-based UPI payments or normal UPI payments. However, interchange charges are only applicable for prepaid payment instruments (PPI) merchant transactions and there is no charge to customers, NPCI clarified in a statement. Earlier there was confusion that customers will be charged for all UPI transactions.

NPCI has permitted the PPI wallets to be part of interoperable UPI ecosystem and levied 1.1 per cent charge on unified payment interface (UPI) transactions above ₹2,000 while using PPI.

"The interchange charges introduced are only applicable for the PPI merchant transactions and there is no charge to customers, and it is further clarified that there are no charges for the bank account to bank account-based UPI payments," the NPCI said.

With this addition to UPI, the customers will have the choice of using any bank account, RuPay Credit card and prepaid wallets on UPI-enabled apps, it added.

In recent times, UPI has emerged as the preferred mode of digital payment by offering free, fast, secure and seamless experience. Traditionally, the NPCI said, the most preferred method of UPI transactions is linking the bank account in any UPI-enabled app for making payments which contribute over 99.9 per cent of total UPI transactions.

The interchange fee varies for the different categories of merchants. It ranges from 0.5% to 1.1%. For telecom, education, and utilities/post office, the interchange fee is 0.7% while for supermarkets the fee is 0.9% of the transaction value.

Spike in student suicides

DEATH OF THE RD GIRL IS THE SIXTH CASE OF A STUDENT DYING BY SUICIDE IN THE STATE THIS YEAR AND MANY FEEL THAT THEIR INABILITY TO TACKLE STRESS IS FORCING THEM TO TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Coming close on the heels of suicide of popular artist DJ Azex and young engineer Durga Prasad Mishra, a 17-year old girl student of Rama Devi Higher Secondary School died by suicide Wednesday by hanging herself in her hostel room here. The deceased has been identified as Prajna Mohanty, a student of Plus-II second year and a native of Tikiri police limits in Rayagada district. She hanged herself with her scarf in the afternoon.

It should also be stated here that Tuesday another student was found hanging inside her hostel room at the Government Polytechnic College in Jajpur. She was only 18. Mystery surrounds her death as sources had said that she was a brilliant student. Whatever it may be, the number of students dying by suicide



in Odisha is surely a matter of concern. So far six students have died by suicide this year.

Prajna's friends noticed her hanging inside the hostel room and informed the authorities. They in turn informed the police as well as her uncle residing in the Odisha capital.

Sahid Nagar police arrived at the spot and first sent the deceased's body to the Capital Hospital where she was pronounced dead on arrival. Police registered a case and after a thorough search of Prajna's room allegedly recovered a 'suicide' note.

When contacted, Sahid Nagar police station IIC Manoj Satapathy said that Prajna in her note has said that she took the extreme step due to pressure in studies and her inability to do well in the exams.

Untimely end

March 28: Rojalin Patra, 18, a polytechnic student, was found hanging from the ceiling fan at her hostel in Jajpur

March 20: Rashmibala Pahl, 15, a Class X student of Bamadevpur under Dasrathpur block in Jajpur, ends her life due to poor results in Matric

March 11: Tarini Prasad Biswal, 22, a post-graduate student at Berhampur University, found hanging from the ceiling fan of her hostel room

March 2: Nageswari Gond, 20, a student of the Government ITI in Nabarangpur's Umerkote dies by suicide

Jan 31: Nursing student Saurabh Dey, 19, ends life at Bharatpur in Bhubaneswar

Jan 17: Manoj Kumar Behera, 23, a first year MCA student of a private university under Barang police limits in Cuttack, kills self while on a video chat with girlfriend

She said that she did not perform as per expectations in her earlier examinations and hence she was taking the drastic step.

But then what about the student of the polytechnic college in Jajpur? Authorities and her family members had informed that she was brilliant in studies and had received four interview calls from various companies. They had alleged foul play behind her death.

Contd...4

Jharsuguda bypoll May 10, result 13th

Naba Das had won from the constituency twice on a Congress ticket and in 2019 for the BJD. Prior to that, BJD's Kishore Kumar Mohanty had won from the same constituency in 2004, 2009

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Byelection to the Jharsuguda Assembly constituency will be held May 10 while the results will be declared May 13, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced Wednesday in New Delhi along with the dates of the Karnataka polls and other bypolls.

The Jharsuguda seat has been lying vacant following the murder of former Health Minister Naba Kishore Das who was shot dead January 29 by 'dismissed' ASI Gopal Das. As per the schedule announced by the Election Commission of India (ECI), formal notification for the bypoll will be issued April 13 while the last date of filing nomination is April 20. Scrutiny of the papers will be done the next day (April 21) while the last date of withdrawal is April 24.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Odisha, Nikunjia Bihari Dhal said Wednesday the model code of conduct has come into force with the announcement of the date. He



K'taka elections in single phase

New Delhi: Assembly elections in Karnataka will be held in a single phase May 10 and the results announced May 13, the Election Commission announced here Wednesday. It set the stage for a key BJP versus Congress electoral fight ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha show-down. The Janata Dal (Secular) is the third major party in the state, which has a 224-member Assembly. The BJP currently has 119 seats, followed by the Congress with 75. The JD (S) has 28 MLAs, while two seats are vacant. The last date for filing nominations for the Assembly polls is April 20, CEC Rajiv Kumar said.

P7

said there are 2,21,070 voters in the Jharsuguda Assembly segment, of which, 1,10,687 are female voters while 2,526 are persons are physically-challenged.

Dhal informed that polling will be conducted in 253 booths. Restrictions for Covid-19 will be put in place as per the instructions of the Health department.

Contd...4

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'm not asking about Amritpal...just tell me that you are keeping a close eye on opposition leaders

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	57960.09 ↓ 346.37
NIFTY	17080.70 ↓ 129.00
DOLLAR	82.219 ↑ ₹0.42
EURO	89.0530 ↓ ₹0.460
GOLD	₹58,874 ↓ ₹168
SILVER	₹70,630 ↑ ₹46

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	34.8°C	34.8°C
TEMP MIN	24.7°C	25.0°C
Humidity	85%	79%
Rainfall	8.8mm	1.4mm

Forecast: Light rain very likely

FAIZAL BACK IN LOK SABHA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The Lok Sabha Secretariat restored Wednesday, the membership of NCP leader Mohammad Faizal PP, who was disqualified from the lower house in January following his conviction in a criminal case with a 10-year jail term.

Faizal, who represents Lakshadweep, had moved the Kerala HC against the Sessions Court order and obtained a suspension of his conviction and sentence. Faizal was disqualified January 13 from Lok Sabha, after he and three others were sentenced to 10-year rigorous imprisonment and fined ₹1,00,000.

Politicians responsible for hate speeches: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The Supreme Court took serious exception Wednesday to hate speeches and said the moment politics and religions are separated and politicians stop using religion in politics, such speeches will go away. The top court said hate speeches are being made by fringe elements and people should restrain themselves.

A bench of justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna referred to speeches of former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The bench pointed out people from remote areas and nook and corner used to gather to hear them.

"Major problem arises when politicians are mixing politics with religion. The moment politics and religion are segregated, this will end. When politicians

Hate speeches are like a vicious circle. One person will make it and then another will follow suit as there is no mechanism to stop it

SC BENCH

stop using religion, all this hate speech will stop. We have said in our recent verdict also that mixing politics with religion is dangerous for democracy," Justice Joseph said.

The bench wondered as to how many people can initiate contempt action in courts. It asked why 'cannot the people of India' take a pledge to not vilify other citizens or communities.

Contd...4

India gets home-born cheetah cubs

The spotted cats usually give birth 90 days after mating, so it can be said that India now has its own cheetahs after more than 70 years

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 29: Two days after the death of one of the 'translocated' cheetahs at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, there was good news for the animal lovers Wednesday. Forest officials informed that one of the other cheetahs brought from Namibia, has given birth to four cubs. This is the first time, that India will have its own cheetah since 1947.

The last cheetah died in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh in 1947 and the species was declared extinct in 1952.

The news of the birth of four new cubs was confirmed by Union



Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav in a tweet. He termed it a momentous event in India's wildlife conservation history during 'Amrit Kaal'.

"I am delighted to share that four cubs have been born to one of the cheetahs translocated to India on September 17 2022," Yadav tweeted. The minister congratulated the entire team of 'Project Cheetah' for their relentless efforts in bringing back the large carnivore to India and for their

efforts in correcting an ecological wrong done in the past.

Under the ambitious Cheetah reintroduction programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had released the first batch of eight spotted felines - five females and three males - from Namibia into a quarantine enclosure at Kuno, September 17 last year. Since then another 12 cheetahs from South Africa have been relocated at Kuno. The second batch of the spotted

cats were released in Kuno, February 18. One of the Namibian cheetahs, 'Sasha', had died due to a kidney-related ailment Monday, Forest and Wildlife department officials in MP said.

An official informed Wednesday that 'Siyaya', another of the spotted cats from Namibia has given birth to four cubs. "It is a matter of happiness that 'Siyaya' gave birth to four cubs," Sheopur divisional forest officer PK Varma told reporters. "The mother and the cubs are fine and healthy. In fact, Siyaya has killed two animals since she became mother. She has been kept in a big enclosure at the park as of now," he added.

A female cheetah generally gives birth 90 to 93 days after mating. As Namibian cheetahs were brought here September 17, 2022, Siyaya would have mated after her arrival in India. The four newborn cubs can be said to be 'Indian cheetahs', born in the wild on Indian soil, officials pointed out.

leisure



MAISIE SINGS PRAISES ABOUT BEING IN INDIA

GOT actress, Maisie Williams is in Mumbai and can't keep her calm after seeing the Indian décor. The actress took to Instagram, where she shared a video of her room in Mumbai. The 25-year-old will be joining actress Freida Pinto for the *Christian Dior* show to be held in city.

PITT SELLS HOLLYWOOD HOME FOR \$39 MILLION

Babylon star Brad Pitt has sold the Hollywood home he shared with Angelina Jolie for \$39 million for a huge profit, reports *TMZ*. The 59-year-old actor tied the knot with his *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* co-star in 2014 but the pair called it quits just two years later.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES
Today is the day for creativity, while you leave the logic for tomorrow, even when it comes to work. You are bent upon success at work, but Ganesh warns that it requires commitment and devotion. In the evening, you may want to be left alone with your spouse or a book.

TAURUS
Today your money will be burning holes in your pockets. You will be dying squander it away and get rid of it as fast as possible. You'll be tossing it around as if you owned a gold mine. Ganesh urges you to hold your horses and tighten your purse strings. Other wise you are going to regret it, and feel like an idiot. Beware.

GEMINI
You will be filled with energy and enthusiasm in the morning. You will be able to productively utilise your energy in your work. You will be able to take up projects dear to your heart. You will spend the evenings in the company of your family and friends and will be able to relax and unwind in luxury, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today, your action will usher in incredible results, thanks to your forthright approach, foretells Ganesh. Later in the day, you may work on self-improvement and personality development. You may make some changes in your house.

LEO
You will receive extremely good news from your friends today. You will have co-operation and the support of your spouse. You will feel emotional today. Your understanding nature will make everything easy however. You are likely to be in a state of sensitivity with regards to feelings today, says Ganesh.

VIRGO
Today is a bright day, says Ganesh. The focus will be on you and you can count this among your most excellent days. Opinions might differ at the workplace, but Ganesh says you may bypass them. In the evening, a candle-light dinner will make your spirits soar. You will impress people today.

LIBRA
Ganesh says you will be able to get out of legal hurdles successfully today and it will be showcased by your happiness. You will be inclined towards fine arts like classical music and dancing. This is a good time to go out to dinner with your favorite person.

SCORPIO
It's time for soiree and merry making with family, predicts Ganesh. You never know, you may even bump into someone special today, who may become an integral part of your life in future. Your friends are your extended family, call them over for the celebrations.

SAGITTARIUS
Ganesh foresees a gradual weakening in your position. You are most likely to bring troubles upon yourself as the day progresses. Good economic gains are expected if you change the hub of your activities.

CAPRICORN
You mark dates on calendar to sneak away for a small vacation near by, but because of the heavy workload, you always have to cancel the plans. You don't need to plan, in fact, you can take an impromptu vacation, feels Ganesh. Take one now! Get a roadmap and drive away from the hassle of the city.

AQUARIUS
Who doesn't like to have a heavier pocket? You will be pleased to have little extra cash in your wallet. Also, you will pay attention to your financial planning and position, says Ganesh. Beware! The green-eyed people around you will try to distract you from your path, so keep your guards on, advises Ganesh.

PISCES
Today is a good day for conducting business and on the work-front, especially for those in higher management. You will find yourself attending important meetings or taking critical decisions. For students looking to pursue higher studies, now is a good time to get cracking.



I was pushed into a corner: Priyanka

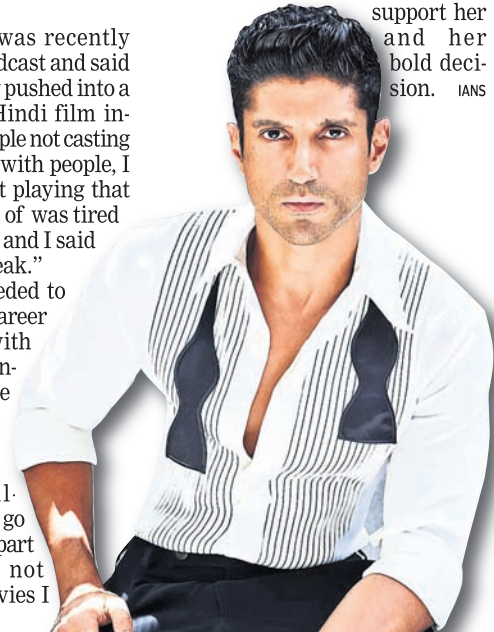
Mumbai: *Citadel* star Priyanka Chopra Jonas has created a stir in the Hindi film industry with her recent revelation stating the reason she left the town and moved to work in the States. She also revealed that she was not the happiest with the work she was getting from the industry.

The actress was recently speaking on a podcast and said that "I was being pushed into a corner in the Hindi film industry. I had people not casting me, I had beef with people, I am not good at playing that game so I kind of was tired of the politics and I said I needed a break."

She proceeded to pursue her career in the US with the music industry. She added, "This music thing allowed me to go into another part of the world, not crave for the movies I

didn't want to get but I would require to schmooze certain clubs and cliques of people." Eventually, she tried out for acting roles in the US as well and landed herself the lead role in *Quantico* in 2015.

With her recent disclosure, numerous artists and celebrities from B-town came to support her and her bold decision. IANS



Farhan reflects on being a filmmaker

Mumbai: Farhan Akhtar, who is known for his acting and singing, also ace the domain of directing movies where his contribution is quite underrated. Recently in his social media he reflected on being a filmmaker out of everything else.

The actor took to Instagram and wrote, "Every once in a while I stop, and think about how lucky we filmmakers are to think up a story and then connect with like-minded dreamers to bring that story to life, to get to share what once lived just in the mind with the world and hopefully... hopefully... elicit the intended emotional response."

He further added, "There's no other place I'd rather be. It doesn't matter if it's behind a camera or in front of it. As long as

it's telling stories."

On the work front, Farhan Akhtar was last seen in *Toofan* in 2021. He recently announced his upcoming project titled *Jee Le Zaraa* starring Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Katrina Kaif, and Alia Bhatt in the lead with the theme of road trip. Apart from directing *Jee Le Zaraa*, he is also producing *Kho Gaye Hum* starring Ananya Panday, Siddhant Chaturvedi, and Adarsh Gourav.

AGENCIES

STATE MUSEUM EXHIBITS WORKS OF CHANDRA BHATTACHARJEE



Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena, poet Rajendra Panda, and other dignitaries inaugurating the exhibition by lighting lamps

Bhubaneswar: A solo exhibition titled *Dissolving the Surface* by Chandra Bhattacharjee was inaugurated by Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena here at the Odisha State Museum Wednesday. The exhibition is being organised by Gallery Artistmindz and will display a series of watercolour paintings. The event will continue until April 14 for art lovers.

Born in West Bengal, Chandra Bhattacharjee is a self-made consummate. His brilliance in watercolours reflects his roots in his academic training in fine arts from Kolkata. A graduate from the Indian College of Arts and Draftsmanship, he is a recipient of a gold medal from Rabindra Bharati University for excellence in fine arts. Chandra is also a photographer par excellence and captured the deep forest flora and fauna. In the exhibition, his art imbues these photographic



effects with the sensitivity and artistic genius of the brush strokes, resulting in a solemn expression of his artistic genius.

Addressing the event, the chief secretary said that more such exhibitions and shows of artists from other states should be organised to help the new artists. Director of Artistmindz Arun Bera found the experience of presenting an artist of such stature extremely fulfilling. PNN



'I don't associate myself as royal'

Mumbai: *Atrangi Re* star Sara Ali Khan said that she doesn't consider herself to be royalty, even though she is descended from the Nawab of Pataudi. She is the granddaughter of Sharmila Tagore and Mansoor Ali Khan, the last Nawab of Pataudi. Her great-grandfather was the last ruler of the princely state of Pataudi during the British Raj. The young actor spoke about having a normal upbringing in Mumbai and living a simple life, not connected to royalty.

In an interview with a news portal, the actor said, "I find it ridiculous when people think that I don't associate myself as a royal. I've lived in Juhu, Mumbai most of my life with my mother. I go to Bandra to meet my dad. I holiday in Himachal Pradesh, Kedarnath, Jammu, and Kashmir. I really don't know what royal means."

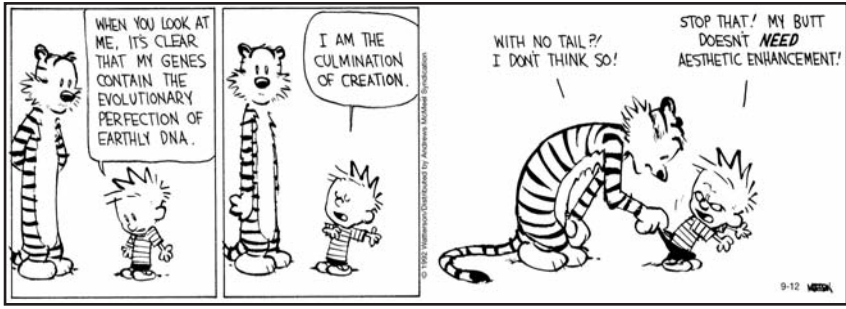
The actress will next be seen in the Disney+ Hotstar film *Gaslight*. Her upcoming work includes Homi Adajania's *Murder Mubarak* and the historical drama *Ae Watan Mere Watan*, in which she plays an Indian freedom fighter and underground radio host, Usha Mehta. AGENCIES

FUN post

PEANUTS



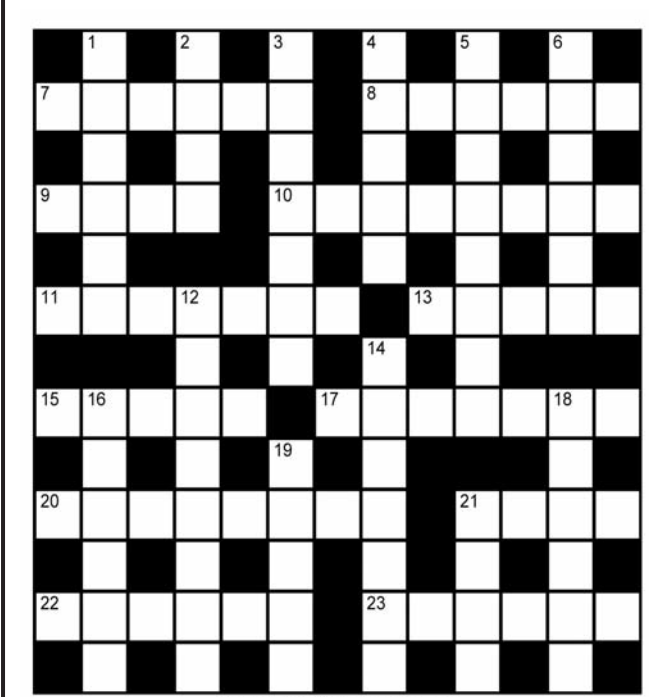
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



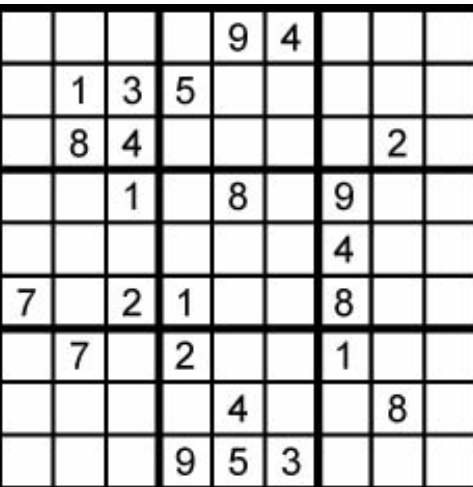
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Structure support
 - 8 Garden tool
 - 9 Kon Tiki, for one
 - 10 Certain, as a plan (4-4)
 - 11 Military officer
 - 13 Dutch cheese
 - 15 Calculate
 - 17 Stabilise
 - 20 Earthquake aftermaths, at times
 - 21 Have supper
 - 22 Passionate
 - 23 Dense
 - Down
 - 1 Ocean trip
 - 2 Equitable
 - 3 Strange
 - 4 Loan shark's rate
 - 5 Face up to
 - 6 Become very angry (3,3)
 - 12 Railroad employee
 - 14 War and Peace author
 - 16 Ludicrous
 - 18 Complete
 - 19 Skips over
 - 21 Appointment

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



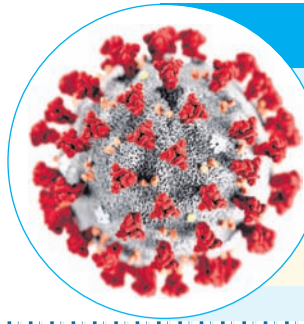
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



CAR FEST PREP

The first coordination meeting ahead of Rath Yatra, chaired by district Collector Samarth Verma, was held at Puri Circuit House, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,35,67,637	65,65,24,151	68,28,672
India	4,47,09,676	4,41,66,925	5,30,848
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

SC miffed over no status reports Govt trying to suppress Naba Das murder: Oppn

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 29: The Supreme Court Wednesday directed the state government to file a status report on compliance and non-compliance of directions issued by it with respect to better management of affairs at Srimandir in Puri.

