



IN SOUP

Priyanka Chopra gets slammed by Twitteratti for her dialogue that allegedly insulted Princess Kate Middleton

LEISURE

P2



MODI IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

PM Narendra Modi arrives in Papua New Guinea on his maiden visit during which he will host a key summit Monday

INTERNATIONAL

P10



NOT THINKING TOO MUCH

KKR batter Rinku Singh, despite a brilliant IPL season, is not thinking about playing for India right now

SPORTS

P12

CAB REJIG TODAY

Three senior leaders receive Naveen's call



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 21: Putting all speculation to rest, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday picked up three senior BJD leaders and former ministers for their re-induction in his Cabinet.

According to reliable sources, three senior MLAs Bikram Keshari Arukha, Sarada Nayak and Sudam Marndi are likely to be inducted in the Cabinet, Monday.

Phone calls have been made to the three senior BJD MLAs to remain present at the swearing-in ceremony, the sources said.

Notably, Assembly Speaker Bikram Keshari Arukha along with two controversial ministers Samir Ranjan Dash (School and

Mass Education) and Srikanta Sahu (Labour and Employees' State Insurance) resigned from their positions, May 12. Besides, the then Health Minister Naba Kishore Das was murdered January 29 this year, creating another vacancy in the Cabinet.

The Odisha Council of Ministers can have 22 ministers including the Chief Minister but now has 19 ministers. So, with the induction of three ministers, all vacancies will be filled up.

According to the sources, the Chief Minister may also make changes in the portfolios of some ministers after the swearing-in event.

However, it is unclear who will be the next Speaker of the state Assembly. The probable names for Speaker's posts making the rounds are: Prafulla Samal, Debi Prasad Mishra, Amar Prasad Satpathy, Snehangini Chhuria and Badri Narayan Patra.

Meanwhile, Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal, who was out of station, arrived in Bhubaneswar Sunday evening.

Naveen Patnaik had effected a complete reshuffle of his Cabinet last time in June 2022. So, another reshuffle will be conducted Monday morning.



LIVELIHOOD MATTERS: Women workers sort onions at a wholesale market in Jalandhar, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Bringing an ordinance is a masterstroke! Why can't we do it for every state not ruled by us?

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX	39.5°C	37.5°C
	MIN	27.2°C	28.0°C
Humidity	67%	81%	
Rainfall	Trace	Nil	
		Forecast	
		Light rain very likely	

Sarpanch dies in honeybee attack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jagannathprasad, May 21: A public representative under Jagannathprasad block in Ganjam district died Saturday after being attacked by a swarm of honeybees.

The deceased was identified as Sanat Kumar Pradhan, the sarpanch of Kudutai panchayat under this block.

The incident occurred when he was working on his farmland.

Suddenly a swarm of honeybees attacked him and some other farm workers on nearby farmlands. Pradhan ran to save his life when some villagers covered him with a tarpaulin.

The honeybees after moving around for some time left the place. Villagers rescued him and admitted him to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar where he succumbed to his injuries, late Saturday night.



'Complete support' to Kejriwal: Nitish

Kejriwal, who is locked in a bitter tussle with the Centre over the control of administrative services, is all set to meet the chiefs of the TMC, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP this week seeking their support

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 21: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal Sunday called for opposition unity to take on the BJP as the JD(U) leader met the AAP convenor at his residence here and extended "complete support" to him in the ongoing face-off with the Centre over the control of administrative services.

Kejriwal said he would meet leaders of various parties to ensure that any Bill brought to replace the recent Central ordinance, which virtually negated the May 11 Supreme Court order that ruled in favour of his government, is not passed in Rajya Sabha and also urged Kumar to reach out to them to rally support on the issue.

"If the Bill is defeated in Rajya Sabha, it will send out a message that the BJP will lose the 2024 Lok Sabha elections," he claimed. "It will be the semi-final of the 2024 Lok



We will hold further meetings. We are trying to ensure that the maximum number of opposition parties come together and a nationwide campaign is launched to demand that laws are followed and there is mutual harmony and brotherhood in the country

NITISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM

Sabha polls," the AAP national convenor told reporters outside his residence after meeting Kumar and his deputy and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav. Kejriwal will be meeting the chiefs of the TMC, Shiv Sena (UBT) and the NCP this week seeking their support.

Kumar said the Centre's actions were "strange" and "baffling". "How can you take away an elected government's power," the Janata Dal (United) leader asked.

If the bill is defeated in Rajya Sabha, it will send out the message that the BJP will lose the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It will be the semi-final of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

He said Kejriwal is doing good work in Delhi and it's surprising that his government is being stopped from doing its work. "That's why we are saying that all (opposition parties) in the country should come together," he said.

The BJP hit out at both Kumar and Kejriwal, saying the Bihar chief minister should pay attention to his state which is being pushed into "anarchy" instead of daydreaming about becoming the

Prime Minister.

Addressing a press conference, the party's six MPs from Delhi said Kejriwal was seeking the support of opposition leaders who he once branded as corrupt. "There was a time when Arvind Kejriwal used to carry a list of political leaders and considered them as symbols of corruption. But today he is ready to hug Nitish Kumar and Tejashwi Yadav," BJP leader Manoj Tiwari said.

Kejriwal's priority is not to eliminate corruption, but to defeat Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the MP from North East Delhi said and alleged that the AAP chief "is ready to stoop to any level to save his empire of corruption."

The Centre promulgated the ordinance Friday to create a National Capital Civil Service Authority for the transfer of IAS and DANICS cadre officers and disciplinary proceedings against them. This came a week after the Supreme Court handed over the control of services, excluding those related to police, public order and land, to the elected government in Delhi.

The Centre has also filed a review plea in the apex court against the verdict. Kejriwal had Saturday said that the ordinance was "unconstitutional" and they will challenge it in the apex court. An ordinance has to be ratified by Parliament within six months. The Aam Aadmi Party has 10 MPs in Rajya Sabha and one MP in Lok Sabha.

Branches fall on Vande Bharat, crack windshield

UP AND DOWN SERVICES OF THE TRAIN WILL REMAIN CANCELLED MONDAY



PNN & AGENCIES

Kolkata, May 21: Tree branches fell on the Puri-Howrah Vande Bharat Express during a storm in Jajpur district Sunday, stranding it there for over three hours, officials said.

The branches got entangled with its pantograph, besides cracking its windshield, bringing the train to a halt, they said.

No one was injured in the incident, a South Eastern Railway (SER) official said.

The incident happened around 4.45pm between Baitarani Road and Manjuri Road stations, near the Jajpur-Keonjhar Road station, he said.

The train remained stranded there for over three hours, before

it restarted its journey with a diesel engine at 8.05pm, the official said.

A diesel engine would haul the train to Bhadrak as the overhead traction wire was damaged by the fallen tree branches, he said. It will run on its own from Bhadrak to Howrah thereafter, he added.

The up and down services of the train will remain cancelled Monday since some repairs would be required for the rake, the SER said. 22895-22896 Howrah-Puri-Howrah Vande Bharat express will remain cancelled for repairs of damages caused by thunderstorm May 21 in Cuttack-Bhadrak section of East Coast Railway, a statement by SER said.

The train was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday and commenced its commercial run Saturday.

Persona non grata: Georgian Airways' flight ban on Prez

AGENCIES

Tbilisi, May 21: The founder of Georgia's national airline Georgian Airways has banned the country's President from using its services after she said she would boycott the airline over its resumption of flights to Russia, Russia's TASS news agency reported Sunday.

Russia announced this month it was lifting a four-year old ban on direct flights with Georgia and removing a decades-old visa requirement for Georgians travelling to Russia. Subsequently, President Salome Zourabichvili urged Georgian authorities to thwart the Russian initiative, an appeal they ignored.

A Georgian Airways aircraft made a flight to Russia May 20 for the first time since 2019.

On the same day, Zurabishvili, during a briefing, called on fellow citizens to boycott the airline, promising that she herself would not use its services. The President called it unacceptable that a Georgian airline, which enjoys the support of the state, flies to a country that occupies 20% of the Georgian territory.

Tamaz Gaiaashvili, founder of privately-owned Georgian Airways, was cited by TASS Sunday as saying that Zourabichvili was now persona non grata and would be banned until she apologises before the Georgian people.



According to Gaiaashvili, the president mistakenly believes that "by stopping the Georgian airline, it will destroy the Russian economy" and does not think about the interests of Georgia.

There was no immediate reaction



from Zourabichvili.

Although Georgian officials welcomed the resumption of flights, some Georgians who want the South Caucasus country to distance itself from Moscow in favour of the European Union

- A Georgian Airways aircraft made a flight to Russia May 20 for the first time since 2019 after Russia lifted a four-year old ban
- Moscow occupies two breakaway regions - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - that make up around one fifth of the Georgia's territory
- The airline has declared the President as 'persona non grata' after she decried the move and appealed for a boycott of the airline

demonstrated against it in central Tbilisi Sunday.

Many Georgians oppose any rapprochement with Moscow whose troops garrison two breakaway regions - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - that make up around one fifth of the country's territory.

Other Georgians are more open to the idea, however, and the Georgian government has in recent years worked to improve ties with Moscow, declining to impose sanctions on Russia over the war in Ukraine.

President Zourabichvili, whose position is largely ceremonial and whose relations with the government are strained, has warned that deepening ties with Russia could jeopardise the country's chances of the EU one day.



MILEY CYRUS THINKS HER SUCCESS IS 'SEASONAL'

Despite her eighth album topping the charts, Miley Cyrus has insisted she thinks her success is 'seasonal'. Her eighth album *Endless Summer Vacation* contained the hit single *Flowers* and set a string of streaming records. "I might be No1 now, but No2 is on its way. Everything is seasonal," the singer recently said.

BALDWIN ACCUSED OF YELLING AT WAITRESS

Hollywood star Alec Baldwin has been accused of losing his temper and yelling at a waitress. The 65-year-old actor allegedly scolded a young waitress at the 2023 PEN America Spring Literary Gala as she served guests their dinner, reports *mirror.co.uk*.



FORTUNE FORECAST



ARIES

Today, you may get to share your ideas and opinions with like-minded people. Ganesha says you may finally have a heart-to-heart chat with your beloved, and express your deep commitment. You may even talk of your long cherished dreams.

TAURUS

Logic may be your forte today, but in the game of life, sometimes the heart wins and sometimes the head. Your analytical skills will help you understand things better, in turn, making you wiser. You may feel an urge to spend on music cassettes, CDs and electronic gadgets.

GEMINI

You will witness a marked improvement in your emotional quotient, says Ganesha. This change may either come through watching a film, listening to a song or just a simple insight. At the workplace, people will be lavishing praise on you for your excellent performance.

CANCER

You know how to make money, and you are even better in putting it to good use. Today, you will have your one eye on the developments in the stock market, and the other on brochures of tourism companies. Yes, you may plan to spend some money on leisure, entertainment and getting closer to your family.

LEO

It may be that the best daffodils bloom early in the morning, but good ideas can come any time of the day, says Ganesha. So spruce up your management skills, as you shall need them to help organise and cash in on the multitude of ideas that will bombard you today.

VIRGO

A la Sisyphus, you may realise the futility of your efforts and constant failure in achieving success. But do not despair, says Ganesha. Recharge your imagination, inquisitiveness and intelligence and focus on your long-term goals, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

Some days you get the carrot, while on others, it is the stick! Today is going to be one of those 'stick' days when it comes to dealing with your seniors, foresees Ganesha. It would be wise to delay auction bids or sealed tenders. Sometimes, waiting patiently is the best policy, especially if you are a job aspirant.

SCORPIO

There is a big black hole in your pocket, and it's high time you looked for remedies there. Loved ones will make use of your money as suntan cream - liberally and carelessly. You are most likely to burn the holes larger by spending lavishly, especially to impress a member of the opposite sex.

SAGITTARIUS

Get ready to rule hearts today. Your thoughtful insights into other people's psyche might just help you write a book on it! In the battleground of love, you will win over your sweetheart all over again, probably with a nice, slow dance coupled with a fantastic candlelit dinner.

CAPRICORN

Work will suck you dry of your energy today, says Ganesha. Business rivals will go out of their way to mar your reputation and project you as incompetent. But to their dismay, you will prove to be way too smart to let them succeed in their sinister motives. In fact, you will hit where it hurts most and show your foes that you have all it takes to be a winner. Your superiority will reign over theirs.

AQUARIUS

You get a pat on the back due to your brilliant academic standing. People will admire your business acumen and may imitate your choices. But this doesn't mean you become haughty and unapproachable.

PISCES

Anticipation is all the fun. Sadly, this only alludes to your months-in-preparation travel plans that are most likely to be delayed today on one count or the other. Though, if this is any consolation, your trip, when it finally occurs, will bring you as much pleasure and satisfaction that you expected out of it, if not more, says Ganesha.

BIDYAKANAK SRUJANUSTHAN'S 5TH NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL 2023: DAY 1

Odia play shows the bright side of ageing

Bhubaneswar: The five-day Fifth National Theatre Festival-2023, organised by City's one of the prominent drama troupes, Bidyakanak Srujanusthan, kicked off here at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Sunday.

On the first day, the host organisation presented the Odia play *Aei Bodhe Prema*. Written by Dilip Balabantaray and directed by Jagadish Prasad Maharana, the drama showcased how old age



A scene from Odia play *Aei Bodhe Prema* staged at Rabindra Mandap, Sunday

can be enjoyed despite its shares of physical pain and suffering. The climax of the play told that noth-

ing is more eternal than death. Once a person is in its hold, he or she can't belong to anyone else.

The actors who performed included Nabin Parida, Suvakanta Padhi, Rakesh Satpathy, Debashis Rout, Sunanda Parida and others while Manas Kumar Parida scored the music.

Among the dignitaries, State Science & Technology Minister Ashok Chandra Panda, Nalco Managing Director

Sridhar Patra, dramatist Dharendra Nath Mallick, president of the troupe Sudhakar Patri were present on the occasion.

Noted theatre directors Susmita Rana, Sushil Pattnaik and journalist Manoranjan Mohanty were felicitated for their contributions to the state's art and culture.

Drishyam set for Korean remake

Mumbai: Ajay Devgn and Tabu-starrer *Drishyam* franchise is transcending boundaries as it is set to be adapted for the South Korean audiences with the official Korean remake. *Drishyam* is an Indian franchise that has delivered success in every Indian language be it Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu or Hindi.

The announcement happened Sunday at India Pavilion at the ongoing edition of Cannes Film Festival.



Indian production company, Panorama Studios, and Anthology Studios, founded by former Warner Bros. local Korean production head, Jay Choi, Parasite actor Song Kang-ho and acclaimed director Kim Jee-woon have partnered for the Korean remake.

The first part of *Drishyam*, directed by the late Nishikant Kamat, revolves around Vijay Salgaonkar whose simple world splinters after an acci-

dental death involving his family and his desperate measures to shield them from the law. With applause-worthy performances from Ajay Devgn, Tabu and Kamlesh Sawant, the film was a huge success.

Producer Kumar Mangat Pathak said, "I'm excited that *Drishyam* franchise is being made in Korean, a first for a Hindi film. This will not only increase its reach outside India but will also put Hindi cinema on the global map."

Jay Choi is equally upbeat about the collaboration. He said, "We are thrilled to have an opportunity to remake a massively successful Hindi film with a touch of originality from Korean cinema."

Aahana loses cool after being touched by fan



Mumbai: Actress Aahana Kumra, who is known for films like *Lipstick Under My Burkha*, *Inside Edge* and *Rangbaaz*, recently lost her cool at a fan breached her personal space and touched her while she was posing for the paparazzi.

A video, shared by a paparazzi account, revealed how a fan touched her around her waist at an event in Mumbai. In the video one of her fans can be seen putting his hand around her waist. The actress was taken aback. She turned towards him and told him: "Don't touch me!"

Her fans were angry at the man. Most of them wrote in the comment box that the actor was right.

One of them commented: "She is right. Self-respect is very important." Another one wrote: "This is bang on!! She is absolutely correct. Guys/fans need to understand that they can't put their unsolicited hands behind anyone's back while taking a picture. Not cool."

"The second man also touched her; if a girl says no it means no!!!!!!!" another fan commented.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Aahana will next be seen in Faisal Hashmi's *Cancer* opposite Sharib Hashmi. She was last seen in *Salaam Venky* which also stars Kajol and Vishal Jethwa.

IAN S

PC in soup over Citadel dialogue

Angry over 'sexual insult' to Princess Kate, a Twitteratti digs up an old video of Priyanka Chopra wanting to go on a date with Prince William

Mumbai: Priyanka Chopra's spy drama *Citadel* is back in the headlines after seemingly taking a jab at the Princess of Wales (aka Kate Middleton).

In an episode of the show, Priyanka's character Nadia Sinh instructs her partner Mason Kane (Richard Madden) to meet with crime leader Balduino Basto (Sen Monro) to broker a deal with the military. It is during this meeting, that the character says, "The chief of armed forces? You might as well have asked me how to get between the legs of the Duchess of Cambridge!"

The dialogue has been viewed as a diss at the Princess amidst her ongoing beef with her sister-in-law who has been close friends with Chopra for years and even invited her to her wedding to Prince Harry in 2018.

"This is vile," said a Twitter user. Another said, "That remark in *Citadel* is disgusting. To specifically target Kate Middleton with a sexually crude and lewd bit of dialogue is just low and crass."

Amidst the buzz around the dialogue, a Twitter user dug out an old video of Priyanka saying she wanted to go on a date with Prince William.

