



## SHOCKING CLAIM

Kangana Ranaut alleges that some top actresses do films for free and also offer other favours

LEISURE P2



## SATELLITE LAUNCH FAILS

North Korea's spy satellite launch Wednesday ends in failure, as the booster and payload plunge into the sea

INTERNATIONAL P10



## STUNNING VICTORY

India's Kiran George stuns World No. 9 Shi Yuqi of China at the Thailand Open Super 500 badminton tournament

SPORTS P12

### SHORT TAKES

#### Ex-gratia enhanced for govt employees

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government Wednesday hiked the compassionate assistance for employees in the event of death while on duty from ₹4 lakh to ₹10 lakh. It also increased the assistance from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh for employees who get permanently disabled due to injuries suffered while on duty and from ₹1 lakh to ₹2 lakh for employees partially disabled due to injuries suffered while on duty. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approved a proposal in this regard Wednesday.

#### Modi may visit Odisha in June

**Bhubaneswar:** Top BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will visit Odisha in June as a part of the month-long special public relations campaign (Maha Jansampark Abhiyan). The programme has been launched to mark the completion of nine years of the Modi government and it will continue till June 30, BJP officials said Wednesday. "The month-long campaign aims to reach out to the public and media and brief them about the achievements of PM Modi and the BJP in the last nine years," state unit president Manmohan Samal said here. "We aim to reach out to at least 3 crore families and 36,606 booths in Odisha," Samal added.

#### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Uniting people is tough. Had it been about dividing people, we would've done it in a jiffy

#### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	62622.24 ↓ 346.89
NIFTY	18534.40 ↓ 99.45
DOLLAR	82.59 ↑ ₹0.03
EURO	88.16 ↓ ₹0.59
GOLD	₹60,256 ↑ ₹310
SILVER	₹71,733 ↑ ₹690

#### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	39.2°C	37.4°C
MAX	32.8°C	34.4°C
MIN	24.8°C	24.4°C
Humidity	73%	75%
Rainfall	0.8mm	12.8mm
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

# Pass percentage dips in Plus II exams



A MOMENT TO CHERISH: Successful Plus II students of Royal College of Science and Technology in Bhubaneswar celebrate after the results were announced Wednesday

OP PHOTO

## GIRLS AGAIN OUTSHINE BOYS IN SCIENCE AND COMMERCE STREAMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The results of Plus-II examinations in Science and Commerce streams were announced Wednesday by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE).

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik congratulated the successful students. "Best wishes and congratulations to the students who have passed the Science and Commerce stream exams. Regardless of the results, let's all move forward

with the goal of success in life. Wishing everyone a bright future," he said.

School and Mass Education (S&ME) Minister Sudam Marndi informed that the overall pass percentage stood at 84.93 per cent and 81.12 per cent for Science and Commerce streams respectively. Last year the pass percentage was 94.12 per cent in Science and 89.20 in Commerce.

S & ME secretary Aswathy S explained the reason behind the dip in pass percentage. The exams were held in the pre-Covid pattern. Also students appeared physically in a board exam for the first time. They could not do so for their Class X exams as it was during the pan-

## 2 GIRL STUDENTS ATTEMPT SUICIDE

**Balasore:** Two girl students tried to die by suicide after failing to get marks as expected in the Plus II exams, the results of which were announced Wednesday. In the first incident, the girl, a resident of Simulia village under Nilagiri NAC limits in Balasore district jumped from a three-storied building to end her life. She was rescued in critical condition and rushed to Nilgiri hospital first and later to the Balasore headquarters hospital and then to a private nursing home in Bhubaneswar after her condition worsened. In the second incident, a girl of Mendhapur village under Aul block of Kendrapara district, tried to end her life by jumping into Brahmani river near Dandisahi under Pattamundai police limits. Locals and fire personnel rescued her and admitted her to the Pattamundai hospital first and later shifted her to the Kendrapara district headquarters hospital.

dem. This resulted in a dip in the pass percentage," Aswathy said.

The results for Plus II Arts and Vocational examinations will be declared by June 8 said Ashwini

Kumar Mishra, chairman, CHSE. He also said that the marksheets and certificates of the students will be uploaded in digilockers where it will be stored securely.

As seen in the Class X board exams, girls have once more outperformed the boys in the Plus II examinations. In Science stream, 85.67 per cent of girls were successful while the figure for boys stood at 84.28%. Of the 92,950 students who appeared for the examinations, 78,938 students, comprising 42,121 boys and 36,817 girls were successful.

Similarly, in the Commerce stream, 83.87% girls passed the exams while for the boys it was 79.52 per cent. A total of 24,082 students had appeared for the examinations.

Nayagarh emerged the best among the districts with a pass percentage of 96.41% in Science

### SCIENCE STREAM

1st div for 39,573 students  
2nd div for 24,257 students  
3rd div for 14,852 students

### COMMERCE STREAM

1st div for 7,410 students  
2nd div for 4,543 students  
3rd div for 7,492 students

and 93.9% in Commerce. Gajapati with 61.55 per cent occupied the bottom place in the Science stream while Boudh district (55.55%) was the last-placed in the Commerce stream. A total of 3.5 lakh students had appeared for the Plus II exams this year. P4

## CAMBRIDGE RERUN AT SAN FRANCISCO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**San Francisco, May 31:** It was 'Cambridge rerun' here Tuesday evening with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi taking a swipe at the ruling BJP government. Rahul said it is 'threatening' the people and 'misusing' the country's agencies as he addressed a gathering of the Indian diaspora here. Rahul also said that there are people in India who think they know more than God and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is 'one such specimen'.

The BJP was quick to retort with Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur pointing out that it has become a 'habit of Rahul to defame India in foreign land'.

Joshi described the former Congress president as a 'fake Gandhi' and as a person 'who knows nothing' but has become an expert on everything.

Rahul, speaking at an event in Santa Clara, California, said the BJP and the RSS are controlling all the instruments of politics in India.

"The BJP is threatening people and misusing government agencies. The 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' started because all the instruments that we needed to connect with the people were controlled by the BJP-RSS," Rahul said.

Rahul also said the ruling BJP can be defeated if the Opposition is 'aligned properly' and the Congress party is working towards it and it is 'coming along very nicely'. P7

## ₹10 lakh aid for Cuttack girl's kin

*The minor girl got trapped between huge pipes and concrete slabs when an under-construction bridge collapsed Tuesday*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, May 31:** The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) announced Wednesday an ex-gratia of ₹10 lakh to the family of the minor girl who died Tuesday after suffering serious injuries due to the collapse of an old iron bridge here. The financial assistance was announced by CMC Mayor Subash Chandra Singh.

The development came after Singh was prevented from meeting the family of the deceased. He also

faced protests from local residents when he visited the accident spot.

Facing backlash from the local residents, Singh ordered the putting up of information signages at all construction sites in the city. He also asked officials to provide security guards and the barricading of sites where constructions are currently on. Orders have also been given to check all old structures and cover all open drains in this city.

Sixteen-year-old Mohini Das who died in the mishap was a resident of Nua Rausapatana locality in the city. She was a Plus II student of Emarti Devi Women's College. The mishap occurred at Gamadia locality of Kesarpur under Puri Ghat police limits. The victim was crossing the bridge when it collapsed leading to her death.

"The mishap occurred due to

## 2 ENGINEERS SUSPENDED

**Cuttack:** The Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department suspended Wednesday two assistant engineers namely Sanjeeb Kumar Pradhan and Dillip Kumar Sahoo, both working in the Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) for non-performance and dereliction of duty. The decision was taken following the death of a minor girl in a box drain tragedy Tuesday. Disciplinary proceedings will be initiated against them, officials said.

the apathetic attitude of local administration," some of the residents said Wednesday. "Had the administration rescued the girl promptly, she could have been saved," they added.

## UWW threatens to suspend WFI

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 31:** The investigation into the sexual harassment case against WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh is under progress and reports claiming that the Delhi police have not found sufficient evidence are 'wrong', officials said Wednesday. The police had earlier said that they had not found sufficient evidence to arrest Singh, who is accused of sexually harassing seven female wrestlers, including a minor.

In a separate development the United World Wrestling (UWW) issued a statement Wednesday condemning the detention of wrestlers during a march to the new Parliament building Sunday.

UWW has also expressed 'disappointment over the lack of results of the investigations' against the federation chief and threatened to suspend the body if its elections are not held within 45 days.

Delhi police took to Twitter to clear the confusion. "Several media channels are running a story that the Delhi police haven't found sufficient evidence in the cases registered against the ex-president of WFI and a final report in the matter is due to be submitted before the concerned court. It is to clarify that this news is 'wrong' and the investigation into this sensitive case is under progress with all sensitivity," Delhi police tweeted.

In a related development Delhi Commission for Women chief Swati Maliwal issued a notice Wednesday to police seeking action against a man who allegedly revealed the identity of a minor wrestler who has filed a sexual harassment complaint against Singh. Maliwal has also issued summons to DCP New Delhi in the matter.

## Al Pacino, 83, becomes dad for 4th time

The Academy Award winner is dating Noor Alfalah since 2022 and has now decided to have a family

AGENCIES

**Los Angeles, May 31:** Scarface actor, Al Pacino, 83, is expecting a baby with girlfriend Noor Alfalah, who is eight months pregnant. He sparked romance rumours with Alfalah, 29, back in April 2022 when the two were seen leaving a restaurant in California together according to a report in 'E! News'.

However, Al Pacino is not the only Hollywood celebrity who has become a dad after 70. Close friend and Academy Award winner Robert De Niro had revealed earlier in May that he was becoming a dad for the seventh time. "I am okay with it," De Niro was quoted as saying by 'Extra'.

Previously, Alfalah dated Mick Jagger for over a year until their 2018



breakup. She was later spotted with Clint Eastwood in 2019. However, she clarified to 'Daily Mail' that there was 'no relationship' between her and Clint. As for Pacino, he and former girlfriend Meital Dohan

called it quits in 2020.

'E! News' further stated that Pacino's bundle of joy will join his three other children. He shares Julie Pacino, 33, with ex Jan Tarrant, as well as Anton Pacino, 22, and Olivia Pacino, 22, with ex Beverly D'Angelo.

The 'Godfather' star has maintained a close connection with his children, noting that he wanted to be different from his father, who left him and his mother when he was two years old.

"It's the missing link, so to speak," Pacino had told 'The New Yorker' in 2014. "Having children has helped a lot. I consciously knew that I didn't want to be like my dad. I wanted to be there. I have three children. I'm responsible to

them. I'm a part of their life," he added. And when he couldn't be a part of their life, Pacino said it was 'upsetting to me and to them'.

However, Pacino and De Niro are not the only ones who are embracing fatherhood at such a late age.

Richard Gere was 70 years old when he welcomed his second son with wife Alejandra Silva in 2020. The couple, who wed in 2018, are also parents to another young son, Alexander, who was born in 2019. Rocker Mick Jagger was 73 when he became a dad to his eighth child Deveraux with his girlfriend Melanie Hamrick. However, much before them, Charlie Chaplin, set an example by becoming a dad at 73 when he welcomed his youngest child with wife Oona O' Neill.

## Deloitte flags Adani Port deals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** Auditor Deloitte has flagged three transactions, including recoveries from a contractor identified in the Hindenburg report, as it issued a qualified opinion on the accounts of Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone (SEZ). In the auditors' report on the audit of the fourth quarter and 2022-23 financials, Deloitte Haskins & Sells LLP highlighted transactions with three entities, which the company said were unrelated parties. Deloitte however said it could not attest to the company's statement as no independent external examination has been done to prove the claims.

'Hindenburg Research' in its January 24 report that levelled allegations of fraud, stock manipulation and money laundering against the Adani group, had also

flagged inadequate disclosures of related party transactions.

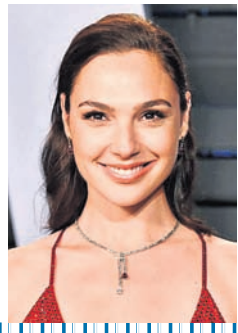
While the group has denied all allegations, the Supreme Court constituted an expert committee for assessment of the extant regulatory framework and asked SEBI to complete its probe into allegations.

"The evaluation performed by the group does not constitute sufficient appropriate audit evidence for the purposes of our audit," Deloitte said in notes on APSEZ financial statement.

In the absence of the independent external examination and the pending completion of investigation by SEBI, the auditor said it cannot comment if the company was fully compliant with the law and if the transactions flagged may result in possible adjustments and/or disclosures in the financial statement in respect of related parties.



# leisure



## GAL GADOT SUFFERS FROM IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

Wonder Woman actress Gal Gadot has admitted she always doubts her acting skills. Every time she acts she doubts herself and worries no one will like what she's doing, Gadot said while speaking to L'Officiel magazine for its cover interview.

## SWEENEY CREATES MEMORIES FOR ALL HER MOVIE CHARACTERS

Hollywood actress Sydney Sweeney creates 'character books' for every character she plays, listing their possible memories, relationships, and failures. The 25-year-old actress portrays Reality Winner, a former translator for the National Security Council (NSA) who was hailed for leaking information, in the drama film *Reality*.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

All eyes may be on you today – for your looks, skills, or even your funky bag! Make hay while the sun shines, and charge your batteries with all that attention. You can get some decent work done with that energy, says Ganesh.