The court took note of the fact that no status report was filed by state government on compliance or non-compliance of directions issued by it November 4, 2019.

The top court expressed unhappiness over the non-appointment of a full-time chief administrator to the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration despite the court's directions. Meanwhile, the state government submitted during the hearing that an application seeking extension of time to appoint full time chief administrator has been filed in the apex court. The state government counsel submitted that Works department secretary is managing the affairs currently. The court rejected the state government's argument and observed that there must be a full time chief administrator. The court said that the state can either keep Works department secretary as an advisor



SRIMANDIR AFFAIRS

The top court took note of the fact that no status report was filed by state govt on compliance or non-compliance of directions issued by it Nov 4, 2019

The SC expressed unhappiness over the non-appointment of a full-time chief administrator to the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration despite the court's directions

or can appoint the secretary as a full-time chief administrator.

A two-judge bench of Justices MR Shah and CT Ravikumar asked the Odisha government to file the status report within four weeks and serve a copy of the report to amicus curiae Ranjeet Kumar at least a week before the next hearing, scheduled May 1.

"As on today, we are not aware which directions are complied with and which are not. A status report on compliance or non-compliance of various directions issued by this court shall be submitted within four weeks," the bench said.

During the hearing, senior ad-

vocate Ranjeet Kumar brought it to the notice of the SC that no progress report has been filed by the state government till date.

"We don't have copy of progress," Kumar said.

With respect to directions for construction of school for children of servitors, Kumar submitted that ₹5 crore were released from SC for the purpose but there has been no updates about the construction of the school. He further submitted that no status report was filed on various other directions such as conduct of rituals in the traditional form as prescribed by Shankaracharya, maintenance

of hygiene at Rasoghar, construction of toilets, preparation of record of rights (RoR) of the properties of Srimandir among others. Kumar submitted that RoR has been made for only 34,000 acres of land while the temple has over 60,000 acres.

The Supreme Court November 4, 2019 had ordered the temple administration to ensure that there should not be any harassment of devotees in the temple. It ordered the temple administration to prevent incidences of misbehaviour with women, snatching and pickpocketing in the temple premises and also asked them that all the rituals shall be held according to tradition and practices.

"We direct the temple administration and the chief administrator including the state government to prepare a roadmap with the help of experts for having proper darshan by the devotees/pilgrims and to implement it effectively, and to ensure that there is no commotion so that everybody is able to have darshan peacefully without any obstruction," the bench had said.

The SC further recommended issuance of I-cards to servitors and temple committee staff. It had also asked for construction of shelter home for the devotees.

PNN/AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Opposition BJP and Congress Wednesday created a ruckus in the Assembly accusing the Naveen Patnaik government of making all efforts to suppress the killing of former minister Naba Kishore Das in Jharsuguda district.

The allegation was made by both BJP and Congress during Zero Hour in the Assembly. Das was gunned down by a policeman Gopal Das, exactly 60 days before - January 29, 2023 - at Brajarajnagar Gandhi Chowk in Jharsuguda district.

The minister was shot dead by Gopal while he was on his way to attend an official function.

The issue was raised by Leader of Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra of BJP who claimed that the Crime Branch of Odisha Police which is probing into the incident, has not revealed the motive of the crime.

"I have already said that some influential persons had hatched a conspiracy to eliminate Das for which the CB was not revealing the motive behind the murder," the BJP veteran said, adding that the case must be handed over to the CBI as the state government's crime branch has "failed" to do justice.

He said: "A government employee (ASI Gopal Das) killing the government (then minister Naba Das) is not a small matter. How can the state government probe into the mat-

ter?" "When the state government doesn't have any info about FBI probe into any case in another state, why is the government so worried about the FBI probe into this murder case?" he asked.

The LoP said that once the Assembly session comes to end April 6, there will be none to raise

question on the state government's alleged attempt to suppress the daylight killing of a minister. "They have done this in other cases too in the past," he alleged.

The BJP leader was supported by Congress Legislature Party Leader (CLP) Narasingha Mishra. He alleged, "The government is getting mad to prove Gopal Das as mad despite the medical board and the court saying that the accused has no mental illness."

The Congress leader alleged that the government is an accused in the Naba Das killing as a policeman has opened fire on the minister. Therefore, the state government's probe cannot be free and neutral. He demanded an SIT probe into the matter.

BJD's Nayagarh MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo, however, countered the opposition allegation and said, "The issue has been discussed in the Assembly several times. There is no point in raising the matter again in the House. The opposition should have patience till the Crime Branch probe is completed."

Two get new lease of life at SCBMCH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Adding another feather to its cap, the Sriram Chandra Bhanja Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) in Cuttack has successfully retrieved two kidneys from a cadaver donor and transplanted those in two recipients, giving a new lease of life to the duo.

A team of experts from SCB's Urology and Nephrology departments - comprising Samir Swain, Aruna Acharya, Sabyasachi Panda, Snajaya Choudhury and Sarat Chandra Parida - retrieved the kidneys from Tanuja Kar, 57, and transplanted those in Alok Bodak, 36, of Brajarajnagar in Jharsuguda and Saurjya Ranjan Sahoo, 48, of CDA in Cuttack.

CADAVERIC TRANSPLANT
Kar, a resident of Tarol in Jagatpur area of Cuttack, was under treatment at Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery (CTVS) department of SCBMCH. "As Kar could not be revived despite efforts, she was declared 'brain dead' by the Brain Death Declaration Team," said an SCB official in know of the development.

As per the recipient list of Odisha prepared by State Organ Tissue Transplant Organisation (SOTTO), Bodak and Sahoo having high priority score were selected for kidney transplant. Later, it was intimated to the Regional Organ Tissue Transplant Organisation and National Organ Tissue and Transplant Organisation for further process. "Apollo Hospitals-Bhubaneswar cooperated in performing all laboratory investigations. After donor-recipient cross match, the kidneys were retrieved and transplanted as per law," said the official.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday congratulated SCBMCH for the feat.



REVISITING ODIA HEROISM: Swordsmanship skills on display by Nikhila Odisha Paika Mahasangha members at Museum Square in Bhubaneswar as part of Paika Divas celebrations, Wednesday

BOOST TO SPORTS INFRA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: With a few days left for the ITF Asia 14-U Development Championship 2023 to commence in Bhubaneswar, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday inaugurated the Tennis Centre at Kalinga Stadium Sports Complex.

He also unveiled the logo and jersey of the upcoming international tennis tournament.

The Tennis Centre is certified by International Tennis Federation and features one synthetic centre

Naveen unveils Tennis Centre at Kalinga Stadium

court with a gallery seating for 1,400, gymnasium, players changing room, auditorium and rooms for dignitaries, media room, broadcast and administrative purpose.

The Tennis Complex at Kalinga Stadium with 8 synthetic courts is now capable of hosting matches under the aegis of International Tennis Federation and Asian Tennis Federation.

Patnaik congratulated Odisha Tennis Association and Sports department for working closely to develop tennis in the state. He said, "Kalinga Stadium Sports Complex

has been admired as a hub of sports and a premier training ground that is nurturing champions of the future. Addition of the Tennis Centre strengthens our ecosystem further which will help our tennis players to compete and excel at national and international events."

On the occasion, the Chief Minister felicitated sportspersons Archana Majhi (Kho kho), Swadhin Majhi (Athletics), Debasis Sahoo (Tennis) and Jayanti Behera (Para athletics), for their achievements at various international events.



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik speaks during the inauguration of Tennis Centre at Kalinga Stadium Sports Complex and launching of jersey as well as logo for ITF Asia 14-U Development Championship 2023 in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

Furthermore, prior to the inauguration, Sports Minister Tusharkanti Behera felicitated 45 athletes with cash awards for their achievements at various national events.

Dignitaries present at this inauguration include Chief Secretary PK Jena, Development Commissioner Anu Garg, Secretary to CM (ST) VK Pandian, Sports and Youth Services Secretary Vineel Krishna, OTA president Asit Tripathy and its secretary Satyajit Mohanty and other officials.

India saw 7 lakh malware attacks in 2022: Report

The report reveals a 16% rise in malware attacks, underscoring the need for ongoing vigilance and collaboration to safeguard critical industries

India experienced approximately 7 lakh malware attacks in 2022, up from 6.5 lakh in 2021, with the banking sector being the most vulnerable to these attacks, totalling 44,949 incidents, a report revealed Wednesday.

The top six sectors affected by malware in India in 2022 were banking, government, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and finance.

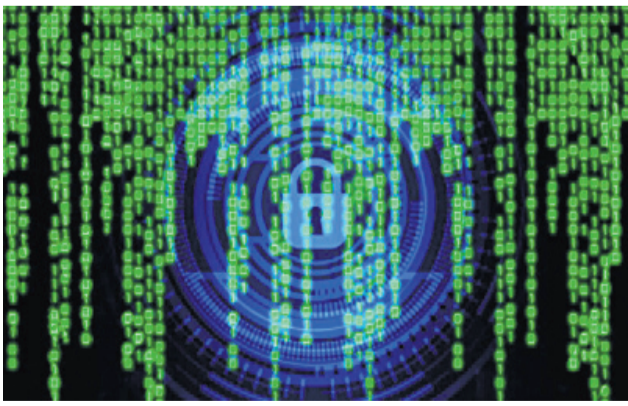
However, there was a slight decline in the number of malware detections across the six critical sectors, indicating that appropriate measures are being taken, according to the report by global cyber-security firm Trend Micro.

In 2022, there were a total of

1,49,83,271 ransomware threats globally, with 38.06 per cent of the attacks targeting Asia, and 10.51 per cent of those attacks being detected in India.

"The report reveals a 16 per cent increase in malware attacks, underscoring the need for ongoing vigilance and collaboration to safeguard critical industries such as banking, government, and manufacturing in India," said Vijendra Katiyar, country manager for India & SAARC, Trend Micro.

In 2021, the top three sectors affected by ransomware were banking, government, and manufacturing, but the trend shifted in 2022 when the Indian government sector became the most affected, followed by manufactur-



VITAL STATS Globally, cyber-threat detections hit a record 146 billion in 2022

The report mentioned a massive 55% increase in overall threat detections in 2022 and a 242% surge in blocked malicious files

There was an 86% increase in backdoor malware detections

ing and banking. Interestingly, while the number of attacks on the Indian banking sector decreased significantly from 15,928 to just 626 ransomware alerts, the number of attacks on

the government sector remained relatively stable, and the manufacturing sector saw an increase from 994 to 1,178 incidents in 2022, the data showed.

Globally, cyber-threat detections hit a record 146 billion in 2022.

The report mentioned a massive 55 per cent increase in overall threat detections in 2022 and a 242 per cent surge in blocked malicious files, as threat actors indiscriminately targeted consumers and organisations across all sectors.

There was an 86 per cent increase in backdoor malware detections. These backdoors primarily targeted web server platform vulnerabilities.

"A surge in backdoor detections is particularly concerning in showing us their success in making landfall inside networks," said Jon Clay, VP of threat intelligence at Trend Micro.

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Fight malnutrition in mission-mode: Min

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Women and children form an important pillar of society and it is crucial to focus on their health and nutrition. As malnutrition is one of the key factors influencing their health and wellbeing, we will take up the fight against it in mission-mode, said Women and Child Development Minister Basanti Hembram at the state level celebration of Nutrition Fortnight-2023 here Wednesday.

To address malnutrition, under the POSHAN Abhiyaan, interventions have been mapped out for different depts focusing the first 1,000 days of a child's life since conception

technology, a targeted approach and convergence. It is not a programme but a Jan Andolan, a 'people's movement' that incorporates participation of government departments, public representatives of local bodies, social organizations and the public and private sector at large," added the minister. To address malnutrition at the earliest, under the POSHAN Abhiyaan, high-impact interven-

tions have been mapped out for many departments, especially focusing the first 1,000 days of the child's life since conception. "Each converging department prepares an action plan related to nutrition and integrates it with its ongoing activities. The programme, through its stated targets, will strive to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia and low birth weight babies. It provides a platform to converge the activities of various stakeholders towards attaining the goal of 'Suposhit Bharat,'" informed a department official. The goals of POSHAN Abhiyaan are to achieve improvement in nutritional status of children from 0-6, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers in a time-bound manner during three years with fixed targets.



BETTER NOURISHED: Dignitaries including Women and Child Development Minister Basanti Hembram (middle) and department commissioner-cum-secretary Subha Sarma release a booklet titled 'Pathway to Improve Complementary Feeding' during the state level celebration of Nutrition Fortnight in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

CONTINUED FROM P1

Jharsuguda bypoll...

Sources informed that BJD is likely to nominate the former minister's daughter Dipali while the BJP in all probability will field its youth leader Tankadhar Tripathy Both Dipali and Tripathy have already started campaigning in the constituency. President of the OPCC Sarat Pattanayak informed that a committee has been formed headed by senior leader and MLA Santosh Singh Saluja. The committee will select a candidate for the bypoll shortly. Both the BJD and BJP leaders exuded confidence about registering a win. Senior BJD leader Debi Prasad Mishra claimed that the party will register a landslide victory in Jharsuguda as it did in Padampur Assembly constituency in December last year. Naba's daughter Dipali meanwhile said that even though exactly two months have passed since her father's death, the pain still remains. "Whoever is nominated by the CM (Naveen Patnaik), our family will extend full support. Our preparations will be made in accordance with the decision of the Chief Minister."

ing action in time. This is because the state has become impotent, powerless and does not act in time," the bench shot back.

Spike in...

The probe has so far failed to provide the correct reason as to why she took the drastic step. However, her parents have alleged that she was forced to take the drastic step due to ragging. Till March this year, six students of various institutions have died by suicide. Four of the deaths have occurred in March only and it is a worrying sign indeed. Psychiatrist Dr Amrit Pattojoshi pointed out relationship issues, lack of coping skills, failure to do well in academics and substance abuse are the main causes of students dying by suicide. Dr Pattojoshi also asserted that present day youth do not have the ability to tackle stress and that is why student deaths are increasing

Politicians...

"Everyday fringe elements are making speeches to vilify others including on TV and public forums," the bench said while hearing a contempt petition against various state authorities including Maharashtra for failing to register FIRs against those making such speeches. When Solicitor General Tushar Mehta pointed out a derogatory speech made in Kerala by a man against a particular community, it triggered sharp exchanges between the court and him. The bench referred to the speeches and said 'every action has equal reaction'. We are hearing the contempt petition because states are not tak-

Lord Lingaraj's chariot pulled

Bhubaneswar, Mar 29: The annual chariot festival of Lord Lingaraj, the presiding deity of Bhubaneswar, was observed with festive fervour as the famous Rukuna Ratha Jatra rolled the grand road here. Amid chanting of slokas and beating of cymbals, Lord Lingaraj's festive journey is observed on the eighth day during the waning moon phase in Chaitra month as per the Hindu calendar, also known as Ashokashtami. Hundreds of devotees thronged the Lingaraj Temple to pull the chariot. The bronze idols of three deities- Chandrashekhar representing Lord Lingaraj, Rukuna, and Ananta Vasudeva are brought to the chariot amid blowing of conches and chanting of religious hymns. The four-wheeled 35-ft chariot is pulled from this 11th-century Lord Lingaraj Temple to Mausima Temple, amid tight security. The deities stay there for four days and the return festival is observed on 5th day.



chanted of religious hymns. The four-wheeled 35-ft chariot is pulled from this 11th-century Lord Lingaraj Temple to Mausima Temple, amid tight security. The deities stay there for four days and the return festival is observed on 5th day.

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AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of affidavit before Public Notary, Puri, I, Rabindra Upadhyaya, S/o Ashok Mohanty, resident of Srikrishna Colony, Water Workers Road, Puri, 752002, P.S.-Seabeach, here by changed my name to Rabindra Mohanty. Henceforth, I will be known as Rabindra Mohanty for all purpose.

Correction the title of my husband 'SHAH' instead 'Saha' That is my Passport vide No. W9339513, File No. - BH1065145558723, dtd. 17.3.23 my husband's title from been mentioned on Akbar Ali Saha instead of Akbar Ali Shah. Please correct it.

Unclean fuel, fast food behind heart diseases in India

A MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION OF INDIA RESIDES IN RURAL AREAS AND USES UNCLEAN FUELS FOR COOKING AND OTHER PURPOSES, EXPOSING THEM TO HARMFUL SMOKE EMITTED FROM BURNING THEM

Use of unclean fuel causing indoor air pollution and sedentary lifestyle, with the increased adoption of fast-food culture, are some of the reasons behind rising heart diseases in India, according to a study released by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi Wednesday. Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are a leading cause of mortality worldwide, claiming lives of around 17.9 million people annually. Data from the ICMR and Registrar General of India shows that India accounts for approximately 60 per cent of the world's heart disease burden. To identify the most significant risk factors for CVDs in the country, the researchers analysed data from more than 59,000 individuals aged 45 and above in both rural and urban India. Their findings, published in the Current Problems in Cardiology journal, suggest that older adults in India are prone to physiological risk followed by genetic, indoor environmental, and behavioural risk factors. "There are several traditional risk factors for CVDs, including high systolic blood pressure, low HDL cholesterol, obesity, unhealthy food, poor nutritional status, age, family history, physical inactivity, smoking, and alcohol consumption," said Ramna Thakur, IIT Mandi, in a statement. "Additionally, exposure to air pollutants is another significant risk factor. We aimed to cluster these risk factors into different groups and identify the exclusive individual effect of each group on CVD prevalence among adults aged 45 and above in India," she added.



The study found that environmental exposure is a significant risk factor for the occurrence and progression of CVDs in older adults in India. A majority of the population of India resides in rural areas and uses unclean fuels for cooking and other purposes, exposing them to harmful smoke emitted from burning them. The study also identified behavioural risk factors such as physical inactivity leading to CVDs. The study showed that the effect of physiological factors, which include diabetes, high cholesterol, depression, and being overweight or obese, is particularly serious.

The sedentary lifestyle of people, the adoption of fast-food culture, and urbanisation are some of the reasons for the prevalence of these physiological factors. To reduce indoor air pollution and safeguard public health, the study recommends promoting the use of cleaner technology such as liquefied petroleum gas, solar, electricity, and biogas. Engaging in light to moderate physical activity in middle or older age has a considerable positive impact on the reduction of the risk of cardiovascular disease and overall mortality. Risk awareness programmes associated with alcohol and tobacco use could also be an effective method to curb their use and reduce the probability of getting diagnosed with CVDs, the researchers said.