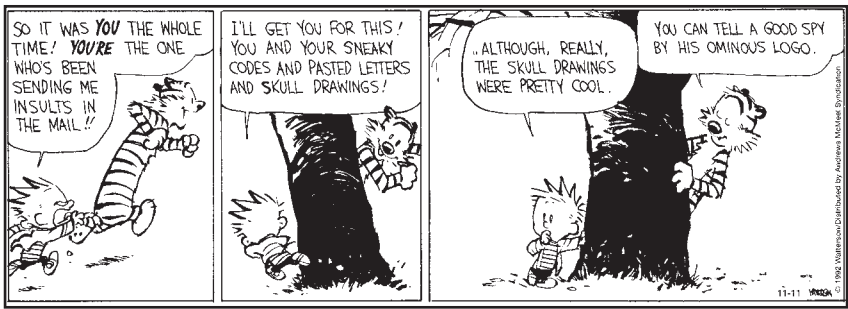
AGENCIES

FUN post

PEANUTS



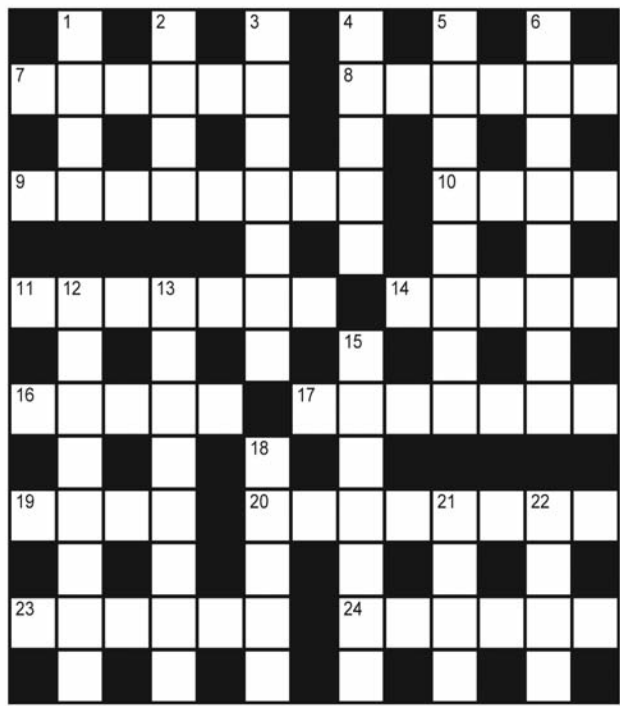
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Abatement
 - 8 Root vegetable
 - 9 French endive
 - 10 Exigency
 - 11 Sweet liqueur (4,3)
 - 14 Tunic
 - 16 Hard wood
 - 17 Shellfish
 - 19 Family member
 - 20 Salad ingredient (5,3)
 - 23 Italian port
 - 24 Promised land
- Down**
- 1 Overlook
 - 2 Ancient Greek portico
 - 3 Baltic republic
 - 4 Precipitous
 - 5 Skin problems
 - 6 Terrier type
 - 12 Construction worker, e.g.
 - 13 Brainiac
 - 15 Toxic
 - 18 Muffin topper, at times
 - 21 Cupid's counterpart
 - 22 Nile wader

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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.

	9			6				
		3		2	4		9	
				7			2	
7			6					9
						1	8	
	3	1		9	2	5		7
6					2			
			3				8	
				5	7			

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

D	O	L	E	F	U	L	A	S	S	O
W	E	A	R	T	A	E	T	C		
E	A	R	L	D	O	M	A	D	U	L
E	I	G	E	S	D	A				
B	U	D	G	E		N	O	T	H	I
			T	T			E	O		
M	A	R	T	Y	R		B	U	R	D
E	A	L	L	E	G	R	O			
S	A	E	S	A	O	B	E			
U	N	T	I	L		C	O	R	D	O
R	E	I	O	D	S	E	R			
E	N	D	E	D		W	E	S	T	E

SUDOKU

8	5	9	3	7	2	1	6	4
2	6	4	8	5	1	3	7	9
3	7	1	9	6	4	8	2	5
9	2	5	4	3	6	7	1	8
7	8	6	2	1	5	9	4	3
4	1	3	7	8	9	2	5	6
5	9	7	6	2	8	4	3	1
1	3	8	5	4	7	6	9	2
6	4	2	1	9	3	5	8	7

downtown

₹1cr brown sugar seized from City govt quarters



- Since 2020, STF has seized over 69 kg of brown sugar/heroin, 202 gram cocaine and more than 113 quintals of ganja/marijuana and 750 gram opium
- More than 168 drug dealers/peddlers have been arrested since then

POST NEWS NETWORK

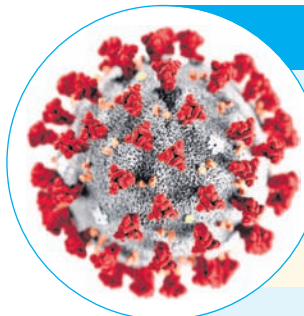
Bhubaneswar, May 21: The Special Task Force (STF) of state Crime Branch (CB) has arrested a 36-year-old man after recovering Rs 1 crore worth brown sugar from his possession at one of the government quarters in Unit-VIII area under Capital police limits here, an official said Sunday.

Chittaranjan Sahoo, who hails from Kalanga in Dhenkanal and



BUDDING ARTISTES

Young artistes perform during a dance festival in Puri, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	688,769,151	661,135,465	6,877,660
India	4,49,85,705	4,44,45,206	5,31,824
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

was staying on rent at one of the government quarters here for a few months now, has been taken into custody after over 1 kilogram of brown sugar was recovered from his possession, said the official, adding that a case (11/23) has been registered with the STF in this regard.

Following a tip-off, the STF sleuths with the help of Commissionerate Police carried out a raid at Chittaranjan's house Saturday evening. During the

search, the sleuths recovered 1107 gram of brown sugar worth Rs 1 crore, a motorcycle and a few incriminating materials from Chittaranjan's possession.

"Locals claimed that the quarters has been allotted to a former Army official. We will write to the General Administration (GA) department about the allotment. Subsequently, the allottee will be brought under the purview of investigation," said a senior STF official.

On Sunday, the accused was produced before a local court that sent him to judicial custody.

Sources said police have also launched a manhunt to nab the brown sugar supplier who is a native of Balasore district.

"Since 2020, STF has seized over 69 kg of brown sugar/ heroin, 202 gram cocaine and more than 113 quintals of ganja/marijuana and 750 gram opium. More than 168 drug dealers/peddlers have been arrested since then," said the STF official.



STREET MUSIC: A musical performance by Bivash Rath and others in front of Coffee Corruption near The Press Club of Odisha in Master Canteen area of Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

5T Secy inspects progress on projects in Nuapada

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Nuapada, May 21: 23 higher secondary schools and 7 colleges of Nuapada district will be taken up under the 5T initiative of the state government, informed secretary to CM (5T) VK Pandian during his visit to Nuapada Sunday.

On the direction of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Pandian visited the district to take stock of progress of various development projects.

The Secretary visited the blocks of Nuapada, Sinapali, Khariar, Nagma, Komma and reviewed the development projects and interacted with the people about their problems. Pandian first visited the large lift irrigation project in Gadramal and interacted with the local people there. In this project, 819 hectares of land is being irrigated while 1,630 farmer families are benefitting from it. The objective of the project is to encourage farmers to cultivate maize, groundnut, cashew, and vegetables apart from traditional farming.

Pandian has also taken decision for the development of some major temples in Nuapada.

He discussed with the sevayats and local people about the transformation of Jogeswar Mahadev Mandir at Patora. He directed them to prepare and submit a detailed report for renovation and beautification of the temple along with the development of tourism and water sports facilities.

Woman found dead, family cries foul play

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 21: A 25-year-old married woman in the City died under mysterious circumstances at a private hospital here Sunday morning. The deceased, Manisha Panda was a resident of Aska in Ganjam.

Based on complaint lodged by the family members of Manisha, police registered a case (155/23) against the accused husband under sections 302, 304B, 498(A) of the IPC and section 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act.

Police sources claimed, Manisha had married Lingaraj Panda of Baliapatana area around four years back. The couple was staying alone in a rented house at Lingaraj area. Saturday afternoon, the couple engaged in a heated argument over some petty issues when she suddenly fell on the ground losing her consciousness. Her husband rushed him to capital hospital and informed his family members.

Manisha was later shifted to the private medical college and hospital in Bharatpur area where she succumbed. The in-laws claimed that Mansiha had committed suicide by consuming poison.

However, her family members have alleged that Manisha was killed by her husband. The accused has been detained at the Lingaraj police station till the last news came in.

OTP SHARING SCAM

STF takes accused on 3-day remand

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 21: The accused persons held for selling one-time passwords (OTPs) and mule bank accounts to Pakistani intelligence operatives and other cyber-criminals were Sunday brought on 3-day remand by the special task force (STF) for further probe.

The STF had earlier sought the court's permission to take the accused on remand for five days.

As per sources, it's possible that the STF could slap the National Security Act on the accused if their complicity in anti-national activities is established during the course of investigation.

The accused persons, Pathani Samant Lenka, Soumya Pattanaik and Saroj Kumar Nayak alias Amit, were in touch with a woman PIO agent who was arrested in Rajasthan last year.

Besides, the STF sleuths have so far succeeded in fetching some more

startling leads in the case during the investigation. The cops reportedly have found that the accused persons have links with anti-national criminals in Gujrat and New Delhi.

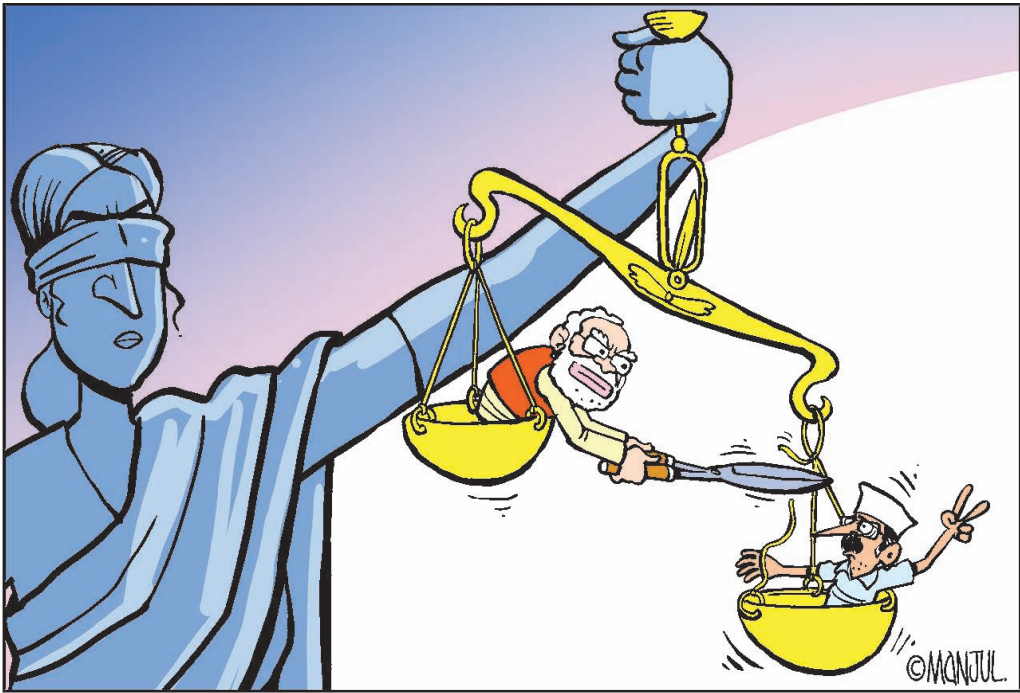
The STF suspects that the accused might be involved in spying for Pakistani intelligence agencies.

On the other hand, the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and various banks have reportedly shared with STF officials vital details regarding financial transactions the accused persons made with Pakistani agents through UPI.

The NPCI was earlier requested by the STF to share details about the Pakistani agents and other criminals who had made payments to the accused in lieu of the OTPs and mule accounts.

Following a tip-off, the STF sleuths had arrested Pathani Samant Lenka from Master Canteen area here May 11. Pathani Samant was reportedly planning to go Kolkata to procure pre-activate SIM cards.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



App tracks men's contribution to household chores

Angela Rodríguez, Spain's secretary of state for equality, says the app aims at shedding light on the invisible 'mental load' overwhelmingly carried by women when it comes to domestic tasks

The Spanish government is hoping to encourage men to do more at home by developing a free app that will log how much time each household or family member spends on domestic chores, The Guardian reported.

Announcing the measure in Geneva earlier this week, Spain's

secretary of state for equality, Angela Rodríguez said the aim was to shed light on the invisible 'mental load' overwhelmingly carried by women when it comes to domestic tasks, it said.

According to Rodríguez, the app is very similar to those used to measure the sharing of travel expenses.

"The design of the program would be 'bold' and it would be capable of tracking the progress of a variety of domestic tasks, reflecting the 'mental burden' that housework and caring duties entail," The Telegraph reported quoting Rodríguez.

The app is being designed with couples and families in mind, but it could also be used to share tasks among children or roommates, Rodríguez said.



Rodríguez said the app would also serve to highlight all the invisible jobs necessary for the smooth

running of a house. Although tidying up the kitchen might take 20 minutes, she said, it depended on

According to Spain's National Statistics Institute, 50 per cent of women in heterosexual relationships say they perform the majority of housework, compared with only 4 per cent of men

A further 40 per cent of women are the principal carer for a child, with the same being true of 5 per cent of men

someone having remembered to buy washing-up liquid or having planned the shopping list.

The Spanish government has opened bidding for which company will produce the app, with a budget of 211,000 (€183,000).

According to sources, most Spanish men continue to do far less than their fair share when it comes to household chores and caring work.

According to a study by INE, the state statistics institute, 50 per cent of women in heterosexual relationships say they perform the majority of housework, compared with only 4 per cent of men, according to The Telegraph.

A further 40 per cent of women are the principal carer for a child, with the same being true of 5 per cent of men, it said.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, May 21: At 11:43 am Sunday, Capital Bhubaneswar experienced a 'Zero Shadow Day', a time when vertical objects appear to cast no shadows. This was because the sun was at its zenith, and the shadow fell directly under the object, a planetarium official explained.

A large number of people, including children, thronged the Pathani Samanta Planetarium here to witness this rare event.

"Today, when the Sun exactly reached overhead at 11:43 am in Bhubaneswar, the shadow of any vertical object disappeared at that instant. Zero Shadow Day occurs twice a year in any particular place," said Pathani Samanta Planetarium deputy director Subhendu Patnaik.

While informing that the phenomenon was observed for 2 to



3 minutes in the City, Patnaik said that Cuttack will also witness the Zero Shadow Day May 22 at 11.30 am.

Uttarayan (movement of Sun from south to north from winter solstice to summer solstice) and Dakshinayan (back from north to

south) happen because Earth's rotational axis is tilted at an angle of roughly 23.5 degrees to the axis of revolution around the Sun.

Patnaik explained that the Sun's location moves from 23.5 degrees N to 23.5 degrees S of Earth's equator and back. All

Pathani Samanta Planetarium deputy director Subhendu Patnaik said that Cuttack will also witness the Zero Shadow Day May 22 at 11.30 am

places whose latitude equals the angle between the Sun's location and the equator on that day experience Zero Shadow Day, with the shadow of an object falling just beneath it at local noon.

"For the first time, I have experienced this wonderful event. It enhanced my practical knowledge about how the Sun moves around the earth," said a student present at the planetarium.

AGENCIES

Cuttack, May 21: Orissa High Court Chief Justice S Muralidhar inaugurated thirteen New Courts in the Cadre of Senior Civil Judge in Puri, Boudh, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Angul, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Balasore and Baragarh in hybrid mode.

Inaugurating the courts, the Muralidhar said that courts at these places, which are spread across the Odisha, are a part of the bigger expansion project undertaken by the High Court.

Thanking the state government for its support in their establishment, he said that these new courts are fully equipped to take up the challenges with help of technol-

ogy. The Chief Justice congratulated the judges of the High Court for their constant effort in transformation and guiding the district judiciary in the right direction. He said that only because of teamwork, the vision of access to justice could shape into the reality. The Chief Justice also urged for more and more women participation in judicial task force.

Speaking on the occasion, Justice Biswanath Rath said, opening of these Courts will improve the rate of disposal of cases and the public of the locality will be benefited immensely by availing justice at their doorsteps.

Justice Dehabrata Dash urged the young advocates to upgrade themselves legally, to adopt the technological advancement in

the ever growing legal system. He also advised the presiding officers of newly established courts to lay their foundation firmly in due dispensation of justice.

Similarly, Justice BR Sarangi said presiding officers must toil hard to serve the society with reasonable dispensation of justice. He said all the stakeholders should work together to cater to the needs of the people of the locality particularly those belong to poor and marginalised group.

Justice S Talapatra said the presiding officers of the newly opened Courts should constantly strive to develop innovative ideas and put efforts to get the best out of infrastructure of the Court system.

Speaking in Geneva at a convention of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, a United Nations (UN) body, Rodríguez said, "We (women) spend more time on domestic tasks than men."

Spain's equality ministry has introduced a host of reforms since the Left-wing government of prime minister Pedro Sánchez took power five years ago, including legislation to increase access to abortion, introduce menstrual leave for women with severe period pain and create a consent-based rape law.

The latter proved controversial, however; after more than a thousand prison sentences for convicted sex offenders were reduced as a result of the changes in the penal code.

AGENCIES

Action plan for climate change needed on priority basis: Pujari

MINISTER NIRANJAN PUJARI STRESSED ON INTRODUCING LOCALLY LED ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION PRACTICES THROUGH ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION MEASURES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLAN



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 21: A roundtable ‘Towards a Climate Resilient Odisha’ was held Saturday, organised by the Finance Department, in collaboration with Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)’s Infrastructure for Climate Resilient Growth (ICRG) programme. Finance, Parliamentary Affairs, Health and Family Welfare Minister Niranjana Pujari graced the occasion as the chief guest and deliberated on the topic based on combating the impact of climate change in Odisha. Addressing the delegates and participants in the event held at a City hotel Pujari said, “We are working with commitment for building new Odisha as it has become a

model state in the field of disaster management. Odisha is one of the leading states in India that at first prepared a state-level action plan on climate change. It is realised that there is now an urgent need to operationalise all the initiatives by effective implementation of the state action plan for climate change (SAPCO), introducing locally led adaptation and mitigation practices and through adaptive social protection measures.” He also stressed on effective implementation of the action plan in collaboration with all the partner institutions. Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena, British Deputy High Commissioner, East and North East India Nick Low, P&C department Special Secretary Chitra Arumugam and Finance department Principal

Secretary Vishal Kumar Dev were present on the occasion. Jena, while speaking, cited examples of cyclones Phailin in 2013, Hudhud and Titli, which occurred in the subsequent years and said those may be one of the reasons for causing climate change. He said that due to cyclone and flood, the agriculture and economy of the state are getting affected. He also focused upon the challenges posed by climate change such as food security, depletion of groundwater and water pollution and stressed on the need to collect more and more scientific research and data to address the issue. Quoting Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik’s call ‘every life is precious’, he stressed the need for care of everyone through disaster management and added the state government is focusing on renewable energy sources and all possible measures for sustainable climate resilient growth. In his address, Low stated about how rising temperatures in Odisha during the summer months affecting the lives as well as ground water levels. He said that the UK government, through its Department for International Development and partnership with the state government for over 25 years, has supported interventions towards inclusive urban development, investment in infrastructure and sustainable climate resilient growth.