#### TAURUS

You may have a tendency to feel frustrated when the results are not the way you expected, feels Ganesh. You must still work hard and finish whatever you undertake today. You will discuss some vital issues with a close friend and relive cherished secrets with your life partner.

#### GEMINI

Lady Luck is likely to smile on you, foresees Ganesh. You are generally shy, but today is a different day. You will remain outgoing and will be able to freely express your feelings. This temporary change will do a lot of good to your ego, says Ganesh.

#### CANCER

Today, you will be trying new things in your style of work. You may come across as mad, but there will be a method in your madness. Your new strategy and innovative ideas will give a new lease of life to the projects you are working on. However, you need to take a break from work in the evening and go home to your loved ones to recharge your batteries, advises Ganesh.

#### LEO

The oath of friendship that you once took as a bunch of raggedy misfits still holds true, and your best buddies are the ones who will stand by your side through hell or high water. Ganesh sees in you the desire to cherish such friends and prove your appreciation by treating them with graceful munificence.

#### VIRGO

Today, you shall balance business and entertainment equally well. The day will be like an endless party, says Ganesh. The emptying of pockets will be proportional to the amount of time you spend doing nothing. But spend prudently, advises Ganesh, and let it not worry you.

#### LIBRA

Connect and Express – these are the two things you must aim for at work today. You tend to do both things supremely well, be it in a business dialogue on phone, in writing, or in meetings. Getting across to people is not an issue today. But all this work aside, the lingering feeling of wanting to chill out with your sweetheart may become more substantial towards the evening.

#### SCORPIO

Try adding an entirely new dimension to the way you approach relationships today, advises Ganesh. Being tractable will help iron out the creases in relationships with closed ones. But be wary of complete subjugation, warns Ganesh.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Confidence-building measures will need to be taken up. Be the herald, and usher in new vigour and confidence in people around you. Your business is set to skyrocket and a fair share of profits are in the offing, says Ganesh.

#### CAPRICORN

Memories of the bygone days will flash through your mind, creating a wave of nostalgia and compelling you to get in touch with old pals. On the other hand, there may be a feeling that your loved ones are demanding more than you can give, says Ganesh. But enjoying some light moments with your beloved in the evening will unburden you and charge you up for the next day.

#### AQUARIUS

Today will be about pleasure and pain! Plumbing, cleaning, grocery shopping, cooking... you can expect anything to weigh you down. Later, you can relax in a hot soak by candlelight, or unwind with a soothing aromatic massage. Ganesh says you'll be grateful for the pleasures only after the pain.

#### PISCES

A day filled with socialising awaits you, says Ganesh. You will likely make contact with near and dear ones you haven't met in a while. New associations and friendships could also occur. It is a pleasant and joyous day, so make the most of it.

## Aamir keen to team up with Kapil

Mumbai: Actor Aamir Khan says he would love to do a film with comedian and TV host Kapil Sharma.

When asked about why he never promotes any of his films on *The Kapil Sharma Show*, Aamir said: "Usually, I am busy during a film's release. I am travelling and promoting the film in different cities and overseas, and it has somehow never worked out with Kapil Sharma. I even told him that, when I am free, I will come to his show, we don't have to worry about a film."

He then addressed Kapil Sharma and said: "Kapil Sharma and me, doing a film together? I would love that. Hey listen Kapil, let's do a movie. I would love to do a movie with Kapil."

Aamir came to the show to promote Punjabi film *Carry On Jatta 3*, helmed by Smeep Kang, stars Gippy Grewal, Sonam Bajwa, Binnu Dhillon, and Gurpreet Ghuggi in lead roles. It is set to hit theatres this June 29.



## Kangana's shocking revelation!

Mumbai: Kangana Ranaut and Priyanka Chopra worked together in *Fashion* and the *Dhaakad* actress has now reacted to the latter's interview in which she spoke about pay disparity in the Hindi entertainment industry.

Kangana, who had earlier supported Priyanka when she claimed about being 'pushed into a

corner' in the Hindi film industry, shared a long note along with a clip from her interview.

Kangana called herself the 'first one to fight for pay parity' and claimed that 'the most disgusting thing' that she had to face was that her 'contemporaries offered to work for free' for

same roles.

The actress claimed, "I can say with confidence most A-listers (women) do films for free along with offering other favours because they fear roles will go to the right people... and then shrewdly release articles that they are highest paid."

According to Kangana, she is the only female actor who gets 'paid like male actors'.



## Shruti Haasan sets relationship goals

London: Actress Shruti Haasan recently attended the prestigious Cannes Film Festival in France and mesmerised everyone with her stunning black dress.

After the event, she headed to London where she reunited with her boyfriend, Santanu Hazarika, and their affectionate reunion was a sight to behold.

Shruti Haasan took to her Instagram story to share a heartwarming video of her reunion with Santanu in London. In the video, she can be seen dancing and expressing her joy at being reunited with her beloved. She lovingly embraces Santanu, showering him with kisses on his cheeks and head. The video serves as a testament to the deep love and affection Shruti has for Santanu, setting relationship goals for many.

The actress also shared an intimate photo with Santanu Hazarika on her Instagram, captioning it, "Date night with my favorite human in my favorite city @santanu\_hazarika\_art."

Shruti and Santanu make for a truly romantic couple and have never shied away from flaunting their love for each other. They have been dating for two years and are currently in a live-in relationship.

The *Luck* actress has always been open about her relationship with the visual artist Santanu Hazarika, and their PDA-filled moments both on social media and in public truly exemplify their deep bond.



## Rekha was forcibly kissed by Biswajeet

Mumbai: Rekha is an icon in the film industry in so many ways. However, she faced some traumatic experiences early in her career, and it was shocking beyond belief.

The actress was merely approaching 15 when she starred in *Anjana Safar* along with Bengali actor Biswajeet Chatterjee, who must have been 33 then. During the shooting of the film, the actor forced himself on the diva, and the details were extremely disturbing.

In an excerpt mentioned in the actress's biography, *Rekha: The Untold Story*, it is mentioned that the actor decided to kiss the rising star then without her consent and information.

The passage in the book read, "In the very first schedule of the film, Kuljeet Pal (the director), and Biswajeet (the lead actor) had hatched a



plan, with Rekha as the unsuspecting victim."

The actress was left humiliated by the shocking kiss that continued for five minutes. "As soon as the director Raj Nawathe said 'action', Biswajeet took Rekha in his arms and pressed his lips on hers. Rekha was stunned. This kiss had never been mentioned to her. The camera kept rolling; neither was the director ordering 'cut' nor was Biswajeet letting go of her. For all five minutes, Biswajeet kept kissing Rekha. Unit members were whistling and cheering. Her eyes were tightly shut, but they were full of tears," the book said.

Biswajeet, however, had stated that the kiss was crucial in the film, and it was not his but the director's idea.

### PEANUTS



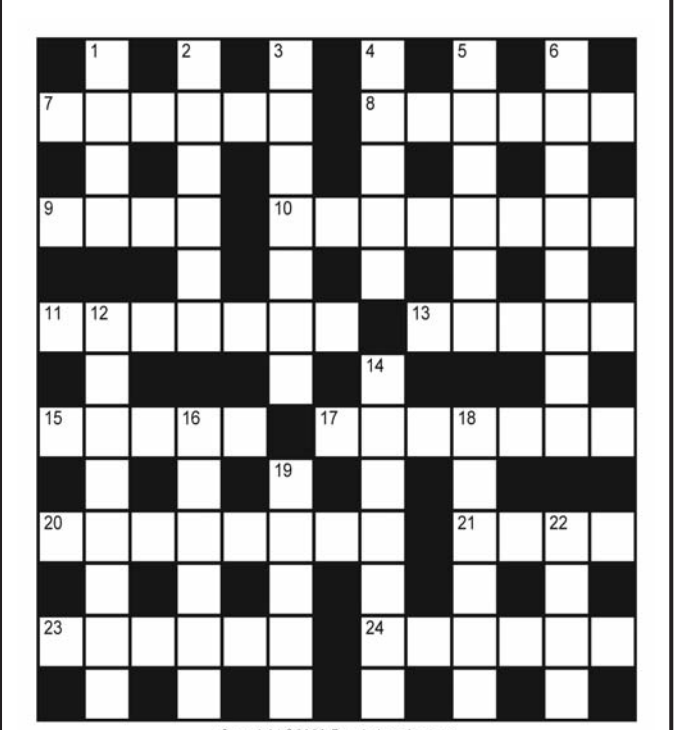
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Garment part
  - 8 Light source
  - 9 Big bovines
  - 10 Henry Fielding character (3,5)
  - 11 Put down, as a riot
  - 13 Wrinkled fruit
  - 15 Flower holder
  - 17 South African oryx
  - 20 Splendour
  - 21 Sail holder
  - 23 Common allergen
  - 24 It has an eye
  - 3 Jacket material
  - 4 Rascal
  - 5 Vessel lynchpin
  - 6 Pink wading bird
  - 12 Motive type
  - 14 Kipper
  - 16 Devoid of friends
  - 18 Boil slowly
  - 19 Redhead's dye
  - 22 Aria, e.g.
- Down
- 1 Bend
  - 2 Dog house

### 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.

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

### SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

S	U	B	S	I	D	E	P	I	Q	U	E
I	L	M	B	N	U	U	X				
S	N	U	B	B	E	D	B	R	A	N	T
A	N	A	U	R							
L	O	T	L	O	R	G	N	E	T	T	E
A	E	I	E	M							
P	R	A	W	N	S	C	K				
U	C	C	S								
C	H	A	M	E	L	E	O	N	T	I	A
C	D										
I	N	E	R	T							
N	M	E									
I	D	Y	L	L							

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

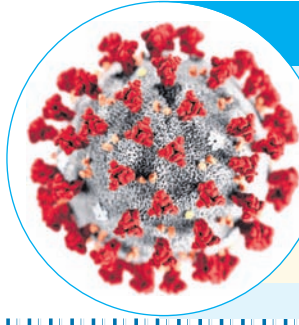


# downtown



## RAZING DOWN

An excavator engaged by BDA razes encroachments in Satyanagar area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



## COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,95,56,779	66,19,94,757	68,84,659
India	4,49,90,278	4,44,53,908	5,31,867
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204



**AT LORD'S SERVICE:** An artisan prepares decorative items for Gajanan Besha during Snana Purina of Srimandir deities in Puri, Wednesday OP PHOTO

## W&CD DEPT REVIEW

# ₹2,706cr Mamata aid disbursed since 2011

There has been a 10-fold rise in the budget provision for Women & Child Development dept during the last two decades - from ₹376.86 crore in 2000-01 to ₹3,670 crore in 2023-24

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Wednesday reviewed the targets and achievements of Women & Child Development (W&CD) department and the fulfilment of the assurances given in the election manifesto of 2019.

After the meeting, W&CD Minister Basanti Hembram presented the details of fulfilling the assurances given in the manifesto and other transformative steps undertaken by the department during the last four years.

Hembram said that Mamata, a conditional maternity benefit scheme of the state government, aims at reducing maternal and infant mortality by improving the health and nutrition status of pregnant women and lactating mothers and their infants. Since its inception in 2011, more than 56 lakh pregnant women & lactating mothers, children in the age group of 6 months to 6 years and adolescent girls have benefitted.

She said that ₹ 2,706 crore have been e-transferred to the bank accounts of beneficiaries since 2011. It has contributed directly to the improved health of pregnant women, infants and lactating mothers. As part of the 5T initiative and to introduce greater accountability, e-Mamata 2.0 has been launched.

Relaxation has been given to particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) for more than two live births since 2014. Altogether 22,733



PVTG women have benefitted from the scheme. A mobile app was also launched February 25, 2021 by the Chief Minister. Anganwadi workers can update the details of pregnant and lactating women through this app to ensure hassle-free and timely cash payments. More than 99 per cent pregnant women have used the app. More than 17.86 lakh SMSes have been sent to the beneficiaries on transfer of funds, said the minister.

She also said that Ashirbad, a unique scheme of the state government, was launched to provide support and financial assistance to children who lost their parents during Covid-19 pandemic. The government has committed to extend the benefits to such children till they attain the age of 18 years. A total of 51,130 beneficiaries have been included under the scheme till March 2023. The process has been made citizen-friendly using Ashirbad portal. Payment of as-

sistance is credited into the bank account of the child/guardian on a monthly basis through direct benefit transfer (DBT).

There has been a significant improvement in the overall nutritional status of children (stunting, wasting and under weight) in the last 20 years as evident from NFHS-2 to NFHS-5 reports.

There has been a 10-fold rise in the budget provision for the W&CD dept during the last two decades - from ₹376.86 crore in 2000-01 to ₹3,670 crore in 2023-24. Programme Expenditure (Budget) has increased from ₹272.99 crore in 2000-01 to ₹3,641 crore in 2023-24.

Odisha was one of the first states in India to decentralise Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) in April 2011, thereby eliminating involvement of contractors and other suppliers, claimed the minister. This decentralised system involves local women self-help groups of the state for production and supply of take home ration (THR). The scheme benefits 39.19 lakh people across 30 districts.