'Covid-19 taught lawyers use of technology'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar Wednesday launched free wi-fi and e-inspection facilities for members of the High Court Bar Association in presence of judges of the High Court. Delivering the keynote address at the event, the Chief Justice said that the Covid-19 pandemic taught the legal fraternity the use of technology and in Odisha particularly the hands-on training for lawyers and law clerks helped a lot in technology adaptation.

The Orissa High Court has been taking initiatives to make best use of technology to ensure speedy and quality justice delivery to the public. Digitization of records, e-filing, e-payment of court fees, paperless courts, e-libraries for the bar, virtual courts, a mobile applica-



tion are some of the key e-initiatives undertaken by the High Court. The free Wi-Fi and e-inspection facilities are an extension of these initiatives for the benefit of bar members. Citing the growing use of mobile phones the Chief Justice said that technology is something that someone can learn through regular use. He added, "Society has moved ahead with technology and lawyers have to keep pace with the change as the rate of change in technology is much quicker than one can imagine." The Chief Justice also said that artificial intelligence would help lawyers organise themselves urging them to adopt the best practices of their counterparts from other states. High Court Bar Association secretary Chittaranjan Swain thanked the Chief Justice for the free wi-fi facility and e-Inspection facility saying it would make the work of the lawyers a lot easier.

The Chief Justice said that AI would help lawyers organise themselves urging them to adopt best practices of their counterparts from other states

Speaking on the occasion, Justice Subhasis Talapatra said the lawyers will be immensely benefitted by the two new facilities urging the present lawyers to use the wi-fi facility for research work. The Chief Justice urged the newly elected Bar Association president to organise a workshop on "law and technology" advising the young lawyers to watch live streaming of court proceedings of different countries for their learning.

Omfed milk to cost ₹2 more from April

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: The state government has hiked the prices of Omfed milk by Rs 2 per 500 ml with effect from April 1, 2023. The new prices will be applicable to all milk variants. The milk federation said that the hike was effected in view of rising input cost of farmers' feed

and fodder prices, medicines & fuel costs - as well as costs of packaging material. The expenditure at the federation has also gone up due to increase in the overhead cost coupled with mounting operational costs of packaging, logistics, etc. Despite paying higher prices towards milk procurement in the last one year, the consumer prices were kept intact by Omfed.

VARIANT	PACK SIZE	CONSUMER PRICE	
		Old MRP	Revised MRP
Toned Milk	500 ml	21	23
Premium Milk	500 ml	24	26
Gold Milk	500 ml	24	26
Chai Special	500 ml	23	25

State inks MoU for semiconductor fab

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 29: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed Wednesday between Industrial Promotion & Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited (IPICOL), the state government and SRAM & MRAM Technologies for establishment of a semiconductor fabrication project in Odisha. The MoU was signed by IPICOL managing director Bhubendra Singh Poonia and group vice-chairman Gurujee Kumar Swami in the presence of Industry, MSME & Energy Minister Pratap Keshari Deb, Industry principal secretary Hemant Kumar Sharma, IPICOL ED Kalyan Kumar Mohanty, project director Debadutta Singh Deo



and other dignitaries of state government and IPICOL. M/S SRAM & MRAM Technologies, a unit of SRAM & MRAM Group, UK, will establish the Semiconductor Fab Unit with a total investment of around 2 lakh crore. However, in the first phase, they will invest Rs 30,000 crore. The company is looking for a technical tie-up with some global leaders in the semiconductor industry, informed a source familiar with the developments.

Devotional video album unveiled



Bhubaneswar: Eminent Sai devotee Gurujee Chandrabhanu Satapathy unveiled a video album 'Srikrishna Sangeetayan' at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. The album comprising six songs is written and directed by Satapathy and produced by Sai Sadra Productions and CBS Cultural Foundation, Gurugram. The album comprising six songs describes various facets on the life and times of Lord Srikrishna. It has been shot at various locations of Koraput district. State Chief Secretary Pradip Kumar Jena, special relief commissioner Satyabrata Sahu, former chief secretary Ramakant Rath, Odisha Mo Parivar Chairperson Arup Patnaik, Sai Sadra Production's Bini Samal, Mo School Chairperson Akash Das Nayak, former MP Siddhanta Mohapatra, Kadambini editor Iti Samant. All India Radio, Cuttack's former director Sudha Mishra conducted the programme while anchor Gungun compered it.

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Decline in water level of Luna river sparks concern

Drinking water supply to Kendrapara town and irrigation at farmlands may get seriously hit



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 29: With the water level in Luna river declining day by day, a serious drinking water scarcity stares at the face of Kendrapara residents.

The decline in water level will not only trigger a drinking water shortage in the town but is also likely to leave the farmlands uncultivated due to lack of water for irrigation.

Reports said that water level of Luna river flowing through the Kendrapara district has been declining since December, 2022. Environmentalists said the development was due to rampant and illegal mining of sand from the riverbed.

They alleged that water level has been declining due to illegal sand mining which is likely to change the course of the river. The development has sparked concern in the area. Local intelligentsia said that the problem can be resolved by linking all the seven rivers flowing through the district.

Khitish Kumar Singh of Khadianga area in the town said that drinking water is supplied to the residents in Kendrapara town through a pump house established at Kalapada near the Luna river bank. However, the portion of the river near the pump house has already

dried up from January, this year. Alarmed over the development, the PHD and Irrigation department officials dug up a channel of 150 metre length from the opposite side of the river till the pump house for lifting of the river water. The river water after being lifted by the motor pump is processed and supplied as drinking water to the residents of Kendrapara town.

However, the channel is also drying up slowly creating concerns that a drinking water scarcity is looming over the residents of Kendrapara town. If the situation does not improve then water supply to Kendrapara town might get seriously affected within the next 15 days.

A local intelligentsia Santosh Kumar Panda said that check dams have been constructed on Luna river at Padagayaspur, Gayaspur, Thauri, Chadheigan, Rajgarh and Angulai in the district for supply of drinking water to the residents and for providing irrigation facilities to the farmlands.

However, the water level of the river declining even before the start of the summer season is quite alarming. The fall in the river's water level may deprive the farmlands of irrigation facilities for which around 10,000 hectare of farmlands risk remaining uncultivated.

Former Zilla Parishad member Ganesh Chandra Samal said that the 73-km-long Luna river which flows through Kendrapara district was the hub of marine trade during the British rule. However, lack of renovation, illegal sand and soil mining and encroachments have spelt disaster for the river. As a result, the river is now changing its course.

The residents of Kendrapara district are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. In the absence of any other viable irrigation facility, the farmers here depend on river water to irrigate their farmlands. However, they lack drainage facilities to discharge the leftover water from over 15,850 hectare of farmland. Moreover, 32,350 hectare of farmland in the district is saline while 34,952 hectare is flood affected. This apart, over 84,910 hectare of farmland in the district is prone to droughts. There have been consistent demands in the Zilla Parishad meetings to devise a plan for proper management of the rivers and canals flowing through the district. However, these pleas are yet to be addressed.

Social activist Pratap Kumar Tripathy said that earlier Luna river water used to help in cultivation of paddy during kharif season and cash crops like jute, groundnuts and sugarcane during the rabi season. However, farming has been seriously hit in the district due to sharp decline in the water level of Luna river. Moreover, construction of dams by the Chhattisgarh government on the upstream of Mahanadi has also contributed to the situation.

Farmer leader Bidhu Bhusu Mohapatra said that linking of all seven rivers in the district only can help resolve the situation.

When contacted, executive engineer Umesh Chandra Sethi said that various schemes have been launched for development of the Luna river and the residents will soon reap its benefits.



SWIMMING CONTEST: Participants dive into the pool during a state-level school swimming championship held at Dr Jhasaketan Sahu Swimming Complex in Sambalpur, Wednesday

3 youths held over objectionable reel

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, March 29: Town police in Bargarh district Wednesday arrested three youths on the charge of hurling casteist slurs on the members of Sahara, Kulta and Binjal communities through objectionable Instagram reels uploaded on the social media platform.

The accused were identified as Ashis Bhasagar, Kundan Suna and Alok Mahananda of Banjipali village under Barpali police limits in Bargarh district. A case was registered in this connection and the accused were produced in court. Police said the accused youths were making objectionable Instagram reels and uploading them on social media hurling abuses at the members of these three communities.

The videos evoked sharp reactions from the members of these three communities. Reacting sharply to the videos, a delegation of an outfit Kulta Yuvashakti visited the Town police station and lodged a complaint in this regard, March 26. Police registered a case and arrested the youths.

The matter came to the fore after

Doc demands bribe for autopsy report, sacked

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 29: The district health authorities here Wednesday sacked a surgery specialist of Telkoi hospital in Keonjhar district after a video of the doctor demanding bribe to hand over a post-mortem report went viral on social media.

The matter came to the fore after the chief district medical officer (CDMO) Dr Kishore Chandra Prusty issued an order dismissing the surgery specialist Dr Ganapati Pradhan from service. The sacked doctor was posted as a surgery specialist at Telkoi community health centre with funds sanctioned by the district mineral foundation (DMF).

Reports said that Kalabati Behera of Khajuria Sahi in Kardangi village under Telkoi police limits had



The sacked doctor was posted as surgery specialist at the Telkoi hospital and received ₹1.65 lakh as salary with funds sanctioned from DMF

drowned February 5. Police seized the body and sent the body for post-mortem to Telkoi hospital.

An autopsy was conducted but the family members of the deceased had to take rounds of the hospital to get the report. It was alleged that Pradhan demanded ₹5,000 from the bereaved family to deliver the post-mortem report.

Later, the deceased family mem-

bers succumbed to his demand and handed over the money to him a video of which went viral on social media. Reports about the doctor accepting the bribe from the bereaved family members were published and telecast by various media outlets.

Concerned over the development, district Collector Ashish Thakare directed a probe into the incident. The CDMO Dr Prusty also issued a show-

cause notice to the accused doctor asking him to reply within three days of receiving the notice.

Finally, the CDMO issued a letter-1507, dated March 28, 2023, directing his dismissal from service after the accused doctor failed to reply satisfactorily to the show-cause notice. The district Collector also confirmed the dismissal of Dr Ganapati Pradhan from his service at Telkoi hospital.

The sacked doctor was appointed as surgery specialist at the Telkoi hospital and received Rs 1.65 lakh as salary with funds sanctioned from DMF funds. Locals have questioned why no action was taken against the accused doctor by the state Vigilance department and why the bribe money was not recovered from his possession.

2 arrested for minor's murder over ransom

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, March 29: Two persons have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the abduction and murder of a 15-year-old boy, police said here Wednesday. The deceased, identified as Samarth Agrawal, son of Sunil Agrawal of Sarbahal locality of this district, was recovered from Bhedan area of Bargarh district. Among the two arrested is the mastermind of the crime, police said.

The kid was abducted March 27 following which a ransom call of ₹50 lakh was made to the parents of the victim. "We have apprehended two persons on the intervening night of March 28 and 29. The accused persons have been identified as Amit Kumar Sharma and Dinesh Agarwal," informed Jharsuguda SP Parmar Smit Parshotamdas at a press conference here.

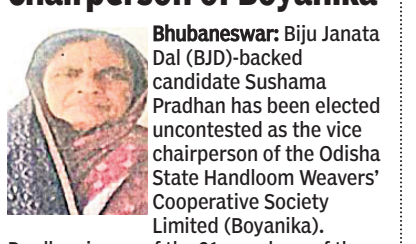
The SP said that the police had received a report March 27 that a 15-year-old boy had gone missing at around 3.30pm. "The missing boy's father received a call at around 8.30pm on the same day and the caller had demanded a ransom of ₹50 lakh for releasing the child," the SP added.

Parmar Smit stated one of the accused, Sharma, was well-acquainted with the family of the boy. As a result, the boy had gone with them willingly. When the boy's father did not respond to the ransom call, the two accused decided to kill him. The boy was murdered in the late hours of March 28, Parmar Smit stated.

In a feat, RSP produces 100 MT of crude steel

Rourkela: The Steel Melting Shops of Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) surpassed the historic milestone of production of 100 million tonnes (MT) of crude steel Wednesday. RSP sources said the journey of steel making in the plant commenced in January 1959, with the commissioning of the Steel Melting Shop-I, which was further strengthened with Steel Melting Shop-II commencing production in 1996. The report said 50 MT crude steel production was achieved in only 19 years. Moreover, the last 10 million tonnes of crude steel was produced in 3 years and 2 months, while the last year witnessed the production of more than 4MT of crude steel. RSP Director In-Charge Atanu Bhowmik Wednesday visited the Steel Melting Shop-I department along with other senior officials to congratulate the collective for the remarkable achievement. A helium-inflated balloon with the greetings message of 100 MT crude steel production was also floated from the Steel Melting Shop-I, CGM office building, Bhowmik said, "The milestone has been crossed with the efforts put in by the employees of SMS-I & II as well as all the associated units."

Sushama elected as vice chairperson of Boyanika



Bhubaneswar: Biju Janata Dal (BJD)-backed candidate Sushama Pradhan has been elected uncontested as the vice chairperson of the Odisha State Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society Limited (Boyanika). Pradhan is one of the 21 members of the operational committee of the organisation, who filed her nomination 27 March, 2023. Sushama was the only contestant for the election as anybody else from the committee hardly showed interest in filing a nomination for the post. Pradhan belongs to the Mahulia weavers' society in Badamba. After getting elected, Pradhan expressed her gratitude to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Minister of Handloom, Textiles and Handicrafts Rita Sahu, MLA Badamba and Narasinghpur MLA Debi Prasad Mishra, Cooperation Minister Atanu Babasachi Nayak and Attabira MLA Snehangini Chhuria. Pradhan pledged to work towards the betterment of the weavers, weavers' society and the development of Boyanika.

15-yr-old rapes minor

Jajpur: A 15-year-old boy allegedly raped a minor girl in Jajpur district, police said Wednesday. The incident which occurred Sunday came to light after the mother of the 11-year-old girl filed a complaint with Balichandrapur Police Station Monday night, an officer said. According to the complainant, her daughter was playing with the boy of her neighbour in front of the house, Sunday evening. The boy then called her and took her to the roof and forced himself upon her. The girl went back home crying and informed her mother about pain in her private area. Later, she told her that the boy had performed an indecent act with her on the roof. The girl was immediately admitted to Barchana Community Health Centre for treatment. Her condition is reported to be stable. The girl's mother then lodged a complaint against the accused. Based on the complaint, police registered a case after conducting a medical examination of the survivor. The boy has run away from home after the incident came to light. "The boy is still absconding and we are searching for him," said Balichandrapur Inspector in Charge Ramakanta Muduli.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No. EPC-ETCECONII/VSKP2023011, Dated: 22.03.2023

NAME OF WORK : KORAPUT-SINGAPUR ROAD DOUBLING PROJECT & TALCHER-BIMALAGARH NEW BROAD GAUGE SINGLE LINE RAIL LINK PROJECT: DESIGN, PROOF CHECKING, CONSTRUCTION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF BALLAST LESS TRACK INCLUDING OTHER ALLIED WORKS FOR FOUR TUNNELS (TUNNEL NO. T1 - FROM CH. 40500 M TO 41100 M, T2 - FROM CH. 50960 M TO 51749 M, T3 - FROM CH. 53077 M TO 53524 M & T4 - FROM CH. 57654 M TO 58846 M, TOTAL - 3.028 KM) BETWEEN BAIGUDA & LAKMIPUR ROAD STATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH KORAPUT-SINGAPUR ROAD DOUBLING PROJECT AND ONE TUNNEL (1.020 KM) BETWEEN SUNAKHANI & SAMAL STATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH TALCHER-BIMALAGARH NEW BROAD GAUGE SINGLE LINE RAIL LINK PROJECT OF EAST COAST RAILWAY.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 1857.00 Lakhs, EMD : ₹ 9,28,500/-, Completion Period of the Work: 11 (Eleven) Months.

Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1200 hrs. of 24.04.2023.

Complete information including the RFP document of the above EPC-tender is available in website : <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website for any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenders/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering.

The tenderers should read all instructions to the tenderers carefully and ensure compliance of all instructions.

Chief Administrative Officer (Cony) PR-183C/F22-23 Bhubaneswar

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMU TRAIN BETWEEN NAYAGARH TOWN-BHADRAK

IT IS DECIDED BY THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS TO INTRODUCE A NEW MEMU PASSENGER TRAIN BETWEEN NAYAGARH TOWN-BHADRAK-NAYAGARH TOWN.

FROM NAYAGARH TOWN AS 08556 NAYAGARH TOWN-BHADRAK MEMU TRAIN w.e.f. 31.03.2023 (DAILY)

FROM BHADRAK AS 08555 BHADRAK-NAYAGARH TOWN MEMU TRAIN w.e.f. 31.03.2023 (DAILY)

ABSTRACT TIMINGS

Train No. 08556	Nayagarh Town-Bhadrak	Station	Train No. 08555	Bhadrak-Nayagarh Town
Arrv.	Dep.		Arrv.	Dep.
-	1705	NAYAGARH TOWN	1155	-
1813	1818	KHURDAROAD	1003	1008
1840	1845	BHUBANESWAR	0932	0937
1929	1934	CUTTACK JUNCTION	0842	0847
2121	2126	JAJPUR KEONJHAR ROAD	0638	0643
2245	-	BHADRAK	-	0545

Composition: Motor Car cum Second Class -3, Second Class-9=12 MEMU Car Coaches.

Other Stoppages: Bolagarh Road, Bolagarh Town P.H., Rajsunakhala, Begunia, Khurda Town, Retang, Lingaraj Temple Road P.H., Vanivihar P.H., Macheswar, Patia P.H., Bhubaneswar New, Barang Junction, Gopalpur Baikuda, Kathajori P.H., Kendrapara Road, Manguli Chowdwar P.H., Nergundi, Kapilas Road, Sri Jhadeswar Road P.H., Byree, Barithengagarh, Dhanmandal, Haridaspur, New Garhmahopur, Jenapur, Brahmani P.H., Jakhapura Junction, Korai, Baitarani Road, Dulakhapatana P.H., Manjuri Road, Kenduapada, Kapali Road P.H., Baudpur.

N.B. On the inaugural run, the above train will run as special train on open fast timings. However, the regular run of the above trains will commence w.e.f. 31.03.2023 from Nayagarh Town and Bhadrak.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
PR-1118/N/22-23

National Highways Authority of India

Project Implementation Unit, Sambalpur
Sarakani Chowk, Infront of St.John's School Near NH-6
Sakhipara Road, Sambalpur, Odisha-768006

11040/NHAI/PIU/SP/IR/TLN/298/2023
Date:24.03.2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Revision of user fee rate for 2023-24 in respect of Govindapur Fee Plaza at Km. 25.200 in section from Kanakara-Jharsuguda from Km.197.300 to Km.265.300 on NH-49 (Old NH-200) in the state of Odisha w.e.f. 01.04.2023, 0.00Hrs. (In Rs.)

Category of vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	60	90	1975	30
Light commercial vehicle (Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus)	95	145	3190	50
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	200	300	6685	100
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	220	330	7295	110
HCM or EME or MAV (four to six axles)	315	470	10485	155
Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	385	575	12760	190

The rates of monthly pass applicable for local non commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 Km. from the above toll plaza for the year 2023-24 shall be **Rs.330/-**, subject to revision every year as per the provisions of said rules. As FASTag is mandatory for all vehicles, hence, all users are requested to purchase FASTag. Ph. No. (0663) 2548966, Email: piusambalpur@nhai.org, nhaissambalpur@gmail.com.

Sd/- Project Director

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

National Highways Authority of India

Project Implementation Unit, Sambalpur
Sarakani Chowk, Infront of St.John's School Near NH-6
Sakhipara Road, Sambalpur, Odisha-768006

11040/NHAI/PIU/SP/IR/TLN/298/2023
Date:27.03.2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Revision of user fee rate for 2023-24 in respect of Bolangir Fee Plaza at Ch.15.250 near town Bolangir, in Bolangir District in the section from Bolangir to Sonepur from Km.0.00 to Km.45.750 on NH-57 in the state of Odisha w.e.f. 01.04.2023, 0.00Hrs. (In Rs.)

Category of vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	40	60	1310	20
Light commercial vehicle (Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus)	65	95	2115	30
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	135	200	4430	65
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	145	215	4830	70
HCM or EME or MAV (four to six axles)	210	315	6945	105
Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	255	380	8455	125

The rates of monthly pass applicable for local non commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 Km. from the above toll plaza for the year 2023-24 shall be **Rs.330/-**, subject to revision every year as per the provisions of said rules. As FASTag is mandatory for all vehicles, hence, all users are requested to purchase FASTag. Ph. No. (0663) 2548966, Email: piusambalpur@nhai.org, nhaissambalpur@gmail.com.