BOOK RELEASE: Twin city Police Commissioner Soumendra Priyadarshi among guests during the release of poetry collection ‘Kehi Jane Dake Nai Arapakhe’ by Jasobanta Sethi at Commissionerate Police office in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

TPCODL restores power supply to Cuttack city

A severe nor’wester, accompanied by strong winds and heavy rainfall, caused widespread disruption in Cuttack, leading to power outages and inconvenience for the residents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack/Bhubaneswar, May 21: TP Central Odisha Distribution Co Ltd (TPCODL) swiftly responded to the aftermath of a severe nor’wester (Kalbaisakhi) that impacted Cuttack May 19, causing significant damage to the electricity infrastructure. With more than one hundred electricity poles broken due to fallen trees, TPCODL’s dedicated employees worked tirelessly to restore power supply to the affected areas. The powerful storm, accompanied by strong winds and heavy rainfall, caused widespread disruption in Cuttack, leading to power outages and inconvenience for the



residents. However, TPCODL’s prompt and efficient response ensured that power supply to the city was successfully restored by Friday night itself, providing relief to the

affected residents. Furthermore, the restoration work extended to nearby locations, with power supply being fully restored by May 20, 2023.

To expedite the restoration efforts, TPCODL deployed skilled employees who exhibited exceptional dedication and expertise in addressing the damage caused by the fallen trees. The use of high-quality equipment and resources further contributed to the efficient restoration of the electricity supply. “TPCODL extends its heartfelt gratitude to the electricity consumers who extended their support and cooperation during this challenging period. Their understanding and assistance greatly facilitated the repair works, enabling a swift recovery of the power infrastructure in Cuttack,” said TPCODL CEO M Shenbagam.

Listing of bail applications at HC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 21: Orissa High Court has issued a new set of practice directions in the shape of a standing order relating to listing of bail applications. Pursuant to the observations made by the Supreme Court of India in order May 15, 2023 passed in Pradhani Jani v. the State of Odisha (Criminal Appeal No. 1503/2023 arising out of SLP (CrI) No. 3241/2023). The new practice direction has been issued modifying paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Standing Order No. 1 of 2020. The High Court had earlier issued Standing Order No. 1 of 2020 which provided that all the bail applications of a particular accused arising out of the same FIR would be listed before the same bench in the High Court and the practice was continuing since then.

In a recent order passed May 15, 2023 in Pradhani Jani v. the State of Odisha (Criminal Appeal No. 1503/2023 arising out of SLP (CrI) No. 3241/2023) the Hon’ble Supreme Court had observed that hearing of bail applications of different accused persons arising out of the same FIR in different benches creates an anomalous situation because it so happens that while some accused get bail orders in some benches, some do not get bail orders in similar footing though they are involved in the same case. The Supreme Court had requested the High Court of Orissa to change the practice. Pursuant to the said observations the High Court has now modified paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of its Standing Order No. 1 of 2020 and issued Standing Order No. 2 of 2023 relating to listing of bail applications. The new standing order provides that all the anticipatory bail applications arising out of the same FIR would be heard by the same bench and if previous bail applications have been heard by different benches, the bench which first decided any of those applications would hear the subsequent bail applications. The same practice will be followed for the bail applications where the accused persons are in custody.



AGAINST TERRORISM: IG Praveen Kumar administering ‘fight against terrorism’ oath to police personnel at state police headquarters in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

INT’L DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Large carnivores play roles in balancing ecosystems

Large carnivores like wolves are returning to areas they used to occupy, leading scientists to wonder whether they may once again fulfil important ecological roles. But wolves’ return to the landscape can affect other nearby animals in complex ways. The research, published in the journal Science, shows that an increase in predators can lead smaller carnivores, like coyotes and bobcats, to seek refuge near people – but humans then kill them at even higher rates than large predators do. Predators structure ecosystems. Large carnivores play crucial roles in their ecosystems. As they prey on or push other animals to avoid the areas they frequently use, predators shape the way interconnected food webs work. Wolves also kill smaller predators like coyotes, providing respite for the animals that coyotes eat. Research suggests that landscapes with wolves may have more

diverse vegetation and more small animals like songbirds than those without wolves. But because humans are often intolerant of predators and kill them at high rates, large predators tend to avoid areas that are frequented by people. Predators in human-dominated landscapes Wolves are now returning to areas heavily modified by humans. This level of development raises the question: Do predators have the same influence on ecosystems where humans, rather than wolves, are the top dogs? To answer this question, GPS collars were used to track the movements of 22 wolves, 60 cougars, 35 coyotes and 37 bobcats as they navigated the landscapes a patchwork of public forests and land used for agriculture, ranching, logging and residential development. When ‘human shields’ are lethal The researchers found that wolves and cougars avoided areas heavily influenced by humans,



CARNIVORES PLAY CRUCIAL ROLES IN THEIR ECOSYSTEMS. AS THEY PREY ON OR PUSH OTHER ANIMALS TO AVOID THE AREAS THEY FREQUENTLY USE, PREDATORS SHAPE THE WAY INTERCONNECTED FOOD WEBS WORK

such as busy roads and residential areas. Coyotes strongly avoided wolves, which brought them closer to humans. In parts of the landscape with large predators around, both coyotes and bobcats moved to areas with approximately double the

human influence, potentially using humans as shields. When coyotes and bobcats sought refuge near people, they instead encountered a more lethal source of danger: Humans were the greatest cause of mortality, killing these smaller

predators at more than three times the rate that large carnivores did. People are biggest danger for bobcats and coyotes. People use modern technologies such as firearms and steel traps to kill small predators at far higher rates than other predators kill small predators. Unlike other predators, humans often target animals in prime condition. But if people are so dangerous, why would coyotes and bobcats seek refuge near them? Other research shows that smaller predators do indeed fear humans, so they likely still recognise that humans are dangerous. Most bobcats and coyotes in were either shot or trapped. These technologies allow people to kill animals either when absent or from large distances, possibly making it difficult for animals to accurately gauge risk. Additionally, lenient hunting

regulations for these small predators put them at high risk. Conservation in human-dominated landscapes While the findings may at first seem like bad news for conserving smaller predators, these results have important implications for maintaining balanced ecosystems, where no species is too abundant. Unbalanced ecosystems, like ones with too many small predators, can face devastating effects. In Australia, for example, overabundant cats and foxes have contributed to the extinctions of about 30 small mammal species. The results show that larger predators can constrain the behaviour of smaller predators in human-dominated landscapes, which may help to prevent overabundance. Rewinding ecosystems by using large predators to reestablish missing ecological processes may provide a way to maintain balanced ecosystems.

PTI

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Berhampur Ring Road hit by land acquisition glitches

NEW PLAN LAUNCHED TO ACQUIRE LAND FROM PRIVATE OWNERS



POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, May 21: The construction of the proposed Ring Road in Silk City of Ganjam district has been inordinately delayed even after 10 years of the commencement of work.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik laid the foundation stone for the project in 2013 to ease the traffic problem arising out of the burgeoning population in this city. Sources informed Sunday that failure to acquire private land has led to the delay in completion of the project.

The Ring Road will be constructed at a cost of ₹475 crore. Once completed it will ease commuting in the city for residents of Berhampur, Chhatrapur, Gopalpur and Digapahandi Assembly segments. People coming from rural areas will be specially benefitted as

they will not to have take long detours to reach their destinations and get caught in the traffic snarls after entering this town.

Moreover, people of the beach tourism site Gopalpur, Rangeilunda and Kukudakhandi blocks coming here for work can use the Ring Road. Sources said that it will not only facilitate smooth commuting for the residents but will also lead to financial growth in these areas.

The construction of the Ring Road will also help in making the Haldiapadar bus terminal here operational. The Ring Road will have bypasses from Raghunathpur to Ratanpur and then to Haldiapadar road and from Raghunathpur to Karapalli.

The proposal for construction of the road was moved during the stint of Krishan Kumar, the then District Collector of Ganjam. It had then been decided to construct

the 46-km long Ring Road. Despite the foundation stone being laid, construction from the beginning stuttered due to problems in land acquisition and non-cooperation of National Highway Authority of India (NHAD). Eight years passed and the first phase of work for the Ring Road started only during the stint of former Ganjam Collector Vijay Amruta Kulange in November, 2021.

Meanwhile, efforts have been launched for land acquisition for the project. Authorities have decided to acquire land from the private owners in Gobindpur and Manoharpur mouzas for construction a stretch from Ratanpur to Haldiapadar. The Works department in a letter to the Ganjam Collector has given its permission for acquisition of private land.

According to the letter, 10,552 acres of private land will be acquired in Manoharpur mouza and 4,449 acres in Gobindpur mouza. Funds worth ₹13.92 crore will be spent for acquisition of land. The land acquisition process will be undertaken in the presence of the executive engineer of Ganjam Roads and Buildings Division-1 (R&B). Moreover, the authorities have been directed to make photography of the land acquisition.

When contacted, District Collector Dibyajyoti Parida confirmed the development stating that the land acquisition process has reached its final stage.



FESTIVE FERVOUR: Artisans busy preparing tableaux ahead of the Sital Sasthi Yatra at a park near Dhubapada in Samablpur, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Hospital staff held on graft charge

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sonepur, May 21: Vigilance sleuths arrested Sunday a junior assistant of Biramaharajpur sub-divisional veterinary hospital in Subarnapur district for taking a bribe of ₹15,000. The accused has been identified as Golak Bihari Podha.

Police informed that Podha had taken the bribe from Dr Narayan Meher who was absent from duty for



some personal reasons from February 2017 to April 2019. During this period

he also did not get his salary.

After resumption of duties, the vet doctor requested Podha to release his backlog salary. However, Podha demanded ₹20,000 for the work. Initially Dr Meher paid him the amount, but even then Podha did not release the former's salary. He demanded an additional ₹15,000 for doing the same.

Meher then approached the Vigilance department and lodged

a complaint. A trap was laid and Meher went to Podha's quarters to pay ₹15,000. When Podha was accepting the money, he was caught red-handed by Vigilance officials. The specially coloured notes were seized from Podha's pockets. He was arrested and produced in court Sunday itself. After Podha's bail application was rejected, he was taken to the prison.

Trader arrested for murder bid on wife

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, May 21: Bada bazaar police personnel in Ganjam district have arrested a man on the charge of trying to murder his wife. Incidentally the wife is an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of police. The accused has been identified as Ramesh Chandra Sahu, 47, a trader by profession and a resident of Sriramnagar, IIIrd lane in Silk City. His wife Jyotshna Sahu presently works as an ASI at the Polsara police station in the district. Police registered a case and produced the accused in court Sunday.



Ramesh married Jyotshna 20 years back and the two have a 17-year old daughter and a 14-year old son. After marriage, Ramesh frequently used to physically and mentally torture his wife under various pretexts. However, Jyotshna tolerated the physical and mental assaults with the hope that someday Ramesh will mend his ways. That however, did not happen.

Matters took a turn for the worst when Ramesh assaulted his wife and tried to strangle her Saturday night. However, both his children resisted Ramesh and rescued their mom. The kids then dialled up emergency services number following which police arrived at the victim's house and arrested Ramesh. Jyotshna, who was injured in the attack, is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital here.

Rape convict gets 10 yrs RI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kantabanji, May 21: A man was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment after being convicted of raping a physically-challenged woman. The court also slapped a fine of ₹50,000 on the convict identified as Rabi Hans. In case he fails to pay the fine amount, Rabi will have to undergo two more years in prison.

As per the case diary, Rabi had raped the girl in 2016 at Dumerpada village under Bangomunda PS in Bolangir district. Subsequently after the victim's family lodged a complaint with the police, he was arrested and lodged in the sub-prison here, public prosecutor Arun Kumar Bag who represented the government in the case, informed.

NHRC seeks report on plight of sex workers in Bhubaneswar

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 21: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has directed Odisha Chief Secretary PK Jena and the DGP, to submit a detailed report on the preventive, punitive, reformatory and rehabilitation measures taken by the government on the issues related to the plight of sex workers within eight weeks.

Acting on a petition filed by human rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy and a response received from the authorities, the NHRC has passed the order recently. The petitioner pointed out the plight of the girls and women working as sex workers in brothels in Master



Canteen/Mali Sahi and other areas of the Odisha capital. Most of these girls/women are victims of human trafficking, the petitioner said.

Tripathy in his plea also said that during the World Cup hockey tournament, some of the sex workers were rendered homeless by the police without minimum life support.

Even if there is anti-traffic units in police stations those do not work, Tripathy said and added that the police don't take sincere steps to prohibit the recurrence of sex trade.

Tripathy alleged that the Statutory Institution, set up under Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, 1956, is not functional. He pointed out that victims have been deprived of benefits under various social welfare programmes like Anganwadi scheme and integrated child development scheme (ICDS). The Supreme Court judgement about the rights of the sex workers has not been complied with by the state government, Tripathy alleged.



NATURE'S FURY: Bikers left stranded after a large tree was uprooted and fell on the road during a thunderstorm at Ranipentha village under Kashinagar block of Gajapati district, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Rare Indian red squirrel rescued from Gajapati

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, May 21: Forest department officials rescued Sunday a rare species of squirrel during a raid at a hotel at Luhagudi Square under Mohana block in Gajapati district. A special team of the Chandragiri Forest department raided the hotel and rescued the animal which was later identified as the Indian red squirrel.

Forest officials while rescuing the squirrel also detained the hotel owner for illegal possession of the species. He is being grilled as to how he managed to get hold of such a rare species.

The raid took place after DFO S Anand received an intelligence input. He directed ACF Ashok Kumar Behera to form a special team and conduct the raid.

Cash, ornaments stolen from Rayagada temple

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, May 21: In a shocking incident miscreants looted money and jewellery from a Kali temple close to the superintendent of police's residence here. The incident proves, how criminals are dominant in this town despite the police's claim that they are keeping a watch over the law and order situation.

Police said Sunday that some miscreants broke open the lock of the temple late Saturday night and entered its premises. They then looted all the money in donation boxes and also decamped with the jewellery adorning the idol.

Temple committee president Dillip Pattnayak said, that approximately ₹1,00,000 in cash have been stolen. The value of the gold and silver jewellery that have been taken away will be worth several lakhs, he added.

It should be stated here that three CCTV cameras have been installed at places close to the entrance of the temple. However, none of them were working, police said. It has made their job of identifying the criminals dou-



bly difficult, police added. Even though a probe has been launched police are yet to identify the miscreants and so far no arrests have also been made. Police however, are hopeful of solving the case soon.

Woman gets hit by speeding train, dies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, May 21: A woman was killed after she was hit by a train at a railway level crossing at Angargadia in Balasore town, Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Samima Biwi, 50, a resident of Sunhat under Town police limits in Balasore district. The mishap occurred when the victim tried to cross the railway track on her cycle

even though the level crossing gate had been closed.

A speeding train coming on the track hit her and rendered her critical. Locals rushed her to the district headquarters hospital where she succumbed to her injuries. Government Railway Police have registered a case and launched an investigation, IIC Papu Kumar Nayak said. The body was handed over to her family members after the post-mortem, the IIC added.

Without cold storage, farmers forced to resort to distress sale

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baisinga, May 21: Farmers in Baisinga locality under Betanoti tehsil of Mayurbhanj district are staring at a bleak future as huge quantities of vegetables are rotting on a daily basis, due to lack of a cold storage in the area, sources said. The ongoing heatwave has compounded the problems of the farmers. As a result, farmers have been forced to resort to distress sale of vegetables to recover some portion of their losses.

Sources said that vegetable cultivation is carried out on a large scale on farmlands situated close to Budhabalanga river bank and on

Gangahara river basin. This year farmers have cultivated ridge gourd, brinjal, cucumber, pointed gourd, green chillies and beans.

Farmers of Patalipura, Salagaon, Nakhara, Denfouda, Deopada Dariha, Pratimadeipur, Manatri, Chandanpur and Mangobindpur villages alleged that they have no option, but to sell their produces at dirt cheap rates because of the lack of a cold storage. The ongoing heat-wave is destroying the vegetables, they pointed out. They added that if there were cold storage facilities, they could have preserved the vegetables for a long time and even sell those in markets at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.



Reports said that farmers have been severely hit due to drastic decline in vegetable prices in the markets at Baisinga, Manatri and

Betanoti. As a result they are failing to recover their investments. Currently their only aim is to recover as much money as they can.

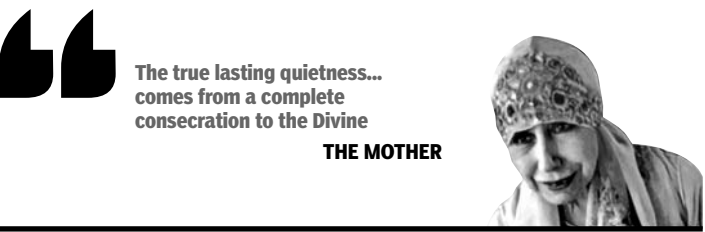
The Dahibadi weekly market is held twice a week and farmers have to pay a fee to sell their produce there. The Regulated Market Committee (RMC) at Betanoti and Baisinga panchayat officials collect taxes from over 5,000 farmers. Despite paying fees and taxes, farmers lamented the lack of a proper storage facility.