Odisha is the first state in India to initiate the concept of 'Nutrition Budgeting' in financial year (FY) 2020-21 along with Gender Budget, Child Budget and Children's Policy. It has enabled the state to stride ahead in improving the nutritional status of the most vulnerable.

Purna Aahara or community-based management of acute malnutrition is being implemented in all districts since November 2022.

# 4.11 lakh new power connections in 4 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The state government has provided 4.11 lakh new connections and addressed the grievances of 5,100 consumers through Mo-Bidyut portal. This was revealed during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik here Wednesday.

Addressing the media after the meeting that took stock of the achievements of the Energy department during the last two years, Minister Pratap Deb said 1,320 mega watt (MW) additional capacity was added to 420 MW generated by Odisha Power Grid Corporation (OPGC) in 2019 to ensure energy security of the state.

The Chief Minister appreciated various initiatives undertaken by the department in power generation, transmission, distribution & rural electrification sectors.

After the review meeting, Deb told the media that during the last four years more than 2,200 MW of renewable energy (RE) was contracted by GRIDCO (Solar- 1,158 MW & Wind- 1,050 MW). The share of renewable has increased to 10.7 per cent in 2022-23 from 2.74 per cent in 2018-19.

A progressive Renewable Energy Policy, 2022 was launched with an objective to add about 10 giga watt (GW) RE capacity in the state by 2030, Deb said.

With the present generation contracted capacity of 8,065 MW, the state is able to meet the average peak power of around 5,400 MW conveniently, he said.

The average duration of power supply in rural areas of the state has been increased from 20.13 hours in 2018-19 to 23.22 hours in 2021-22 which is better than national average of 20.53 hours, he claimed.



Odisha Distribution System Strengthening Programme (ODSSP Phase-IV) was launched with an outlay of about ₹1,800 crore.

More than 17 lakh new low tension (LT) connections and over 72,000 new agricultural connections were given.

Further, aggregate technical and

commercial (AT&C) losses have been brought down from 30.57 per cent in 2018-19 to 18.12 per cent in 2022-23. More than 50 customer care centres are in operation, he said.

Highlighting the actions taken under 5T initiatives, the minister said that 4.11 lakh new connections were provided, and 5,100 consumer grievances redressed on-line through Mo-Bidyut.

About 67,103 e-certificates for electrical licensing & inspection were issued by EIC (Electricity) while 1,291 women SHGs were engaged for metering, billing and collection activities. All these measures have been instrumental in providing quality and reliable power to the consumers and facilitating growth of industries and economy in line with the commitments of the state government, Deb added.

# Milk Day thrust on low carbon footprint

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** From delightful smoothies to flavourful paneer recipes, there are numerous ways to enjoy milk and other dairy products. Since 2001, World Milk Day is being celebrated June 1 to increase public awareness of the importance of milk in a balanced diet as well as how it benefits local economies and communities.

In 2023, World Milk Day, with the theme 'Enjoy Dairy', will focus on showcasing how dairy is reducing its environmental footprint, while also providing nutritious foods and livelihoods. The objective will be to drive an active narrative that integrates the environmental, nutritional and societal impacts of the sector.

This day is celebrated by all United Nations member states which organise various events to educate the public about the importance of milk.

Back home, the rising price of milk and dairy products has, however, taken the sheen off the nutrient-rich product.



Saraswati Devi, a resident of Sailashree Vihar area in Bhubaneswar, said milk and its benefits are beyond calculation.

"The benefits of dairy products outdo the negligible rise in price. These days, we are receiving packaged milk and other dairy products with assured purity at doorsteps. Quality comes with a price. And a negligible rise in milk price shouldn't be an issue," Devi, a retired banker, said.

Pahala Rasagola Sangha president Akshay Lenka attributed the rise in prices of sweets to the milk price hike.

"With the rise in prices of daily essentials and cattle fodder, we expected a slight rise in price of milk, and that has happened. Milk prices are lower in Odisha in comparison with other states. If we go by the rule book, with Re 1 rise in a litre of milk, the price of 1 kg of Chhena (unripened curd cheese) will go up by ₹5. A hike in prices of milk and its products in April first week resulted in subsequent rise of prices of the sweets made out of it," Lenka said.

According to Bhimasen Tripathy, a tea seller in Rasulgarh area of the Capitl city, although the middleclass is somehow unaffected by the milk price hike, owners of small tea joints across the Temple City are bearing the brunt.

"With the latest rise of ₹4 per litre of milk, it's tough to convince customers while selling a cup of tea for ₹7. Milk price hike is almost like a bolt from the blue for tea sellers like me who has already been reeling under the burden of rising prices of LPG and other essentials," said Tripathy.

# Science, Arts most preferred streams

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, May 31:** Science and Arts have been the most popular streams among students over the last 10 years, while commerce has stagnated with only 14 per cent students opting for it, according to a study conducted by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

The study, which is an assessment of Class X and XII board exam results, noted that there are huge variations in choice of streams across states.

"Only 2 per cent students in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Telangana opt for Arts stream but in states like Tripura and Gujarat over 82 per cent students choose the stream while in states like Punjab and Rajasthan the percentage of such students is above 70," it said.

Similarly, the popularity of science stream is extremely low in Punjab, Haryana and Assam where just about 17 per cent students opt for it, whereas in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, more than 60 per cent students choose science to study after Class XII.

"In Goa and Karnataka, distribution of students is almost similar

A study conducted by the Ministry of Education notes that Commerce has stagnated with only 14 per cent students opting for it over last 10 years

in major streams," the report said. A large difference in performance of students from various boards, significant variation in pass percentages and no level playing field for students in terms of standard are among the challenges identified by the ministry in the assessment.

According to School Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar, the difference between pass percentages of various states has led the MoE to look at standardising the assessment pattern for all 60 school boards across states in the country.

Currently, there are three central boards in India - Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). Apart from these,

various states have their own boards, taking the total number of school boards to 60.

The study analysed the Class X and XII results for state boards of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Odisha, West Bengal and Telangana to understand the variation in results for different state boards.

Based on the report, all states have been asked to work on the standardisation process of assessment.

"A meeting in this regard was held earlier this month wherein the presentation was shared with the states and concerns about developing a common assessment system were discussed," Kumar added.

The report also noted that 11 states contribute to 85 per cent of school dropouts. These states are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Assam, West Bengal, Haryana and Chhattisgarh.

Among possible causes for higher failure rate in state boards pointed out in the report include less number of trained teachers and teachers per school. This contributes to low Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and also affects India's overall rank in global indices.

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# BMC signs agreement with TG Swikruti in City



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) and TG Swikruti SHG signed an agreement Wednesday for operation and maintenance of cesspool vehicles in the BMC limit. The agreement was signed in presence of Mayor Sulochana Das and Commissioner Vijaya Amruta Kulange. The operation and maintenance of cesspool vehicles will be done by Transgender (TG) group in Bhubaneswar. While inclusive approach is

adopted by BMC to promote community participation in a greater circle, assigning TG group to manage cesspool service of the City is also an important step by the Urban Local Body (ULB). City authority has been involving the TG communities in different responsibilities like parking, defaulters' tax collection and sanitation activities. This is a bigger tax handed over to them and BMC has trusted the group on their previous activities, said Das. Kulanage said, "Day by day different activities are being undertaken by BMC in partnership approach. Progress with partnership can bring our intended outcome of community participation. The development programmes designed by the government include SHGs and Transgenderers groups. City can be more livable when groups from all walks will participate in development initiatives."



ANNIV DAY: Guests during the 19th annual day celebrations of 'Murchhana' at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

# ₹2,500cr in creation of sports infra: Krishna

**STATE IS ESTABLISHING 90 MULTIPURPOSE INDOOR STADIUMS IN URBAN AREAS, SPORTS SECRETARY INFORMED**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The state government is investing about ₹2,500 crore in the creation of sports infrastructure in the state, Sports Secretary Vineel Krishna said here Wednesday. The Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium, Rourkela, the world's largest seated hockey stadium, has earned a prestigious place in the Guinness Book of World Records, he said. The facility, which also houses an Olympic-style Hockey Village with 225 rooms, was built in just 15 months. This stadium stands as a symbol of Odisha's unwavering dedication to the sport of hockey, offering state-of-the-art facilities and an impressive grandeur, he said. In addition, he said, Odisha houses other sporting venues such as the Birsa Munda Athletics Stadium in Rourkela, the Kalinga Stadium Tennis Center, Dharanidhar Sports Complex in Keonjhar amongst others, providing athletes with top-tier facilities to train and excel in their respec-



Sports & Youth Services Minister Tusharkanti Behera and Sports Secretary Vineel Krishna addressing the media in City, Wednesday

disciplines. Recognising the significance of grassroots development, the Odisha government has taken proactive measures to nurture young talent and establish a strong foundation for sports in the region, Krishna said. As part of this initiative, 17 astro-turf hockey fields have been set up across Sundargarh district, known as the cradle of hockey in Odisha. This strategic move aims to identify and nurture promising

talent, ensuring the sustained growth and success of the sport. Moreover, the state is establishing 90 multipurpose indoor stadiums in urban areas. Six FIFA standard pitches have also been developed, he added. Over the last four years the sports budget has raised to ₹1,217 crore reflecting the commitment of Odisha and its Chief Minister towards sports development and promotion, the Secretary said.

# BJP's Maha Jana Sampark Abhiyan

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to participate in the month-long Maha Jana Sampark Abhiyan in Odisha, BJP state president Manmohan Samal said Wednesday. Speaking to media persons here, Samal said the campaign was launched by the party Wednesday to mark the completion of nine years of the Modi government. Samal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi kick started the campaign with a mega rally at Ajmer in Rajasthan Wednesday. The campaign will continue across the country till June 30 next.

*State BJP President Manmohan Samal informed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the month-long Maha Jana Sampark Abhiyan in Odisha*

He said that in addition to the Prime Minister, top BJP leaders including Home Minister Amit Shah and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and several other central Ministers are also scheduled to participate in the Maha

Jansampark Abhiyan. Samal said in total 51 mega rallies are scheduled to be organised in the country out of which four would be held in Odisha. Top leaders of the party would participate in the rallies. During the campaign, around five lakh BJP workers would reach out to one crore families in 36,606 booths across Odisha and apprise them about the achievements of the Modi government during the last nine years to form the double engine government in Odisha, the BJP president said. Central Ministers, BJP leaders will hold press conferences and brief about the achievements of PM Modi in the last 9 years. They

will also interact with the media and people of the State and give presentations based on all the achievements of the Modi government, he pointed out. Samal said four of the total 51 mega rallies proposed to be held across the country during the month-long campaign would be organised in Odisha. In addition to it 1,000 Jana Sabhas are scheduled to be held in Odisha during the month-long campaign. Several Union Ministers including Union Minister Giriraj Singh, Arjun Munda, Nityananda Rai, Aswini Vaishnav, Biswaswar Tudu are scheduled to join the campaign.

# Mixed emotions as Plus II results out

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The Council of Higher Secondary Education Odisha announced the results for Science and Commerce stream Wednesday. As per the Odisha CHSE 12th result 2023, the overall pass percentage is 84.93 per cent. Last year, the pass percentage in Science was 94.12 per cent, while in Commerce was 89.20 per cent. A total of 92,950 students appeared in the exam this year, of which 78,938 students cleared the exam. The boys pass percentage this year was recorded at 84.28 per cent and girls pass percentage at 85.67 per cent. Orissa POST spoke to a few students and their parents who shared their happiness because of their result and their anxiety due to the first attempt of board examinations. The students of the City shared their style of preparation and their future aspirations as well. Expressing her happiness

**Shubhanshi Mishra** from BJB Higher Secondary School who secured 91 per cent marks in Science stream, said that she is delighted with her results. "It was a mixed feeling for me as this was my first board exam and an additional pressure of 12th boards. For preparation, I relied on previous year question papers and not to forget the contribution of the faculties of both my school and coaching. And by God's grace the previous year question papers have helped me to a great extent." **Snehasish Kasta** who se-

cured 90 per cent in the Commerce stream says consistency is the key to success. Satisfied with his marks (540), Snehasish from BJB Higher Secondary School said, "I used to revise my syllabus everyday for 7-8 hours; it has helped me in keeping touch with every topic. My marks have exceeded my expectations as I expected somewhere around 87 per cent. I am satisfied with my performance, so are my parents and that matters a lot to me". I am aspiring to be a Chartered Accountant; hence my preparation will guide me through B Com and further, added Kasta. **Aryan Pattanayak** from Rajdhani College secured 89 per cent in Science stream. He is little dissatisfied with his results. "According to my preparation,

I expected above 550 but it cut short in literature subjects and in physics. I have been regular with self preparation of 5-6 hours and revisions but my marks didn't justify my hard work. **Sai Dutam Panda** from Rajdhani College Bhubaneswar belonging to the Commerce stream secured 86 per cent in 12th boards. Expressing his expectations, Sai's grandfather Gyana Nanda Panda said, "As industrious he is, I expected him to score above 90 per cent. But I am very happy with his hard work and I believe he can achieve much more in future as he aspires to be a Cost Accountant."