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National Highways Authority of India

Project Implementation Unit, Sambalpur
Sarakani Chowk, Infront of St.John's School Near NH-6
Sakhipara Road, Sambalpur, Odisha-768006

11040/NHAI/PIU/SP/IR/TLN/298/2023
Date:27.03.2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Revision of user fee rate for 2023-24 in respect of Rangamatia Fee Plaza at Ch.190.050 near Rangamatia Village, in Nayagarh District in the section from Adenigada-Maichheli from Km.140.900 to Km.224.180 on NH-57 in the state of Odisha w.e.f. 01.04.2023, 0.00Hrs. (In Rs.)

Category of vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	70	105	2380	35
Light commercial vehicle (Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus)	115	175	3850	60
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	240	365	8060	120
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	265	395	8795	130
HCM or EME or MAV (four to six axles)	380	570	12645	190
Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	460	695	15390	230

The rates of monthly pass applicable for local non commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 Km. from the above toll plaza for the year 2023-24 shall be **Rs.330/-**, subject to revision every year as per the provisions of said rules. As FASTag is mandatory for all vehicles, hence, all users are requested to purchase FASTag. Ph. No. (0663) 2548966, Email: piusambalpur@nhai.org, nhaissambalpur@gmail.com.

Sd/- Project Director

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION

National Highways Authority of India

Project Implementation Unit, Sambalpur
Sarakani Chowk, Infront of St.John's School Near NH-6
Sakhipara Road, Sambalpur, Odisha-768006

11040/NHAI/PIU/SP/IR/TLN/298/2023
Date:27.03.2023

PUBLIC NOTICE

Revision of user fee rate for 2023-24 in respect of Padapada-Nildungu Fee Plaza at Km.551.800 in the section from Telebani-Sambalpur Section of NH-53 from Km.493.300 to Km.521.825 and Km.545.176 to Km.567.400 in the state of Odisha w.e.f. 01.04.2023, 0.00Hrs. (In Rs.)

Category of vehicle	Fee for single journey	Fee for return journey within a day	Fee for monthly pass for 50 single journeys in a month	Fee for single journey for the commercial vehicles registered within the district of fee plaza
Car, Jeep, Van or Light Motor Vehicle	75	110	2430	35
Light commercial vehicle (Light Goods Vehicle or Mini Bus)	120	175	3925	60
Bus or Truck (Two Axles)	245	370	8220	125
Three Axle Commercial Vehicles	270	405	8970	135
HCM or EME or MAV (four to six axles)	385	580	12890	195
Over-sized Vehicles (Seven or more axles)	470	705	15695	235

The rates of monthly pass applicable for local non commercial vehicle residing within a distance of 20 Km. from the above toll plaza for the year 2023-24 shall be **Rs.330/-**, subject to revision every year as per the provisions of said rules. As FASTag is mandatory for all vehicles, hence, all users are requested to purchase FASTag. Ph. No. (0663) 2548966, Email: piusambalpur@nhai.org, nhaissambalpur@gmail.com.

Sd/- Project Director

NOT JUST ROADS, BUILDING A NATION



Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed for learning more and ever more.

THE MOTHER



Crisis & Bailout

The shotgun wedding of UBS and Credit Suisse was hastily arranged in the spirit of ensuring our collective safety. As Swiss National Bank Chair Thomas Jordan noted, Credit Suisse's size and global network makes it "a global systemically important bank," and having UBS take it over – thereby forestalling a bankruptcy – "ensures that the systemically important function remains secure." Might we dare to hope that a similar sense of urgency and ambitious deployment of resources be brought to bear on the compounding crises confronting more than half of the world's low-income countries? The government-brokered UBS-Credit Suisse merger was uncharacteristic for the Swiss, and not only because it was concluded on a Sunday, normally Switzerland's enforced day of rest. The government invoked emergency laws to override shareholders' right to vote on mergers, and wrote down all of Credit Suisse's additional tier-one (AT1) bonds – some \$17 billion worth – running the risk of years of litigation.

Some fear that these actions will tarnish Switzerland's reputation with investors. Maybe they will. But if the merger succeeds in stabilising the financial system, it will be more than worthwhile for us all. The reality is that this outcome is not guaranteed, but not because of any flaw in the authorities' decision-making or, indeed, any factor that the authorities can control. The bottom line is that complex systems are unpredictable, and even well-crafted interventions can fall short.

Such uncertainties did not deter the Swiss government from showing extraordinary leadership at a moment when it was needed. And comparable uncertainties did not stop major economies' from mobilising more than \$15 trillion in short-term stimulus funding to protect themselves from systemic risks during the pandemic. The same goes for protecting the economy from longer-term shortfalls. For example, the European Union deployed nearly \$900 billion for post-pandemic economic development, and the United States and China mobilised trillions of dollars for investment in infrastructure and green technologies. Such interventions may not guarantee a secure future, but they are crucial nonetheless.

Similarly bold leadership is now needed to tackle the challenges facing increasingly vulnerable low-income countries, notably those facing the multifaceted crisis in sovereign debt, high and rising poverty, food insecurity, and social and political instability – all of which are being exacerbated by the Ukraine war – together with the mounting effects of climate change. But, so far, such leadership is nowhere to be found.

Instead, rich-country governments have offered an agonisingly slow, fragmented, and unambitious response to these mutually reinforcing crises, with other G20 countries that could make a difference – including China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia – also slow to act. Advanced-economy leaders offer well-rehearsed justifications for their inaction, pointing out, for starters, that they have their own problems, not least high inflation and tightening fiscal constraints, which are fueling popular frustration and political turmoil.

The same leaders voice concerns about "moral hazard." They argue that the governments of countries in need have themselves to blame for their current mess. These governments have taken on too much debt, according to this view, and have failed to serve their populations properly, which suggests that they are likely to squander whatever relief they receive.

But it is the third reason for slow, incremental action in addressing the challenges facing low-income countries that is the most absurd. Behind closed doors, rich-country governments have in effect concluded that the debt distress faced by more than 60 per cent of these countries (and more than 25 per cent of emerging economies) does not pose a systemic threat. So, while they are willing to act quickly in bailing out domestic banks – even midsize institutions – they have concluded that offering significant debt relief to dozens of debt-distressed countries with hundreds of millions of vulnerable citizens is not worth the cost. It is entirely possible that many actors do not fully understand the systemic implications of simmering crises – particularly debt distress – in low-income countries. The crises are happening "over there" – in places whose physical remoteness and apparent economic and financial unimportance makes them seem irrelevant.

"Over there-ism" will be our downfall. If short-term political and business interests trump longer-term imperatives like preventing continuous waves of debt crises, it will become harder to act collectively to mitigate climate change, ensure food security and political stability, and devise meaningful approaches for dealing with the rising number of refugees. Of course, poorer populations are already feeling the effects of these problems. But for those who could make a difference, they remain far away.

The UBS-Credit Suisse deal offers yet more evidence that, when the will is there, authorities can act quickly and ambitiously to mitigate systemic risks, even if the cost is considerable and the outcome is unpredictable. Rich-country governments might not recognise – or want to acknowledge – the systemic implications of the risks gathering at the nexus of sovereign debt, climate change, poverty, and political instability. But this will not stop those implications from materialising. Systemic is as systemic does.

The writer is Executive Director of NatureFinance.
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WISDOM CORNER

Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, while defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.
SUN TZU

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.
MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

Youth is happy because it has the ability to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.
FRANZ KAFKA

WORDSWORTH

Ground zero

It was used first about the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan at the end of World War II; at least, its first appearance – about a year after the events – is in this connection: *There is reason to believe that, if the effects of blast and fire had been entirely absent from the bombing, the number of deaths among people within a radius of one-half mile from ground zero (the point on the ground directly under the bomb's explosion in the air) would have been almost as great as the actual figures (Syracuse Herald Journal, 1 July 1946).* More recently, the term has taken on various other associations: it became a jargon term for the focus of any momentous or damaging event, such as the epicentre of an earthquake or the place at which a tornado touches down. *"It just so happened we raised the exact amount of money to meet the purchase price," O'Toole says. "Now we're back to ground zero, and we have to start over again" (Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 14 Dec. 2008).* The devastating effects of the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 reminded people of the aftermath of a nuclear attack. The term was applied to the site within hours, to the extent that it looked for a while as though it would displace the older meanings entirely.

FOCUS GLOBAL WARMING

SUMMER THOUGHTS

The hot summer days are unceremoniously back! With the daytime temperatures inching to 40°C so early in the season, the current season promises to be painfully hot. Scientists are attributing this unusual situation to a relatively recently known phenomenon called global warming which is emerging as perhaps the greatest environmental challenge of the twenty-first century. According to IPCC, our planet has warmed by 0.6 degree C over the last century and it is projected that the Earth's mean temperature is likely to rise 2.4 to 4.8 degree C by the year 2100. This will seriously upset the delicate ecological balance of the planet and the basic life support system of our biosphere. The consequences are catastrophic some of which are already becoming visible: melting of glaciers and rising of sea level, climate change and its manifold impacts like change in precipitation patterns, untimely monsoon onsets, increase in extreme weather conditions like floods, droughts, heat waves, hurricanes and long term effects like lowering of agricultural yields, species extinction, increase of vector-borne diseases, and social conflicts over issues like water. The fact that 11 of the warmest years of the past 125 years occurred only after 1990 with 2005 being the warmest on record tells amply the extent of nature's fury.

This has gravely affected the lives and livelihoods of people around the world. A man in the Maldives worries about relocating his family due to sea level rise, a farmer in Kansas struggles for bread as prolonged periods of drought ravaged his crops, a fisherman on the Niger river wonders why his fishing net has gone empty, a child in New Jersey worries how she lost her home to a super-storm and a woman in Bangladesh struggled to get fresh water due to more frequent flooding and cyclones: these are a few of the enormously many victims of global warming.



We should cut down our energy consumption at individual levels and use appliances that are more energy efficient

Intense heat waves in 2003 took a toll of around 35,000 people in Europe including 15,000 lives in France alone. About 700 million people in India depending directly on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, forests and fisheries for livelihood will directly face the brunt of climate change induced by global warming. Even animals are not spared the wrath of nature. The polar bear in the melting ice sheets of the Arctic, the Royal Bengal tiger in India's fragile mangrove forests of the Sundarbans, the right whale in the plankton-poor waters of the warming North Atlantic, and the orangutan in Indonesian forests segmented by frequent bushfires and droughts are some of the survivors of this tell-tale story.

Global warming has proved to be harsh on Odisha. Atmospheric temperature is consistently surging with summer seasons turning out to be painfully unbearable. Low pressure weather conditions and depressions are becoming regular incidents causing unpredictable rainfall patterns across the state much to the woes of farmers. Who can forget the scorching hot summer days of 1998 when hundreds of people died of sunstroke and the devastating Super Cyclone of 1999 that claimed thousands of lives in

coastal Odisha. The sea has also posed a serious threat to the state. The Bay of Bengal is expanding towards the coastal landscape at an alarming rate taking many villages and farmlands into its grip.

Scientists have reached a consensus that the emission of certain greenhouse gases (like carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide) is responsible for this unusual warming of our planet. These gases have never been a threat to mankind since the long history of our planet as they used to trap some of the Sun's radiant heat and help maintain minimum temperature on Earth (18 degree C) necessary for survival of life. Without these gases, the Earth would have been incredibly colder with its mean temperature dropping to -26 degree C where no life could exist! However, these gases are constantly accumulating in our atmosphere far beyond the safety limit since the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century. These are mostly produced by the burning of fossil fuels like coal and petroleum which were initially used as raw materials for giant hungry machines of various industries and later for generation of electricity and other forms of energy and as fuels for automobiles. While the increase of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere

is 11%, methane accounts for a whopping 149% since the Industrial Revolution.

While greenhouse gas emissions account for three-fourths of global warming, deforestation also is responsible to a great extent. Forests used to absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and keep its level in control. As forests are cleared every day to give way for concrete jungles, carbon dioxide absorption on the planet is seriously affected leading to its uncontrolled build-up in the biosphere. Some global warming also results from melting of Arctic sea ice which has been a key factor in stabilising the global climate. Melting of sea ice (ice is a good reflector of radiant heat) reduces the amount of solar energy reflected back into space thereby contributing to global warming.

Keeping these grave consequences in mind, world leaders have met at several forums in the past to find a solution to the menace greenhouse gases with the Rio Summit in 1992 serving as the launching pad. The Paris Agreement signed in 2015 by 196 parties at the COP21 was a landmark event as it, for the first time, put a legally binding international obligation on nations to combat climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2 degree C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5 degree C. The Glasgow Climate Pact that followed during the COP26 ended in a less stringent greenhouse gas emission cuts from coal power owing to objections from countries like India and China.

Given turbulence in global political scenario, there is hardly any sight seen for a lasting solution in near future. Our mantra should be to "think globally and act locally." We should cut down our energy consumption at individual levels and use appliances that are more energy efficient.

The writer is Education Officer, Regional Science Centre, Bhopal.

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Ocean governance: 'Samudra Manthan' 2.0



Avilash Roul

NOW, WITH THE HIGH SEA TREATY, THE OCEANS WILL BE GOVERNED UNDER INTERNATIONAL LEGAL REGIMES

Samudra Manthan – churning of the ocean – a legend in Hindu mythology, which is depicted in a magnificent sculpture at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok and as in the bas-relief at Angkor Wat (Cambodia) has been revisited in the form of a high seas treaty. In the latest bid, countries have joined hands to conserve marine biodiversity on high seas outside their national jurisdictions. Early this March, the UN-sponsored Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) successfully concluded a treaty, named informally as the high seas biodiversity treaty or high seas treaty. When world leaders are sceptical about 'global governance' the high seas treaty upholds multilateralism. The BBNJ Treaty is a major step forward in contributing to governance of the global commons.

After the historic UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) adoption in 1982, the entire ocean world is not under legal regulations, especially oceans beyond national jurisdictions that consist of exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and continental shelves. High seas or open seas are neither regulated nor protected. Out of 362 million sq.km of ocean area or 72% of Earth's surface, approximately 200 sq.km or more than 60% are high seas. Despite being extremely biodiverse, only 1.44 % of high seas are currently regulated or protected. As of

now, 8.16% of ocean is covered by 18,445 numbers of marine protected areas (MPAs). National waters represent 39% of global ocean and at present, 18.70% of these waters are designated as protected areas. An MPA is essentially a space in ocean where human activities are more strictly regulated than the surrounding waters. Now, with the high seas treaty, the oceans will be governed under international legal regimes.

We are all aware that the high seas provide numerous ecosystem services that benefit humankind. More than 3 billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their lives and livelihoods. The ocean absorbs 30% of carbon dioxide produced by humans, as the largest carbon sink, safeguarding the impact of climate change. Around 270,000 species have been identified in the high seas so far; millions more are there in the abyss yet to be discovered.

Despite the market value of the coastal and marine resources and industries being \$3 trillion per year, i.e., 5% of global GDP, the ocean is always in constant threat from anthropogenic activities. It is conservatively estimated that each year humans dump nearly 8 million tonne of plastic waste and discharge 80% of wastewater untreated which are detrimental to marine life and dependent communities. Marine living resources are critical but threatened by illegal, unreported and unreg-

ulated fishing and unsustainable aquaculture practices. Unaccounted and uncontrolled anthropogenic pressure on the ocean is destabilising the balance in the ecosphere.

Since 2004, the UN has been trying to address the conservation and protection of marine diversity in various forums. Subsequently, Goal 14 of the SDGs – life below water – calls for conservation, protection and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources. The UNCLOS adopted during the Cold War and considered the constitution of seas and oceans, defines the rights and responsibilities of nations and their use of the planet's oceans. The high seas were left untouched as free for all.

However, after the 40th anniversary of adoption of UNCLOS, the success of the BBNJ reaffirms the importance and relevance of multilateral cooperation in establishing a rules-based ocean regime. From the outset, countries agreed that there can be no exploitation without regulations that ensure high environmental standards.

Initially India and China were cautiously engaged in the negotiation process of BBNJ. During the informal working group discussions, the positioning of the lead parties was an indication of the uphill task for a consensus agreement. While India batted for rights associated with high seas, freedoms must not be limited by MPAs and other area-based conservation measures. With

eyes on South China Sea row, China's position was that BBNJ should not include too specific legally binding mechanisms. India in 2016 suggested focusing on the legal regime for marine genetic resources on high seas in the framework of UNCLOS. On the other hand, China has been extremely cautious on the transboundary Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs).

Major achievements for the Global South especially small island countries from the BBNJ Treaty are access to and use of marine genetic resources; conduct of EIAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction and capacity-building and transfer of marine technology. A compromise deal on financial commitment by developed countries for capacity building projects aimed at marine conservation was key to the treaty's success. The treaty would aim for protecting 30% of the ocean by 2030 as famously campaigned worldwide as "30 by 30".

The treaty is crucial for addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The treaty needs to be ratified, adopted, accepted or accessioned by 60 member countries to become enforceable. Let's hope the last 'global commons' won't become a 'tragedy of commons' during the implementation of the agreement.

The writer is a scientist at IIT-Madras.

South Indian staple

Sir, Every year, March 30 is observed as World Idli Day. The celebration of the day started some years ago when an enthusiastic idli lover from Chennai decided to dedicate a day to South India's most popular staple food. The reputation of the humble idli is really a phenomenon in the 20th century. Steamed, puffy and delectable, idli doused in sambhar and chutney, easily makes one of the nation's much sought after nutrients for breakfast. Idli, for long has been making the South-Indian cuisine proud across the sub-continent. This popular, yet simple food is not oily or greasy, and is considered to be one of the most delicious and intelligent nourishments in the South. Idli is also a 'street food', yet it shares no infamous reputation of being unhealthy or calorie-laden. Idli may have originated elsewhere, but it was in the South that the process of making it from a painstakingly ground fermented batter of urad dal and rice was perfected. For all South Indians, who are common eaters of idli, this day is the opportunity to commemorate this unassuming and easy-to-digest food.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Arbitrary move

Sir, The 1.1% surcharge proposed by NPCI on UPI transactions from April 1 is arbitrary and clearly against the financial interests of the public. Today, most of the transactions between individuals and between individuals and merchants are carried out through UPI because of the ease and numerous reasons such as difficulty in carrying cash and change of small denominations. The real-time transaction facility offered by UPI gateways promotes cashless payments. An ancillary but more beneficial feature from the viewpoint of the governmental agencies (such as CBI and ED) is the transparency of transactions that prevents black money and financial frauds as all online transactions through UPI are recorded and can be traced if and when the need arises. The hefty surcharge of 1.1% would compel individuals to revert to offline transaction mode of cash payment which would potentially hinder the goal of 'Cashless India' and worse, it would invariably terminate the scope for tracing black money as cash transactions are arduous to trace. Hence, the government must consider not implementing this proposal by NPCI and maintaining the status quo concerning the UPI payments, as it is clearly in the interests of both the public as well as the government.

Shivanshu K. Srivastava, LUCKNOW

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

Orissa POST
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national

of the day quote

Why will the PM not be disqualified for hurting the sentiment of women by mocking West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with his 'Didi O Didi' taunts during the 2021 assembly polls campaign? We demand that action be taken in that case too

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | SENIOR TMC LEADER

We had expected that the elections would be declared yesterday or today. I welcome that this election is happening in a single phase

SIDDARAMAIAH | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

I think our contribution was to get G20 back to the G20's real business. The G20 is not the UN Security Council. It is not the primary forum to debate international peace and security

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Chargesheet against three LeT operatives

New Delhi: The NIA Wednesday filed a charge sheet against three alleged Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives in the Hyderabad hand grenades recovery case as part of a major conspiracy by the banned terror group to carry out blasts in the country, an official said. The National Investigation Agency filed the charge sheet against Mohd Abdul Wajid alias "Zahed", Samiuddin alias "Sami" and Maaz Hasan Farooq in a special court for their role in the terrorist conspiracy to raise funds, collect explosives and carry out recruitment into the Pakistan-based group, a spokesperson of the federal agency said.

Bodies of woman, three kids found

Medininagar (Jharkhand): Bodies of a 30-year-old woman and her three children were found on railway tracks in Jharkhand's Palamu district Wednesday, a police officer said. It appears that they were "accidentally" run over by a train near Nimia, around two kilometres from Daltongunj railway station, Superintendent of Police Chandan Kumar Sinha said. The deceased woman was identified as Manita Devi (30), a resident of Kharagpur village under Harihargunj police station of the district. Of her children, who were aged between four and eight years, two were girls.