Farmers have demanded the construction of a cold storage on land belonging to RMC which is about 500 metres away from the Dahibadi vegetable market adjoining National Highway-18

Badasahi MLA Sanatan Bijuli had earlier drawn the attention of the Odisha government on this

issue. In the last session of the Odisha Assembly, Bijuli had brought up the topic of building a cold storage. State Agriculture Minister, Ranendra Pratap Swain had informed Bijuli then that the government did not have any plans for establishment of a cold storage in any of the localities mentioned above. However, he had said that the government will specially allocate funds if a cold storage is established on private initiative.

When contacted, Betanoti's RMC secretary Sadanan Marndi informed that he is aware about the problems of vegetable farmers and very soon he will submit a proposal to the state government in this regard.



The true lasting quietness... comes from a complete consecration to the Divine

THE MOTHER

Pink Isolation

It is disconcerting the way the capital of India, New Delhi, is handling some problems faced by women during their daily public interactions. The message that Delhi is sending out is that women need to be segregated or given a defined ‘safe space’ to avoid the prying eyes of some perverted men. This is not only turning the clock backward, but is also an attempt to hide the administration’s failure to discharge its responsibilities towards providing a safe environment for women. The failure to curb harassment of women in public spaces is a poor reflection on the efficiency of the law enforcing agencies.

Instead of acting more effectively, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has decided to take the easy option of proposing to open ‘Women Only Pink Parks’ where entry of men will be prohibited. All 250 Wards under MCD will soon get these Pink Parks to provide a ‘more comfortable space’ to women in the national capital.

On the surface, this might look like a pro-women move, but it seems like an act of the government washing its hands off the responsibility of providing ‘comfortable space’ to women everywhere else. No matter which political party is getting this done. In this case it is not the predictable BJP but the so called liberal Aam Admi Party (AAP) of Kejriwal. Interestingly, this move has the potential to satisfy conservative Hindus as well as radical Moslems who both seem disturbed by women’s equal position in society.

The solution to women’s safety does not lie in taking away their liberty. Limiting women to isolated safe spaces is in itself an admission that all other spaces are unsafe and that society cannot provide free movement to women without compromising their safety. It is an admission that Indian society has become perverted beyond redemption and women better limit themselves to small spaces like Pink Parks in the company of only other women to feel comfortable.

At a time when the world has condemned the Taliban regime’s decision first to segregate parks for women and eventually ban women’s entry into parks, Delhi Municipality’s Pink Parks decision seems to be going in the similar regressive direction. In the name of providing protection to women, the civic body is harking back the medieval idea that men and women cannot be present together in public places. On the other hand, millions of men and women of the country study in co-ed institutions and share workspaces. There have been numerous cases of women being subjected to harassment and obscenities both in educational institutions and in work sphere. But that does not mean women will have to suffer banishment from studies and work to keep them protected. Instead, those spaces will need to become safer for women by more responsible behavior by men. The seed of segregation never stops. It will eventually lead to compartmentalization and isolation in education, work space and social spaces, forcing women to bear the brunt of the fallout.

The issue of women feeling insecure in public spaces will need to be handled in a more responsible and sustainable manner. In another development, the Delhi Metro Railway Corporation (DMRC) authorities has decided to deploy 100 of its personnel in civilian clothes inside metro trains in a bid to crack down on acts of ‘nuisance’ and ‘obscene activities’ inside compartments. Along with DMRC and CISF officials, these police personnel will prosecute offenders on the spot and take further legal action. The decision followed complaints of some cases of nuisance, including masturbation by a depraved man inside the train recently. Another passenger was seen brushing his teeth in a compartment. The two videos went viral on social media prompting the metro railway to take the decision. However, more than obscenity, dancing, singing, taking photographs and making videos or reels in metro trains will henceforth be deemed an offence. A country where police presence or policing is increased to keep a watch on citizens is undoubtedly heading towards an authoritarian regime. Especially who does not know the attitude of the Indian police and its outlook towards women in distress. Also, the behavior of the Army towards women in Manipur and other areas where the Armed Forces Special Powers Act has been in place is public knowledge. It may not be assumed that men in uniform are ‘safer’ or their presence in large numbers makes women feel ‘comfortable’ anywhere in India. If at all, it is an objectionable intrusion. All these steps seem to be leading towards a much more regressive and authoritarian society which is governed by laws that take away civil liberties and suppress citizens under the excuse of assurance of safety. Be it under the AAP or BJP rule, these steps do not bode well for the capital city as well as the entire nation.

WISDOM CORNER

- Take care of all your memories. For you cannot relive them. BOB DYLAN
- Time you enjoy wasting, was not wasted. JOHN LENNON
- Remember that failure is an event, not a person. ZIG ZIGLAR

WORDSWORTH

Hyperborean

Since today we have a pretty firm hold on geography and climate, we find it a little strange to learn that the ancient Greeks believed a race of people lived at the northern limits of the world, beyond the place from which the god Boreas sent his icy blasts. According to the poet Pindar, they occupied an earthly paradise, a land of sunshine and plenty. They were untouched by old age or conflict or disease, spending their days in song and dance and in worshipping their god Apollo, who came every winter to visit them. Hence hyperborean, from the Greek words hyper, beyond, plus boreas, the north wind. It has been used in English for pretty much the same idea – of a people who live in the extreme north – though without the merrymaking, frolicking or warmth. We know too well that the far north contains no earthly paradise but only ice, snow, gales and bone-freezing temperatures. Hence appearances of the word like this, from D P Thompson (better known for The Green Mountain Boys, about Vermont’s struggle for independence), in Gaut Gurley, 1857: It was the second week in May; and spring, delightful spring, sweet herald of happiness to all the living creatures that have undergone the almost literal imprisonment of one of the long and dreary winters of our hyperborean clime, was beginning to sprinkle the green glories of approaching summer over the reanimated wilderness.

LOL

Ploughing the land

A man and his wife were driving down a country lane on their way to visit some friends. They came to a muddy patch in the road and the car became bogged. After a few minutes of trying to get the car out by themselves, they saw a young farmer coming down the lane, driving some oxen before him. The farmer stopped when he saw the couple in trouble and offered to pull the car out of the mud for \$50. The

husband accepted and minutes later the car was free. The farmer turned to the husband and said, “You know, you’re the tenth car I’ve helped out of the mud today.” The husband looks around at the fields incredulously and asks the farmer, “When do you have time to plough your land? At night?” “No,” the young farmer replied seriously, “Night is when I put the water in the hole.”



Pinelopi K Goldberg

EVEN IF CHINA AND INDIA ARE NOW TWO OF THE WORLD’S BIGGEST POLLUTERS, THEY BEAR LITTLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PAST, CUMULATIVE EMISSIONS THAT LED TO THE CURRENT CLIMATE CRISIS

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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FOCUS CONGRESS

REASSERTING PRIMACY



The party high command has entrusted Siddaramaiah and DK Shiva Kumar with the task of ensuring that the Congress wins a large number of the 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka during the parliamentary elections in 2024

him, particularly on power-sharing between the two leaders. Sonia Gandhi is understood to have reached out to DK Shiva Kumar, breaking the ice and persuading him to come on board.

The moot question is whether Siddaramaiah and DK Shiva Kumar will manage to sink their differences and work together as a team, especially in the run up to the crucial Lok Sabha elections in 2024. The experience in the Congress has not been particularly encouraging. Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan and Bhupesh Baghel and TS Singh Deo in Chhattisgarh pulled in opposite directions. In Madhya Pradesh, differences between Kamal Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindia forced the latter to break ranks with the Congress and join the BJP. So, will it work in Karnataka, is what remains to be seen.

In fact, Siddaramaiah-Shiva Kumar duo makes an ideal team. They complement each other. Siddaramaiah is a mass leader, who united SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities in a caste alliance known as Ahinda in Karnataka. Late former Karnataka Chief Minister D Devaraj Urs is credited with conceiving the Ahinda combination, just as Madhavsinh Solanki is considered the architect of KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Minorities) in Gujarat. Now, Siddaramaiah has

strengthened the Congress hold on the Ahinda. Only the second Karnataka Chief Minister to complete a full term in office from 2013-2018, Siddaramaiah is considered an astute administrator.

Shiva Kumar, on the other hand, is the quintessential organisational man, capable of mobilising resources. After the truce, Shiva Kumar went on to assert that the Five Congress Guarantees were issued under his name and signature and he has a stake in delivering on the commitments made to the people of Karnataka and in ensuring good governance in the state. If they can really pull together, the Congress can face the challenge of the Lok Sabha elections with a greater degree of self-confidence.

For the Congress, this huge electoral victory was badly needed, as the party has lost out major states. The Karnataka victory will help the party to strengthen its own credentials for taking the lead in its efforts for forging Opposition unity. The Congress can now aim to replicate its electoral success in Karnataka in other election-going states like in neighbouring Telangana, besides Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, where Assembly elections are due later this year.

Karnataka election results are significant as the Congress fought

the BJP and won in a straight contest. As a result, the Janata Dal (Secular) of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda was reduced to irrelevance. The NCP and the AAP, besides the BRS of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao which supported the Janata Dal (Secular), all failed to harm the electoral prospects of the Congress by dividing the anti-BJP vote. The Congress registered a convincing victory which proved that the regional players could not establish their relevance beyond their state borders.

If anything, this election only proves that regional players cannot take on the BJP at the national level. In several states, the BJP and the Congress are the principal contenders. This comes in sharp contrast to other Opposition parties, like Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, which, at best, are mere regional players, but not national parties. This victory has helped the Congress to reassert its primacy as the principal challenger to the BJP at the national level.

The results also establish that Rahul Gandhi has finally arrived on the national political scene. Rahul’s 4,000 km-long Bharat Jodo Yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir did result in an image-makeover for him. He cannot now be taken lightly by his counterparts in the rest of the Opposition. As talks for Opposition unity gain momentum, it will be that much easier for Rahul to stake claim to leadership.

Surely, after these results, the Congress is highly unlikely to concede the leadership to any other leader from among other parties in the Opposition. But, this win in Karnataka, which is astounding by all means, is not enough for the Congress. It has to wrest Madhya Pradesh and retain Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in the Assembly elections later this year to face the Lok Sabha elections in 2024 with confidence.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior journalist and political commentator. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

The climate elephants in the room

Now that the falsehoods and obfuscation of climate denialism have finally been silenced, addressing climate change has become the world’s top priority. But time is running out, and the International Monetary Fund warns that any further delays on implementing policies to mitigate global warming will only add to the economic cost of the transition to a low-emissions economy. Worse, we still lack a concrete, pragmatic strategy for tackling the problem. Although economists have made a robust case for why carbon taxes are the best solution, this option has proven politically infeasible, at least in those countries that account for some of the highest emissions (namely, the United States).

Commentators have also stressed that climate change is a shared problem involving important cross-border externalities that must be addressed through a multilateral approach to global coordination. But, as with carbon taxes, this argument has fallen on deaf ears. And, given the current geopolitical climate and the increasing fragmentation of the global economy, there is little hope that the message will get through anytime soon.

Having committed to assisting developing economies as they confront climate change, the World Bank finds itself limited by the

country-based model underlying its financing operations. It is earnestly weighing its options and considering how it could coordinate climate-related financing across borders. But while such efforts are well meaning and consistent with the spirit of multilateralism, they inevitably will delay concrete action. World Bank financing would have to be completely restructured, and coordinating action across multiple countries that have limited financial resources and often conflicting interests seems an impossible task. For example, while some developing economies are rich in fossil fuels, others are starved for energy sources.

Given these limitations, pragmatism dictates focusing on the biggest polluters. Global carbon dioxide emissions are concentrated among only a handful of countries and regions. China, the US, the European Union, Japan, and Russia collectively account for 63% of the total, and none of these top polluters is a low-income country anymore. China, the poorest of the group, represents around 30% of all emissions, making it by far the world’s largest current polluter in absolute terms. But its government is taking steps to accelerate the transition to green energy – a winning strategy, given the country’s abundance of rare earth metals.

India, the third-largest emitter, currently accounts for approximately 7% of global CO2 emissions, and its size and growth trajectory imply that it could easily surpass China as the leading polluter, barring stronger climate policies. In fact, when it comes to helping developing countries decarbonise, considerable progress could be made simply by targeting India alone. The big advantage of this strategy is that it would avoid the paralysis associated with attempts to adopt a multilateral approach in an increasingly fragmented world.

This does not mean that we should eschew projects aimed at climate mitigation or adaptation in other countries. But we would not need to wait until everyone is on board before doing anything. Those insisting on a multilateral approach should learn from the experience of the ultimate multilateral institution: the World Trade Organization. Its requirement that every single provision in every multilateral agreement gain unanimous support has left it increasingly paralysed, prompting demands for institutional reform.

Of course, India is not low-hanging fruit. It is rich in coal and has little incentive (beyond the health of its citizens) to hasten the transition to green energy. In focusing on India, we would need to employ

the carrot, not the stick. Since the stick generally takes the form of pressure to implement carbon taxation, it is a non-starter. A tax would be ineffective, because it would incite massive domestic opposition (as has been the case in the US). It would also be morally objectionable, because it is unfair to ask a lower-middle-income country to bear the burden of reducing CO2 emissions when rich countries (like the US) have failed to do the same. Moreover, even if China and India are now two of the world’s biggest polluters, they bear little responsibility for the past, cumulative emissions that led to the current climate crisis.

That leaves the carrot, which would come in the form of tax incentives or subsidies to support green energy. When paired with other policies, these can ease firms into adapting to higher environmental standards (such as those associated with a cap-and-trade programme). But such policies are expensive, which means that tackling climate change will require richer countries to help finance them. Whether or not India becomes the new China, it is still in our power to ensure that it does not become the new outsize polluter.

The writer is Professor of Economics at Yale University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

Unfazed India

Sir, The third, 3-day G20 tourism working group meet will begin Monday in Srinagar. As expected, China and Pakistan have shied away from the meet, and then there is Turkey; a staunch Islamabad supporter, which has not registered for the event. An unfazed India, however, strongly desires to send signals to the international community on how such conferences could be held in highly sensitive regions. In April, Youth-20 summit was held in Leh and in March, a G20 event was successfully organised in the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar. Needless to say, Beijing stayed away from both places. Beside the diplomatic signals, holding global mega events in places like Srinagar, Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh will tremendously showcase the sociocultural richness of the areas. Infrastructural boost, massive leg-up to tourism, push to local products are all huge possibilities. Also, hospitality industry, that saw a breakdown of sorts during the COVID pandemic, is all set to reach a zenith.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

COVID origin

Sir, A new report on the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic has said circumstantial evidence points that the coronavirus outbreak came from a lab accident at the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) in China. Marco Rubio, US Senator from Florida, released a report stating that “after years of censorship, there is growing evidence that some type of lab accident is responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic.” Rubio released the findings of a 17-month probe into the origins of COVID. Beijing’s efforts to render imperceptible the exact timing and original cause of the initial outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 are what necessitated this study, the report released by Rubio’s office said. The report points to a mountain of circumstantial evidence that the pandemic came from a lab accident in Wuhan. Information detailed in this report, including that derived from official Chinese sources, further indicates that a serious bio containment failure or accident, likely involving a viral pathogen, occurred at the state-run WIV during the second half of 2019 – approximately during the same period of time in which the available epidemiological evidence indicates that SARS-CoV-2 was introduced to the human population in Wuhan, the release read. Beijing has repeatedly dismissed the lab leak theory, but at the same time warned its officials that the risk of laboratory-acquired infections with SARS-CoV-2 was significant, and ordering regulatory reforms to be implemented immediately, the contents of the report read.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

of the day quote

The G20 meeting in Srinagar, beginning Monday, is an opportunity for India to showcase the changed scenario in Jammu and Kashmir which was earlier under the shadow of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

I am happy at the Union government's decision to withdraw the Rs 2000 currency note from circulation. The government took seven years to rectify the mistake it had made

P. CHIDAMBARAM | FORMER UNION MINISTER FOR FINANCE

Under the Road Safety Week, work will be done on the black spots of the roads in all the districts and activities related to road safety will be organized

MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR | HARYANA CM

SHORT TAKES

Pilgrim dies

Katra/Jammu: A 27-year-old woman was killed and 24 people were injured when a Rajasthan-bound bus carrying Mata Vaishno Devi pilgrims overturned in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district Sunday, officials said. Additional Director General of Police of Jammu zone Mukesh Singh, quoting eyewitnesses, said the accident occurred when the driver lost control of the speeding vehicle due to a sharp curve, rubbingish the claim by some terror groups on social media that it was a terror act.

Three dead

Hisar (Haryana): Three people died after allegedly inhaling toxic gas while cleaning a well in the Saharwa village in this Haryana district, police said Sunday. The victims have been identified as Jaipal, Narendra and Suresh, they said. According to the police, Jaipal entered the well but lost consciousness after allegedly inhaling the toxic gas. Narendra then went inside but did not return either. Suresh and Vikram -- the fourth man hired to clean the well -- then went in to bring Jaipal and Narendra out. However, Suresh also fell unconscious and Vikram immediately came out of the well, they said. Later, the police recovered the bodies of Jaipal, Narendra and Suresh from the well.

Elephants kill man

Seraikela: A 68-year-old man was trampled to death by a herd of wild elephants in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharswan district Sunday, police said. The victim, identified as Lilkant Mahato, went out to relieve himself when the incident happened in Khunti village in Chandil block, they said. He died on the spot, they added. A police team reached the spot on being informed by the villagers and recovered the body.

China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt to stay away from G20 meet

The staying away of China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt from the G20 meet bears testimony to the fact that PM Narendra Modi's foreign junkets have not been fruitful and that there are still a large number of countries that support Pakistan over Kashmir

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 21: With the RBI's announcement to withdraw Rs 2,000 notes from circulation making headlines a few days back, it seems the focus has shifted away from some of the more important developments of the G20 meet in Srinagar, like China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt refraining from attending the high-profile meet. India is set to host the third G20

Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir from May 22 to May 24.

China, the all-weather friend of Pakistan, has said it will not attend the planned G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Jammu & Kashmir next week, asserting that it is "firmly opposed" to holding such meetings in the "disputed territory". "China firmly opposes holding

any form of G20 meetings on disputed territory", Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing in response to a question. "We will not attend such meetings," he added.

Islamabad and Beijing have previously made unwarranted references to the Indian Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir India has previously rejected the statements from Beijing and Islamabad on Jammu & Kashmir.