# CREDAI Odisha hails apartment ordinance

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The Odisha Chapter of Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) expressed its support for the Apartment (Ownership and Management) Ordinance 2023, recently released by the state government. While CREDAI has not yet reviewed the complete details of the ordinance, it is hopeful that it is in compliance with the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA). CREDAI firmly believes that the ordinance will potentially open the doors for sale deeds in Odisha and the transfer of common areas to the association of allottees, a significant step aligned with the provisions of RERA. "We understand that there may be hurdles along the way and are ready to engage in meaningful dialogue to address any potential



bottlenecks. Our fraternity is committed to lending its expertise, resources and support to smooth the implementation process and enhance the effectiveness of this significant initiative," CREDAI chairman DS Tripathy said. Those present on this occasion included CREDAI President Swadesh Kumar Routray, Umashankar Panigrahi, Vice President, CREDAI, Anil Kumar Agarwal, Secretary, CREDAI, PR Maharana, President, CREDAI Cuttack, Bibhu Chandan Jena, Treasurer, CREDAI, Suryakanta Behera, Treasurer, CREDAI and Sofia Firdous, CREDAI East Zone Coordinator.

# Increasing heat a factor in human migration

The decade spanning 2011 and 2020 was the warmest on record. Current national commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions put Earth on track for 2.7°C of warming. Scientists believe this would entail 2 billion people living with average annual temperatures above 29°C as soon as the end of this decade - heat that very few communities are accustomed to. This will have multiple repercussions, not least for human health. High temperatures compromise the body's ability to regulate its own internal temperature, affecting the heart, lungs, brain and kidneys, as well as the mind and the hormonal system, all of which can contribute to premature death and disability. Temperature extremes (both hot and cold) already result in 5 million excess deaths a year. There are many ways in which humans adapt to temperature extremes and other climate-related risks - and one valid response is migration. This includes temporarily mi-



grating in the hottest months, longer-term seasonal migration often for employment reasons, and permanent migration. The findings suggest that heat, in at least some contexts, is and will continue to play a part in peoples' intention to move, while also threatening their health when on the move and settling. The heat factor in migration Of the 32 studies that considered how heat affects migration, half showed that consistently rising temperatures would increase the likelihood that a person will migrate. People seem to be less likely

to migrate because of rising temperatures in low-income countries compared with high or middle-income countries. Heat pushes people to migrate through a variety of intersecting factors: physiological discomfort, extreme events such as wildfires, poverty and restricted access to water and food, among others. There are also other more subtle factors which influence the likelihood of people choosing, or being able to choose, to migrate. This includes whether they live in the countryside or a city, their gender, how old they

are and whether they have access to suitable healthcare and a source of income where they reside. Heat risks health Many studies concerned people migrating to find work, particularly in agriculture and industry, where the risk of heat appears to be less important than the need for economic survival. Once in a new destination, the impacts of heat seem to be worse for migrants than non-migrants. This can be because of the type of housing and work migrants are more likely to find themselves in. While there is a trend towards people migrating as a result of increasing temperatures, no absolute threshold is defined above which people will definitely migrate, and migration also does not seem to be a guaranteed outcome of heat. The decision and ability to migrate is never straightforward, and is often a last resort when other measures for adapting to the heat have been exhausted. (THE CONVERSATION)

# ED attaches ₹66L assets of Abhay Pathak

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, May 31:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹66 lakh of former additional principal chief conservator of forests (Plan, Programme and Afforestation) Abhay Pathak for possessing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income, an official said, Wednesday. Pathak, a 1987-batch IFS officer, was arrested by the state Vigilance on graft charges November 27, 2020. Later, on request of the state Vigilance, the ED launched a probe into Pathak's properties under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. While arresting Pathak, the Vigilance had claimed that he was found to have possessed disproportionate assets to the tune of around 435 per cent of his total income. He was given compulsory retirement in May 2021.

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# 8 years on, Centre's Coastal Highway Project hangs fire

The delay in implementation of Coastal Highway Project has also hit several infrastructure projects proposed by the state government



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, May 31:** The Coastal Highway Project, an ambitious infra project of the Centre has remained a non-starter here even after passage of eight years since its inception, a report said Wednesday.

The then Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari had announced construction of a 451-km long coastal highway that will connect Digha coast in neighbouring West Bengal with Gopalpur in Ganjam district crisscrossing through coastal parts of the state, April 15, 2015.

At the time of announcement, it was said that the Coastal Highway Project will help in development of beach tourism and development of the coastlines and transportation leading to social and economic growth of the areas close to the coastline.

The Union government had then sanctioned ₹7,500 crore for the project in the first phase and completed the survey works.

Meanwhile, eight years have passed since then but work on the

project is yet to start. The delay in implementation of Coastal Highway Project has also hit several infrastructure projects proposed by the state government.

The announcement of the project prompted the state government to announce construction of a 45.5-km-long coastal road project from Digha to Balasure and a bridge across Subarnarekha river at a plan outlay of ₹217 crore.

Accordingly, the Works department prepared an estimate of ₹68.25 crore for construction of 45.5-km-long road in which ₹1.5 crore will be spent per km. It also made an estimate of ₹12.80 crore for construction of six bridges and ₹120 crore for construction of a bridge across Subarnarekha river and ₹15.25 crore for construction of 30 box culverts.

The state government also planned a road from Haldipada to Panchupada and construction of another bridge on Panchupada river as the road project of the state government was connecting with NH-60 at Haldipada. It prepared a plan outlay and submitted a detailed report to the Centre for its ap-

praisal and approval.

The road when constructed will reduce the distance to Balasure by 17 km while it will directly connect all major sea beaches like Digha, Talasari, Udayapur, Dagra, Balaramgadi and Chandipur and will result in development of beach tourism.

This road will also open up communication facilities to flood-prone and remote areas of Balasure Sadar, Basta, Baliapal and Bhograi blocks in Balasure district. This road will also be helpful to the satellite hospital of AIIMS in Balasure, Fakir Mohan Medical College and Hospital (FMMCH) in Balasure and the defence establishment at Chandipur in the district.

The Centre also realised the importance of the state government's proposal and expressed its interest to sanction funds. It has been eight years since the Centre announced the coastal highway but the project is still limited to only an announcement and yet to be realised. Neither the coastal highway is being constructed, nor is any work being undertaken on the proposed state-sponsored coastal road.

The local intelligentsia has alleged that both the Centre and state governments made such an announcement to influence the residents for votes.

When contacted, NH project director Jayprakash Verma said that detailed report comprising the volume of land required for the Coastal Highway Project as well as funds have been sent to the Union government for its approval. The land acquisition for the coastal highway will start soon after the Centre sanctions funds for the project, he added.



FOR PASSENGER SAFETY: Senior officials of South-Eastern Railways reviewing the ongoing expansion work of Talcher-Sambalpur rail route project between Maneswar and Sambalpur city stations. The crucial project has reached its last leg. OP PHOTO

## 5-yr RI to youth for selling 3 girls on pretext of job

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, May 31:** Mayurbhanj assistant sessions court judge Basudev Acharya Wednesday convicted a man for selling three girls on the pretext of providing them jobs and sentenced him to 5 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) along with ₹6,000 fine. In case of default, the convict will have to serve additional 6 months of imprisonment, the judge ordered.

As per the case file, Budhini Singh of Jayabila village under Baripada Sadar PS limits in Mayurbhanj district along with his associate Shankar Patra took three girls including a minor from Khanua village under Badasahi police limits to Rourkela in the pretext of providing them jobs with ₹12,000 salary per month.

But after the girls' mobile numbers were found to be switched off for the next five days, their family members approached police. Upon



investigation, police rescued one girl from Rajasthan with the help of Rajasthan Police. It was discovered only then that the two accused had sold them at Kota in Rajasthan

for ₹2 lakhs. Police then registered a case (44/22) at Badasahi police station, arrested Budhini and forwarded him to court. The judge pronounced the judgement after hearing 11 eyewitnesses and going through the police investigation report.

Another accused Shankar Patra is serving his term at a Rajasthan jail as an undertrial prisoner. Public prosecutor Bajendra Singh conducted the proceedings of the case in court.

## Miscreants hurl eggs at Kendrapara MLA

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, May 31:** Eggs were hurled at BJD's Kendrapara MLA Shashi Bhushan Behera while he was delivering a speech at Palli Mangal ground after unveiling the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Indupur Bazar in his constituency, Wednesday.

The eggs missed Behera and fell near the dais. Sources said Behera had organised a padayatra at Indupur panchayat and unveiled the statue of Gandhiji Tuesday to mark the 87th year of his historical padayatra at

Indupur May 30, 1934.

Sources said some miscreants also threw eggs at the car of Behera near Nikirai, while he was returning after attending the meeting. Political analysts said this could have been the fall out of a conflict within the party. Some party activists were opposing Behera for neglecting the grassroot party workers and allegedly torturing his daughter-in-law for dowry, they said.

His daughter-in-law has registered a case of domestic violence and dowry torture against her husband and in-laws recently.

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## 2 get 20 years RI for raping minor

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, May 31:** A court in Mayurbhanj district Tuesday sentenced two men to 20 years rigorous imprisonment after convicting them of raping a 16-year-old girl in 2016. Mayurbhanj Special POC SO Court judge Sumita Jena also imposed a fine of ₹15,000 on both the convicts, said special public prosecutor Abhinna Kumar Pattnaik. If the convicts fail to pay the fine amount, they will have to undergo another six years of rigorous imprisonment, Pattnaik informed.



The court also directed the Mayurbhanj District Legal Services Authority to pay ₹4 lakh to the girl's family as compensation.

The incident took place February 5, 2016 at Badhunia village when the victim was alone at home. Both the men had forcibly taken her to a nearby bush and committed the crime.

The family members of the girl lodged a police complaint at Bisoi police station following which a case was registered against the duo under POC SO Act and relevant provisions of the IPC. The judgment was based on the statement of the girl, other witnesses and the medical report, Pattnaik said.

## Child labourer, man die in stone quarry accident

**OVER 25 LABOURERS AND OPERATORS HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES AT ILLEGAL STONE QUARRIES IN STATE DURING LAST SEVEN TO EIGHT YEARS**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, May 31:** At least two persons, including a child labourer, were killed after a large chunk of stone came crashing down on them reportedly from a height of 20-feet at an illegal black stone quarry in Lunibara mouza near Chadheidhara under Jenapur police limits and Dharmasala tehsil in Jajpur district, police said Wednesday.

One of the deceased was identified as Shantanu Khilar, a machine operator and a resident of Telkoi in Keonjhar district, while another is a child labourer.

The incident took place at Lunibara black stone quarry under Jenapur police station limits where the stones were being extracted using heavy earth moving equipment. The trader had engaged the deceased duo and some other labourers to extract stone late Tuesday night.

Khilar and the child labourer as well as others were loading stone on a truck with an earthmover. After conducting blasting on the quarry, they were picking up the heavy boulders and loading it on a transport vehicle.

Both the deceased persons were inside the heavy machine when a large chunk of stone came crashing reportedly from 20 feet height and fell on them. Khilar died on the



spot while the child labourer was rescued and rushed to the Dharmasala community health centre (CHC) first and later shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack where he succumbed during treatment.

On being informed, Jenapur police personnel reached the spot and initiated a probe into the matter. Jenapur police station inspector in-charge Umakanta Nayak said investigation is underway and appropriate action would be taken against the culprits.

Notably, over 25 labourers and operators have lost their lives at illegal stone quarries during last seven to eight years.

## Youth goes missing in Subarnarekha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jaleswar, May 31:** A youth went missing in Subarnarekha river while taking a bath along with his friend, Wednesday.

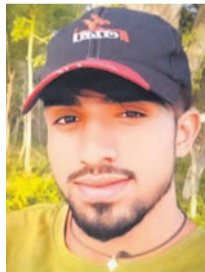
As per reports, Chandan Dash (22), the only son of Banabihari Dash of Birishpur village under Laxmananath panchayat in Balasure district, had gone to take a bath in Subarnarekha river along with his friend Harish Kar (Muna), son of Jhadeswar Kar of the village, Wednesday afternoon.

The duo went for swimming as water level was low in the river. But Chandan, who did not know swimming properly, went missing in the river.

Harish returned to his village and informed the village sarpanch Ranjan Mohanty about the incident after he was not able to find Chandan. A frantic search was conducted with villagers using their boats to look for the boy, but to no success.

Later fire brigade personnel from Jaleswar also came to rescue Chandan and searched the river till evening but could not trace him. The ODRAF team was also informed about the incident.

A pall of gloom fell on the village after the news spread.



## Admin to assist labourer-topper Karma Muduli



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Malkangiri, May 31:** The Malkangiri district administration has assured to extend a helping hand for higher studies to Karma Muduli, who had emerged as the district topper in Plus-II Commerce examinations last year and was found to be working as a labourer.

A team led by District Welfare Officer approached

the tribal girl and gave her assurance of assistance for future studies. Additionally, the team prepared and submitted a report to the District Collector's office in this regard.

Karma will be given financial assistance that will come from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), sources said.

Notably, Karma had topped in Malkangiri dis-

trict in Plus-II Commerce examination with 82.66 per cent score. Currently, she is studying at Rama Devi Women's University in Bhubaneswar.