Thunderstorm, rain lash Delhi

New Delhi: Light rain, coupled with a thunderstorm, lashed the national capital Wednesday evening under the influence of western disturbance affecting north-west India. Met officials said. Winds gusting up to 40 kilometres per hour barreled through the city. The IMD had earlier predicted a spell of rain and cloudy weather starting Wednesday night. As many as nine flights were diverted from the Delhi airport to Jaipur Wednesday evening due to bad weather.

Man beaten to death

Gurugram: A man was beaten to death by two people over suspicion of theft in Gurugram's Ghata village the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, the police said. The police received an information about the incident Wednesday morning following which they took custody of the body and sent it for post-mortem. The complainant, Asruddin Sheikh (30), a resident of West Bengal, told the police that he along with the victim, Rafiquddin, used to collect and sell junk items.



Sexual harassment is still considered a taboo and most victims do not report it
SWATI MALIWAL | DELHI COMMISSION FOR WOMEN (DCW) CHIEF

MASSIVE BOOST FOR DEFENCE

In yet another boost to 'Aatmanirbharta' in defence, the Ministry of Defence signed three contracts Wednesday, two with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Ghaziabad and one with New Space India Limited (NSIL) amounting to nearly Rs 5,400 crore to bolster the defence capabilities of the country



SC refuses to entertain pleas for gender-neutral laws

The bench was hearing petitions seeking a direction to the government for enacting uniform religion and gender-neutral laws on a wide variety of issues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: In a significant development, the Supreme Court Wednesday thwarted an attempt to get a direction to the Centre to frame uniform religion and gender-neutral laws governing subjects such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and alimony by refusing to entertain a batch of petitions, saying it cannot direct

Parliament to legislate. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala took note of the submissions made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the issue falls under the domain of the legislature and hence, the pleas cannot be entertained. Disposing of a total of 16 petitions, including those filed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Shazia Ilmi and lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, the top court said, "After taking a considered view of the pleadings and submissions, we are not inclined to entertain the petitions under Article 32. The grant of relief in these proceedings necessitates a direction for enactment of laws - gender-neutral and religion-neutral legislation as the



petitioner has described it." "This lies exclusively within the domain of the legislature. It is an established position that a mandamus cannot be issued to the legislature to enact laws," it said. The bench also refused to direct the Law Commission to prepare a report on such laws as sought in the petitions. "As far as a direction to the Law Commission to prepare a report is concerned, we see no reason to entertain the request. Ultimately, the issue of making a law will fall under the legislative domain.... The petitions are disposed of," it ordered. The bench, however, allowed

Upadhyay, the lead petitioner, to take the recourse available to him to seek the framing of such laws. It, however, kept a petition moved by a Muslim woman, having individual grievances, alive. The bench was hearing petitions seeking a direction to the government for enacting uniform religion and gender-neutral laws on a wide variety of issues. Upadhyay had filed five separate petitions seeking directions to the Centre to frame such laws on divorce, adoption, guardianship, succession, inheritance, maintenance, marriageable age and alimony. Earlier, the top court had asked whether it could hear a range of pleas, including PILs, seeking a direction to the Centre to frame uniform religion and gender-neutral laws governing is-

such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and alimony. Upadhyay, in August 2020, filed a public interest litigation (PIL) matter seeking "uniform grounds for divorce" for all citizens, in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution and international conventions. He filed another PIL through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey seeking uniform "gender and religion-neutral" grounds for maintenance and alimony for all citizens. In another PIL, he sought the removal of anomalies in the laws governing adoption and guardianship and to make them uniform for all citizens. He also filed a petition seeking the removal of anomalies in the succession and inheritance laws and making them uniform for all.

K'taka polls May 10, results May 13

As the political temperature in Karnataka hots up on a range of issues, the BJP hopes to buck a nearly four-decade-old trend to retain power and script history while the Congress will seek to upstage its saffron rival to up its stakes as a key challenger



Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar speaks during a press conference for the announcement of the schedule of Karnataka Legislative Assembly elections

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Bangalore, March 29: Assembly elections in Karnataka will be held in a single phase May 10 setting the stage for yet another showdown between the ruling BJP and the Congress ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the JD(S) facing its toughest challenge in the southern state.

Announcing the poll schedule at a news conference in Delhi Wednesday, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said votes will be counted May 13.

No political party has won a successive mandate in the state since 1985 and the BJP is eager to rewrite this bit of history and retain its southern citadel. Kumar said elections for the 224-member Assembly have been scheduled on a Wednesday, and not on a Monday or Friday, to encourage greater participation of voters.

"People can take a day off and have a long weekend. But by holding the poll on Wednesday, the possibility has been reduced," he said, adding the move is part of the EC's effort to ensure greater participation and curb voters' apathy in going to the polling stations.

Kumar said the poll notification will be issued April 13 and the last date for filing nomination papers is April 20. He said the nomination papers will be scrutinised on April 21 and the last date for withdrawal of nominations is April 24.

Like in the last two decades, the polls will mainly be a three-cor-

nered contest involving the BJP, Congress and JD(S). Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai said the BJP is confident of returning to power with absolute majority. Union minister Pralhad Joshi, an MP from Karnataka's Dharwad seat, echoed Bommai's sentiments and said he was confident about the BJP coming back to power for the second consecutive term because of its government's "historic" work for the development of the state.

BJP general secretary and in-charge for Karnataka Arun Singh said the party will go it alone in the polls. Asked by newsmen if the BJP is holding any talks with the JD-S to forge an alliance, he categorically said, "No. No. We are fighting on our own strength." A BJP victory is expected to help the party maintain the momentum of its winning streak and give it confidence to sail through the crucial polls in the Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan later this year.

Whirlwind visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and BJP President J P Nadda to the poll-bound State have no doubt given the party a leg-up in campaigning but it's up against a combative Congress which has sought to make corruption a central theme of the political narrative.

The BJP state unit is banking on the party's central leadership to shore up its prospects as it fights anti-incumbency.



HAPPY FACES: Class X students celebrate on completion of their exams in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

PTI PHOTO

NATIONAL ANTHEM DISRESPECT CASE

No relief for Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 29: A magistrate's court here Wednesday asked police to probe a complaint against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for allegedly disrespecting the national anthem after the Bombay High Court denied her relief.

Metropolitan Magistrate (Sewree court) P I Mokashi directed the Cuff Parade police station in south Mumbai to conduct an inquiry into the matter and submit a report by April 28. Local Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) functionary Vivekanand Gupta had approached the magistrate's court with a complaint alleging that Banerjee did not stand up immediately when the national anthem was sung at an event here during her visit in December 2021.

She sang it while sitting before standing up and singing two more verses, and then left the venue abruptly, he alleged. A First Information Report should be registered against her under the Prevention of Insults to the National Honour Act, he demanded.

Over 14L kids 'severely malnourished': Centre



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Children who are severely malnourished have very low weight for their height, and are nine times more likely to die in case of diseases due to their weakened immune system

New Delhi, March 29: There are over 14 lakh severely malnourished children in the country as per the government's Poshan Tracker, the Women and Child Development Ministry said Wednesday.

Children who are severely malnourished have very low weight for their height, and are nine times more likely to die in case of diseases due to their weakened immune system.

Responding to a question in Rajya Sabha, Women and Child

Development Minister Smriti Irani said under Mission Poshan 2.0, out of approximately 5.6 crore children measured in the month of February 2023, the percentage of severely malnourished children is 2.6 per cent. The number comes to be 14,56,000.

The percentage of malnourished children was found to be 7.7 per cent which comes to around 43 lakh, the ministry said.

BJP Kerala chief booked for alleged remarks against Left women leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram/Kozhikode, March 29: A case has been registered by the police against Kerala BJP president, K Surendran, in connection with his alleged derogatory remarks against women CPI(M) leaders.

Surendran, however, said he did not make any derogatory remark against women and that he was only referring to the quantum of financial gain allegedly received by Left leaders through their corrupt activities. "My remarks were not aimed at any person. It was a general remark or reference to corrupt persons. I did not name anyone. I did not make any comment aimed at dishonouring women," he said.

It is Congress leaders who raked up the issue and made it controversial as it suits their political interests, the BJP state president



K SURENDRAN

4,314 women set to perform Haj without 'Mehram'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: As many as 4,314 Indian women are set to perform Haj without 'Mehram' (male companion) this year, the largest since the reform in 2018 which did away with the compulsion of a male companion with women on the pilgrimage, officials said.

With a view to ensure quality health support to pilgrims, the Ministry of Minority Affairs is collaborating with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare for comprehensive health arrangements for pilgrims planning to visit Mecca. Each year, Saudi Arabia hosts



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

around 25 lakh to 30 lakh pilgrims from across the globe to visit Mecca and India sends the third largest contingent of pilgrims in the world. Such large number of pilgrims

In a first, the Minority Affairs Ministry has also made comprehensive arrangements for the health of the Haj pilgrims with health desks at airports and medical screening by govt doctors

also poses unique public health challenges, and the medical requirements of the pilgrims in Mecca, Madina, and Jeddah must be well-cared for, a statement is-

sued by the ministry said. For the present year, a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims has been allotted to India. The first flight for the pilgrimage from India will begin May 21.

With a view to ensure comprehensive and quality services to the pilgrims, Minority Affairs Minister Smriti Irani and Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya have undertaken a series of meetings accompanied by officials from both ministries.

In the last three months, more than 10 meetings have been organized on the subject between both the ministries and a detailed plan of action has been finalized,

the statement said. The Health Ministry accordingly has issued directions to all states March 21, wherein they have been advised to provide for medical screening and fitness certificate for applicant pilgrims and a detailed format for such screening has been sent to the states.

With a view to aid the applicants, this year the medical screening and fitness certificate by the applicant can be issued by any government allopathic medical doctor in the States/UTs. This will ease the process of getting the medical screening certificates across the country.

Amritpal calls for Sikh congregation

AMRITPAL SINGH AND HIS MENTOR PAPALPREET SINGH ONCE AGAIN DODGED THE PUNJAB POLICE IN A VILLAGE NEAR HOSHIARPUR TOWN TUESDAY NIGHT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, March 29: Fugitive Khalistani radical Amritpal Singh, in a video message, Wednesday requested the Jathedar of the Akal Takht to call Sarbad Khalsa (congregation of Sikhs) to discuss issues to save Punjab on Baisakhi (April 13) and said he is not yet arrested.

During Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Punjab Police, he slammed the police for arresting Sikh youths during crackdown against him.

In the video, Amritpal Singh said he managed to escape from the police March 18 and that he is safe. He also expressed his willingness to surrender.

The police is expecting him to surrender either before the Akal Takht in Amritsar or Takht Damdama Sahib. Security has been beefed up at both places.

Amritpal Singh and his mentor Papalpreet Singh once again dodged the Punjab Police in a village near Hoshiarpur town

Tuesday night.

An Innova vehicle, with three people onboard, including Amritpal Singh, was stopped by the police at a checkpoint but they managed to flee in the dark, an official familiar with the development told IANS.

The police were chasing the car from Phagwara. The car was later found abandoned near Gurdwara Bhai Chanchal Singh on the Phagwara-Hoshiarpur road, with the occupants having fled on foot.

Police have cordoned off villages in Hoshiarpur district and are carrying out door-to-door search operations.

The police, which was on high alert, had inputs about Amritpal Singh's movements in Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar districts.

A new video of Amritpal Singh and Papalpreet Singh surfaced Tuesday, purportedly showing Amritpal Singh walking in a street in Delhi without a turban and wearing a mask.

A day earlier, the state's Advocate



In this grab from a recently surfaced video, Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal in his video message slammed the Punjab Police for arresting Sikh youths during a crackdown against him

Police have cordoned off villages in Hoshiarpur district and are carrying out door-to-door search operations

General informed the Punjab and Haryana High Court that the police were close to arresting Amritpal Singh.

The high court was hearing a petition seeking his release, by a man who claimed that Amritpal Singh was in illegal custody in Jalandhar.

The Advocate General clarified that Amritpal Singh was not arrested and the police were trying its best to arrest him.

Punjab is passing through a sensitive stage and national security is involved. As such, the arguments addressed should be limited to the contentions raised in the habeas corpus petition, he said.

After hearing counsel for both the parties, Justice NS Shekhawat asked the petitioner's counsel to show evidence that Amritpal Singh was in illegal custody of the police.

He said the state's categorical stand was that Amritpal Singh had not been arrested.

Amritpal Singh has been evading arrest, changing his location and looks multiple times, since March 18 when the police launched a massive crackdown to arrest him.

Akali Dal seeks Mann's apology for insulting Akal Takht Sahib

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, March 29: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Wednesday asked Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to apologise to the Sikhs for insulting the highest temporal seat of Sikhism - Sri Akal Takht Sahib as well as its Jathedar Harpreet Singh, besides immediately releasing all innocent Sikh youth who were "wrongly" detained.

Senior SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema told the media here the party also asked the Chief Minister to seek forgiveness from the supreme temporal seat for filing a complaint to remove a tweet of Jathedar Sahib from social media, besides accusing the latter of inflaming passions.

Everyone knows the opposite is true. Jathedar Sahib convened a meeting of intellectuals and political leaders to discuss the state crackdown against innocent Sikh youth. Respecting the sentiments of the 'sangat', an ultimatum was given to release the innocent youth within 24 hours.

"Instead of respecting this religious directive, the Chief Minister chose to not only insult Jathedar Sahib but also previous Jathedars



of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, besides politicizing a case which was essentially one of human rights abuses."

Asserting that all this had hurt Sikh sentiments, Cheema said it was condemnable that instead of realising his mistake, the Chief Minister was displaying arrogance.

He said it was a fact that the state government was forced to release a large number of Sikh youth who had been arrested on trivial charges.

He demanded that all pending cases against the youth who had secured bail following the recent crackdown should be withdrawn.

He also demanded a stop to state repression against youth, intelligentsia, artistes and media

persons. Asserting that Sri Akal Takht was a symbol of pride for Sikhs and that it had always stood up against repression and tyranny, Cheema said "the Akal Takht has also always upheld human values".

He said despite trying times, including the demolition of the Takht by Afghans and later by the free India government led by Indira Gandhi, the Takht had always emerged supreme.

Asserting that the Chief Minister was defaming Punjab in league with the Central government, Cheema said the current politics of polarisation was aimed at taking Punjab back to an era of darkness.

Why Atiq Ahmed's family is the most 'wanted' in UP

Ahmed's family members have 165 criminal cases registered against them in various police stations in Prayagraj

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 29: The family of mafia-turned-politician, Atiq Ahmed, is undoubtedly the most wanted and 'decorated' one in Uttar Pradesh.

Among themselves, the family members have 165 criminal cases registered against them in various police stations in Prayagraj.

Atiq Ahmad has 100 cases registered in his name - a record that is matched by SP leader Mohd Azam Khan.

Of these, 50 cases are under trial, in 12 others, he has got acquittal, while the then Samajwadi Party government had withdrawn two cases in 2004. A senior po-



lice officer said that in other cases, cross-examination of witnesses is awaited.

Atiq's brother Ashraf has 53 cases in his name. He has been acquitted in one while others are under trial.

Atiq's sons have eight cases against them - seven of them are under trial while one is still being probed by the police. Atiq's wife Shaista has four cases against her.

Additional DG (prosecution) Ashutosh Pandey said that in 12 cases against Atiq Ahmed, charges are to be framed. For this, the joint director of prosecution has been asked to expedite such cases. The two cases were withdrawn by the

then SP government in June 2004.

A senior prosecution officer said that both the cases were registered in Prayagraj - one of dacoity, robbery in Civil Lines police station under the Gangsters Act while the other case was registered in Shahganj police station under the charges of rioting and the Gangsters Act.

Atiq's brother Ashraf was acquitted in one case of 1992 rioting January 4, 2000, while other 52 cases are under trial.

Three cases are under trial in which Atiq's wife Shaista is yet to make an appearance while in one case, investigation by the police is pending. Charges have been framed in two cases of Atiq's son Ali Ahmed, who has five cases in all - one is under investigation, while two others are under trial.

Similarly, a case against Atiq's other son Umar Ahmed is pending in a CBI court, and one is under investigation by the police. Atiq's other son Asad has one case which is pending investigation by the police.



FARMERS' SIT-IN: Farmers from Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee raise slogans during their protest demanding increase in minimum support price (MSP) for their crops, in Amritsar, Wednesday

As UP state bird sarus crane numbers go up, experts red flag safety issues

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 29: The debate on sarus crane - the state bird of Uttar Pradesh - has intensified in the state, with the ruling BJP and the Opposition parties engaging in a political slugfest over the issue of safety of such wild bird species.

Recently, Mohammed Arif (30), a resident of Mandka village in Amethi, came into limelight after his pictures and videos with a sarus crane went viral on social media, following which he was also interviewed by several media outlets.

Samajwadi Party's chief Akhilesh Yadav, who came to Amethi a few days back, also went to Mandka and met Arif. After learning about the sarus crane, the state Forest Department took custody of the bird from Arif. Since then, the matter has gathered steam across political circles.

According to the Forest Department, as per the census done in June 2022, there are 19,180 sarus cranes spotted in the state. Etawah and Auraiya have the highest 4,437 sarus cranes. In December 2021, the number of sarus cranes in the state was 17,665. The counting of this stork bird could not be done in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Abu Arshad, Wildlife Warden-Endangered Project at state Forest Department, says that the sarus crane is the tallest among the flying birds in the world. Its height is up to five to six feet while the male and female sarus cranes look alike. The Gruidae species are the only birds that breed in the southern part



Akhilesh, Arif not allowed to meet sarus at Kanpur zoo, told bird is in quarantine

Kanpur: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and Amethi's Arif Khan Gurjar, who cared for an injured sarus crane for a year before it was taken away by forest officials much to his dismay, were not allowed to see the bird at the Kanpur zoo with officials telling them it was under quarantine. The crane lived with Gurjar in Amethi district's Mandkha village like a family member for months. But last Tuesday, forest officials shifted it to the Samaspur Bird Sanctuary in Rae Bareilly so that it could live in its natural environment. It was subsequently moved to the zoo here. Yadav, during his Kanpur visit Tuesday, went to the zoo with Arif to see the bird but they returned disappointed. The Samajwadi Party chief was told that the bird is under 15-day quarantine and a team of doctors is keeping a close watch on its health, a senior forest department official said, requesting anonymity. The official, however, added the two spent about an hour there and saw the sarus on CCTV screens. The SP chief criticised the government for taking away the bird from Arif and sending a legal notice to him.

breeds between July and December. They build nest near lakes and ponds with the help of grass pallets. Apart from this, they are very sensitive towards their nest and don't let any living come near it. Their babies stay with them for a year and are born generally in pairs.

The Wildlife Warden said that the Amethi incident has led to an impression that since the sarus cranes are living together with human beings, their natural habitat has been affected and is not getting requisite nutrients for its growth. Experts have advised to keep these birds in the zoo. It is an offence to catch, touch and disturb such endangered birds and their eggs.

Dr Brajendra of Lucknow Zoo says that sarus crane is considered a sensitive bird and does not eat potato and rice. It is very important to receive the requisite diet so that this bird can remain healthy. They usually eat grass, grains etc. They eat about 500 to 700 gram of food at a time.

Ashok Kashyap, another Lucknow Zoo veterinarian, says, "If you domesticate any animal or bird, it starts getting attached to you emotionally. But you cannot do this for long since there is a change in their wild nature due to which they can attack human beings which can be fatal."

Kaushalendra Singh, a member of Uttarakhand Wildlife Board, says, "Sarus crane is a protected bird. If the bird is found in an injured state, a person must inform the Forest Department. Their natural behaviour must not be disturbed... If they come in contact with humans regularly they will not breed..."

AMRITPAL CASE BBC Punjabi Twitter account withheld

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 29: Amid ongoing police crackdown against pro-Khalistani elements in Punjab, the official Twitter account of the BBC Punjabi was blocked by the authorities.

The message of Twitter profile of BBC News Punjabi read "@bbcnewspunjabi's account has been withheld in India in response to a legal demand".

Though the BBC has not issued any statements yet on the latest development, social media users took to Twitter to express their opinions.



Now BBC News Punjabi twitter handle blocked in India. The government is afraid of the media that criticises the government and exposes the government. It seems as if an undeclared emergency is being imposed in India, especially in Punjab, tweeted Lakhvir Singh.