"We have consistently rejected such statements and all parties concerned are well aware of our clear position on these matters. The Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh are and always will be integral and inalienable parts of



India. No other country has a locus standi to comment on the same," the Ministry of External Affairs has commented before on comments by Pakistan and China.

Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt also have not registered for the G20 meeting at Srinagar. It is pertinent to note that as per Indian Union Tourism Secretary Arvind Singh, the registration window to attend the meeting would remain



Mr. Bommai, all guarantees will reach the people. We have kept our words before. In the future also we will continue to do so. This is the difference between Congress and BJP. The BJP governments at the Centre and state level have not achieved any development

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

DHANKHAR ARRIVES IN KERALA

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar arrived in Kerala on a two-day visit. He will be staying at the Raj Bhavan



RAIN FURY: WOMAN TRAPPED IN CAR DIES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, May 21: A 22-year-old woman drowned Sunday after a car she was travelling in with her family got stuck in neck-deep water at KR Circle underpass, just a stone's throw from Vidhana Soudha, the seat of power in Karnataka.

Fire and emergency services personnel saved five others of the family and the driver, with the help of people who had rushed to save those trapped in the flooded underpass in the heart of the city.

The victim as well as the others were taken to St Martha's Hospital where doctors declared the woman, identified as Bhanurekha, dead.

Learning about the incident, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah rushed to the hospital and took stock of the situation. He announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and free treatment for those admitted in the hospital.

"The family from Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh had hired a car

and come to see Bengaluru Bhanurekha works in Infosys. Due to the downpour, the barricade at the underpass fell down and the driver took the risk of crossing the underpass, which he should not have," Siddaramaiah told reporters. Bhanurekha was 22 years old.

When reporters who were covering the incident complained that doctors refused to treat Bhanurekha, who was alive when she was taken to the hospital, Siddaramaiah said he will get it investigated and initiate action.

According to those present at the spot, the car driver tried to zoom through the water, but in the middle of the underpass the car almost got submerged. The occupants of the vehicle came out frantically trying to save themselves.

Due to the downpour and hailstorm, the water level started increasing. As the family started crying for help, people nearby rushed to their rescue. They threw sares and ropes to help them keep afloat. Those entrapped tried to climb up but failed.

Speeding BMW crushes man to death in Delhi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 21: A speeding BMW car that was being driven by a woman has crushed a man to death here in west Delhi's Moti Nagar area, an official said Sunday.

The incident took place at around 4 a.m. near Fun Cinema crossing. The speeding BMW car first hit the scooter that was being ridden by the 36-year-old man, then collided with a generator at the roadside, before coming to a halt.

Though the police arrested the woman, she was later reportedly released on bail.

The police said that the deceased -- identified as Ajay Gupta, used to run a grocery shop, and the woman is an architect.

According to the police, Gupta was on his way home after taking medicines from a hospital while the woman behind the wheels of the BMW was returning to her home in Ashok Vihar after attending a party in Greater Kailash.

A senior police officer said that the police received a call about the incident at around 4.08 a.m.

The caller said that a BMW car crushed a scooter rider near Moti Nagar Metro Station and Fun Cinema.

A police team that went to the spot found two vehicles in a damaged condition.

The police said that neither the driver of the BMW car nor the victim, who was on the scooter, were found there.

"A generator was spotted there in a damaged state as it was also hit by the BMW car. Police were told that the victim was taken to a nearby hospital. On reaching there, the police learnt that the driver of the BMW car had taken the man to the hospital. Later, the man was shifted to another hospital where he was declared dead," a police officer said.

Soon after the incident, a number of people assembled at the spot and raised slogans against the police and the accused.

The police said that initially, they filed a case under Sections 279, 337 of the Indian Penal Code in this regard. Later, Section 304A was also added to the case.

President should inaugurate new Parliament: Rahul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 21: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday said that the President should inaugurate the new Parliament building and not the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the newly-constructed Parliament building May 28. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla met Modi on Thursday last and extended an invitation to inaugurate the new building, the Lok Sabha Secretariat had said.

Taking to Twitter, Rahul Gandhi said, "The President should inaugurate the new Parliament House and not the Prime Minister".

Veteran Parliamentarian and former deputy leader of the Congress in Rajya Sabha Anand Sharma and some other opposition leaders were also of the same view. "It will not be constitutionally correct for the PM to inaugurate the new building of Parliament. Jury is out whether it was required at all. No major democracy has done this. Westminster is the seat of the



British Parliament and Capitol Hill of the US Congress for hundreds of years," Sharma said on Twitter.

He said Parliament is the custodian and pride of India's Constitutional democracy and its glory must not be undermined as the sovereignty of the people is vested in it. Article 79 of the

Constitution is unambiguous that the President is the head of Parliament which comprises Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, he contended.

"The PM is the leader of Lok Sabha. It is the President who alone can summon the Parliament - Article 85," he said. "Rashtrapati addresses the joint session only flanked by Rajya Sabha Chairman

Manipur extends internet suspension

Manipur's Commissioner, Home, H. Gyan Prakash, in a notification extending the suspension of internet services till May 26, said that the Director General of Police, Manipur, reported that there are still reports of incidents like arson of houses and premises

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Imphal, May 21: The Manipur government Sunday extended the suspension of internet services for another five days following reports of arson incidents and to prevent spreading of rumours and videos, photos, and messages, which might affect the law and order situation in the ethnic-violence hit northeastern state.

Manipur's Commissioner, Home, H. Gyan Prakash, in a notification, extending the suspension of internet services till May 26, said that the Director General of Police, Manipur, reported that there are still reports of incidents like arson of houses and premises.

"There is apprehension that some anti-social elements might use social media extensively for transmission of images, hate speech and hate video messages inciting the passions of the public which might have serious repercussions for the law and order situation in the state.

"There is an imminent danger of loss of life and/or damage to public and private property, and wide spread disturbances to public tranquility and communal harmony, as a result of inflammatory material and false rumours, which might be transmitted/ circulated to the public through social media/messaging services on mobile services, SMS services, and dongle services."



The government said that it has become necessary to take adequate measures to maintain law and order in public interest, by stopping the spread of disinformation and false rumours, through various social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. on various electronic equipment like tablet, computer, mobile phone etc.

Sending bulk SMS, for facilitating and or mobilisation of mobs of agitators and demonstrators, can cause loss of life and or dam-

age to public and private property by indulging in arson and vandalism and other types of violent activities, it said.

The government now ordered further suspension, curbing of mobile data services, internet, data services including broadband -- Reliance Jio Fiber, Airtel Xtreme Black, BSNL FTTH etc. and internet, data services through VSATS of Bharatnet Phase-II in the territorial jurisdiction of the state of Manipur.

Massive anti-terrorist operation in Poonch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Poonch/Jammu, May 21: The Army Sunday launched a massive search operation in a forward area in Jammu and Kashmir's border district of Poonch after troops picked up suspicious movement and opened fire, officials said.

No one was injured in the firing by the soldiers on patrolling duty at Kerri in Mendhar sector around 3 am, they said. Though there was no retaliation from the suspected persons, the Army launched a massive search operation in the area and adjoining forests to ensure that there is no presence of terrorists, the officials said.

All roads leading to the besieged vast area were closed and the residents were asked to stay indoors as a precautionary measure, they said, adding the searches were completed in the populated area but no one was arrested.

The nearby Bhata Dhurian witnessed a deadly ambush by terrorists on an Army vehicle on April 20, resulting in the killing of five soldiers and injuries to a major-rank officer. At least six overground workers were arrested for providing shelter to the terrorists. However, the attackers are still at large and efforts are on to neutralise them, with the Army almost conducting daily search operations and area domination patrols, according to officials.



ALL UP VILLAGES TO GET 4G WITHIN A YEAR

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Varanasi (UP), May 21: All the remaining villages of Uttar Pradesh will be covered with 4G network within a year.

According to the government spokesman, the Union Minister of State for Telecom Devusinh Chauhan gave this information during his visit to Varanasi Saturday.

Chauhan along with Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Anupriya Patel, launched installation of mobile towers equipped with 4G network at an



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

The Union Cabinet had approved a project for saturation of 4G mobile services in uncovered villages across the country at a total cost of ₹26,316 crore in July 2022

event. The Union Cabinet had approved a project for saturation of 4G mobile services in uncovered villages across the country at a

total cost of Rs 26,316 crore in July 2022.

Chauhan said the 4G saturation project is an ambitious scheme envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to create digital connectivity facility for the residents of far-flung areas and thereby bridge the digital divide in 500 days.

"This scheme will not only be helpful in including the citizens living in far-flung areas in the mainstream and improving their standard of living, it will also be effective in delivering e-governance, medical and educational fa-

cilities and other citizen-centric schemes directly to the beneficiary," the minister said.

He further said the locals will get direct and indirect benefits from installation of the mobile towers and the area will also get developed.

Chauhan said that 65 remote villages of Varanasi district and adjoining Chandauli, Ghazipur, Mirzapur, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Sonbhadra, Varanasi districts under the Varanasi Business Area will be provided 4G services through 49 new towers and by upgrading seven existing towers.

MP: Civic body throws 'poha' party to free Indore of single-use plastic



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, May 21: The civic body in Madhya Pradesh's Indore organised a farewell 'poha' party Sunday to make people aware about the ill effects of single-use plastic.

The civic body of the cleanest city in the country served 'poha', a local snack, to dignitaries and citizens to create awareness against single-use plastic.

Talking to reporters at Dussehra Maidan, mayor Pushyamitra Bhargava exuded confidence that Indore will be the cleanest city in the country for the seventh time in a row.

"The Indore Municipal Corporation has carried out many campaigns against single-use plastic, but it is observed that the material is still in use largely. Considering this, we have organised a farewell party for single-use plastic to create awareness among people of Indore," Bhargava said.

Citizens were informed about the ill effects of single-use plastic during the programme, he said.

Indore MP Shankar Lalwani, state cabinet Minister Tulsiram Silawat and several public representatives were present in the function to bid farewell to single-use plastic.

One step at a time for MP Cong: First, winning state election, then 2024



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, May 21:The BJP's recent loss in two assembly elections - Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka - has given rise to speculation on whether the Congress can come back to power at the Centre in 2024 like in 2004? As the Congress won these two elections after its leader Rahul Gandhi's "Bharat Jodo Yatra", which covered 14 states and over 3,800 km was over, it was obviously going to create a buzz.

A question gaining momentum is what if the BJP loses the upcoming assembly elections in three Hindi speaking states - Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. Out of these three, the BJP is in power only in Madhya Pradesh, while the Congress is ruling in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. Madhya Pradesh based political analyst IANS spoke to were of the view that Karnataka's outcome may not have much impact on the Lok Sabha elections, but it has given the impression that the opposition has strongly planted their feet on the battle ground for the general elections in 2024.

Replying to an IANS query on this subject, former Chief Minister and Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath in a statement said currently he was completely focused on the assembly elections due later this year and maintained that the party will form the government with a full majority. However, he stated that the

In Madhya Pradesh the Congress as of now seems in a better position against the ruling BJP, mostly because of the huge anti-incumbency against Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's government of nearly two decades

The BJP is also striving hard to remain in power, and at the same time, it has also started preparing for the Lok Sabha elections

Congress will win the maximum number of Lok Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh.

In the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, the BJP had won 28 out of the total 29 seats in Madhya Pradesh. The Congress had managed to save only Chhindwara, where Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath could win the election. If it is assumed that the Congress can win the maximum Lok Sabha seats in 2024, it would be pertinent to mention that when the last general election was held in 2019, the Congress was in government in Madhya Pradesh, but it could win just one seat.

Political analyst N. K. Singh talking to IANS said that the position of both the national parties, the BJP and the Congress, is getting clearer by the day. The safety brigade is not just struggling to tackle anti-incumbency but many more issues also, while the Congress seems in a better position.

Divided Muslim vote cause of worry for SP

The Samajwadi Party may face difficulties in upcoming Lok Sabha elections if Muslim votes get divided, as it was the Muslim votes because of which, the SP did well in the 2022 assembly elections

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 21: In the just-concluded local body elections in Uttar Pradesh, there has been a lot of fragmentation of Muslim votes. Political experts said: "This time the Muslim votes got divided among parties in the local body elections. Changing the previous election trends of uniting behind a single party against the BJP, Muslims have voted for the people of their choice this time."

"UP's Muslims have voted for Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and SP on some seats. However, they ignored the Muslim candidates of BSP and SP on some seats and voted for Congress, Independents, Aam Aadmi Party, and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM)." According to experts, division of votes among Muslim vot-

UP LOCAL BODY POLLS



ers in Moradabad - the strongest bastion of SP - left the SP at the fourth position in mayoral contest. Congress candidate Mohd Rizwan stood at second position, BSP nominee Mohd Yameen remained at third place, while BJP candidate won the seat.

"In Shahjahanpur, the Muslims were divided between Congress and SP. Even in Bareilly, the Muslims were not inclined towards any one

party," the experts said. According to election statistics, this time the BJP has won the seats with majority of Muslim voters. Muslims have shown their faith in the state government. The BJP fielded 395 Muslim candidates in the just-concluded local body elections in UP and more than 70 of them won, according to party leaders.

Political analyst Prasun Pandey said: "One thing that was seen in

Yogi prepares for cabinet rejig

The reshuffle will be based on the work done in their departments by the ministers in the past one year and also the performance of party candidates in the constituencies of the ministers in the recent municipal polls

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 21: With less than a year left for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is planning for a cabinet reshuffle in.

"Some ministers may be promoted while some senior ones may be shifted for organisational work. The party and the chief minister will decide which minister is more suited for the government or the party. The exercise will rejuvenate the party and the government and ensure that it is fighting fit for the Lok Sabha elections," said a sen-



ior party functionary.

BJP sources said that by changing responsibilities of ministers and the state leaders, the party wants to keep the ministers and the organisational leaders consistently on toes. The sources said that the party and the state government have been receiving inputs about some of the ministers and organisational leaders not acting promptly in some of the districts.

"The party is analysing the performance of ministers and legislators in their respective constituencies in the recent municipal polls. The entire data will be shared with the Chief Minister and other senior leaders after which a decision will be taken

regarding cabinet reshuffle," the functionary said.

The Yogi Adityanath government's decision to reshuffle his cabinet marks the beginning of the much-anticipated change in the government and party structure ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

Party sources said that some high-profile ministers who had failed to perform may be shifted to organisational posts in the party and new blood will be inducted in the government.

In view of his own excellent performance, the chief minister is likely to be given greater freedom in choosing which ministers are to be dropped and which one should be promoted.

UP SURPASSES MAHA IN SUGAR PRODUCTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 21: Uttar Pradesh has surpassed Maharashtra in sugar production in the current season even as 118 sugar mills operated in UP during the period compared to 210 mills that were operational in the western state.

UP's Cane Development and Sugar Mills' minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary told PTI, "UP is ahead of Maharashtra as far as production of sugar is concerned along with a number of other factors." Elaborating further, Chaudhary said, "The total sugar produced by Uttar Pradesh in sugar season 2022-2023 is 107.29 lakh tonnes (which includes 3.05 lakh tonnes of Khandasari (physically extracted sugar from liquid jaggery), as compared to 105.30 lakh tonnes by Maharashtra. The area under cane cultivation in Uttar Pradesh is 28.53 lakh hectare (maximum in India) as compared to 14.87 lakh hectare in Maharashtra." The sugarcane crushing season runs from October to June. "The sugarcane production in UP has been 2,348 lakh

tonnes, while in Maharashtra it was 1,413 lakh tonnes," Chaudhary said. He added that total cane crushed by sugar mills in UP in the 2022-2023 season was 1,084.57 lakh tonnes, whereas it was 1,053 lakh tonnes in Maharashtra.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

The UP minister also informed that 19.84 lakh tonnes of sugar was diverted to ethanol in Uttar Pradesh, while in Maharashtra, it was 15.70 lakh tonnes. Pointing towards the number of installed sugar mills in both the states, the UP minister said that as compared to 246 installed sugar mills in Maharashtra, there are 157 installed sugar mills in UP.

Nirupur village becomes hub for production of famous Shahi Litchi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ballia (UP), May 21: Farmers in a dusty village of Ballia district in eastern UP are pioneering the art of growing the famous Shahi (Royal) Litchis and expanding the horizons by taking the succulent fruit to other markets in the country.

Raja Shankar Tiwari, who retired from the Railway Protection Force, is one of the farmers who is about to bring Nirupur village into the limelight by producing the high quality litchi fruit.

Tiwari, was one of the pioneers of Litchi farming in Nirupur, told PTI that in 2013, after his retirement, he started litchi plantation after reading somewhere that a tree gives an output of Rs 90 lakhs in its entire life.

"After retirement, I went to Muzaffarpur and learned about litchi horticulture at Litchi Research Center and planted 290 royal (Shahi) litchi trees and 200 mango trees in two hectares of land in Dopahi Mouja of our village," said Tiwari.

Over the years some other vil-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

lagers in Nirupur and nearby villages followed suit and dedicated themselves to grow litchi in the area, which is traditionally not known for the fruit.

The decade-long efforts resulted in high litchi yield. "Eight tonnes of litchi is expected to be produced this year on our farm," said Tiwari.

Besides the high litchi production, the farms also provide jobs to villagers and are a source of an alternate income. For almost six months during the fruiting and harvesting season, villagers are

hired as workers. Tiwari says that over 30 villagers work at his farm and over Rs 1.5 lakh is spent every month as their salaries.

Munnan of Pindari village, neighboring the Nirupur village, is associated with this work for the last several years. Munnan said due to rising litchi cultivation in the area he easily gets a job as a worker and earns up to Rs 10,000 a month.

Tiwari said earlier, litchi and mango produced in the village were sold in the local market only

Over the years some other villagers in Nirupur and nearby villages followed suit and dedicated themselves to grow litchi in the area, which is traditionally not known for the fruit

Nirupur village located 13 kilometers from the district headquarters, has become a hub for the production of the famous Shahi Litchis

Due to this the profit was less. "In the last three years we have started selling litchi in markets outside the state.

Talking about the problem they face, the farmers said that lack of long distance transport facilities in Ballia is affecting their business. Besides Litchi, the farmers of the area also grow mangoes of Langra, Dussehri and Chausa variety.