Her parents work as daily labourers and are unable to afford her education. As a result, she had started working as a labourer to fund her education. Studious Karma aims to become a civil servant in the future.

**Centre for Development of Advanced Computing**  
Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology  
Government of India

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**IN SEARCH OF TALENT FOR EXCITING AND CHALLENGING ASSIGNMENTS**

**Location: Across India**

**LAST DATE TO APPLY IS 20<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 2023. FOR DETAILED ADVERTISEMENT AND FOR APPLYING VISIT "CAREER" PAGE OF WWW.CDAC.IN**

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FOCUS NATION

# OF PROTESTS & MOVEMENTS



Protests and mass movements are integral to India's democratisation processes, and they have long occupied a central role in shaping public policy and legislations

The wrestlers' protest in the national capital with no sympathy being shown by the ruling dispensation is an example of stifling democratic values and worse an authoritarian posture. The wrestlers have brought glory to the country, but sadly their attempt to hold a women's Mahapanchayat to press for their demands invites police wrath rather than a patient hearing. All this because a ruling party MP happens to head the wrestlers' national association.

Protests and mass movements are integral to India's democratisation processes, and they have long occupied a central role in shaping public policy and legislations. India's genesis itself is a product of popular struggle against the British rule, where top national leaders participated. Our founding fathers, especially Mahatma Gandhi, believed in the idea of the common man standing up for himself and expressing his dissent to the policies of the regime.

This precedent of protests is reflected in Article 19 of the Constitution, which guarantees it as a right to our citizens. It was believed by Dr BR Ambedkar, one of the founding fathers and drafters of our Constitution, that protests would be rare in an Independent India as other means would be available to get justice. However, this no longer holds good as many mass movements have taken place in the country initiating socio-economic and political reforms and changed the nature of our institutions.

The best-known example is that of the people's movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan, which led to the fall of the 'invincible', dictatorial government of Indira Gandhi in 1977, a feat thought impossible leading to the first non-

Congress government since Independence. Similarly, Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement in 2011 was instrumental in taking down the scam-riddled central government. Social issues such as rape have too been addressed through protests, evidenced by the large-scale movement after the Nirbhaya case in 2012-13, which forced legislators to address the situation immediately. However, it is disheartening to note that in recent years, except the organised and massive protest by farmers, there has been no noteworthy movement that has a national or state-level appeal. The reason for the decline in protest movements is difficult to ascertain, but it is generally believed that the authoritarian tendencies of both central and most state governments may be a critical reason.

The other important factor is the lack of dynamism of the middle class, which has been benefited by the pro-capitalist policies of the rul-

ing dispensation. The upper middle class is always away from protest movements as it is more interested in its self-interest while a section of the lower middle class sometimes had earlier joined protests.

Besides, recent years are seeing unleashing of concerted propaganda against civil society groups and NGOs working in the social sector as being labelled as 'foreign agents.' One may refer here to the well-known political scientist, Rajni Kothari, who called civil society movements non-party political formations. These grassroots movements influenced mainstream electoral politics. Political parties had to acknowledge the issues raised by these struggles.

But in recent times, it has been manifest that the State has become violent and uses force against the non-violent protests of common people. A lot of the legislation used for silencing detractors can be traced to colonial times which

remained after Independence. Just as protests are intrinsic to Indian democracy, the laws to suppress them are as well. One of them is the sedition law in the IPC (Section 124-A), which has been construed to treat dissidents as rebels and put them in jail. Gandhi and Nehru were charged under the same provision by the British and subsequently imprisoned. Recall, Disha Ravi, an activist who edited two lines of a document shared by Greta Thunberg to show solidarity with farmers was arrested under this provision. Fortunately, the Supreme Court, dealing with several petitions against the misuse of the law, has put a stay on it. Another legislation, the UAPA, too has been misused to detain dissenters during protests and dissenting on social media.

The protesters and detractors are often termed 'anti-national', aided by the media, which is reluctant to criticise the government. Police too have been increasingly discouraging protesters through harassment and brutality.

Social scientists believe, and quite rightly, that fragmentation of society as also political chaos and authoritarianism can only be curbed if there are mass protests against policies of the government, which, in recent times, are seen as autocratic and anti-people.

The attitude of the authorities these days shows an unwillingness to understand the viewpoint and address people's grievances. This needs to change for unless the problems of the people are understood and considered, inclusive democracy cannot be a reality. It is critical for the government to understand and empathise with the masses and not seek to entice them with claims of taking India to new heights, of it becoming a superpower or a \$5 trillion economy.

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It is the Divine Presence that gives value to life. This Presence is the source of all peace, all joy, all security. Find this Presence in yourself and all your difficulties will disappear.

THE MOTHER



## A Western Distraction

It should be common knowledge by now that climate change is a complex problem with outsize consequences for the Global South. By 2030, most Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will lose up to 100% of their GDP to climate disasters. Similarly, Africa's 54 countries will suffer some of the worst consequences of a warming planet, even though they are least responsible for the crisis, contributing less than 4% of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions. Rising temperatures are likewise threatening life in the Arab world, resulting in water scarcity in Jordan and extreme heat waves in the Gulf countries. The need for a great transformation at the regional, as well as the global, level was one of the main reasons why Egypt hosted last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), and why the United Arab Emirates will host this year's meeting. In preparation for COP28, which will convene in Dubai in November and December, the UAE has committed to engaging in open and honest discussions with everyone to ensure that the conference is a success.

Building on its strategic decision to promote and invest in renewables, conservation, and climate technology, the UAE selected Sultan Al Jaber as the COP28 president-designate. The choice has received ample attention: in addition to being the chairman of Masdar – the world's first carbon-neutral city and home to the International Renewable Energy Agency – and the minister of industry and advanced technology, Al Jaber is managing director and group CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

Accelerating climate action, meeting the challenges of the energy transition, and maintaining the world's demand for oil must be addressed comprehensively. Recognising this reality the UAE has chosen as its official to oversee talks someone who has extensive experience in renewable-energy projects, as a special envoy for climate change, and in positions responsible for reducing industrial emissions. Global warming is a complicated problem, and solving it calls for sophisticated solutions requiring the expertise of specialists in a wide variety of fields.

A small but loud group of politicians in the United States and Europe, together with some activists, have questioned why an "oil executive" is leading COP28. Many of these policymakers insist on reducing climate negotiations to a zero-sum game. By distracting people from the challenge of implementing realistic climate solutions and focusing instead on Al Jaber's appointment, they seem to view the fight against global warming as a political stick to wield, rather than a global imperative that requires close collaboration.

Last week, members of the US Congress and the European Parliament sent a letter to US President Joe Biden, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres urging the removal of Al Jaber as COP28 president-designate. Their demand was not based on any wrongdoing or a lack of commitment to the role, but rather was a means to score political points at the expense of a united global effort to tackle climate change and maintain economic growth. Legislators should ensure the best possible outcomes for their constituents and their children, not embrace positions based on political biases without any effort at genuine engagement. Worse still, the US and European legislators are advocating international intervention in a sovereign decision – the latest in a long line of Western efforts to dictate to Global South governments for domestic political gain.

Moreover, the tendency to prescribe policy solutions to Global South countries – which are often the worst hit by climate change and have endured injustice after injustice, including colonialism and resource extraction – is widening the gap between approaches to global warming. Emerging economies like China and India must balance climate action with the need to provide economic opportunities for billions of people.

Nonetheless, both China and India have invested substantially in climate mitigation and adaptation, and China has developed the world's largest capacity to manufacture and deploy renewables. The two countries lead globally in solar and wind capacity and have deployed more than 40% of the world's new solar and wind capacity each year since 2017. Fossil-fuel consumption continues in China and India – as it does worldwide – but has been reduced from 96% to an average of 83% of the total across both countries. With nearly three billion people between them, China and India are among the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world; their needs cannot be ignored.

The same legislators lecturing sovereign states about how to navigate climate policy seem to forget that the US and Europe are responsible for the majority of historic emissions. Rather than interfering in decision-making by countries committed to climate action, they should be exerting pressure on their own governments to live up to their climate commitments.

Currently, the US and Europe are expanding their own fossil-fuel infrastructure and failing to contribute substantially to internationally agreed funds to mitigate the effects of climate change. The United Kingdom has announced its first new coal mine in 30 years, while Germany has resurrected or extended the lives of at least 20 coal-fired power plants.

Any discussion about the energy transition requires nuance and a sincere commitment to joint action. But that is impossible when certain politicians are more committed to catchy soundbites and making a name for themselves. The world has largely agreed on the need to reduce GHG emissions. We cannot let a minority change the framing of the problem and, in the process, slow momentum. The climate crisis is real, as is the political drama that impedes tangible and practical solutions. We must avoid the trap of division and distraction if we want to address global warming before it is too late.

The writer is a member of the United Arab Emirates Federal National Council. @PROJECT SYNDICATE



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE ATTITUDE OF THE AUTHORITIES THESE DAYS SHOWS AN UNWILLINGNESS TO UNDERSTAND THE VIEWPOINT AND ADDRESS PEOPLE'S GRIEVANCES



Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi

With nearly three billion people between them, China and India are among the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world; their needs cannot be ignored

SPECTRUM GEOPOLITICS

## Syria back into Arab fold



Asad Mirza

REGARDLESS OF THE FUTURE OF US POLICY ON SYRIA, THE FACT THAT ARAB STATES ARE NORMALISING WITH ASSAD IS ALSO A SIGN OF THE RECEDING US POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN THE REGION

After more than a dozen years of ostracism by regional Arab and Western leaders, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is officially back into the Arab fold. He was warmly embraced by regional leaders at the Arab League summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, last week. Apparently it seems that the Arab League has lost its meaning and purpose and it is demonstrated by the manner in which member states take its sessions in a non-serious manner. Morocco declined to host a summit in 2016, calling the event a waste of time. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, skipped last year's gathering in Algeria on medical grounds. Heads of state are sometimes spotted falling asleep at the fora meetings.

But it seems that at the moment no one would relish the regional Arab body more than Assad, who seemed euphoric to be invited to the Arab Summit. Syria was suspended from the league in 2011, when Assad began a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests that plunged the country into a civil war. Assad's deployment of chemical weapons against his own people along with mass arrests, torture and disappearances and killing of more than 3 million civilians in the country have no parallel elsewhere. This is a legacy, which he in-

herited from his father, Hafez al-Assad, who reportedly massacred more than 10,000 people in the city of Hama during a 1982 siege.

On May 7 however, the regional Arab body agreed to re-admit Syria to its fold. Though an invitation from a dull talking shop crammed with dictators may seem unappealing to many but to Assad, it is the culmination of a long effort to end his Arab isolation - and, he may hope, another step towards acceptance in the West.

However, Assad's regional Arab acceptance creates a "problem" for the US, which continues to oppose any sort of normalising ties with the Syrian government but has not been able to force its Arab partners from restoring ties with Damascus. The US officials maintain that though they do not back normalisation with Assad, they share the objectives that restored relations could bring, including expanding humanitarian access to conflict-torn regions, combating IS, reducing Iran's influence and countering the trafficking of the drug Captagon.

Making the US stand quite clear, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week: "We do not believe that Syria merits readmission to the Arab League." Still, Blinken said Washington and its Arab allies have broader common objectives in Syria.

Syria was suspended from the Arab League and left isolated by regional power brokers in 2011 after its crackdown on protests during the Arab Spring, a wave of anti-government demonstrations across several countries in the region that year.

That heavy-handed security approach in Syria turned into a protracted war, killing hundreds of thousands of people and displacing millions.

In recent years, government forces recaptured much of Syria with the aid of Russia and Iran, and local ceasefires have maintained relative calm as parts of the country remain under the control of various rebels and armed groups.

As to why Arab states are keen to bring Syria among their fold, there are many plausible reasons. One is to forge a broader spirit of détente. The Saudis struck a deal in March with Iran to restore diplomatic ties and reopen embassies. Turkey and Egypt, mired in mutual economic crises, are trying to end a decade of animosity. Gulf states have ended their embargo of Qatar, which accomplished little. Old foes across the region are keen to pretend they are friends.

When it comes to Syria, however, they want something bigger in return. Its neighbours hope to get rid of millions of Syrian refugees. The 2 million or so in

Lebanon, with a population of just 5 million, are seen as a burden, blamed unfairly for the country's economic collapse. In Turkey, the mood has also turned hostile.

In addition, the West hope that mollifying Syria may result in it controlling its Captagon trade. Syria has become the world's leading producer of Captagon, an amphetamine that is a popular recreational drug in the Gulf. The scale of the Captagon trade is often exaggerated. Unconfirmed estimates put its annual value at \$57 billion. The real figure is probably an order of magnitude smaller – but that is still large enough to make it Syria's top export.