BBC News Punjabi Twitter account blocked in India for spreading misinformation on law and order situation in Punjab and anti-India propaganda, wrote another Twitter user.

In a latest development, a purported selfie of fugitive Khalistani ideologue Amritpal Singh enjoying an energy drink, along with aide Papalpreet Singh, has gone viral on social media. However, police have not confirmed the timing of the photo and even its authenticity.

Bypolls to Suar, Chhanbey, assembly seats on May 10



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, March 29: Bypolls to Uttar Pradesh's two assembly seats - Suar and Chhanbey - will be held May 10 and counting of votes will take place May 13, election office said here Wednesday.

Notification for the bypoll on the two seats in Rampur and Mirzapur districts will be issued April 13 and the last date for filing of nominations will be April 20, Chief Electoral Officer Ajay Mishra said.

Bypoll on the Suar and Chhanbey seats have been necessitated following the disqualification of Azam Khan's son and sitting SP MLA Abdullah Azam after his conviction in a 15-year-old case and the death of sitting Apna Dal (Sonelal) MLA Rahul Kol.

Though the by-election will have no impact on the present government which enjoys a comfortable majority in the 403-member UP assembly, it assumes significance as the two major political players in the state, BJP and Samajwadi Party, will be going all out for the win, especially SP which will be out to test its popularity one year into the formation of second

Adityanath government. After defeating Azam Khan in his stronghold Rampur, BJP will be looking forward to making a clean sweep by annexing the Suar seat too.

BJP recently demolished over a four-decade-old SP leader's hold on Rampur Sadar assembly seat and it would be interesting to see whether his son's seat too goes out of the family hands.

In the 2022 assembly polls, Abdullah Azam had defeated BJP ally Apna Dal (S) candidate Haider Ali, son of Congressman and a known critic of Azam's family, Kazim Ali Khan, by over 60,000 votes.

Earlier in 2017, Abdullah had won the seat by defeating BJP's Laxmi Saini by over 53,000 votes. But on both the occasions, he got disqualified - in the first instance, because of an alleged anomaly in his birth certificate and in second, due to his conviction in the 15-year-old Chhajlet incident.

Chhanbey reserved seat had been won by Rahul Kol, a son of former Robertsganj MP Pakauri Lal Kol, in 2017. He won it again in 2022 as a candidate from Union minister of State Anupriya Patel headed Apna Dal (S), which is an ally of the ruling BJP.

of the day quote

Never has the maximum sentence been given in a criminal defamation case. The maximum two-year sentence for criminal defamation is unheard of. We can hardly find cases where it was given, especially to an elected representative

SALMAN KHURSHID | SENIOR CONG LEADER

The Centre has stopped releasing funds for MGNREGA and Indira Awas Yojana (Grameen). Besides, it has also stopped scholarships for OBC students

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

Strictest legal action should be taken against those illegally encroaching land. The government is determined not to let injustice happen to anyone and bring prosperity to everyone's life

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

SHORT TAKES

Ruckus in Assam Assembly

Guwahati: The Assam Assembly Wednesday witnessed a ruckus after the Congress introduced an Adjournment Motion to discuss the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha following a court verdict. Following a high drama in the House, Speaker Biswajit Daimary was forced to adjourn the House twice, and suspended two Congress MLAs and an Independent legislator for the entire day. The Congress MLAs attended the House wearing black dresses.

3 die after excavator falls on car in T'gana

Hyderabad: Three members of a family, including a couple, were killed and four others injured when an excavator machine being transported on a tractor-trolley fell on a car in which they were travelling in Nizamabad district. The mishap took place in Bheemgal Tuesday night when one tyre of the tractor-trolley burst and the excavator on it slid and fell on to the car that was passing by from the opposite direction, a police official said on Wednesday, based on preliminary investigation.

Ch'garh: Maoists kill two villagers

Narayanpur/Sukma: Two villagers, including a former deputy sarpanch, were allegedly killed by suspected Naxalites in Chhattisgarh's Maoist-hit Bastar division in separate incidents, police officials said Wednesday. The victims were accused of acting as police informers by assailants, they said. Both incidents took place Tuesday night. While the man identified as Ramji Dodi was murdered in Narayanpur district, another villager Madkam Raju was killed in Sukma district, they said.

Fire in Indore hotel; 8 rescued

Indore: A fire broke out in a six-storey hotel in Indore city of Madhya Pradesh Wednesday morning and eight people, including three women, have been rescued, an official said. No casualty has been reported in the incident. Superintendent of Police (Fire) R S Ningwal said the fire erupted in the basement roof of Papaya Tree Hotel in Rajendra Nagar area, and people staying on the sixth floor got trapped due to smoke.



Let us internalise the ideals of Maryada Purushottam Lord Ram in every sphere of our life, and dedicate ourselves to make India a glorious nation

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT OF INDIA

MADRAS HC TO HEAR OPS PETITION TODAY

The Madras High Court division bench headed by Justice R Mahadevan will hear the appeal submitted by deposed AIADMK coordinator and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, O Panneerselvam (OPS) Thursday



Raj HC acquits all accused

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 29: The Rajasthan High Court Wednesday acquitted four men who were given the death sentence by a lower court for the 2008 serial Jaipur blasts that killed 71 people and slammed the investigating agencies over their "shoddy investigation".

It also affirmed the acquittal of a fifth accused by the trial court.

Jaipur was rocked by a series of blasts May 13, 2008 when bombs went off one after another at Manak Chawk Khanda, Chandpole Gate, Badi Chaupad, Chhoti Chaupad, Tripolia Gate, Johri Bazar and Sanganer Gate. The explosions in the evening left 71 people dead and 185 injured.

According to advocate S S Ali, the counsel for the accused, the high court lambasted the investigating agencies for doing a shoddy investigation in connecting the chain of evidence. The court also directed the director general of police of Rajasthan to take action against the officers involved in the investigation.

Ali said the court found the entire theory presented by the Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS), which in-

2008 JAIPUR SERIAL BLASTS



In December 2019, a special court gave the death sentence to four men --Mohammad Saif, Mohammad Salman, Saifur and Mohammad Sarvar Azmi -- and acquitted another accused, Shahbaz Hussain

vestigated the case, wrong. He said the high court issued directions to the chief secretary to monitor the case.

"The ATS failed to prove the travel plan of the accused that they had travelled from Delhi to Jaipur in a bus May 13, had lunch

Jaipur was rocked by a series of blasts May 13, 2008 when bombs went off one after another at Manak Chawk Khanda, Chandpole Gate, Badi Chaupad, Chhoti Chaupad, Tripolia Gate, Johri Bazar and Sanganer Gate

The explosions in the evening left 71 people dead and 185 injured

at a restaurant, purchased cycles, planted bombs and returned the same day to Delhi in Shatabdi express. The ATS could not produce bus tickets," the counsel said.

Ali said the frame numbers of the cycles mentioned in the bills produced by the ATS did not match with the cycles seized after the blasts and the bills of cycle purchase were tampered with.

"The pellets which the agency said that the accused had purchased from a shop outside Jama masjid in Delhi to plant in the bomb did not match with the pellets found in the dead bodies. The

pellets did not match in the FSL report," he said. "The court said that the allegations against them are not proven. The ATS has failed to establish its theory. The court also said that the ATS did not try to reach the real culprits," Ali added.

In December 2019, a special court gave the death sentence to four men --Mohammad Saif, Mohammad Salman, Saifur and Mohammad Sarvar Azmi -- and acquitted another accused, Shahbaz Hussain.

While the state government challenged the acquittal of Shahbaz Hussain in the high court, the four awarded capital punishment filed an appeal against the trial court order.

The BJP has targeted the Ashok Gehlot government over the investigation by the ATS in the case, saying the judgment cast doubt on the prosecution by the state.

"The Rajasthan High Court has acquitted all the accused. The acquittal in such a big crime raises doubts on the prosecution of the Ashok Gehlot government. The manner in which the evidence was presented by the ATS creates doubts. I think this is the height of appeasement of the Congress government," he said.

Govt introduces Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill in LS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29 : Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav introduced an amendment bill in Lok Sabha Wednesday that seeks to bring clarity to the country's forest conservation law and exempt certain categories of lands from its purview to fast-track strategic and security-related projects of national importance.

Yadav introduced the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023, amid slogan shouting by opposition members demanding a joint parliamentary committee probe into the Adani issue.

The bill was then sent to a joint committee of both the Houses for discussion. The committee consists of 19 Lok Sabha members, 10 Rajya Sabha members and two members to be nominated by the Lok Sabha speaker.

According to the government, the bill seeks to clarify the scope of applicability of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, on various lands. It seeks to broaden the horizons of the Act, keeping in view India's aim to increase forest cover for creation of a carbon sink of additional 2.5-3.0 billion tons of CO2 equivalent by 2030.

Medical services hit in Rajasthan as docs protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 29: Medical services were affected in parts of Rajasthan Wednesday after government doctors and faculty members in medical colleges went on a one-day strike in solidarity with private doctors agitating against the Right to Health Bill.

However, many government doctors attended to patients in OPDs at places like Bharatpur, Alwar and Udaipur. Emergency services and ICUs were exempted from the strike.

There was not much impact of the boycott in Sawai Mansingh (SMS) hospitals, the largest state-run hospitals in the state. Similarly, the services remained unaffected in Dausa, the hometown of state Health Minister Parsadi Lal Meena.

In Rajasthan, private doctors are demanding withdrawal of the Bill passed in the state assembly last Tuesday. According to the Bill, every resident of the state will have



the right to emergency treatment and care "without prepayment" at any "public health institution, health care establishment and designated health care centres".

Iqbal Khan, joint secretary, health department, had Tuesday issued an order to medical college principals directing them to ensure that medical services in OPD, IPD, ICU, emergency and maternity wards were not affected and to take disciplinary action against the doctors going on leave without approval.

Mamata starts 2-day sit-in against Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 29: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the two-day sit-in that she started here Wednesday to protest the BJP-led Union government's alleged discriminatory attitude against the state was on behalf of her party, Trinamool Congress, and not on part of the state government.

Stating that she is doing a "double duty" (as West Bengal chief minister and TMC supremo), Banerjee showed a copy of the Constitution at the protest site and said that the demonstration is also to "save India, save democracy".

"People were asking me whether I am demonstrating on behalf of the state government or the Trinamool Congress. I would like to tell them that I have two responsibilities. I am the CM of West Bengal and also the TMC chairperson. So, as a chief minister when I see the people of my state suffer, it's my responsibility to look into that." "Since this is the



government of the TMC, I will say that I am conducting this demonstration on behalf of my party and not for the state government. You can see my party's symbol," Banerjee said from the dais.

The TMC supremo commenced her sit-in in front of Dr B R Ambedkar's statue on Red Road here earlier in the day to protest against the Centre's alleged "stoppage" of funds to the state for

MGNREGA and other schemes of the housing and road departments. Banerjee, accompanied by senior party leaders Firdah Hakim, Aroop Biswas, Subrata Bakshi, Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay and Chandrima Bhattacharya, reached the venue around noon.

"I am doing double duty. We have several ministers of the state government here. But unlike the BJP, I am not using my

Banerjee had alleged that the Centre has not released funds for the MGNREGA project for the state and other initiatives of its housing and road departments

government's funds (to stage this demonstration)."

"You can see that we have kept a copy of the Constitution here. So, we must remember that the copy is kept here by those who have respect for it, the democracy and secularism of the nation... From here, I will give a call for 'save India, save democracy'," she said.

The sit-in will continue till 7 pm Thursday. Since the CM will not go to the state secretariat 'Nabanna' during the demonstration programme, a temporary office was opened at the venue so that the administrative work is not hampered.



MATTER OF FAITH: Muslims during Zuhur prayers (mid-day prayers) on the 7th day of Ramadan at Jamia Masjid in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO

Left Front, Cong joint protest rally against TMC and BJP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 29: The Left Front and the Congress Wednesday held a joint protest rally in the city against the ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal and the BJP dispensation at the Centre.

The Congress was protesting the cancellation of Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership and also seeking a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe on the Adani shares volatility issue.

The Left Front protest was against alleged corruption involving some ruling party members in the state. Apart from CPI(M), supporters of CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc were present in the rally in good numbers. Left Front chairman Biman Bose, CPI(M) state secretary Mohd Salim, RSP leader Manoj Bhattacharya, Congress leaders Ashutosh Chatterjee, Koustav Bagchi and others led the rally from Ramlila Maidan to Park Circus in south Kolkata

The Congress was protesting the cancellation of Rahul Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership and also seeking a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe on the Adani shares volatility issue

The Left Front protest was against alleged corruption involving some ruling party members in the state

on a day the TMC and the BJP also held mega political programmes in the metropolis.

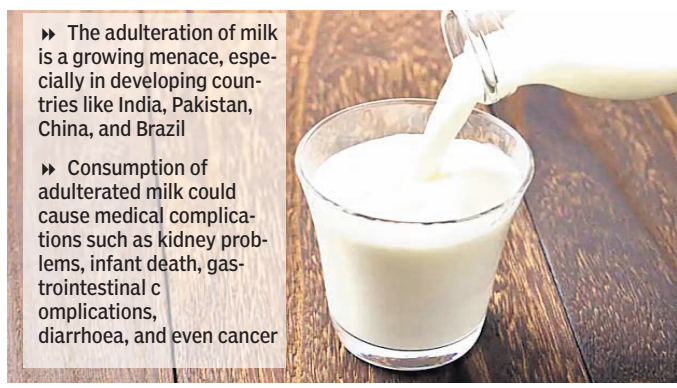
Bose welcomed the Congress party for joining the protest rally, saying that anyone having similar views against corruption and other issues are appreciated for being part of it. "Corruption that took place in every level from the top to the panchayats, we are walking in protest of that," Bose said. Salim said that those who are against the Trinamool Congress and the BJP participated in the rally.

NOW, DETECT ADULTERATED MILK IN 30 SECONDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Researchers have developed a three-dimensional (3D) paper-based portable device that can detect adulteration in milk within 30 seconds.

The test, which could be performed at home, can detect multiple commonly-used adulterating agents including urea, detergents, soap, starch, hydrogen peroxide, sodium-hydrogen-carbonate and salt, among others,



The adulteration of milk is a growing menace, especially in developing countries like India, Pakistan, China, and Brazil

Consumption of adulterated milk could cause medical complications such as kidney problems, infant death, gastrointestinal complications, diarrhoea, and even cancer

they said. Requiring only a millilitre of a liquid as a sample for the test, the researchers said that the test can be used to detect adulteration in other liquids as well such as water, fresh juices and milkshakes.

The research, led by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, is published in the journal Nature.

"The 3D paper-based microfluidic device is made up of a top and bottom cover and a sandwich structure middle layer and

works well for transporting denser liquids at a consistent speed. "The paper is treated with reagents and is let to dry."

"Both paper layers are adhered to both sides of the support after drying, and the covers adhere with double-sided tape."

"Whatman filter paper grade 4 is used in this design, which aids liquid flow and allows for the storage of more reagents," said Pallab Sinha Mahapatra, associate professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, and lead researcher

of the study. This new technology, say the researchers, is affordable, unlike conventional lab-based tests, which are expensive and time-consuming.

The adulteration of milk is a growing menace, especially in developing countries like India, Pakistan, China, and Brazil. Consumption of adulterated milk could cause medical complications such as kidney problems, infant death, gastrointestinal complications, diarrhoea, and even cancer.

international

of the day quote

Israel is a sovereign country which makes its decisions by the will of its people and not based on pressures from abroad, including from the best of friends (US)

Hungary is holding up Sweden's admission to NATO because of grievances over criticism by Stockholm of Prime Minister Viktor Orban's policies

Worldwide, we see autocrats violating human rights and suppressing fundamental freedoms; corrupting — and with corruption eating away at young people's faith in their future

SHORT TAKES

Saudi joins SCO
Riyadh: Saudi Arabia's cabinet approved Wednesday a decision to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as Riyadh builds a long-term partnership with China despite US security concerns. Saudi Arabia has approved a memorandum on granting the kingdom the status of a dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), state news agency SPA said. The SCO is a political and security union of countries spanning much of Eurasia, including China, India and Russia. Formed in 2001 by Russia, China and former Soviet states in Central Asia, the body has been expanded to include India and Pakistan, with a view to playing a bigger role as counterweight to Western influence in the region. Iran also signed documents for full membership last year.

SL cuts fuel price
Colombo: The Sri Lankan government Wednesday announced cuts in fuel prices following the IMF bailout package and signs of economic stabilisation. The move comes after Sri Lanka secured a nearly \$3 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) March 20. The price of different petrol will be lowered by 26.5 per cent while diesel price will be reduced by 19.8 per cent and kerosene by 3.3 per cent. Earlier, the Sri Lankan government introduced painful economic measures such as tax hikes and utility rate hikes to unlock the programme which led to trade unions and opposition groups organising protests against such measures.

NBWs for Khan
Islamabad: A court in Pakistan Wednesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for former prime minister Imran Khan in a case related to alleged threats made to a woman judge. Islamabad-based judicial magistrate Malik Aman presiding over the hearing rejected a plea by Khan's counsel to grant him exemption from in-person appearance. He also rejected a plea by Khan's lawyer to allow the former PM to appear March 30 when the prosecution lawyer opposed the move by saying that he should have appeared by the deadline of the arrest warrants.

Kyi's party dissolved
Yangon: Myanmar's junta-stacked election commission Tuesday announced Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party would be dissolved for failing to re-register under a tough new military-drafted electoral law, state media said.



External pressure will not stop Taiwan engaging with the world. We are calm and confident, will neither yield nor provoke

OATH ON BHAGAVAD GITA

Indian-origin politician Daniel Mookhey took oath on the holy Bhagavad Gita as he was sworn in as the Treasurer of Australia's New South Wales (NSW) state by Governor Margaret Beazley in Sydney. Mookhey was sworn in Tuesday along with NSW Premier Chris Minns and six other ministers



SOLAR DANGER

Gigantic 'coronal hole' spotted on Sun's surface

The gaping hole 20 times larger than Earth and is unleashing solar winds of 2.9 million kmph supposed to hit our planet Friday

AGENCIES

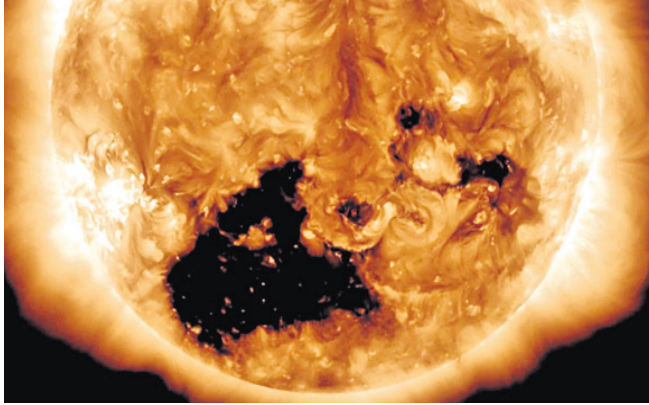
Washington, March 29: A huge 'hole' about 20 times the size of Earth has torn through the Sun, the second in less than a month. Scientists from American space agency NASA spotted this massive black region on the Sun, according to a report. Called the "coronal hole", it looks like certain portion of the Sun has vanished. The appearance of the hole

prompted US federal agency NOAA to issue an alert for geomagnetic storms. According to news.com.au, the gaping hole is unleashing solar winds of 2.9 million kmph towards Earth, which will hit our planet Friday.

The coronal hole was discovered by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory (SDO) March 23 near the Sun's South Pole.

The situation is being monitored to assess the impact these solar winds will have on our planet, said the report. The continuous flow of charged particles from the Sun are known to impact the Earth's magnetic field, satellites, mobile phones and GPS.

These holes allow solar wind (or geomagnetic storms) to escape more readily into the space, which are ranked from G1 to G5 - with the



latter being the most powerful. Because of the giant hole on the Sun's surface, solar winds are hurtling towards the Earth can potentially take down our satellites and other vital pieces of tech.

"The current coronal hole, the big one right now, is about 300,000 to 400,000 kilometres across. That is about 20-30 Earths lined up back-to-back," Alex Young from NASA Goddard's Heliophysics

Science Division told Business Insider.

On March 24, the first coronal hole caused dazzling auroras that filled up the night sky with electric purples and greens. They were triggered by a G3 storm, which is a strong solar storm capable of disrupting electrical systems and satellite operations, including orientation problems.