District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said that farmers of Nirupur like Tiwari are taking the horticulture sector of the district forward.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, May 21: As many as 32 elderly pilgrims Sunday were sent to Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj in a special flight under 'Mukhyamantri Teerth Darshan Yojana'.

The scheme was introduced in June 2012, but it is for the first time that pilgrims were sent for the pilgrimage on a flight.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan flagged off the airbus from Bhopal's Raja Bhoj airport. He met the pilgrims one by one and sought their blessings. Chouhan was seen touching the feet of senior citizens and also went inside the airbus before flagging it off. Some pilgrims were also seen hailing CM Shivraj for providing airbus facility to them for the pilgrimage.

"A resolution has been fulfilled today, a dream has come true. Elderly people like my parents are going on pilgrimage by aeroplane," Chouhan said after flagging off IndiGo flight from Bhopal airport.

Notably, Chouhan had announced the airbus facility for pilgrimage in February this year, according to



The scheme was introduced in June 2012, but it is for the first time that people were sent for the pilgrimage on a flight

which, eligible beneficiaries from 25 districts (out of the total 52 in the state) will be taken on pilgrimages to various destinations by aeroplanes between May 21 and July 19.

Under this scheme, eligible senior citizens above 60 years of age can visit any of the listed pilgrimage places on government ex-

penses. Till now, the beneficiaries used to be taken to various places of religious worship by trains. But now, air travel was also added to it.

Interestingly, this comes at the time when the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh are just around six months away.

The elections to the 230-member Assembly in Madhya Pradesh are scheduled by the end of this year. BJP leader and Union Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia congratulated the people of Madhya Pradesh for availing air service introduced by the state government for pilgrimage.

of the day quote

Some powers ruling the country are taking it backwards by inciting tensions on caste and religious lines in society. They are using power not for the welfare of people, but to create divisions among them

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP PRESIDENT

If all citizens devote one minute out of their daily routine to the cause of environment and cleanliness, it would help to tackle the challenges of climate change and global warming

EKNATH SHINDE | MAHARASHTRA CM

Since currency and its price in the world market are related to interest and prestige of the country, frequent changes in it directly affect public interest. That's why proper study on its effects and consequences is necessary before doing so. The government must pay attention to this

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Student assaulted

Kanpur (UP): A 30-year-old student pursuing BBA from KIT college in Ruma area of the district has been allegedly assaulted by a group of B Pharma students on the college campus. The victim's family has lodged an FIR at Maharajpur police station, alleging that the attackers also shot a video of the incident and put it up on social media. The police have registered a case under relevant sections of IPC and are conducting raids to arrest the attackers. Complainant Faiz Ejaz's mother said they were residents of Machhli Tola Meston Road and her son was pursuing a BBA course from KIT Ruma.

Three drown

Agartala: In a tragic incident, three children - two boys and a girl - drowned in a river and another boy was critically ill in Tripura's Khowai district Sunday, officials said. A police spokesman said that while taking bath, the three children aged about 6 to 12 drowned in the Khowai river. Six-year-old Ayan Das was rescued by his grandfather, who was accompanied by all the four children. The Tripura Fire and Emergency Services personnel along with some local residents fished out the bodies of three children from the river and sent them to a government hospital, where they were declared brought dead, the spokesman said.

Man killed

Patna: A man who went to attend a wedding in Bihar's Chapra city was killed in celebratory firing. On Saturday night, the man, who went to Jalalpur village to attend a marriage function, sustained gunshot injury during celebratory firing. The locals rushed him to Sadar hospital Chapra where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Cop ends life

Kalaburgi: A head constable attached to Bramhapura police station has allegedly committed suicide at his residence in District Armed Reserve headquarters, Kalaburgi in Karnataka Sunday, police said. The deceased was identified as 47-year-old Panduranga, a native of Chimmanachod village in Chikkodi taluk. According to police, Panduranga came back home at 10 p.m. on Saturday and slept with his wife in his room while his children slept on the rooftop. However, early this morning, Panduranga's body was found hanging in the kitchen. The exact cause of the incident is yet to be ascertained.



This (withdrawal of Rs 2,000 currency notes) was a purely political decision like the 2016 demonetisation to protect their (BJP's) political identity but they stand exposed before the masses. Unfortunately, the life span of the Rs 2,000 currency note was just six to seven years

HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

WELCOME MOVE

All drains carrying discharge from villages located on the banks of the Ganga river will be geo-tagged to prevent solid waste flowing into the river, according to an official document



Buoyed by K'taka win, Congress calls crucial meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 21: After a stunning victory in Karnataka, the focus of Congress leadership has shifted to the next round of assembly elections where the party is locked in a direct contest with the BJP in some states.

With assembly elections due in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram in the next few months, the Congress is working on poll strategies in these states and has convened a meeting of state leaders on May 24. While Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh are two states ruled by the Congress where it is hoping to offset the anti-incumbency factor and factional fighting by replicating the 'Karnataka strategy', the party is also determined to make a comeback in Madhya Pradesh where it lost power after Jyotiraditya Scindia and some of the MLAs switched loyalties, sources said.

They said Congress president



Mallikarjun Kharge has called a meeting of its leaders from Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on May 24 to strategise on the upcoming assembly elections. Kharge will hold separate meetings with the state leaders. A senior leader said the idea is to chalk out an early strategy to reach out to the grassroots level. "The Bharat Jodo Yatra, which passed through states like Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, will benefit the party as the cadres are already ac-

tivated and the party will get the benefit of the Yatra, as it did in Karnataka," a senior leader involved with one of the states said.

Another leader said the good schemes and works initiated by the Congress governments in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh will be highlighted in a big way and the poll strategy adopted by the party leadership in Karnataka will be replicated in these poll-bound states.

The Congress faces peculiar challenges in several of these states, especially due to infighting and

The Congress is not leaving any stone unturned to continue its winning spree, after wresting Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka from the BJP, as the party hopes to consolidate its gains

The party is in a direct contest with the BJP in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, even though there is a triangular fight in Telangana among the Congress, the BJP and the ruling BRS

factionalism. In Rajasthan, the Congress has to tackle the festering feud between Sachin Pilot and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

Upping the ante, Pilot has threatened to launch an agitation if his demands were not met by May end. Concluding his five-day Jan Sangarsh Yatra in Jaipur during which he targeted the Gehlot government on the issue of corruption, Pilot had recently placed three demands - disbanding the Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC) and its reorganisation, compensation to youths



A breathtaking performance by a group of youths at an event in Gurugram

PTI PHOTO

Int'l travel scam unearthed in Delhi

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 21: The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police Sunday said four persons have been arrested for duping people on the pretext of sending them abroad. The police have found that Mexico and El Salvador-based agents were also working for the gang, and seized 80 passports.

The gang charged Rs 6 lakh for Schengen Visa, (valid in 27 countries). For illegal entry in the US through the Mexico border, they used to charge around Rs 27 lakh per person. The police have recovered 80 passports of various countries and forged documents from their possession.

The police said that they had been working on the gang for a long time. Bhandari is believed to be the mastermind of the gang. "We conducted a raid in Tilak Nagar, Delhi and apprehended the four accused. We learnt that the accused persons were running the crime syndicate in the garb of Tour & Travel Business. The accused have agents in NCR," the official said.

9 K'TAKA MINISTERS HAVE CRIMINAL CASES: REPORT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 21: Nine ministers, who have taken oath in Karnataka, have criminal cases against them and all are crorepatris, according to the report of the Karnataka Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

The report is based on the analysis of the self-sworn affidavits of nine out of 10 Ministers, including Siddaramaiah, the new Chief Minister of Karnataka.

The report said that it could not analyse K.J. George's case due to the unavailability of his clear and complete affidavits on the ECI website at the time of making this report. The report said, "Out of the nine ministers analysed, all nine ministers have declared criminal cases against themselves, while four ministers have declared serious criminal cases against them.

Highlighting the financial background of the nine ministers, the



report said that all the nine ministers in Karnataka are crorepatris. It said, "The average assets of nine ministers analysed is Rs 229.27 crore."

The report further said that Karnataka's sole Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar is the richest as he declared total assets worth Rs 1,413.80 crore, while Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's son Priyank Kharge is the minister with the lowest declared total assets. Priyank, who is an MLA from Chittapur (SC) constituency, has declared assets worth

Rs 16.83 crore.

The report also pointed out that all nine ministers have declared their liabilities. Out of these the one with the highest liabilities is D.K. Shivakumar, MLA from the Kanakapura constituency with Rs 265.06 crore. Highlighting the Ministers' education, the report said, "Three Ministers have declared their educational qualification to be between 8th pass and 12th pass, while six Ministers have declared having an educational qualification of graduate and above."

J&K TERROR CONSPIRACY CASE

NIA ARRESTS JeM OPERATIVE

The arrest of Mohd Ubaid Malik of north Kashmir's Kupwara came amid a crackdown against conspiracies being hatched by terrorist organisations based across the border to destabilise India through terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, a spokesperson of the federal agency said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, May 21: An operative of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror outfit, who was allegedly passing secret information about the movement of security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, has been arrested, an NIA official said Sunday.

The arrest of Mohd Ubaid Malik of north Kashmir's Kupwara came amid a crackdown against conspiracies being hatched by terrorist organisations based across the border to destabilise India through terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, a spokesperson of the federal agency said.

"Malik was in constant touch with a Pakistan-based JeM commander. Investigations have revealed that he was passing on secret

information, especially regarding the movement of troops and security forces, to the Pakistan-based commander," the spokesperson said.

The official said various incriminating documents showing his involvement in the furtherance of terror activities were recovered from his possession at the time of his arrest. The National Investigation Agency registered the terror conspiracy case suo motu on June 21 last year to unearth the conspiracies hatched by cadres and underground workers of various terrorist organisations on the directions of their commanders based in Pakistan, the spokesperson said.

"It involves collection and distribution of huge consignments of narcotics, cash, weapons, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including remote control-operated sticky/magnetic bombs," the official said. The spokesperson said IEDs and explosives are often delivered from across the border using drones and are also being assembled locally in order to execute terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The attacks are mainly targeted at minorities and security forces personnel," the official said. The NIA said such conspiracies are being hatched both physically and in cyberspace with the overarching aim of disturbing peace and communal harmony, engaging in terrorist acts, and waging a war against the Government of India.



Oppn unity intensifies

With the BJP losing its only southern bastion, Karnataka, the Opposition unity efforts have taken a quantum jump. The NCP supremo Sharad Pawar has agreed to attend the Opposition conclave being held at Patna at the initiative of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray has also accepted Nitish Kumar's invite and may opt to attend himself or send a senior leader to Patna. There is a likelihood that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge may himself prefer to go to Patna. The Chief

Ministers of West Bengal and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, Tamil Nadu CMMK Stalin, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI's General Secretary D Raja, Farooq Abdullah and other prominent leaders are likely attend this conclave.

The lucky commander

As the results of Karnataka assembly polls started pouring in, the three Gandhis (Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka) were glued to the TV. It was during those relaxing moments where Sonia Gandhi appreciated the efforts put in by 80-year old party president Mallikarjun Kharge who addressed 36 public meetings. If insiders at 10 Janpath are to be believed, Priyanka congratulated her mother saying that the commander chosen by her has been lucky. Priyanka was right as Kharge delivered two states, one after the other, in a span of

eight months of taking over the reins as Congress president. Kharge took charge on October 26, 2022 and delivered Himachal Pradesh. This was the first win for the Congress after a long drought on December 8, 2022. Five months later, on May 13, 2023 Kharge delivered a big state like Karnataka to the Gandhis.

BMC polls go for a toss

The cascading effects of Karnataka's humiliating defeat are clearly visible in the BJP. The ruling party was all set to declare holding of BMC polls immediately after the Karnataka assembly polls. The state BJP Chief Chandra Shekhar Bawankule, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Mumbai BJP Chief Ashish Shelar and other leaders had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah where he asked them to start working aggressively on every municipal ward. Shah had given a 7-point program to the Maharashtra leaders to snatch the BMC from the Thackeray faction. The SC judgment may

have given relief to the Shinde group to continue in office. But the legal battle in the SC and other forums will continue for a long time to come. PM Modi had also visited Mumbai and declared that a "triple engine government in the state is needed". But Karnataka results have put the plan in jeopardy.

Why BJP lost deposit in Jalandhar bypoll

The BJP not only lost Karnataka, it also faced its worst in Punjab where its candidate in Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat lost his deposit. No doubt, the BJP increased its vote share by 4 per cent in the bypoll compared to the last Assembly elections in segments falling under this parliamentary seat. But Iqbal Singh Atwal (BJP) not only slipped to the fourth place, he lost his deposit as well. A candidate must get 1/6th of total valid votes polled to save deposit. But the BJP candidate failed to get the same. This was a second

Wankhede quizzed for more than 5 hrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 21: Former Mumbai NCB chief Sameer Wankhede was questioned for more than five hours on the second day in a row Sunday by CBI probing the alleged Rs 25 crore bribe demand from actor Shah Rukh Khan for not implicating his son Aryan in the Cordelia cruise 'drug bust' case, an official said.

Wankhede, an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer, reached the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) office in the Bandra-Kurla Complex at around 10.30 am, he said. While entering the office, Wankhede told reporters he has "faith in the judiciary".

He was allowed a lunch break during questioning, the official said, adding Wankhede left the CBI office for the day at around 4.30 pm. Wankhede didn't respond to queries from media persons waiting outside the CBI office but only said, "Satyamev Jayate" (truth only triumphs).

On Saturday also, the CBI questioned Wankhede for more than five hours. After he left the CBI office at around 4.30 pm on Saturday, Wankhede along with his family members visited the Siddhivinayak temple at Prabhadevi in Mumbai.

The central agency booked Wankhede and four others on May 11 for alleged criminal conspiracy and threat of extortion, besides provisions pertaining to bribery under the Prevention of Corruption Act on a complaint by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

On Friday, Wankhede got a relief from the Bombay High Court which directed the CBI not to take any "coercive action", such as arrest, against him till May 22. Seeking quashing of the FIR, Wankhede alleged before the HC that the 'draft complaint' in the 2021 drugs-on-cruise case named Aryan Khan as an accused, but it was later replaced and Aryan's name was dropped. Aryan Khan was arrested by the NCB on October 3, 2021, following the alleged drug seizure on board the Cordelia cruise ship here. He was granted bail by the high court three weeks later as the anti-drugs agency failed to substantiate its charges against him.

of the day **quote**

Islamic countries do not support the West's sanctions on Russia, and the agreements signed at this week's Kazan economic forum prove this

MARAT KHUSNULIN | RUSSIAN DEPUTY PM

We have been cut off from the Arab world over the past years, and the future President must carry out two tasks, which are to lead the internal reconciliation and to rebuild bridges with all Arab countries

NAJIB MIKATI | LEBANESE CARETAKER PM

Instead of intervening in the internal affairs of other countries ... Western politicians had better listen to the voices of their own citizens' protests and meeting their demands

NASSER KANAANI | IRANIAN DIPLOMAT

SHORT TAKES

10 killed in Mexico car race shooting

Mexico City: At least ten people were killed and nine others injured in an armed attack targeting a group of amateur rally drivers in a car race in the Mexican state of Baja California, local media reported. A group of armed individuals got out of a vehicle and opened fire at the car race participants who were parked on the side of a highway in Ensenada, Baja California Saturday, said the Milenio newspaper citing local authorities.

Cholera outbreak claims 10 more lives

Johannesburg: The provincial health department in the South African province of Gauteng Sunday announced 19 new cases of Cholera in Hammanskraal, including 10 deaths. South Africa reported its first cholera death in February, after the virus arrived in the country from Malawi. It was unclear how many cholera cases there was nationally as of Sunday, but the most populous province of Gauteng, has been hardest hit.

Six border guards killed by 'terrorists'

Tehran: Six Iranian border guards were killed in armed clashes with members of a "terrorist" group in Saravan County in southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan province, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported Sunday. According to Tasnim, five border guards were killed by the "terrorists" at the scene, and another succumbed to his wounds at the hospital.

3 dead in shooting at Kansas City bar

Washington: Three people were killed in a shooting at a bar in Kansas City in the US state of Missouri early Sunday, local media reported, citing police sources. Two of the victims were killed at the scene, and a third victim died later at a hospital, said Kansas City police, Xinhua news agency reported.

UK Home Secy under pressure

London: UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman is under pressure as it was claimed in a media report Sunday that she attempted to dodge a driving fine after being caught speeding outside London when she was Attorney General of the country last year. 'The Sunday Times' reported that the Indian-origin Cabinet minister asked civil servants to help her avoid a speeding fine and points on her driving licence by arranging a private one-to-one driving awareness course.

Alberta wildfire fighters hope rain, cooling bring relief



REUTERS

Canada, May 21: Alberta authorities hope cooler temperatures and showers forecast for the coming week will help firefighters battling blazes in the oil-rich Canadian province, although storms could complicate efforts.

Amid hot, dry conditions, forecasters were tracking a front likely to move into the province on Sunday that should bring much-needed relief, including humidity and even rain, Christie Tucker, information unit manager at Alberta Wildfire, said at a Saturday briefing.

"What we'd like to see is a long-steady rain that will soak into the forest and into the ground," Tucker said. Alberta is enduring energy production cuts, home evacuations and poor air quality after an intense start to the wildfire season. This year, Alberta Wildfire responded to 496 wildfires burning more than 842,000 hectares, compared with just 459 hectares in 2022.

Authorities have closed some parks and campgrounds in Alberta over the Victoria Day weekend. The holiday weekend, when residents traditionally go camping or enjoy other outdoor activities, usually sees an uptick in seasonal wildfires, some of which are accidentally caused by people.

Modi arrives in Papua New Guinea on key visit



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Port Moresby, May 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday received a warm welcome as he arrived in Papua New Guinea on his maiden visit during which he will host a key summit Monday between India and 14 Pacific island countries to boost bilateral ties.

The Prime Minister arrived here from Japan where he attended the summit of the G7 advanced economies and held bilateral meetings with several world leaders.

Modi's visit to Papua New Guinea on the second leg of his three-nation tour is the first ever by any Indian prime minister. He was received at the airport by Prime Minister James Marape who touched his feet as a mark of respect.