Regardless of the future of US policy on Syria, the fact that Arab states are normalising with Assad is also a sign of the receding US political influence in the region. Indeed, this seems to be a sad commentary on the Arab world and its dictatorial leaders who basically conspired to crush the Arab Spring 12 years ago, instead of working for the betterment of their people. In reality the pro-democracy, pro-rights movement has not fizzled out; rather, it was clubbed to death by a conspiracy of the dictators.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior political commentator. @IANS

WISDOM CORNER

We should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

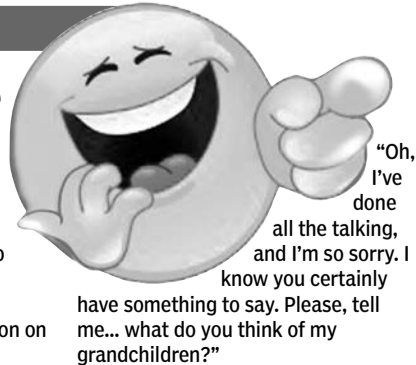
There is only one day left, always starting over: it is given to us at dawn and taken away from us at dusk. JEAN-PAUL SARTRE

Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it. ROBERT FROST

LOL

### Travel on the plane

For two solid hours, the lady sitting next to a man on an airplane had told him about her grandchildren. She had even produced a plastic-foldout photo album of all nine of the children. She finally realized that she had dominated the entire conversation on her grandchildren.



"Oh, I've done all the talking, and I'm so sorry. I know you certainly have something to say. Please, tell me... what do you think of my grandchildren?"

### Failures & misery

Sir, The Modi government's nine years in power will be remembered for their failures and misery rather than their accomplishments. People have had to contend with inflation, unemployment, and arbitrary decisions over the last few years. The problem was not only that the people were affected by the government's strange decisions, such as demonetisation, which weakened the economy and caused many people to die in bank queues; businessmen were troubled by the Goods and Services Tax, which effectively put their financial burden on the shoulders of the consumers; and youths are being hired on contract in the name of Agniveer. Instead, this government made extensive use of 'jumblebaazi.' Announcements such as doubling farmers' income, providing houses to every citizen, recovering black money, and creating two crore jobs every year were plastered on every child's lips. Under this administration, there were numerous attacks on the people's freedom of expression. People were threatened with deportation to Pakistan too. There is a circumstance like an unannounced emergency in which there is no possibility of relief for the people. With people's animosity of the Modi government growing, it is believed that the BJP will have a difficult time winning the next general elections.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

### Breaking the jinx

Sir, After the USA Open title six years ago, in the 2017 Grand Prix, India's top-ranked men's badminton player HS Prannoy has broken the jinx of being a giant killer without lifting the trophy by winning the Malaysia Masters 2023 crown. Although Prannoy has beaten contemporary stalwarts like Viktor Axelsen, Taufiq Hidayat, Chen Long to name only a few, a big trophy consistently eluded him till the win at Kuala Lumpur. All along, the lingering feeling was that despite oodles of talent the 30-year-old was mysteriously unable to click at the right moment. Nerves, said many, temperament said some but Prannoy overcame all to finally come up trumps. From here, the world number seven should aim to add another glittering feather to his cap preferably a world crown or a super 1000 title, preferably the Wimbledon of badminton, the All England championship.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

## 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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# national

## of the day quote

India got a new Parliament building three days back. I ask you whether you are proud of it or not. Did you feel the joy on the increase in India's prestige? The Congress and some parties like it hurled muck of politics on this too

**NARENDRA MODI** | PRIME MINISTER

I can never support Kejriwal...I know Kejriwal...He follows real Hindutva and not just soft Hindutva

**ASADUDDIN OWAIISI** | AIMIM PRESIDENT

It is the hard work, dedication and patriotism of our women wrestlers that showed this talent of India to the world. The Government of India must think in the interest of the country in these 5 days

**K KAVITHA** | BRS LEGISLATOR

## SHORT TAKES

### Sujay remanded to 14-day ED custody

**Kolkata:** Trinamool Congress confidant Sujay Krishna Bhadra a.k.a. 'Kalighater Kaku' (Uncle of Kalighat), who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the alleged multi-crore teacher recruitment scam Tuesday night, was remanded to 14-day ED custody by a special PMLA court here Wednesday. The ED counsel made some serious revelations in the court Wednesday, claiming that another accused and expelled youth Trinamool leader Kuntal Ghosh gave ₹70 lakh to Bhadra as collection money for the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) in 2014.

### Depressed over ugly look, man ends life

**Patna:** A man committed suicide by hanging self from a ceiling fan in Bihar's Nalanda district on Tuesday night. The deceased has been identified as Vijay Kumar, a native of Ekangar Dihi village under the Ekangarsarai police station in the district. He was reportedly under depression due to his 'ugly' looks and baldness.

### WB implements 4-yr UG honours course

**Kolkata:** The West Bengal government Wednesday announced introduction of a four-year honours course at the undergraduate level in all government and state-aided higher educational institutions from this academic session. In a statement, the higher education department said the decision has been taken after holding talks with all stakeholders and on the basis of recommendation of a state-appointed expert panel which had suggested rolling out a four-year UG course from the 2023-24 academic year.



**BJP has mastered the art of misusing religion and nationalism to provide cover to rapists. I should know. During my tenure as CM, BJP ministers held a rally holding Indian flags supporting Kathua rapists. Against all odds, I ensured culprits were jailed and those ministers were sacked**

**MEHBOOBA MUFTI** | PDP PRESIDENT

## TRAGIC INCIDENT

A woman was allegedly stripped, abused and beaten in full public view by a group of persons, including her estranged husband, in Dahod district of Gujarat, following which the police have arrested the latter along with three others in this connection, an official said



**RAIN WOES:** Commuters try to cross the waterlogged Delhi-Gurugram Expressway after heavy rains in Gurugram

PTI PHOTO

## Mamata joins protest rally on wrestlers' issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, May 31:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday took to the streets here to protest against the alleged mishandling of wrestlers at New Delhi's Jantar Mantar after they tried to march towards the new Parliament building following its inauguration three days ago.

Holding a placard with the message, "We Want Justice", written on it, Banerjee participated in a rally which started at Hazra Road crossing in the southern part of the city and culminated at Rabindra Sadan, the cultural hub of the eastern metropolis. Banerjee joined the 2.8-km rally at Bhabanipur, her own constituency. She was flanked by former women footballers Kuntala Ghosh Dastidar and Shanti Mallick, ex-soccer players Alvito D' Cunha, Rahim Nabi, and Dipendu Biswas and several other sports personalities and common people. State minister Arup Biswas and



cricketer-turned-minister Manoj Tiwary spearheaded the rally organised by the sports department to show solidarity towards the protesting wrestlers. The wrestlers are demanding the arrest of the Wrestling Federation of India's former chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh who is accused of sexually harassing several women grapplers. The rally was organised a day after the country's top wrestlers, including Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia, along with hundreds of their supporters, reached Har ki Pauri to immerse their medals in the river Ganga but were persuaded by Khap and farmer leaders not to do so.

## Congress, BJP spar over Rahul's remarks in US

*Addressing an event in Santa Clara in the US, Gandhi took a dig at Prime Minister Modi, describing him as a "specimen", who could start explaining to God how the universe worked*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** The Congress and the BJP sparred over Rahul Gandhi's "one such specimen" remark made in the US against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with the ruling party slamming him as a "fake Gandhi" who "insults" India on foreign soil.

Addressing an event in Santa Clara in the US, Gandhi took a dig at Prime Minister Modi, describing him as a "specimen", who could start explaining to God how the universe worked. Leading the attack on Gandhi, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur claimed that the Congress goes abroad on "sponsored programmes" for "anti-India propaganda" to insult the country on foreign soil.

The Congress hit back, saying these are "made-up distractions" by Modi and his "drum beaters". It also said the former party chief's comments and beliefs have always been in the best interests of the country. Asked about the BJP's criticism of Gandhi during a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Congress MP Deepender Hooda said, the former party chief's statements and beliefs have always been in the best interest of the country. "No person should think of being synonymous with the country," he said.

Slamming him for criticising the state of affairs in India under the Modi government, Thakur said it has become a habit of the Congress leader to insult the country as he does not consider India a



### At the 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' event organised by the Indian Overseas Congress USA, Rahul Gandhi targeted the government, saying the poor and those from the minority communities feel helpless today in India

nation. The BJP leader alleged that Gandhi had himself said so earlier. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi claimed that the Congress leader's knowledge of history did not go beyond his family.

Gandhi, 52, told Indian-Americans in the US that the idea of India was under attack and being challenged.

BJP chief spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Anil Baluni said it is in the Congress' character to defame the country and conspire against it. The world is lauding India for its development under

Prime Minister Modi's leadership but some leaders in the country are working to malign it on foreign soil, he said.

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sushil Modi said Gandhi is making such remarks out of "frustration" as people of the country are standing by Prime Minister Modi.

"That is the disease. We have a group of people in India, who are absolutely convinced that they know everything. In fact, they think they know even better than God. They can sit down with God and have a conversation and explain to him about what is going on. Of course, our prime minister is one such specimen," he said.

Gandhi also took an apparent swipe at the Modi government, saying these people are "absolutely convinced" that they know everything and can explain history to historians, science to scientists and warfare to the army.

"If you sat Modiji with God, he will explain to God how the universe works and God will get confused," the Congress leader said, evoking laughter from the audience.

## Allahabad HC rejects Muslim side's plea in Gyanvapi mosque row

### THE SUIT FILED IN AUGUST 2021 SOUGHT PERMISSION FOR DAILY WORSHIP AT MAA SHRINGAR GAURI STHAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Prayagraj, May 31:** The Allahabad High Court Wednesday rejected a plea challenging the maintainability of a suit filed by five Hindu women seeking permission for regular worship of Shringar Gauri and other deities in Varanasi's Gyanvapi mosque compound.

Justice J J Munir dismissed the mosque management committee's revision petition that contended that the suit is barred under the Places of Worship Act, 1991, which prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of its religious character as it existed August 15, 1947. The Anjuman Intezamia Masjid (AIM) committee had filed the petition in the high court against the order of the district judge of Varanasi in September last year that turned down its objections on the maintainability of the suit filed by the five Hindu women.

The suit filed in August 2021 sought permission for daily worship at Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal in the Gyanvapi complex.

The district judge had September 12, 2022 dismissed the plea of AIM filed under Order 7 Rule 11 of the Civil Procedure Code (CPC). It

had observed that the suit by the Hindu women was not barred by the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, The Wakf Act 1995, and the UP Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Act, 1983 as was being claimed by the AIM.

The counsel for the petitioner, SEA Naqvi, contended before the court that the claim of the Hindu side that the devotees were restrained from worshipping Shringar Gauri and other deities on the outer wall of Gyanvapi in 1993 is an "artificial" claim and an example of clever drafting.

According to him, no order was passed by the then state government in writing in 1993. He said that the aforesaid claim has been made only to avoid the application of the Places of Worship Act, 1991. He pointed out that even if the claim of the Hindu side is accepted, why did they not file suit in 1993 when they were so restrained or thereafter.

Hence, the suit filed before the Varanasi court is illegal under the Limitation Act which bars the filing of any suit for declaration after three years of an incident.

He claimed that Gyanvapi is on a Waqf property, hence in case of any grievance, the claim should be made before the Waqf Tribunal.

On the other hand, the counsel representing the Hindu women had taken the plea that old maps showed the existence of sculptures of Hindu deities in the Gyanvapi mosque structure and the Hindu devotees were regularly worshipping Shringar Gauri and other deities on the outer wall of Gyanvapi since long.



## EASTERN LADAKH ROW

### India, China hold in-person diplomatic talks in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** India and China Wednesday held in-person diplomatic talks here and discussed proposals for disengagement in the remaining friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh in a "frank and open manner".



The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said both sides agreed to hold 19th round of high-level military talks at an early date to achieve the objective of restoration of peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

The meeting took place under the framework of Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC). The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

"The two sides reviewed the situation along the LAC in Western Sector of India-China border areas and discussed proposals for disengagement in remaining areas in a frank and open manner," it said.

"Restoration of peace and tranquillity will create conditions for normalising bilateral relations," the MEA said. The MEA said the two sides agreed to continue discussions through military and diplomatic channels. It was the 27th meeting of the WMCC. The previous WMCC meeting was held in Beijing February 22. The Joint Secretary (East Asia) from the Ministry of External Affairs led the Indian delegation.

## Eating junk food linked with reduced sleep quality: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** Consuming an unhealthier diet is associated with a lower quality of deep sleep, according to a small-scale study.

Deep sleep, the third stage of sleep, repairs and restores necessary functions such as memory, muscle growth, and immunity. Researchers at Uppsala University in Sweden analysed how junk food affects sleep. Healthy participants consumed an unhealthier as well as a healthier diet in a randomised order. The study, recently published in the journal Obesity, shows that after eating the junk food, the quality of the participants' deep sleep deteriorated, compared



with those who followed the healthier diet. "Both poor diet and poor sleep increase the risk of several public health conditions," said Jonathan Cedernaes, Associate Professor at Uppsala University. A total

of 15 healthy normal-weight young men participated in two sessions of the study. Participants were first screened for aspects such as their sleep habits, which had to be normal and within the recommended range of seven to nine hours per night.

The participants were randomly given both a healthier diet and an unhealthier diet. The two diets contained the same number of calories, adjusted to each individual's daily requirements. Among other things, the unhealthier diet contained a higher content of sugar and saturated fat and more processed food items. Each diet was consumed for a week, while the participants' sleep, activity and meal schedules were monitored at an individual level.