According to NASA, coronal holes appear as dark areas in the solar corona in extreme ultraviolet (EUV) and soft X-ray solar images. They appear dark because they are cooler, less dense regions than the surrounding plasma and are regions of open, unipolar magnetic fields. These holes can develop at any time and location on the Sun, but are most prevalent and stable at the solar North and South poles.

Gun crimes a menace in US

NASHVILLE SCHOOL SHOOTING IS AMERICA'S 129TH MASS SHOOTING IN 2023, A DISTURBING MILESTONE AS THE NATION IS ON COURSE FOR THE MOST MASS SHOOTINGS EVER



View of a sign placed by children from St Paul Christian Academy along the street in remembrance after a deadly shooting at the Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, March 28

AGENCIES

Washington, March 29: The United States is trying to deal with news of another mass shooting, this time at an elementary school in Nashville. The surge in violence has reignited what has now become a familiar and highly political debate in the US over gun ownership rights and legislation.

Gun violence of all types has gone up exponentially as 13 school shooting incidents were reported in and 129 mass shootings so far in 2023.

More than 348,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since the Columbine High massacre in 1999. There have been 376 school shootings since 1999, according to reports. There were more school shootings in 2022 — 46 — than in any year since at least 1999. Across all such incidents, at least 199 children, educators and other people have been killed, and another 424 have been injured.

Through 2017, the country averaged about 11 school shootings a year, never eclipsing 16 in a single year. But starting in 2018, violent incidents started climbing. In 2020, the novel coronavirus closed campuses for months, and the number of shootings declined. But with classes in session again, 42 K-12 schools experienced school shootings in 2021, and 46 endured one the next year — mirroring the nation's broader rise in gun violence as it emerged from the pandemic.

Between 2019 and 2021, all of the increase in suicides and most of the increase in homicides was from

gun-related incidences. The gun suicide rate increased 10% while the non-gun suicide rate decreased.

Any action from Republican lawmakers, however, is more likely to move in a different direction. Republicans this year have introduced bills that would make it easier to arm teachers and allow college students to carry weapons on campus.

On the same day as the Nashville shooting, a federal judge approved a legal settlement lowering the minimum age to carry handguns with-

out a permit in Tennessee from 21 to 18. That came just two years after a new law set the age at 21.

There are about 120 guns for every 100 Americans, according to the Switzerland-based Small Arms Survey. No other nation has more civilian guns than people. And about 44% of US adults live in a household with a gun, and about one-third own one personally.

Almost a third of US adults believe there would be less crime if more people owned guns, according to an April 2021 Pew survey. However, multiple studies show that where people have easy access to firearms, gun-related deaths tend to be more frequent, including by suicide, homicide and unintentional injuries. Meanwhile, mass shootings continue to drive demand for more guns.

It is unsurprising that the US has more deaths from gun violence than any other developed country per capita. The rate in the US is eight times greater than in Canada, which has the seventh highest rate of gun ownership globally; 22 times higher than in the European Union and 23 times greater than in Australia, according to Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation data from 2019.

US' SCHOOL SHOOTINGS IN 2023

- Oak Park High School, Michigan:** Student suffered a gunshot after a basketball game January 6
- Wekiva High School, Florida:** Teenager was shot at and injured in a parking lot January 6
- Richneck Elementary School, Virginia:** Six-year-old boy targeted his teacher who was left injured January 6
- Del City High School, Oklahoma:** Person was shot at and injured January 17
- Washington Technology Magnet School, Minnesota:** Cross fight between two groups left a female staffer with graze injury January 20
- Starts Right Here, Iowa:** Two students were killed and an adult male was injured during a gun violence January 23
- Walter P. Carter Elementary/Middle School, Maryland:** 15-year-old girl was injured outside the school February 15
- Palo Duro High School, Texas:** Stray bullet from an incident near the school campus injured a student March 6
- Thomas Carr Howe High School, Indianapolis:** One man was shot dead during a shootout March 7
- Lamar High School, Texas:** Student was killed while another was injured outside the school building March 20
- Thomas Jefferson High School, Texas:** Student was left injured in the school parking lot March 21
- East High School, Colorado:** Shooting left two school administrators injured March 22
- The Covenant School, Tennessee:** Three children and three adults were shot dead March 27

Russia, China bolster usable N-arms in '22



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Oslo, March 29: The world's number of operational atomic warheads increased in 2022, driven largely by Russia and China, a new report out Wednesday said as nuclear tensions have risen since the war in Ukraine.

The nine official and unofficial nuclear powers held 9,576 ready-to-use warheads in 2023 — up from 9,440 the year prior, according to the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor published by the NGO Norwegian People's Aid.

Those weapons have a "collective destructive power" equal to "more than 135,000 Hiroshima bombs," the report said.

The figures are published as Moscow has repeatedly raised the nuclear threat in connection to its invasion of Ukraine and Western military aid to the Eastern European country.

On Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that he had agreed with Minsk to deploy "tactical" nuclear weapons in Belarus, a country on the EU's doorstep.

The additional 136 warheads to the ready-to-use global nuclear stockpile last year were attributed

to Russia, which has the world's largest arsenal with 5,889 operational warheads, as well as China, India, North Korea and Pakistan.

"This increase is worrying, and continues a trend that started in 2017," editor of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor, Grethe Lauglo Ostern, said in a statement.

At the same time, the total stockpile of nuclear weapons, which also includes those removed from service, continues to decline.

In the same year, the number of nuclear weapons fell from 12,705 to 12,512, due to the decommissioning of old warheads in Russia and the United States.

Meanwhile, Moscow will no longer inform the US about its missile tests, an announcement that came Wednesday as the Russian military deployed mobile launchers in Siberia in a show of the country's massive nuclear capability

Kim's missile mania

North Korea unveiled new, smaller nuclear warheads and vowed to produce more weapons-grade nuclear material to expand its arsenal, state media said Tuesday. Pyongyang also launched two short-range ballistic missiles into the waters off the east coast of the Korean Peninsula Monday morning, South Korean authorities said, the latest in series of missile firings as South Korean and United States forces engage in their largest military exercises since 2017.

2ND HIGHEST GLOBALLY AFTER US

Brazil hits 7L Covid-19 deaths

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sao Paulo, March 29: Brazil's government Tuesday reported the 700,000th death from Covid-19 in the South American nation, which has the second most victims of the virus after the United States.

Brazilian health experts say most people dying of Covid-19 in recent days are either unvaccinated or suffer from other debilitating diseases.

The vaccine currently available in every health care unit in Brazil could have changed the lives of families who lost beloved ones in



the pandemic, said the country's Health Ministry.

Health Minister Nisia Trindade criticized former President Jair Bolsonaro for his handling of the pandemic. Bolsonaro, who became ill with Covid, later declined to take the coronavirus vaccine and

EU removes Pakistan from list of 'High-Risk Third Countries'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, March 29: The EU has removed Pakistan from its list of "High-Risk Third Countries" that do not have a robust anti-money laundering and countering terrorist financing regime, a move welcomed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday as a much-needed breather when Pakistan faces an economic crisis.

The EU's delegation in Pakistan termed it an "important positive step" for Pakistan.

"In line with last year's FATF (Financial Action Task Force) decision, the EU has decided to remove



Pakistan from its list of countries with high risk regarding money laundering and financing of terrorism," it said on Twitter.

It was referring to the decision by the global money laundering and financing watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to remove Pakistan from its list of countries under "increased monitoring".

In a statement announcing the news, Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce said the listing of Pakistan in 2018 had resulted in creating a regulatory burden affecting Pakistani companies doing business with the 27-member bloc.

Pakistan was included on the list in 2018, placing the country under additional regulatory restrictions. The list includes countries that the European Union considers to have strategic deficiencies in their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing frameworks.

Sharif in a Twitter post said that the decision would facilitate the country's businesses, individuals and entities. "De-listing of Pakistan from EU's updated list of high-risk third-countries is a major development which would facilitate our businesses, individuals and entities," he tweeted.

PM Shehbaz also said it was a reflection of the government's unwavering resolve to further strengthen the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime.

FIRST TIME IN HISTORY

Hindu PM in Westminster, Muslim 1st Min in Scotland

The recent dispute between the Indian-origin leader and a Pakistani leader over Britain's 'partition' has, thus, resulted in a flood of humorous memes on social media

AGENCIES

Birmingham, March 29: Humza Yousaf's appointment as first minister of Scotland is a historic moment for the UK. It means that, for the first time in history, the country has a Hindu Prime Minister in Westminster Rishi Sunak and a Muslim First Minister in Scotland.

Yousaf was sworn in as Scotland's new leader Wednesday in a ceremony that blended formal tradition with his Pakistani heritage before he announces ap-

pointments to his cabinet that risk worsening the deep divisions in his governing party.

He is the first Muslim to lead a democratic western European nation, was dressed in a black shalwar kameez at Scotland's highest court, the Court of Session in Edinburgh, as his family watched on.

The 37-year-old pledged an oath of allegiance to King Charles. He has previously said he wants to replace the monarchy with an elected head of state if he achieves his dream of ending Scotland's



three-centuries-long political union with England.

'Ind vs Pak' Yousaf scripted history by be-

coming Scotland's youngest and first minority ethnic leader Monday. However, soon after he declared his intention to deliver Scottish independence, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's office rejected his request for another independence referendum. This has caused a stir on the internet, particularly on Desi Twitter, where people have engaged in a meme-fest that harks back to the infamous 'Ind vs Pak' rivalry.

The recent dispute between the Indian-origin leader and a Pakistani leader over Britain's 'partition' has, thus, resulted in a flood of humorous memes on social media. Some individuals also view this as an opportunity to contemplate how

the past under British rule in India is recurring in some ways, with the Brits now experiencing similar situations. Despite the potentially serious nature of the situation, people are making light of it through playful commentary, generating a lighthearted atmosphere.

A Hindu and a Muslim are discussing the partition of Britain, a tweet read.

Humza Yousaf, the new Muslim Pakistani-origin leader of Scotland called for a referendum on independence, which Hindu Prime Minister of Britain Rishi Sunak outrightly rejected. Who would have thought the Hindu vs Muslim 'divide-and-rule' policy will bite Britishers this way?, another tweet noted.

of the day quote

The 300th loco delivery is a proud milestone for us, and as we continue to deliver more locomotives, this partnership will continue to boost the nation's logistic capabilities

OLIVIER LOISON | MD, ALSTOM INDIA

India's merchandise imports for the fiscal year ending March 2023 are estimated to touch \$710 billion, up from \$613 billion in FY2022, an increase of over 15.8 per cent over last year

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

We plan to grow our franchise base by over 50 per cent this year to expand reach in smaller cities and towns across the country

RAJESH MAGOW | CO-FOUNDER AND GROUP CEO, MAKEMYTRIP

SHORT TAKES

Seventh round of coal mine auctions

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Wednesday launched the seventh round of auctions for commercial mining of coal blocks, putting 106 mines under the hammer. Of the total mines offered under the seventh round, 61 blocks are partially explored and 45 mines are fully explored. As many as 95 non-coking coal mines, 10 lignite mines and one coking coal mine are being offered in the latest round of auction. In his address, Singh said coal is considered black gold which plays an important role in strengthening the economy of the country. Companies like JSW Cements, Ultratech Cements, Ambuja Cements, and Jindal Power Ltd among others were the successful bidders in the sixth round of auctions.

Telcos debt touch ₹4.17trn in '21-22

New Delhi: Six telecom companies -- including Airtel, Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea -- had a total debt of ₹4.17 lakh crore in fiscal 2021-22, Parliament was informed Wednesday. Data submitted by Minister of State for Telecom Devusinih Chauhan in the Lok Sabha shows Vodafone Idea had a debt of ₹1,91,073.9 crore, Airtel (Rs 1,03,408.1 crore), Reliance Jio (₹42,486 crore), BSNL (₹ 40,400.13 crore), Tata Teleservices (Rs 20,162.04 crore) and Tata Teleservices (Maharashtra) Limited (Rs 19,703.84 crore) in the financial year 2021-22.

Apple rolls out buy now, pay later plan

New York: Apple is getting into the buy now, pay later space with a few tweaks to the existing model -- including no option to pay with a credit card. The company will roll out the product to some consumers this spring, and will begin reporting the loans to credit bureaus in the fall. Since the start of the pandemic, the option to "buy now, pay later" has skyrocketed in popularity, especially among young and low-income consumers who may not have ready access to traditional credit.

Maruti's new feat

New Delhi: Automaker Maruti Suzuki India Ltd Wednesday said it has crossed the 25 lakh units milestone of cumulative exports since starting overseas shipments in 1986-87. The company, which started exports with shipments to markets like Bangladesh and Nepal in 1986-87, said it currently exports to nearly 100 countries, including markets in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East.



Indian economy is likely to grow at the rate of 6.5 per cent in the coming decade on the back of the turnaround in financial and investment cycle

V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

ALIBABA TO SPLIT INTO 6 UNITS

Alibaba announced that it will split its company into six business groups, each with the ability to raise outside funding and go public, in the most significant overhaul in the Chinese e-commerce giant's history. Each business group will be managed by its own CEO and board of directors



ANTI-COMPETITIVE PRACTICES

NCLAT upholds fine on Google

NCLAT upholds CCI's ₹1,338cr fine on Google and grants partial relief on four grounds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: An appellate tribunal Wednesday handed out a mixed verdict on Google's alleged anti-competitive practices in the android mobile device case -upholding a fine of ₹1,338 crore but scrapping conditions like allowing hosting of third-party app stores on its Play Store.

While upholding the fine imposed by the CCI for exploiting its dominant position in Android, the NCLAT struck down anti-trust regulator order that had said Google will not restrict the removal of its pre-installed apps by the users. Notably, the NCLAT in its 189-page order, upheld CCI's six directions, including one in which Google was asked to allow the users during the initial device setup to choose their default search engine, and another that made it clear that OEMs cannot be forced to pre-install a bouquet of apps.

relief except for setting aside the above four directions".

"The Appellant (Google) is allowed to deposit the amount of penalty (after adjusting the 10 per cent amount of penalty as deposited under order dated January 4, 2023) within a period of 30 days from today," it said.

On October 20 last year, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) slapped a penalty of ₹1,337.76 crore on Google for anti-competitive practices in relation to Android mobile devices. The regulator also ordered the internet major to cease and desist from various unfair business practices.

This ruling was challenged before the NCLAT, which is an appellate authority over the orders passed by the CCI.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The NCLAT order passed Wednesday marks one of the most high-profile anti-trust battles in the Indian market, involving the tech giant and CCI, and concludes over a month-long day-to-day hearing by the appellate tribunal on the directions of the Supreme Court.

Out of the 10 directions issued by the CCI on October 20, 2022, to Google, the NCLAT upheld the six directions and said it "is allowed 30 days time to implement the measures".

One of the important directions by CCI upheld by the NCLAT said

Google will allow the users, during the initial device setup, to choose their

default search engine for all search entry points.

The tribunal also upheld five other directions of CCI - that OEMs shall not be forced to pre-install the bouquet app; licensing of Play Store to OEMs shall not be linked with the requirement of pre-installing Google apps.

It also upheld CCI directions that Google will not offer incentives to OEMs for ensuring exclusivity for its search services; not impose anti-fragmentation obligations on OEMs; and the tech giant will not incentivise OEMs for not selling smart devices based on Android forks.

The four directions set aside by the NCLAT include the one which said app developers would be able to port their apps easily onto Android forks. CCI had said Google will not deny access to its Play Services APIs to disadvantage OEMs, app developers and its existing or potential competitors.

The NCLAT said it is clear that the APIs and Google Play Services,

which are proprietary items of Google cannot be given in through un-hindered access to App developers, OEMs and Google's existing and potential competitors.

The appellate tribunal also set aside CCI's direction that said Google shall not restrict the uninstalling of its pre-installed apps by the users.

The NCLAT noted that OEMs are also not obliged to install all 11 suites of Apps of Google, thus they are free to not preinstall any of the apps.

The tribunal reasoned that when the preinstalled Apps are at the choice of the OEMs and they are not obliged to preinstall the entire bouquet of Apps, the directions issued by CCI in this regard appear to be "unnecessary". OEMs are required to pre-installing 11 apps, including Google search services, Chrome browser, YouTube, Google Maps, Gmail or any other application of Google.

NCLAT backs antitrust ruling against Google's conduct

Tribunal quashes 4 of 10 Android directives

Google will need to deposit penalty, follow other directives

Sebi to bring in place framework to prevent frauds by stock brokers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Markets regulator Sebi Wednesday approved a slew of proposals, including ending the practice of individuals holding permanent directorship at boards of listed companies and putting in place a framework to prevent frauds by stock brokers.

The proposals were cleared by the board of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) during its meeting here Wednesday.

The watchdog has approved a regulatory framework to allow private equity funds to become sponsors of mutual funds, a move that will help further deepen the mutual fund industry.

Besides, the regulator has given its nod for norms for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) disclosures by listed companies.

According to a release issued after the board meeting, Sebi said

it has decided to end the practice of individuals having permanent seats at boards of listed companies. The move is part of efforts to further boost the corporate governance ecosystem.

Among other measures, the regulator will put in place a formal mechanism to prevent frauds and market abuse by stock brokers.

Further, Sebi will introduce fund-blocking facility for secondary market transactions like being done for Initial Public Offerings (IPOs). The measure is aimed at safeguarding investors' money from misuse by stock brokers.



₹6.57CR RECOVERED FROM SAHARA GROUP

Markets regulator Sebi Tuesday said it has recovered pending dues worth ₹6.57 crore from Sahara India Real Estate Corporation, its chief Subrata Roy, and others in the case pertaining to flouting norms in issuance of optionally fully convertible debentures. The government Wednesday said money will be returned to 10 crore investors of 4 cooperative societies of Sahara group within 9 months following a Supreme Court order directing transfer of ₹5,000 crore from Sahara-SEBI refund account to the Central Registrar. Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court allowed a plea by the Centre seeking allocation of ₹5,000 crore, out of ₹24,000 crore deposited by the Sahara group with market regulator Sebi, to repay depositors of the cooperative societies.

BIZ BUZZ

UT Dallas confers Lifetime Achievement Award on Jindal



New Delhi: Naveen Jindal, Chairman of Jindal Steel & Power has been honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award by the University of Texas, Dallas for his accomplishments in industry, politics, and education. An Alumni of UT Dallas 1992 batch, Jindal received the award in a ceremony held by the University March 25. Jindal is the second person receiving the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the University of Texas, Dallas after Nobel Laureate Aziz Sancar. As a student at UT Dallas, Jindal served as both Student Government Vice President and President and earned the Student Leader of the Year Award. He was recognised with the University's Distinguished Alumni award in 2010. To celebrate the enormous success of their most distinguished alumni, the University of Texas at Dallas honoured him by rechristening their School of Management as the Naveen Jindal School of Management in 2011. This award is the highest honour that UT Dallas bestows on alumni, to recognize a graduate whose extraordinary contributions have bettered society, transformed UT Dallas, and inspired others to reach new heights of excellence.

PFC Consulting transfers three power transmission projects to POWERGRID

New Delhi: State-owned Power Finance Corporation arm PFC Consulting Wednesday said it has transferred three special purpose vehicles, which were set up to implement different transmission projects, to Power Grid Corporation. "PFC Consulting Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Power Finance Corporation Ltd, has transferred three transmission projects (special purpose vehicles) namely 'Bhadla Sikar Transmission Ltd', 'Dharamjaigarh Transmission Ltd' & 'Raipur Pool Dhamtari Transmission Ltd' to Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, the successful bidder, on March 28, 2023," a statement said. The bidder was selected through the tariff-based competitive bidding process. Bids were sought for the selection of a transmission service provider for setting up of transmission system in line with guidelines notified by the power ministry.



Union Bank holds CSR programme

Bhubaneswar: Under its Empower HER Initiative, Union Bank of India's Regional Office, Bhubaneswar in the presence of Satyaban Behera, Deputy General Manager, Regional Head, Regional Office, Bhubaneswar and Empower HER committee members donated smart classroom equipments (which includes projector, computer and allied equipments) to Kendriya Vidyalaya No 2, CRPF Campus, Bhubaneswar March 29. In the event Principal Anjan Kumar Khataua and other staff members of the school were present to appreciate such innovative steps of the bank under Empower HER CSR donations to praise, appreciate and celebrate the women power of India. MD & CEO of Union Bank of India, A Manimekhalai's novel Empower HER programme celebrates the human spirit by lending a hand towards provision of basic amenities and a clean environment for all. This initiative shall help to provide advanced teaching facilities for students for creating a better technological facilities for the future generations.