"Reached Papua New Guinea. I am thankful to PM James Marape for coming to the airport and welcoming me. This is a very special gesture which I will always re-

G7 ends with Ukraine in focus

Zelenskyy drew a parallel between the destruction of Bakhmut and the horror of Hiroshima, evoking the symbolism of mass destruction as he wrapped up a surprise appearance at the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Japan

AGENCIES

Hiroshima, May 21:Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy huddled with some of his biggest backers in Hiroshima Sunday, building momentum for his country's war effort even as Russia claimed a symbolic victory on the battlefield.

The Ukrainian leader's in-person appearance in his trademark olive drab during the final day of the Group of Seven summit underscored the centrality of the war for the bloc of rich democracies.

It also stole much of the limelight from other priorities, including security challenges in Asia and outreach to the developing world, that the leaders focused on at the three-day gathering.

Zelenskyy held two major rounds of meetings Sunday, one with G7 leaders and a second with them and a host of invited guests including India, South Korea and Brazil. He also held one-on-one talks with several of the leaders.

US President Joe Biden announced a new military aid package worth USD 375 million for Ukraine during his meeting with Zelenskyy, saying the US would



- Biden announces fresh Ukraine military aid package
- US backs joined allied training of Ukrainians on F-16 jets
- Zelenskyy says Bakhmut destroyed, denies it has fallen
- France, Germany warn against Ukraine becoming frozen conflict
- G7 leaders outline 'de-risk, not decouple' approach to China

provide ammunition and armoured vehicles.

That fresh pledge came days after the US agreed to allow training on American-made F-16 fighter jets, laying the groundwork for their eventual transfer to Ukraine.

Hanging over Sunday's talks was the claim by Russia's Defence Ministry that forces of the Wagner private army, backed by Russian troops, had seized the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut.

The eight-month battle for the eastern city — seen by both sides as a major symbolic prize — has been the longest and likely the bloodiest of the war.

Asked if Bakhmut was still in Ukraine's hands, Zelenskyy said he thought that Russian forces had

finally taken the city in a siege that "destroyed everything."

"For today, Bakhmut is only in our hearts. There is nothing in this place," Zelenskyy said, adding that the fight had left nothing in Bakhmut but a lot of "dead Russians."

While Ukraine was the overwhelming focus of the summit, the leaders of Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada and Italy, as well as the European Union, also aimed to address global worries over climate change, AI, poverty, economic instability and nuclear proliferation.

Biden also aimed to reassure world leaders that the US would not default because of the debt limit



Fighters from the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah carry out a training exercise in Aaramta village in the Jezzine district, southern Lebanon

PTI PHOTO

Ukraine denies fall of Bakhmut to Russia

The loss of Bakhmut would be hugely symbolic for the Ukrainians, who had held on for months, ignoring US advice behind the scenes to focus elsewhere

AGENCIES

Kyiv, May 21: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday that Russian forces weren't occupying Bakhmut, casting doubt on Moscow's insistence that the eastern Ukrainian city had fallen.

Responding to a reporter's ques-

tion about the status of the city at the Group of Seven summit in Japan, Zelenskyy said: "Bakhmut is not occupied by the Russian Federation as of today."

"We are not throwing people (away) to die," Zelenskyy said in Ukrainian through an interpreter. "People are the treasure. I clearly

understand what is happening in Bakhmut. I cannot share with you the technical details of what is happening with our warriors."

"The fight for the city of Bakhmut is continuing," the Ukrainian military's general staff said in a statement on Sunday evening. The fog of war made it impossible to confirm the situation on the ground in the invasion's longest battle, and a series of comments from Ukrainian and Russian officials added confusion to the matter.

Zelenskyy's response in English to a question earlier at the summit about the status of Bakhmut suggested that he believed the city had fallen to Russian forces, and he offered solemn words about its fate. When asked if the city was in Ukraine's hands, Zelenskyy said: "I think no, but you have to — to understand that there is nothing, They've destroyed everything. There are no buildings. It's a pity. It's tragedy." "But, for today, Bakhmut is only in our hearts."

Greeks head to polls with voters worried about cost of living

THE RISING COST OF LIVING WAS AT THE FOREFRONT OF MANY VOTERS' MINDS AS THEY HEADED TO POLLING CENTRES SET UP IN SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Athens, May 21: Greeks were voting Sunday in the first election since their country's economy ceased to be subject to strict supervision and control by international lenders who had provided bailout funds during its nearly decade-long financial crisis.

Greek officials have pledged fast results — about 90% of the precincts should have reported by 10 pm local (1900 GMT), three hours after the voting ends, Dimitris Bakakos, general manager of IT services firm Singular Logic, which is tasked with presenting the results, said in

a television interview, adding that, by 8:30 pm, there should be enough data to predict the result within half a percentage point.

The vote pitches conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, 55, a Harvard-educated former banking executive, against 48-year-old Alexis Tsipras, who heads the left-wing Syriza party and served as prime minister during some of the financial crisis' most turbulent years, as the two main contenders.

Mitsotakis has repeatedly stressed that he needs a second term to build on what he says he accomplished during the first. He

pressed the same line when he talked to media after casting his vote.

"Today, we vote for our future, for higher wages, for more and better jobs. We vote for a more effective public health system, for a fairer society, for a stronger country, which plays an important role in Europe, with protected borders."

Tsipras, unsurprisingly, painted a bleaker picture of the present government's record and emphasized the need for change.

Although Mitsotakis has been steadily ahead in opinion polls, a newly introduced electoral system of proportional representation makes it unlikely that whoever wins the election will be able to garner enough seats in Greece's 300-member parliament to form a government without seeking coalition partners. The winner of Sunday's election will have three



Greek Prime Minister and New Democracy conservative party leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis casts his ballot at a polling station

REUTERS

days to negotiate a coalition with other parties.

If that fails, the mandate to form a government passes to the second party and the process is repeated; in case of failure the third-

place party also gets a chance. But deep divisions between the two main parties and four smaller ones expected to enter parliament mean a coalition will be hard to come by, making a second election likely

probably July 2.

The second election would be held under a new electoral law which makes it easier for a winning party to form a government by giving it a bonus of up to 50 seats in parliament, calculated on a sliding scale depending on the percentage of votes won.

A total of 32 parties are running, although opinion polls have indicated only six have a realistic chance of meeting the 3% threshold to gain seats in parliament.

Greece's once-dominant socialist Pasok party is likely to be at the center of any coalition talks. Overtaken by Syriza during Greece's 2009-2018 financial crisis, the party has been polling at around 10%. Its leader, Nikos Androulakis, 44, was at the center of a wiretapping scandal in which his phone was targeted for surveillance.

Iran summons Swiss envoy for Twitter post showing Mahsa Amini

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tehran, May 21: Iran's foreign ministry has summoned Switzerland's envoy in Tehran for a social media post showing Iranian protest icon Mahsa Amini, local reports said Sunday.

Months of anti-government protests were sparked by the death of 22-year-old Amini in September, after Iranian morality police detained her for allegedly violating the country's strict Islamic dress code.



A website affiliated with Iran's state television called YJC.Ir reported that the Swiss ambassador, Nadine Lozano, was summoned after a Twitter account affiliated with the embassy in Tehran published a photo featuring Amini.

The Twitter account linked with the Swiss embassy in Tehran also posted an image of Iran's pre-revolutionary flag before its current theocracy came to power.

The post added that the Swiss foreign ministry strongly condemned the recent execution of three Iranian protesters. Iran announced Friday the executions of Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi, without saying how the deaths were carried out.

of the day quote

The prospects of a sustained recovery have strengthened. After five quarters of volume decline, the sector has posted volume growth

SAUGATA GUPTA | MD AND CEO, MARICO

Domestic tourism is here to stay and the reality is that we're going to see more and more activity in the domestic space without a doubt

MADHAVAN MENON | CMD, THOMAS COOK (INDIA)

Earnings season will continue to be in focus with companies like BPCL, Ashok Leyland, NMDCL, Hindalco, Oil India, LIC, Vodafone Idea, BHEL, ONGC, and many more will be declaring their results this week

ARVINDER SINGH NANDA | SENIOR VP, MASTER CAPITAL SERVICES

SHORT TAKES

Mcap of 6 of top 10 firms erodes

New Delhi: Six of the 10 most valued firms faced a combined erosion of ₹70,486.95 crore in their market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) taking the biggest hit following a weak trend in equities. While Reliance Industries, TCS, HDFC Bank, ITC, State Bank of India and HDFC were the laggards from the top 10 pack, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys and Bharti Airtel were the gainers. Reliance Industries continued to rule the top 10 most valued firms chart, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Infosys, ITC, State Bank of India, HDFC and Bharti Airtel.

SBI's procurement from GeM drags

New Delhi: India's largest lender SBI was quite slow in procuring goods and services from government-owned GeM portal in 2022-23 and lagged behind smaller counterparts, including Canara Bank and Punjab National Bank, according to the government data. Canara Bank emerged as the largest buyer among the state-owned lenders in 2022-23, making total purchases of ₹592.82 crore from the portal, the data showed. Punjab National Bank (₹164.57 crore) was the second largest, followed by Indian Overseas Bank (₹159.82 crore), State Bank of India (₹158.22 crore), Indian Bank (₹111.59 crore), Bank of India (₹63.81 crore), Bank of Baroda (₹48.63 crore), Union Bank of India (₹37.03 crore), Bank of Maharashtra (₹10.26 crore), Punjab and Sind Bank (Rs 9.98 crore), UCO Bank (₹5.30 crore) and Central Bank of India (₹4.54 crore) in 2022-23.

Discoms' dues down by a third

New Delhi: The total outstanding dues of electricity distribution utilities (discoms) has reduced by a third to around ₹93,000 crore in May, in less than year of implementing the Late Payment Surcharge (LPS) Rules in June 2022. The burgeoning dues of discoms toward power generation (gencos) mainly and transmission (transcos) firms have been affecting the entire value chain of the sector till last year. According to industry data, in June last year, discoms' dues were at ₹1.39 lakh crore at the time of the launch of the Late Payment Surcharge (LPS) scheme. The total outstanding dues now stand at around ₹93,000 crore as per the portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).



I can say Royal Enfield's EV journey is in the top gear now. Our intention is to create uniquely differentiated electric motorcycles with strong Royal Enfield DNA

B GOVINDARAJAN | CEO, ROYAL ENFIELD

ASIA'S LARGEST COAL MINE IN MAKING

The government is scaling up the annual production of SECL's Gevra coal mine to 70 MT making it the largest in Asia, coal secretary Amrit Lal Meena said. Gevra project of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) in Chhattisgarh recently became the first mine in the country to achieve 50 MT of coal production



MORE IN THE OFFING

Pink slips to nearly 2L techies in '23 to date

As more and more Big Tech companies continue to axe employees, they listed various reasons behind the move -- over-hiring, uncertain global macroeconomic conditions, strong tailwinds from the Covid-19 pandemic and the list goes on

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 21: The year 2023 has become the worst year for tech employees as nearly 2 lakh tech employees -- from Big Tech firms to startups -- have been sacked to date globally, as companies like Meta, BT, Vodafone and many others announced further plans to lay off more employees in coming months.

As per the data by layoffs tracking site Layoffs.fyi, 695 tech companies have shown the doors to around 1.98 lakh employees so far this year.

In comparison, 1,046 tech companies laid off more than 1.61 lakh employees in 2022.

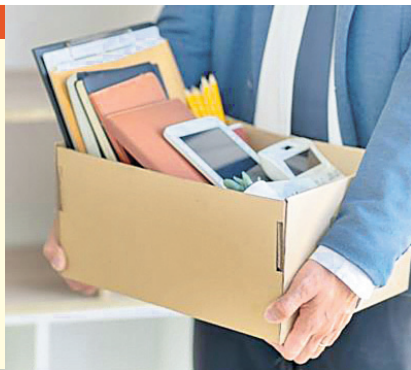
In January alone this year, close to 1 lakh tech employees lost jobs

WAVE OF LAYOFFS

695 tech firms have sacked around 1.98L employees in 2023

1,046 tech companies laid off over 1.61L employees in 2022

About 3.6L tech employees have now lost their jobs globally



globally, dominated by companies like Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Salesforce and others.

In total, about 3.6 lakh tech employees have now lost their jobs in 2022 and till May this year.

Meta (formerly Facebook) is reportedly going to start laying off

more employees next week in its third round of job cuts.

While the exact number has not been confirmed, it is expected that the company will lay off approximately 6,000 employees in this round.

Amazon India laid off around

400-500 employees from its Cloud division AWS as well as People Experience and Technology Solutions (PXT) or HR and support verticals this month.

Fintech unicorn Zepz is laying off 420 employees, or 26 per cent of its workforce.

The UK telecommunication giant BT Group has announced plans to slash a massive 55,000 jobs by the end of the decade.

Global telecom carrier Vodafone said it plans to reduce 11,000 jobs over the next three years, with an aim to "simplify" both headquarters and local markets.

Meanwhile, Microsoft will not give any raise to salaried employees, including senior leaders, this year as global macroeconomic conditions continue to haunt Big Tech.

EXCHANGES OF ₹2,000 NOTES

No form, ID proof required: SBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 21: No form or requisition slip is required for exchange of ₹2,000 notes up to a limit of ₹20,000 at a time as part of exercise to withdraw high-value currency notes from circulation.

RBI Friday in a surprise move announced withdrawal of ₹2,000 currency notes from circulation but gave public time till September 30 to either deposit such notes in accounts or exchange them at banks.

Unlike the November 2016 shock of demonetisation, when old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes were invalidated overnight, the ₹2,000 notes will continue to be a legal tender.

In a communication to chief general manager of all its local head offices, State Bank of India (SBI) informed that the facility of exchange of ₹2,000 notes by public up to a limit of ₹20,000 at a time will be allowed without obtaining any requisition slip.

With regard to deposit of such notes in own account, RBI has not specified any limit but it will be subject to compliance with extant Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and other applicable statutory requirements.

SBI SETS ₹2,000 NOTE EXCHANGE CAP AT ₹20,000



There have been a lot of inquiries about purchasing gold or silver with ₹2,000 notes, hence the higher footfalls on Saturday. However, due to strict KYC norms actual purchase has been less

SAIYAM MEHRA | CHAIRMAN, GJC

"Further, no identity proof is required to be submitted by the tenderer at the time of exchange," the communication dated May 20 said.

It has asked its local head offices to arrange and extend all co-operation to the public so that the exercise is conducted in a smooth and seamless manner without any inconvenience.

According to sources, one can stand any number of times in queue for exchange of ₹2,000 notes.

Although the facility for exchange is available from May 23, many customers were seen visiting their branches with the ₹2,000 notes Saturday.

Bank officials returned such customers after advising them about the start date for exchange.

FPIs bring in ₹30,945cr in May

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 21: Foreign investors have put in ₹30,945 crore in the Indian equities in May so far, driven by strong macroeconomic fundamentals, prospect of reducing interest rates, positive earnings outlook



and falling valuations of stocks. With this, net inflows by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) reached ₹16,365 crore in 2023 so far, data available with the depositories showed.

According to data from the depositories, FPIs invested a net sum of ₹30,945 crore in Indian equities

during May 2-May 19.

This came following a net infusion of ₹11,630 crore in equities in April and ₹7,936 crore in March. Moreover, in the first two months of the year, FPIs pulled out over ₹34,000 crore.

Apart from equities, FPIs have invested ₹1,057 crore in the debt market so far in May.

In terms of sectors, FPIs have been consistent buyers in a host of sectors such as autos and auto components, capital goods, FMCG, health care, telecom, realty and oil & gas. They were big buyers in financials as they invested ₹8,382 crore during the period under review.

PSBs cross ₹1L-cr profit mark

PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS IS A TURNAROUND STORY FROM RECORD LOSSES TO RECORD PROFIT ON THE BACK OF HIGHER INTEREST INCOME AND IMPROVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT OF BAD LOANS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 21: Public sector banks' cumulative profit crossed the ₹1 lakh crore-mark in the financial year ended March 2023, with market leader State Bank of India (SBI) accounting for nearly half of the total earnings.

These 12 Public Sector Banks (PSBs) witnessed 57 per cent increase in total profit compared to ₹66,539.98 crore earned in 2021-22.

In percentage terms Pune-based Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) had the highest net profit growth with 126 per cent to ₹2,602 crore, followed by UCO with 100 per cent rise to ₹1,862 crore and Bank of Baroda with 94 per cent increase to ₹14,110 crore.

However, in absolute term, SBI has reported an annual profit of ₹50,232 crore in 2022-23, showing an increase of 59 per cent over the preceding financial year.

Except for the Punjab National Bank (PNB), other PSBs have reported impressive annual increases in their profit after tax. Delhi-headquarter PNB posted a 27 per cent decline in annual net profit from ₹3,457 crore in 2021-22 to ₹2,507 crore in the year ended March 2023.

The PSBs which reported an annual profit in excess of ₹10,000 crore are Bank of Baroda (Rs 14,110 crore) and Canara Bank (Rs 10,604 crore).

Other lenders like Punjab and Sind Bank posted an annual profit growth 26 per cent (Rs 1,313 crore), Central Bank of India 51 per cent (Rs 1,582 crore), Indian Overseas Bank 23 per cent (Rs 2,099 crore), Bank of India 18 per cent (Rs 4,023 crore), Indian Bank 34 per cent (Rs 5,282 crore) and Union Bank of India 61 per cent (Rs 8,433 crore).

PSB is a turnaround story from



From posting a total net loss of ₹85,390 crore in 2017-18, the PSBs have come a long way as their profit touched ₹1,04,649 crore in 2022-23

record losses to record profit. The doom-to-bloom story of the public sector banking industry can be attributed to the initiatives and spate of reforms undertaken by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with former finance minister Arun Jaitley and financial services secretary Rajiv Kumar and his successors.

The government has implemented a comprehensive 4R strategy: Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms in the financial ecosystem.

As part of the strategy, the government infused an unprecedented ₹3,10,997 crore to recapitalise PSBs during the last five financial years -- from 2016-17 to 2020-21. The recapitalisation programme provided much-needed support to the PSBs and prevented the possibility of any default on their part.