**Indian Bank**

ALLAHABAD

**ZONAL OFFICE: SAMBALPUR**

At: Shyam Arcade, Khetrapur, Sambalpur - 768003

APPENDIX - IV [Rule-8(1)]

**POSSESSION NOTICE**

(for Immovable property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Indian Bank** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrowers/Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the following Borrowers/Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Symbolic Possession** of the property described here-in-below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said Rules. The Borrowers/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Indian Bank** for an amount mentioned herein below with interest & other expenses thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of the section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.**

ROURKELA DAILY MARKET BRANCH/ Name & Address of Borrower/ Guarantors	Amount Payable as on specified date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Property
<b>Borrower: Late Parikshit Chandra Das, S/o.: Late Baidyanath Das/ Guarantors: 1) Mr. Rupesh Das, S/o.: Late Parikshit Chandra Das, 2) Mr. Mukesh Das, S/o.: Late Parikshit Chandra Das. All are At: Plot No.: T/24, 7 &amp; 8 Area, Civil Township, Rourkela, Sundergarh, PIN - 769004</b>	<b>₹11,39,482/- as on 10.03.2023 with interest from 30.09.2019 + interest and charges thereon</b>	<b>10.03.2023 / 26.05.2023</b>	All that part and parcel of Land (Plot) and House situated at House No.: T-24, 7-8 Area, Civil Township, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundergarh, Odisha bearing Mouza: Tarkera, PS.: Raghunathpali, Khata No.: 1/1, Area: 3750 Sq.ft. (Ac.0.09 Dec.), standing in the name of <b>Late Parikshit Chandra Das</b> , Bounded by East: Plot No.: T-23, West: 60 Feet Road, North: Plot No.: T-21, South: Plot No.: T-25, Regd. Sale Deed No.: 501, Dtd. 17.09.1971, Extend of Land: Ac.0.09 Dec. and Property on that Land

**Place: Sambalpur, Date: 31.05.2023**

**Sd/- Authorised Officer, Indian Bank**



# Unseasonal rainfall comes as blessing for Himachal forests

AS PER GOVERNMENT DATA, 1,200 TO 2,500 FOREST FIRES ARE REPORTED IN THE HIMALAYAN STATE EVERY YEAR



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Shimla, May 31:** Unseasonal excess summer rains affected lakhs of hectares of to be harvested crops in Himachal Pradesh, but came as blessing in disguise for forests that largely turn into tinderboxes with the rise in mercury every year in May. As per government estimates, the state's forest wealth accounts for 68.16 per cent of the total geographic area that is rich in biodiversity and plays a vital role in preserving the fragile Himalayan ecology.

As per government data, 1,200 to 2,500 forest fires are reported in the state every year. Mid and low hills in Shimla, Solan, Bilaspur, Una, Hamirpur, Kangra, Mandi and Sirmaur are the worst-affected.

With the onset of May, a majority of the fires are reported from pine forests when the trees shed pine needles that are highly inflammable due to the rich content of turpentine oil.

The pine forests are found up to an altitude of 5,500 feet. The main reason for the forest fires is the long dry spell and the abnormal increase in temperatures.

Official figures show 2018 was the worst year with 2,469 fire incidents reported - the highest in eight years - that gobbled up 25,300 hectares of forest across the state.

Taking into consideration the problem of forest fires, the government adopts a fire management strategy before the onset of the peak summer season.

"This year the summer is not quite harsh but still the government focused on forest fire management strategies like setting up strategic fire centres and coordination among various departments," a government spokesperson told IANS Tuesday.

"The Forest Department has prepared a fire mapping system to control the fire and has prepared a list of sensitive forests wherein close coordination with panchayats and local communities has been established," Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu said, as per an official statement.

Besides, officers of the Forest Department have held several meetings through virtual mode with field staff and elected representatives of the panchayats.

Billowing smoke from the hills of Shimla, Kasauli, Chail, Dharampur and Nahani towns are uncommon these days.

Likewise, there is no report of any major forest fire in the neighbouring hill state of Uttarakhand.

Forest officials say most forest fire incidents are deliberate acts. The villagers also tend to set grasslands afire to get softer grass after the rains. In most cases, the fire from grasslands spreads to nearby forests that cause damage to wildlife, including breeding pairs of birds like the red jungle fowl.

According to the meteorological office here, the average rainfall in the state in May is 61.2 mm. "Till date we had 109.8 mm in May, which is

## INTENSE RAINFALL TO CONTINUE

**Shimla:** Intense rainfall with thunderstorms and gusty winds may continue in hills of Himachal Pradesh, a weather official said here Wednesday. "Many places of the state are likely to experience intense rainfall with hailstorms in the districts of Shimla, Sirmaur, Solan, Bilaspur, Una, Chamba, Hamirpur, Mandi and Kangra," an official with the Meteorological Department told IANS. He said tourist towns of Shimla, Narkanda, Kufri, Kalpa, Kasauli, Chamba, Dharamsala, Palampur and Manali may get moderate to heavy rain. "High-altitude areas of Lahaul and Spiti, Chamba, Kullu and Kinnaur districts may experience mild snow during the next 24 hours," the official added. The average rainfall in the state in May was 61.2 mm. "Till May 30, the state had 109.8 mm in May, which is 79 per cent higher than the average rainfall," added the official.

79 per cent higher than the average rainfall," an official told IANS.

For conservation, scientific management and sustainable use of pine forest residue that can be used as biofuel, an alternative to alleviate dependence on fossil fuel, the government is planning to produce compressed biogas (CBG) from pine needles.

Last month it signed a memorandum of understanding with Oil India Ltd (OIL) and is planning to start a pilot project for the bioconversion of pine needles into biofuel.

The utilisation of pine needles for biofuel production through pyrolysis and other techniques will be a sustainable way to deal with the forest fires as well as the energy crisis.

The pine needle fall starts in April and continues till the beginning of July.

On an average, a pine forest yields two to three tonnes of needles per hectare during a season and the state has pine forests spread over 1,500 square km.



SMOKE & SCARS: A view of damaged house at violence-hit area of Sugnu, in Kakching district of Manipur, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

# When will life be back to normal, wonder villagers

Violence-hit villagers pin their hopes on Home Minister Amit Shah's four-day tour of Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sangaithel/Saheibung (Manipur), May 31:** As Kuki and Meitei villagers pick up their lives after one of the worst bouts of ethnic clashes in this northeastern state, they have only one question in mind - when will life be back to normal?

Normal for most of them meant being able to chat with a fellow Manipuri, without worrying whether he or she belonged to another tribe, ride a motorcycle to the next district in search of a bargain or see a movie in the evening without worrying about an arson attack at the cinema hall.

"Politicians need to step out and work towards a 'milap' (friendship) ... Only then, there will be peace and all will be able to sleep in their own homes. Otherwise, there will be no end to this madness," N Sundeep Meitei told PTI in Sangaithel village in Imphal West district.

L Bimol Meitei, an ex-BSF personnel, said that his village Sangaithel is adjacent to a Kuki village and before the violence began, there was a cordial relationship between them with both

sides visiting each other. There was trade happening between the two tribes. After May 3, there is an atmosphere of fear because attacks took place in some nearby places. So, the contacts have stopped now, he lamented.

In the neighbouring Kuki village of Saheibung, located in the foothills of Kangpokpi district, Village Chief S Athang Haokip said his family was affected and they had to flee on the first night of rioting to hide in the jungle.

"After the Army came, we felt safer and relieved. But I don't know how long this will go on. Once the army leaves, what will be the situation - only time will say that," he added.

Haokip said that houses in his and other neighbouring Kuki villages were not burnt by people from Sangaithel or any other nearby Meitei settlement, but by attackers who came from distant places.

The village chief said, "Kukis have nowhere to go, Meitis are in the same boat ... If violence continues after the Army leaves, we have no option but to fight. We have to fight until both of us are finished .... The BJP government



says it is double-engined and they can do anything. Such a fast and strong government will have solutions ... Unless there is a solution, this war will go on." Hoping that Shah's visit will provide some solutions to the problem, Haokip requested the Central government to do whatever is needed to bring normalcy back.

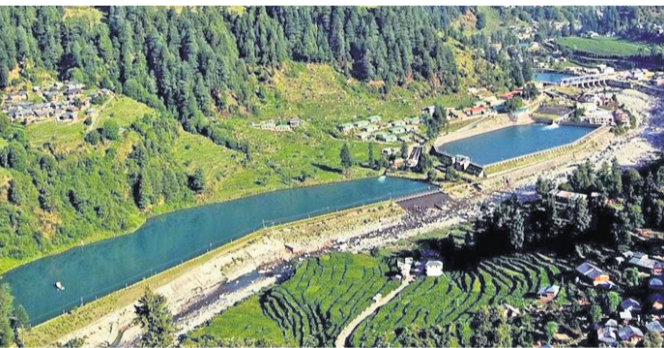
Bimol Meitei said there must be a dialogue between the two communities and the state or Central government should take the initiative to that end. He said that people from Sangaithel and Saheibung met once after the violence started mainly due to an initiative taken by the armed forces. "There, we all agreed that this violence must end at least here as soon

as possible. Both sides agreed that we would request our community brothers in other places to stop violence," Meitei said. This, he pointed out, needs to be replicated on a bigger scale throughout the state.

Home Minister Amit Shah's four-day tour of Manipur is being viewed by these simple but shrewd villagers as a portent for just such an effort.

Though there are mutterings against the state government for failing to do its duty during the rioting, the tour of the state by Shah and his high-powered team, even as the smoke from burnt houses still smoulders, is being seen as a sign that the hatchet may yet be buried and life may get back to what it was before.

# Himachal CM wants custody of India's 1st hydropower project



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, May 31:** Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu Monday called on Union Power Minister RK Singh here and informed him about the 99 years lease period of the Shanan hydropower project that is expiring in March 2024.

The country's first hydroelectric project is presently under the control of the Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd (PSPCL) in Himachal Pradesh.

The Chief Minister requested the Union Minister to issue directions to the Punjab government for taking mandatory steps for handing over the project to the state before the expiry of the lease period.

He also apprised the Union Minister about the facts regarding the share of the state in the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) and demanded 12 per cent water royalty for the state.

Sukhu said due to the construction of projects by the BBMB, many townships were compelled to face rehabilitation and numbers of oustees were not yet compensated even after 50 years.

He urged that the state government may be allowed to impose free power royalty in all commis-

sioned projects of the BBMB. This was the long-pending demand of the state.

He also raised the issue of raising the royalty of state in SJVN. He said that free power royalty share being received from the SJVN projects which have completed debt period of 12 years may be enhanced from existing free power royalty share ranging from 12 to 30 per cent.

The Union Minister assured of all possible support to the state.

The more than 90-year-old Shanan hydropower project is still generating power and earning revenue for his state.

The project located at Jogindernagar was constructed in 1932 by British engineer Colonel BC Batty and his team, and started generating 48 MW power at that time.

Currently, the power house is running with a capacity of generating 110 MW.

The project came in to being based on an agreement made March 3, 1925.

During the reorganisation of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh in 1966, the Shanan Power House was allocated to Punjab by the Union Ministry of Irrigation and Power on a 99-year lease agreement.

## SIVOK-RANGPO RAIL PROJECT

# Sikkim to get first train service by 2024

From Siliguri to Rangpo, a car journey takes around three hours, but the rail project will cut it short to one hour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gangtok, May 31:** With over 50 per cent work done on the Sivok-Rangpo railway line project, Sikkim is expected to become a part of the national network by 2024, while the country will get an "infrastructure of strategic importance" in the Himalayan state that borders China.

Passing through mountains, over ravines and the Teesta river, the under-construction all-weather 45-km rail line from Siliguri in West Bengal to Rangpo in Sikkim will have 14 tunnels and 22 bridges, officials said Tuesday.

"Work is underway on war footing but being done with extreme care as the entire project falls in seismic four and five zones. In addition, there



is always the threat of landslides and flash floods," Project Director Mohinder Singh from IRCON International, a central PSU under the Ministry of Railways, said.

Safety protocols are in place and being followed, the official of the Indian Railway Construction (IRCON) International Limited, assured.

He further said that there are also plans to extend the line up to Gangtok, but that is at a later stage.

There have been crucial breakthroughs in tunnel building and laying of bridges, he told reporters and

added that the two-km tunnel (T-14) before the yet-to-be built Rangpo station has been completed while six are in its final stages (lining work).

"This is an infrastructure of strategic importance as well as of economic importance," the director said when asked about the project's significance in view of Sikkim sharing its border with China. Overall, more than 50 per cent of the work has been completed," he said.

Echoing Singh's views on the significance of the rail line project - 41.45 km of which is in West Bengal and 3.51 km in Sikkim, Darjeeling MP Raju Bista said, "The region (Sikkim and North Bengal) share borders with four countries - Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and China - and a part of it is called the 'chicken's neck'. This is a very sensitive region."

"Besides improving connectivity in the region, known for its many tourist destinations, it will be a major boost from the security point facilitating troop movement," the MP said.