'Two Adani entities face contagion risks'

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 29: Ratings agency Fitch said two Adani Group subsidiaries were exposed to "heightened contagion risks", possibly affecting their financial flexibility, due to weak governance at the parent conglomerate and other companies in the group.

Adani Transmission Ltd and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone "would be capped at current rating level of 'BBB-/Stable' till alleged concerns are ironed out," Fitch said in an emailed statement Wednesday.

Short-seller Hindenburg Research's January 24 report alleged improper use of tax havens and stock manipulation by the ports-to-energy conglomerate - charges it has denied. Seven listed firms of the Adani Group have shed over \$120 billion in market value since the report was published.

Fitch early last month, however, said it had seen no immediate impact on its ratings of Adani Group entities and their securities. It said Wednesday "there is no rating impact even now." It also said contagion risk was lower for restricted groups including Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd and Mumbai International Airport, as their credit profile was supported by "structural enhancements," including limits on debt.

Fitch defines restricted groups as rated entities that benefit from defined cash flow waterfall and



\$2.15bn share-backed loans paid off: Adani

Billionaire Gautam Adani-led promoter group has paid off all of the \$2.15 billion loans taken pledging their shares in the conglomerate, and only debt at operating company level remains, Adani Group said seeking to assure investors of its ability to repay debt. Adani Group in a statement termed reports of the group not completing repayment of \$2.15 billion share-backed debt "baseless and deliberately mischievous."

other structural protections.

"There would not be any capping on those (the rating for the restricted groups) if other credit factors support higher than 'BBB-' rating," Fitch said. It also said in its report, "cash flow generation from January 2023 to March 2024 will boost the liquidity of the groups."

Most Adani group companies gained Wednesday after a drop in the previous session following a report that said the conglomerate was seeking to renegotiate debt, which the group refuted.

Govt plans to raise ₹8.88lakh-cr from market in H1 FY24

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: The Centre plans to raise ₹8.88 lakh crore through market borrowing in the April-September period of 2023-24 to fund the revenue gap to push economic growth, the Finance Ministry said Wednesday.

Out of gross market borrowing of ₹15.43 lakh crore estimated for FY2023-24, ₹8.88 lakh crore or 57.5 per cent is planned to be borrowed in the first half (H1), it said.

The borrowing is scheduled to be completed in 26 weekly tranches of ₹31,000-39,000 crore, it said, adding that the borrowing will be spread under 3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 30 and 40-year securities.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had in the Budget for FY24 reduced the fiscal deficit or the gap between expenditure and revenue to 5.9 per cent of the GDP for FY24 against 6.4 per cent in the current financial year.

To finance the fiscal deficit in 2023-24, net market borrowing from dated securities is estimated at ₹1.8 lakh crore. "The share of borrowing under different maturities will be 3 years (6.31 per cent), 5 years (11.71 per cent), 7 years (10.25 per cent), 10 years (20.50 per cent), 14 years (17.57 per cent), 30 years (16.10 per cent) and 40 years (17.57 per cent)," the statement said.

The issuance of Sovereign Green Bonds will be announced in the second half (H2) of FY 2023-24, it added.

'RISK TO HUMANITY' Musk, experts call for pause in 'giant AI experiments'

SINCE ITS RELEASE LAST YEAR, MICROSOFT-BACKED OPENAI'S CHATGPT HAS PROMPTED RIVALS TO ACCELERATE DEVELOPING SIMILAR LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS, AND COMPANIES TO INTEGRATE GENERATIVE AI MODELS INTO THEIR PRODUCTS

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Paris, March 29: Billionaire mogul Elon Musk and a range of experts called Wednesday for a pause in the development of powerful artificial intelligence (AI) systems to allow time to make sure they are safe.

An open letter, signed by more than 1,000 people so far including Elon Musk and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, was prompted by the release of GPT-4 from San Francisco firm OpenAI.

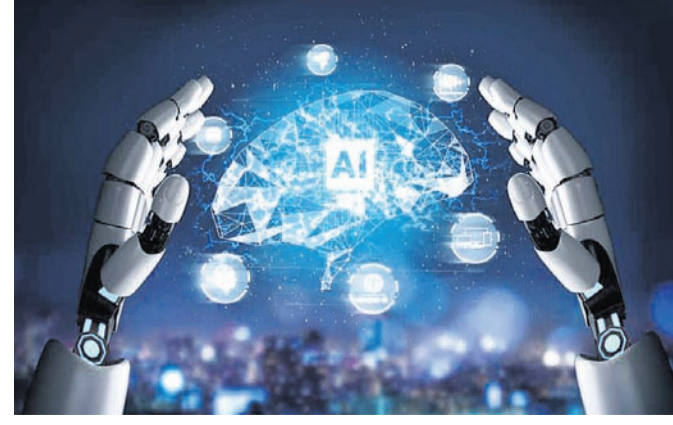
The company says its latest model is much more powerful than the previous version, which was used to power ChatGPT, a bot ca-

pable of generating tracts of text from the briefest of prompts.

"AI systems with human-competitive intelligence can pose profound risks to society and humanity," said the open letter titled "Pause Giant AI Experiments".

"Powerful AI systems should be developed only once we are confident that their effects will be positive and their risks will be manageable," it said.

Musk was an initial investor in OpenAI, spent years on its board, and his car firm Tesla develops AI systems to help power its self-driving technology, among other applications.



The letter, hosted by the Musk-funded Future of Life Institute, was signed by prominent critics as well as competitors of OpenAI like

Stability AI chief Emad Mostaque.

'Trustworthy and loyal'

The letter quoted from a blog written by OpenAI founder Sam Altman, who suggested that "at some point, it may be important to get independent review before starting to train future systems". "We agree. That point is now," the authors of the open letter wrote.

"Therefore, we call on all AI labs to immediately pause for at least 6 months the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4."

They called for governments to step in and impose a moratorium if companies failed to agree. The six months should be used

to develop safety protocols, AI governance systems, and refocus research on ensuring AI systems are more accurate, safe, "trustworthy and loyal".

The letter did not detail the dangers revealed by GPT-4.

But researchers including Gary Marcus of New York University, who signed the letter, have long argued that chatbots are great liars and have the potential to be superspreaders of disinformation.

However, author Cory Doctorow has compared the AI industry to a "pump and dump" scheme, arguing that both the potential and the threat of AI systems have been massively overhyped.

Rohit not bothered by expectations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 29: Rohit Sharma knows a thing or two about winning IPL trophies and having been there and done that on five occasions for Mumbai Indians, public expectation is the last thing to make him wary.

The most successful captain in the history of IPL with five championships, Sharma knows that Mumbai Indians as one of the title contenders comes enters any tourney with a baggage of hype and hoopla.

And that's what a protective skipper wants to shield the youngsters in his side from as one can easily get overawed by the sense of occasion.

"Expectations will always be there whenever we go out to play, not just in the IPL. Having played for so many years it does not bother me and I am not worried about what the people are expecting me to do," Sharma said at the season opening media conference organised by MI. "We know that we have to do our best and win the trophy. To keep thinking about it all the time is to put pressure on yourself," the skipper said.

Dewald Brevis, Tilak Verma will all be playing their second season but for young Cameron Green with a multi-million dollar deal, IPL will be a different beast altogether.

"I don't want to put too much pressure on them (youngsters) right now. Closer to our first game, we will give them that specific roles. Obviously leading up that first game, guys pretty much know what we are expecting from them," Sharma explained.

"But the last thing I will do is put too much pressure on them, especially the guys who have not played IPL before and there are a few," the skipper assured to put his protective arm around the junior mem-



Rohit Sharma speaks to mediapersons during the press conference, organised by MI, as new head coach Mark Boucher looks on

bers of the contingent.

The one tip that MI skipper always offers to the new players in the set-up is to think the platform as an extension of domestic cricket and do exactly what got them success over there.

Sharma said while his side will miss Jasprit Bumrah but to compensate his absence, MI will have Jofra Archer ready to unleash his 145 plus thunderbolts. Mumbai Indians are also expected to an-

nounce a replacement for Bumrah, the captain confirmed.

"It will be a big miss but it is an opportunity for someone else. There are a couple of guys who have been with this team for the last two years and they are very much ready to step up. Hopefully we will blood a few youngsters," Sharma said.

"Jofra (Archer) was part of the team last year, but he was injured. Obviously we all know the quality of Jofra. It is sad we will miss Bumrah

this year, we do understand how big his (Bumrah's) shoes are to fill, but there is an opportunity that is up for grabs, to fill that place.

"A lot of young players will get an opportunity and this is a platform for them to come out and express themselves," he said.

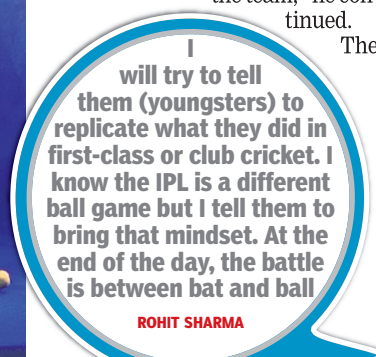
Talking about the new rule of "Impact Player", Sharma said there will be more clarity on the change after a first few matches. "There's no doubt that the captains would

use it. But, again, like I said, it depends on all the team dynamics. What the other teams have as an 'Impact Player' who is sitting outside.

"We will not be worried about what the other teams are doing. We will see what we can do and how we can strengthen our team on that particular day. We'll get some idea (about how to use the rule) in the first couple of games and obviously, we've had a good chat around this new rule as well," Sharma said.

"Luckily for us, when the first (few) games start, we are playing the last, so we would be able to watch the other teams, what they do and how much beneficial is it to the team," he continued.

The



"Impact Player" allows 12 players to take active part in the game and hence the skipper said that team combinations will remain fluid although at least nine slots out of 12 being sorted. Sharma said it was too early for him to discuss team combination.

Sharma had forged a successful combination with Mahela Jayawardene for some years and is equally hopeful that he will develop a fine rapport with new head coach Mark Boucher. For the record, Jayawardene is now the Global Head of all the MI franchises.

Captaining MSD was a little bit daunting: Smith



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 29: Australian star Steve Smith says captaining MS Dhoni in the 2017 IPL was "a little bit daunting" but he also learned to be calm and level-headed by spending time with the Indian great.

In that season, Smith led the Rising Pune Supergiant squad that also featured Dhoni season, as Chennai Super Kings were serving a two-year ban from the competition. Smith, who will be part of the commentary team in the upcoming season, led the franchise to the finals of the tournament in 2017, narrowly missing out on the title by just one run.

Recalling his experiences of captaining the RPS and how Dhoni played a big role in that season, Smith told 'Star Sports', "When I got the call to say that they wanted me to captain, it was a little bit daunting. But that season, MSD was just wonderful. "You know, he helped in any way that he could and, he's a terrific guy. It was a great experience being able to captain him, but also very daunting as well."

Smith also spoke on the emotions he went through when he was picked as the captain of the RPS team and how he felt leading a side with Dhoni in it. "Yeah, I didn't really know what to expect initially, you know, MS had captained every team he played for, obviously throughout the IPL with Chennai, every season should I say.

"But yeah, when they came and asked me, I was a little bit shocked first, and then I didn't really know what to say. It was like, have you spoken to MS about this? This is a little bit strange from my side, but after we sorted everything out, MS was just wonderful. And the way he helped me and helped guide that team that year was incredible. And yeah, I couldn't thank him enough."

Smith said he was bouncing ideas off Dhoni. "He was someone that I was bouncing ideas off. You know, being behind the stumps, he's got a great, great view of the game. He understands the angles really well and obviously playing in India also, you know, it's his home and he understands those conditions as well as anyone would."

The Australian further spoke about what he has been able to learn and emulate from Dhoni over the years. "I think just the calmness that MS shows, we saw it throughout his career; just how calm he was. It didn't look like he was flustered by any emotions or anything like that."

"And that's certainly something that I've taken in not just in that season, but just watching him go about his business in the prior years, just how calm and relaxed he was. And you know, at times I can get quite agitated and things like that."

"So you know, I have to try and keep myself as calm and as sort of levelheaded as I can. And yeah, that's something that I learned off of MS."

I'll try to be unpredictable for bowlers, says Joe Root

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 29: Ahead of his maiden IPL stint, Rajasthan Royals' star English recruit Joe Root says he will try to "get the best out of myself" and "be unpredictable for bowlers" in the tournament beginning March 31.

"I'll try and be as much as I can and try to be unpredictable for bowlers. I am sure I will smile and enjoy it, and will try to get the best out of myself," Root said in a team release.

Ahead of a practice session here, the 32-year-old spoke about his new team. "Everyone seems to want to create that feel around things that it's more than just performances on the field. They said they were delighted to get me in the auction..."

England's ex-Test cricket captain is looking forward to the season. "It's an experience that you can't replicate anywhere else in the world. I've never experienced it before so it's all going to be very new to me, which, for an experienced player that's played a lot of international cricket, is really exciting. I've heard a lot of things. And I'm really looking forward to living it now."

Sharing his thoughts on the Royals' team, Root said; "Last year was an exceptional year for the franchise and I've always enjoyed watching Sanju (Samson) play. I think he's a hell of a talent and



Joe Root bats at the nets during Rajasthan Royals' training session

seems to keep growing every year as a player and as a leader."

The stylish batter also spoke about how he is preparing himself for the format. "I'm just trying to be as consistent as I can be. You can always work on things slowly and in the background but ultimately you are trying to make sure that your strengths are as good as they possibly can be."

"And that you know you're switched on and ready for any situation and scenario that you find yourself in and you have that clarity under pressure."

Scotland stun Spain, Croatia win too

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Glasgow, March 29: Scott McTominay scored twice as Scotland upset Spain 2-0 in qualifying for the European Championship, their first win in 39 years over one of football's biggest heavyweights.

McTominay's goals came after he also scored two in a 3-0 win over Cyprus on Saturday and ended Spain's 19-game unbeaten run in European qualifiers. The result also puts Scotland top of Group A with six points from two games.

Mateo Kovacic also scored twice as Croatia defeated Turkey 2-0 away for its first win in Group D. Romania and Switzerland both won in Group I, continuing their perfect starts.

GROUP A
Spain's players were warned after McTominay scored two late goals in Scotland's opening win over Cyprus. But few expected him to do it again Tuesday against a team that had not lost a European qualifying game since a 1-2 loss to Slovakia ahead of the 2016 tournament.

Spain had not lost to Scotland since Maurice Johnston scored two and Kenny Dalglish added another in a 3-1 World Cup qualifier in November 1984.

New Spain coach Luis de la Fuente made eight changes to the lineup to the team that started Euro 2024 qualifying with a 3-0 win over Norway. Joselu went closest



Scott McTominay (L) reacts after scoring against Spain, Tuesday

for the visitors when his header hit the crossbar midway through the first half.

Georgia and Norway drew 1-1 in the other group game.

GROUP D
Croatia was forced to rely on goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic to deny Turkey's Cengiz Under and Kerem Akturkoglu early on in Bursa. Kovacic opened the scoring from close range in the 20th and nabbed the second just before the break.

Kieffer Moore scored just be-

Germany in new coach Domenico Tedesco's return home. De Bruyne set up both opening goals then sealed the victory just as Germany was threatening an equalizer after recovering from a very poor opening half hour.

It gave Tedesco, the former Leipzig and Schalke coach, a second win from his first two games after his team started Euro 2024 qualifying with a 3-0 win in Sweden last week.

Jürgen Klinsmann, on the other hand, is still waiting for his first win as head coach of South Korea after Uruguay triumphed 2-1 in a friendly played at the Seoul World Cup Stadium. The former Germany coach's first match in charge was a 2-2 home draw with Colombia last week.

After South Korea progressed to the second round of last year's World Cup at the expense of Uruguay, the result in Seoul provided some measure of revenge for the visiting team.

The meeting between the two teams at the World Cup in Qatar ended 0-0 but it only took Sebastian Coates 10 minutes to open the scoring for Uruguay this time, after he rose above the Korean defense to head home a corner from Federico Valverde.

Six minutes into the second half, midfielder Hwang In-beom fired home a shot from inside the penalty area. But Matias Vecino grabbed the winner in the 63rd, scoring from close range.

Messi completes 100 career goals for La Albiceleste



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Santiago Del Estero, March 29: Lionel Messi scored a hat-trick and surpassed 100 career goals for Argentina with three in the first half of Tuesday's international friendly against Curacao.

The World Cup winners beat the Caribbean side 7-0 in their second match since clinching the trophy in December.

The 35-year-old Messi opened the scoring against Curacao in the 20th minute with a right-foot shot from the edge of the box to reach the 100-goal milestone.

Messi scored his 101st in the 33rd minute with a crossed shot to the right of the goalkeeper and his 102nd in the 37th after an easy run to score.

The Argentine captain trails only two players on the list of most goals scored for national teams in official matches; Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, with 122, and Iran's Ali Daei, with 109.

RYBAKINA SECURES 12TH STRAIGHT WIN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami Gardens, March 29: Reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina extended her winning streak to 12 matches by delivering 10 aces — her fourth consecutive outing with at least that many — in a 6-3, 6-0 victory over 25th-seeded Martina Trevisan in the Miami Open quarterfinals.

Rybakina has 46 aces through four matches at the hard-court tournament in Florida and a WTA-leading 201 this season.

The 23-year-old, who represents Kazakhstan, improved to 20-4 in 2023, including a run to the Australian Open final in January and a title at Indian Wells, California, last week.

She is trying to become only the fifth player to win the women's trophies at Indian Wells and Miami in the same season. Top-ranked Iga Swiatek did it a year ago; she withdrew from Miami this time because of a rib injury.



Elena Rybakina plays a backhand during her match against Martina Trevisan at Miami Open, Tuesday

So far in Rybakina's career, 13 of her 18 semifinal appearances have come on hard courts. She will face No.3 Jessica Pegula for a berth in

the final after the American fought off two match points and outlasted No.27 Anastasia Potapova 4-6, 6-3, 7-6(7-2) in a match that ended just

before 1:30 am after play had been delayed by rain. Trevisan reached the French Open semifinals in 2022. In fourth-round men's action

Tuesday, No.2 seed Stefanos Tsitsipas was beaten 7-6(7-4), 6-4 by No.14 Karen Khachanov, while defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, Taylor Fritz and Jannik Sinner all beat seeded opponents in straight sets.

Alcaraz, who returned to No.1 in the ATP rankings last week, got past Australian Open semifinalist Tommy Paul 6-4, 6-4 to set up a meeting against Fritz, the top-ranked American man and seeded ninth in Miami.

Fritz compiled twice as many winners, 22, as unforced errors, 11, and only dropped serve once during a 6-3, 6-4 victory over No.7 Holger Rune. That put Fritz into his first quarterfinal in seven appearances in Miami — and his first matchup against Alcaraz, a 19-year-old from Spain who won the US Open in September for his first Grand Slam title.

No.10 Sinner eliminated No.6 Andrey Rublev 6-2, 6-4. Sinner's next opponent will be Emil Ruusuvuori.

Sindhu, Srikanth advance in Madrid Masters tourney

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, March 29: Star Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth won their respective first round matches in the Madrid Masters Badminton here Wednesday. But the doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty withdrew from the tournament after an injury to the former.

Double Olympic medalist and former World Champion Sindhu made short work of Switzerland's Jenjira Stadelmann 21-10, 21-4. World Championship silver medalist Srikanth defeated Sitthikorn Thammassin of Thailand 21-11, 25-27, 23-21 in his round of 32 match.

The Indian duo of Satwik and Chirag were up against Japanese pair Ayato Endo and Yuta Takei, only three days after winning a historic Swiss Open title, in their round of 32 match.

The Indian pair withdrew following what looked like a knee injury to Satwiksairaj who was seen speaking to the officials and drawing their attention to his left knee. It was during the break of the first game and the Indians were trailing 9-11.

Meanwhile, Aakarshi Kashyap defeated sixth seed Michelle Li of Canada 12-21, 21-15, 21-18 in her first round match. Ashmita Chaliha beat Frenchwoman Leonice Huet 21-12, 22-20.

The women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand lost their first round contest against Japan's Rena Miyaura and Ayako Sakuramoto.

In another men's singles match, B Sai Praneeth beat Jan Louda 21-16, 18-21, 21-12. Priyanshu Rajawat won his men's singles match against Viktor Svendsen 18-21, 21-16, 21-11. Kiran George beat compatriot Mithun Manjunath 21-16, 21-14.