The reforms undertaken by the

12 PSBs WITNESSED 57% RISE IN TOTAL PROFIT

BOM LEADS THE RACE FOLLOWED BY UCO, BOB

SBI ACCOUNTED FOR NEARLY HALF OF THE PROFITS

EXCEPT PNB ALL PSBs SAW IMPRESSIVE GROWTH

IN Q4 PSBs' NET PROFIT ROSE MORE THAN 95%

government over the last eight years addressed credit discipline, ensured responsible lending and improved governance. Besides, there was adoption of technology, amalgamation of banks, and general confidence of bankers was maintained.

In the latest March quarter or the fourth quarter of 2022-23, the PSBs' profit cumulatively increased more than 95 per cent to ₹34,483 crore. In the year-long period, the same was at ₹17,666 crore.

Analysts said that higher interest income and improvement in management of non-performing assets or bad loans are among the key reasons for the improved profitability of the banks.

El Nino on the way, could erode \$3trn of world economy

El Nino, the band of warm ocean water that spans from South America to Asia triggering far-reaching weather changes, has persistently reduced country-level economic growth, attributing \$4.1 trillion and \$5.7 trillion in global income losses to the 1982-83 and 1997-98 events, respectively

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 21: El Nino is on the horizon, which can lead to severe heat waves and droughts in many countries, including India, and could take a \$3 trillion toll on the global economy, new research published in the journal Science has warned.

The 2023 El Nino is predicted to come at a time when sea-surface temperatures are at an all-time high, according to the research.

"The last major El Nino occurred in 2016 and made that year the hottest in recorded history. Global warming has only intensified in the seven years since. In addition, the



Our welfare is affected by our global economy, and our global economy is tied to the climate. When you ask how costly climate change is, you can start by asking how costly climate variation is

JUSTIN MANKIN | ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, CALLAHAN PROJECT

world is coming out of an extended La Nina and the two phases can strengthen each other," the researchers wrote.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects the chances of El Nino setting in by late summer as higher

than 80 per cent.

"The deck is potentially stacked for a really big El Nino. Our results suggest that there will likely be a major economic toll that depresses economic growth in tropical countries for potentially up to a decade," said Christopher Callahan, a doctoral candidate at Dartmouth College in the US.

The result could be trillions of dollars in productivity lost globally relative to a world without this El Nino.

Justin Mankin, an assistant professor of geography, and Callahan project that global economic losses for the 21st century will amount to \$84 trillion as cli-

mate change potentially amplifies the frequency and strength of El Nino -- even if current pledges by world leaders to reduce carbon emissions come to fruition.

The researchers estimate that the El Nino predicted for 2023 alone could hold the global economy back by as much as \$3 trillion by 2029.

The findings, Mankin said, highlight a critical and understudied factor shaping the economic toll of global warming -- year-to-year variations in climate conditions.

In the years it strikes, El Nino results in devastating floods, crop-killing droughts, plummeting fish populations, and an uptick in tropical diseases.

INSIDER TRADING

Six short-sellers in Adani stocks under ED, Sebi scanner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 21: Six entities including four foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are under lens for suspicious trading in Adani group shares prior to the release of the damning Hindenburg report, the Supreme Court-appointed expert committee has said.

There was a buildup of short positions in the Adani scrips prior to the January 24 release of the Hindenburg report, and substantial profits were booked thereafter as stocks crashed, the 178-page report said.

A "short" position is generally the sale of a stock one does not own. Investors who sell short believe the price of the stock will decrease in value. If the price drops, they can buy the stock at the lower price and make a profit.

Hindenburg's report claimed that the Adani empire was the "biggest con in corporate history" engaged in a "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme".

The report did not name any of the six. "The trading pattern here is suspicious because of the buildup of short positions by these entities in the Adani scrips prior to the Hindenburg report, and substantial profits earned by them by squaring off their short positions after publication of the Hindenburg report on January 24, 2023," the expert committee said. A detailed investigation is being carried out in respect of the trading of the six entities.

12 dead in stampede at football stadium

San Salvador (El Salvador): At least 12 people were killed and dozens more injured when stampeding soccer fans pushed through one of the access gates at a quarterfinal match in the Salvadoran league here Saturday. The National Civil police said in a preliminary report via Twitter that 12 dead were confirmed at the match between clubs Alianza and FAS at Monumental stadium in Cuscatlan, which is about 25 miles (41 kilometers) northeast of the capital. At least two of the injured transported to hospitals were in critical condition, the police said.

Good show by Indian paddlers

Durban: India veteran Sharath Kamal made a winning start at the World Table Tennis Championships here Sunday. The 56th ranked Indian defeated World No. 170 David Serdaroglu of Austria 11-8, 9-11, 11-9, 11-6, 11-6 to advance to the round of 64. G Sathiyian also made a winning start beating England's Tom Jarvis 4-3 (11-9, 11-8, 7-11, 11-2, 15-13, 13-11, 11-6) in a men's singles contest. However, Manush Shah and Harmeet Desai lost their opening matches. In mixed doubles the Indian pair of Manika Batra and Gnanasekaran advanced to the round of 32 defeating Xia Lian Ni and Luka Mladenovic of Luxembourg 9-11, 11-8, 14-16, 11-7, 11-6.

3 golfers qualify for final stage in Florida

West Palm Beach (Florida): Three of the four Indian women, including Aditi Ashok, made the cut at the Aramco Team Series Florida golf tournament here Saturday. Making the final stage of the three-round event are Aditi (75-76) and Diksha Dagar (73-79) at T-39, while Amandeep Drall (79-73) was T-50. However, Vani Kapoor (78-79) missed the cut. Aditi had a mixed day on the course with two birdies and four bogeys. Diksha, on the other hand had six bogeys and no birdies.

Eves salvage a draw

Adelaide: Deep Grace Ekka converted a penalty corner to help the Indian women's hockey team rally and play out a 1-1 draw in their third tour game against Australia here Sunday. Deep scored in the 42nd minute after the hosts took the lead through a goal by Maddison Brooks (25th). However, despite the draw, the Australians won the three-game series 2-0 having emerged victorious in the first two matches. Incidentally Sunday's game was the 250th one for skipper Savita.

Gold for Parul

Mumbai: Indian distance runner Parul Chaudhary gave another glimpse of her superb form in the run-up to the Asian Games by winning the 3000m steeplechase title Saturday in the 'Track Night' meet at New York. Parul clocked nine minutes 41.88 seconds to take first place in the Icahn Stadium, which hosted the bronze-level event which is part of the World Athletics Continental Tour. American competitor Madeline Strandemo finished second in 10:02.48 seconds with her compatriot Meredith Rizzo taking third place in 10:08.52 seconds.

Barca stunned

Barcelona: New La Liga champions Barcelona tumbled to a 1-2 defeat to Real Sociedad here Saturday before receiving their trophy at a packed Camp Nou. Mikel Merino and Alexander Sorloth struck for the visitors, who defended their hold on fourth place, restoring a five-point gap on Villarreal, fifth, in the fight for Champions League qualification. Robert Lewandowski pulled one back late on for Barcelona, who clinched the title last weekend with a thumping 4-2 win at Catalan rivals Espanyol, and were given a guard of honour before the game.

Impressive feat

Yokohama (Japan): Talented Indian youngster Shaili Singh won a bronze medal with a creditable effort of 6.65m in the women's long jump at the Seiko Golden Grand Prix here Sunday. It was her first medal at a global event. The 19-year-old Shaili's first round jump of 6.65m remained her best in the World Athletics Continental Tour gold level event, though it was 11cm below her personal best. Her effort was, though wind assisted at +2.1 m/s speed which is above the permissible limit of +2.0 m/s. Shaili was leading the competition event till the third round. Maryse Luzolo of Germany took the gold with a wind-assisted jump of 6.79m, while Brooke Buschkuhl of Australia took silver.

Gill spoils RCB hopes, MI in play-offs



Shubman Gill and Vijay Shankar dashed RCB's aspirations with a century-plus stand, Sunday

PHOTO TWITTER

AGENCIES

Bangalore, May 21: Shubman Gill (104 n o, 52b, 5x4, 8x6) dashed the hopes of Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) as his brilliant century helped Gujarat Titans (GT), beat the hosts here by wickets in the last league match of the IPL here Sunday.

To qualify for the play-offs RCB needed a point as Mumbai Indians (MI) had won their game against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) earlier Sunday to reach to 16 points. RCB needed to win against GT to also reach the same point tally as MI. Then a superior net run rate would have helped them to pip MI. However, in the end all those factors did not come into play as GT won the game and RCB remained stuck at 14 points and took fifth place in the points tally.

Virat Kohli's (101 n o, 61b, 13x4, 1x6) did give RCB a semblance of a hope as they reached 197 for the

loss of five wickets. However, in the end that did not prove enough as Gill and Vijay Shankar (53, 35b, 7x4, 2x6) took the RCB bowlers to the cleaners. The two added 123 runs for the second wicket putting the final nail in the RCB coffin. In the end, GT won with five deliveries to spare.

Earlier in the day Cameron Green's (100 n o, 47b, 8x4, 8x6) magnificent maiden IPL century and Rohit Sharma's (56, 37b, 8x4, 1x6) half century powered Mumbai Indians (MI) to a comprehensive eight-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in their last league match at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.

MI knocked off the target of 201 with 12 balls and eight wickets to spare to accumulate 16 points from 14 matches.

Green was at his belligerent best. He first added 128 runs for the second wicket with Rohit and then 53 runs with Suryakumar Yadav (25 n

o) for the unbroken third wicket to take MI over the line.

Even though Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/26) drew first blood when he dismissed Ishan Kishan (14) in the third over, Green and Rohit attacked the opposition and at the end of the powerplay MI were 60 for one. They continued in the same vein with both Green and Rohit taking the SRH bowlers to the cleaners.

Green brought up his fifty off only 20 balls, in the ninth over; Rohit was off to a modest start, hitting his first six only on the 22nd ball that he faced.

Earlier, unheralded Uttarakhand pacer Akash Madhwal (4/37) nailed his yorkers consistently at the death as MI restricted SRH to 200 for five. This was after a century opening stand between seasoned opener Mayank Agarwal (83, 46b, 8x4, 4x6) and rookie Vivrant Sharma (69, 47b, 9x4, 2x6) threatened to take the

BRIEF SCORES

SRH 200 for 5 (Mayank Agarwal 83, Vivrant Sharma 69, Akash Madhwal 4/37) lost to **MI** 201 for 2 in 18 overs (Cameron Green 100, Rohit Sharma 56) by 5 wickets.

RCB 197 for 5 (Virat Kohli 101 n o) lost to **Gujarat Titans** 198 for 4 (Shubman Gill 104 n o, Vijay Shankar 53) by five wickets

game away. Courtesy Madhwal's wickets, which included two lethal block-hole deliveries to clean up in-form Heinrich Klaasen (18) and Harry Brook (0), SRH managed only 26 in last three overs.

For a bowling unit that has allowed contests to drift away, here at the Wankhede Stadium on several occasions, MI made regular inroads to keep SRH within reach.

Will go away before Chhetri retires: Stimac

HEAD COACH FEELS HE HAS CHANGED THE MINDSET OF PLAYERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 21: India football team's head coach Igor Stimac, who was part of the famous Croatian team of the 1998 World Cup, has just completed his four-year stint with the Blue Tigers. The former centre-back feels that after four years of hard work, he can proudly say that the team now plays the game with a different mindset.

"We have a great number of young players whom we introduced in the past four years with significant international experience. I have just completed four years with the Blue Tigers. The journey has been difficult at times, but overall, it has been a wonderful trip," Stimac said.

"The task that I accepted after taking over was challenging, because the big changes in football require a lot of time. Today, I can proudly say that we play with a different mindset," the Croatian added.

Stimac also remembered some

of his good moments with the Indian team. "There were also some interesting moments for me as the head coach of the national team, such as the Asian Cup qualifiers in Kolkata and the recent Hero tri-nation international tournament in Manipur, where we received amazing support and paid loans to our supporters by playing quality football," Stimac informed.

Stimac also talked about what he will do once Chhetri retires.

"I have to be honest... I don't think much about it because as far as I am concerned, I will leave before he says farewell to the national team. But we have proved several times that with team effort, we can succeed and get results even when our dear captain is not available," asserted Stimac.

"We defeated Thailand in the Kings Cup on their turf without him, and held Qatar away in a fantastic game during the 2022 World Cup qualifiers. We also held Oman 1-1 without Sunil," he added.

Rybakina rules Italian Open courts

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, May 21: Elena Rybakina is discovering that her big serve and heavy groundstrokes can do damage on clay courts, too. The Wimbledon champion was dominating 21-9 with winners when Ukrainian opponent Anhelina Kalinina retired due to a left thigh injury early in the second set of the rain-delayed Italian Open women's final Saturday.

"I can play good on all the surfaces," Rybakina said after the match. "It's just maybe for clay I need to be ready more physically and maybe have a lot of preparation," she added.

It's been quite a year for Rybakina, who reached the final of the Australian Open, also won an elite title in Indian Wells and was the runner-up in Miami.

"I'm proud that I can maintain this level," Rybakina stated. "I can see improvements on the court, physically also. However, I think there is still a lot of room to improve," she added.

Rybakina will move up to a career-high No. 4 when the rankings will be announced Monday and will be a contender at the French Open, which starts next weekend.



Elena Rybakina with the trophy after winning the Italian Open title in Rome

"She's serving 200 kph (125 mph). She's also making winners like no one on tour," Kalinina said. "Anyone can win in Paris, but she has good chances. I am sure if she's going to do like this, maybe new World No. 1 for sure."

Rybakina was leading 6-4, 1-0, 15-0 when Kalinina called for a trainer and grasped her left leg. She then decided she couldn't continue. "I'm really sorry that I couldn't play," Kalinina said during the awards ceremony as the crowd — which had waited under the rain for hours before the night session started — whistled.

In the men's final Holger Rune will face Daniil Medvedev. The 20-

Rinku not thinking about Team India call up now

UP PLAYER EMERGES MOST SUCCESSFUL BATTER FOR KKR WITH 474 RUNS IN IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 21: Rinku Singh may have been the solitary talking point for Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in an IPL season gone horribly wrong, but the 25-year-old prefers to stay grounded and is not thinking about playing for India at present.

Having made headlines hitting fives sixes in a row in their win over Gujarat Titans earlier this season, Rinku emerged as KKR's top-batter and finisher this season with former India coach Ravi Shastri picking him to make a late push for India's World Cup squad.

"Anyone will feel great to have a season like this, but I'm not thinking that far that I will get selected to Indian team," said Rinku after the game against Lucknow Super Giants here Saturday which KKR lost by a single run.

The 25-year-old Rinku, struck a 33-ball unbeaten 67, his fourth half century this season, and nearly pulled off another thrilling win against LSG. Rinku finished with the top run-getter for KKR with 474 runs at an average of 59.25 and 149-plus strike rate.

From getting used to the chants of 'Rinku, Rinku' in the packed Eden Gardens' galleries to receiving adulation from all quarters, his life has changed for good in



span of just two months.

But Rinku prefers to go back to drawing board and follow the same routine. "I will just continue my same routine - practice and gym - after returning home. Names will keep on coming, I will just do my job," the UP cricketer said.

"Everyone at home is really happy. Last year people came to know about me for my cameos. But after hitting those five sixes, I'm getting a lot of respect. Many people now know me. I'm happy but not overjoyed, after all we couldn't make it (play-offs)," rued the left-handed batter.

Needing to hit three sixes from last three deliveries to win against LSG, it was a Gujarat Titans like situation. "I was completely relaxed, and thought we would see whatever happens. Yes, the thoughts of hitting five sixes in a row (against Gujarat Titans) did come to my mind. I just missed one ball (to hit a six) and it turned out to be a four," he lamented.

Recurve archers make early exits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shanghai, May 21: Recurve archers returned empty-handed to take some sheen off their spectacular show in the non-Olympic compound section, as India finished second behind Korea with two gold and one bronze medal in the World Cup Stage 2, here Sunday.

Making a comeback after skipping the season-opener Antalya leg, recurve heavyweights Korea grabbed four gold, two silver and one bronze in the Olympic discipline to top the standings with 11 medals.

Rising Indian recurve archer Dhiraj Bommadevara, who bagged a maiden World Cup bronze in Antalya last month was the only hope after the seasoned duo of Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das and youngster Neeraj Chauhan made first round exits. But Korea once again became the thorn in India's recurve campaign, as the Army man lost out to Oh Jin Hokey 0-6 (29-30, 28-29, 29-30) in straight sets to make a pre-quarterfinal exit.

In the recurve mixed team event too India were eliminated in the last-16 after the duo of Dhiraj and Simranjeet Kaur went down to their Indonesian rivals 2-6.

Murray skips French Open, to focus on Wimbledon

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 21: Former World No. 1 British Andy Murray has withdrawn from the French Open in order to ramp up his preparations for the grass court season in the build-up to Wimbledon, which starts July 3. The former French Open finalist's name has now been removed from the entry list on the Roland Garros website, 'Eurosport' reported.

Earlier, clarifying his thinking on Roland Garros, Murray had said he was hoping to play in the year's second Grand Slam. "I would like to play, just purely because I don't know if I'll get another opportunity to play there again. Whilst I feel fit and healthy, I would like to give it a go," Murray had said.

The three-time Grand Slam winner's best showing at the event was his 2016 defeat to Novak Djokovic in the final.

The Brit, who was bidding to

revive his career after major hip surgery in 2018, entered clay court tournaments this season at Monte Carlo, Madrid and the Italian Open in preparation for a potential run at the French, but suffered first-round defeats at all three events. He did beat Tommy Paul in the final of the ATP Challenger event in Aix-en-Provence early May to secure his first title at any level since 2019. However, it was followed with a heavy defeat against Stan Wawrinka at the Bordeaux Challenger event.

Murray is the latest big name to pull out of the clay court major; following Rafael Nadal and Nick Kyrgios. The French Open, the second Grand Slam of the year, takes place from 28 May to 11 June while Wimbledon starts July 3. It will give Murray sufficient time to prepare for the event.

"Obviously Wimbledon has a different feeling as far as I am concerned. So I would like to give the event my full focus," Murray said.