# Shikaras to ply at migratory bird paradise of Pong wetlands

HOT AIR BALLOONING ACTIVITIES WILL ALSO BE STARTED TO PROVIDE AN ADDED ATTRACTION TO ADVENTURE LOVERS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Shimla, May 31:** The Himachal Pradesh government is planning to start water sports and plying of shikaras at Maharana Pratap Sagar, a paradise of winter migratory birds, particularly the Siberian cranes, popular as man-made Pong Dam reservoir on the Beas river in the picturesque Kangra Valley.

Flying thousands of miles from their native habitat in high-altitude lakes in Central Asia to avoid the extreme winter, the bar-headed geese, an endangered migratory bird species, regularly descend Pong wetlands every winter. The government is exploring

possibilities to create adequate infrastructure around the lake and start water sports and other allied activities so that it can attract tourists throughout the year, an official statement said.

The government will support the youth by providing financial assistance to purchase shikaras, aiming to create employment opportunities in the area.

The government has allocated ₹70 crore for the purpose. As per the plan quoting Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu, introduction of hot air ballooning activities and the construction of a floating hotel are on anvil. Besides, hot air ballooning ac-



tivities will also be started in the Pong Dam area to provide an added

attraction to adventure lovers. Stretched up to 24,529 hectares

with few habited islands, the Pong reservoir caters to the needs of fishermen in a big way and is the most important source of economy to hundreds of families engaged in the business.

The Pong wetlands are also home to many native birds like the red jungle fowl, large Indian parakeet, Indian cuckoo, bank mynah, wood shrike, yellow-eyed babbler, black ibis, paradise flycatcher, crested lark and the crested bunting.

A total of 425 species of birds - both migratory and local, 18 species of snake, 90 species of butterfly, 24 species of mammal and 27 species of fish have been recorded so far in Pong.



## of the day quote

Rather than being a mere event, the Bharat Jodo Yatra has become a transformational movement. It continues to resonate with millions of Indians, here and around the world because it gave them a platform to raise their issues

**JAIRAM RAMESH** | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

Kejriwal should answer as to why Sisodia's bail is being rejected again and again. The fact that hawala money went to Goa has also been stated in the CBI charge sheet. Why is the party (AAP), which claims to be hardcore honest, silent on this revelation

**VIRENDRA SACHDEVA** | DELHI BJP PRESIDENT

Maharashtra was being preferred by many industries, including foreign, on account of the availability of good infrastructure and other facilities including skilled man power

**EKNATH SHINDE** | MAHARASHTRA CM

## SHORT TAKES

### ED: Probe against Sisodia complete

**New Delhi:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) said Wednesday that it has completed its probe against former Deputy CM of Delhi Manish Sisodia for his alleged involvement in the Delhi excise policy case. The ED also mentioned this fact in its fourth supplementary charge sheet filed in connection with the case. The court has taken cognisance of the charge sheet. The ED has claimed that it has enough evidence to prove that Sisodia was involved in money laundering and had allegedly generated proceeds of crime to the tune of ₹622 crore through various means.

### Family of 4 die in road mishap

**Lucknow:** A family of four was killed after an SUV hit their scooter and dragged it for over 100 metres here Wednesday. The couple and their two children were on the scooter when it was hit by an SUV. According to eyewitnesses, the accident was so intense that the scooter got stuck with the four people under the car and was dragged for over 100 metres. The victims were pulled out when the car came to a halt after colliding with a tree. All the four were rushed to a hospital where the doctors declared them brought dead.

### Model accuses man of rape

**Mumbai:** Mumbai Police has registered an FIR against a man for allegedly raping a city-based model after promising to marry her and also pressurizing her to convert, an official said Wednesday. The accused, who has not been arrested, denied all the allegations in a video posted on social media. The 23-year-old woman was motivated to approach police after watching the film "The Kerala Story", the police official said citing her complaint. The model told police that she met accused Tanveer Akhtar Lake Khan (40) and joined his modelling agency here in 2020, and initially he told her that his name was Yash.

### 10 IEDs found

**Chaibasa:** Ten Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) were found in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, police said Wednesday. While six IEDs were found in the forest near Tumbahaka village in Tonto police station area, a 5 kg explosive was found at a forest near Chota Kuiria in Goleikera police station area, they said.



**“We will now provide the job to the cricket player, if he fulfills the criteria of the government job under the state's sports policy**  
**BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM**

## AIMING HIGH

The Centre's ambitious Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (ABPM-JAY) has achieved a milestone of 5 crore hospital admissions amounting to ₹61,501 crore worth free treatment of people



# GOVT COMMITTED TO RESTORING PEACE: SHAH

AGENCIES

**Imphal/Moreh, May 31:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday said the government is committed to restoring peace in Manipur as early as possible and ensuring the return of displaced people to their homes.

Shah said this after visiting the camps of Kuki and Meitei communities in Manipur on the third day of his ongoing visit to the ethnic violence-hit state. "Visited a relief camp in Kangpokpi and met the Kuki community members there. We are committed to restoring peace in Manipur as early as possible and ensuring their return to their homes," he tweeted.

The home minister also said that he had convened a meeting with civil society organisations in Kangpokpi in Manipur and "they are keen to actively participate with the government in re-activating harmony among communities in Manipur".

Earlier, he held a review meeting in Moreh border town to take stock of the security situation in the northeastern state which has been witnessing sporadic violence for nearly a month.

Shah also met a delegation of the Kuki community and a team representing others communities, and they expressed strong support for the government's initiatives to restore normalcy.

A home ministry spokesper-



Union Home Minister Amit Shah in a meeting with a Kuki delegation in Moreh

PTI PHOTO

## MANIPUR CRISIS

■ Ethnic clashes broke out in the state nearly a month ago after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest the Meitei community's demand for ST status

■ After a relative lull for over a fortnight, the state witnessed a sudden spurt in clashes, and gunfight between militants and security forces Sunday

■ So far, over 80 people have been killed in the violence, according to officials

son said Shah held a security review meeting in the Moreh town,

## CM appeals for surrender of looted arms

**Imphal:** Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh Wednesday appealed to people to surrender arms looted from security forces. He also warned of legal action against anyone found to be in unauthorised and illegal possession of arms and ammunition. In a signed statement, the chief minister also appealed to all concerned in Manipur not to block roads and hinder the free movement of security personnel and relief material. Such roadblocks were making it extremely difficult for security and police personnel to respond to attacks by armed groups on time, Singh said.

bordering Myanmar. "Held a meeting with the delegations of Kuki and other communities at Moreh.

They expressed strong support for the government's initiatives to restore normalcy in Manipur," Shah said in another tweet. The home minister is on a four-day

visit to Manipur, the first since the ethnic clashes began May 3. The state witnessed a sudden spurt in clashes and firing between militants and security forces Sunday, after a relative lull for over a fortnight. The death toll from clashes has gone up to 80, officials said.

# NIA raids 25 places in PFI related case



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, May 31:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Wednesday raided 25 locations in three states in connection with the Popular Front of India (PFI) conspiracy to radicalise and train its cadres and members for carrying out acts of terror and violence.

A NIA official said that searches were conducted at the premises of suspects in Katihar district of Bihar; Dakshina Kannada, and Shimoga districts of Karnataka; and Kasaragod, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala. "A slew of digital devices, including mobile phones, hard disk, SIM cards, pen-drives, data cards, incriminating documents and materials related to the banned organisation were seized during the raids. Indian currency of the face value of ₹17,50,100 has also been seized," said the official.

"Acting on a tip-off, the Bihar police had carried out a raid at the rented premises of one Athar Parvez July 11, 2022, and had

Searches were conducted at the premises of suspects in Katihar district of Bihar; Dakshina Kannada, and Shimoga districts of Karnataka; and Kasaragod, Malappuram, Kozhikode & Thiruvananthapuram districts of Kerala

The NIA said that so far 85 locations have been raided during investigation in the case

seized incriminating articles related to PFI including a document titled "India 2047 Towards Rule of Islamic India, Internal Document: Not for circulation". Athar Parvez was arrested along with Md. Jalaluddin Khan, Arman Malick alias Imteyaz Anwer and Nooruddin Zangi alias Advocate Nooruddin," said the official.

The official said that a chargesheet was filed by the NIA against all the accused January 7, 2023. Later, ten more accused were arrested for promoting the unlawful and anti-national activities of the PFI and channelising illegal funds from abroad to the PFI members/accused persons.

The NIA also found that multiple channels were being operated on popular video platforms by persons suspected to be associated with the PFI. These channels were distributing content aimed at inciting communal violence and terror in India. The suspects, having international links, were also indulging in propagation of PFI ideology using the social media.



IS IT AUDIBLE?: Tribal people of Manipur stage a protest at Jantar Mantar against the ongoing tension in the state, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

## 'CRASS' REMARKS ON SAVITRIBAI PHULE

# CM orders action against websites

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Mumbai, May 31:** Hours after the opposition Nationalist Congress Party met the Mumbai Police Commissioner on the issue, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde directed the Chief Secretary to take action against a couple of websites which published offensive articles against the legendary social reformer Savitribai Phule, here Wednesday.

An official said that the article has created a furore with many political parties and social organisations raising serious objections to the 'derogatory' references to the pioneer of women's education, Savitribai Phule.

"Taking cognisance of these objections, the CM has directed the Chief Secretary to probe the content of the website and take strict action if there is any objectionable material found in the article.

He has also warned that the government will not spare those who indulge in offensive language while writing about great icons," said the official.

The developments came barely hours after a high-level NCP delegation called on Mumbai Commissioner of Police (CP) Vivek Phansalkar and demanded stringent action against two websites for publishing the articles with vulgar references to Savitribai Phule.

## Bihar: Jilted lover stabs girl 12 times



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Patna, May 31:** A jilted lover in Bihar's Sitamarhi district stabbed his former girlfriend 12 times, a police official said Wednesday, adding that the victim sustained severe injuries and is battling for her life in a hospital.

The accused, Chandan Kumar, has been arrested and confessed to committing the crime Tuesday.

According to the police, the victim sustained six stab wounds, including one on her chest.

"After committing the crime, the accused was trying to escape but failed. We have arrested him on the charge of attempt to murder. Investigation is underway. We will take strong action against the accused," said Sitamarhi SP Manoj Kumar Tiwari.

Chandan Kumar confessed to the police that he was in a relationship for five years. But the girl started ignoring him of late and also refused to marry him. "I got angry and stabbed her multiple times," he said. In her brief statement to the police, the victim acknowledged that she was in a relationship with Chandan but broke it off as her parents were not happy. "He also uploaded my private video on social media some six months ago. A panchnay also took place and my parents had lodged an FIR in that matter in Bantaha police station as well," she said.

# OTT programmes to carry anti-tobacco warnings

According to the notification, publishers of online curated content displaying tobacco products or their use will be required to display anti-tobacco health spots each of a minimum of 30 seconds at the beginning and middle of the programme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** On the World No Tobacco Day, the Union health ministry Wednesday notified the amended rules under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2004, making it mandatory for OTT platforms to display anti-tobacco warnings as are seen in movies screened in theatres and TV pro-

grammes. According to the notification, publishers of online curated content displaying tobacco products or their use will be required to display anti-tobacco health spots each of a minimum of 30 seconds at the beginning and middle of the programme.

They shall also be required to exhibit an anti-tobacco health warning as a prominent static message at the bottom of the screen when tobacco products or their use are displayed during the programme.

Also, an audio-visual disclaimer of a minimum of 20 seconds on the ill-effects of tobacco use will have to be also displayed at the beginning and middle of the programme, the source stated.

"The anti-tobacco health warning message as specified in clause(b) of sub-rule (1) shall be legible and readable, with font in black colour on white background and with the warnings 'Tobacco causes cancer'



or 'Tobacco kills,'" the notification stated. Besides, the anti-tobacco health warning messages, health spots and audio-visual disclaimers will have to be in the same language as used in the online curated content. The display of tobacco products or their use in online curated content shall not extend to display of the brands of cigarettes or other tobacco products or any form of tobacco product placement and

display of tobacco products or their use in promotional materials.

According to a senior ministry official, the decision was taken following discussions with the Information and Broadcasting ministry and other stakeholders.

"If the publisher of online curated content fails to comply with the provisions of sub-rules (1) to (5), an inter ministerial committee consisting of representatives from

the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, shall take action suo motu or on a complaint, and after identifying the publisher of online curated content, issue notice giving reasonable opportunity to explain such failure and make appropriate modification in the content," the notification said.

The expression "online curated content" means any curated catalogue of audio-visual content, other than news and current affairs content, which is owned by, licensed to, or contracted to be transmitted by a publisher of online curated content, and made available on demand, including but not limited through subscription, over the internet or computer networks, and includes films, audio visual programmes, television programmes, serials, series and other such content.



# international



There are some understandings relating to energy with India, which is of long-term interest to Nepal. We will raise some issues relating to long-term power trade with India during my visit

## DIRE SITUATION IN SYRIA

For the first time in Syria's 12-year war, people in every district are experiencing some degree of "humanitarian stress," and a staggering 15.3 million — nearly 70% of the population — need humanitarian aid, the United Nations said



## of the day quote

I spoke to Erdogan and he still wants to work on something on the F-16s. I told him we wanted a deal with Sweden. So let's get that done

ANTONY BLINKEN | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

Beijing will support long-term, stable development of foreign-invested enterprises in China

WANG WENTAO | COMMERCE MINISTER, CHINA

I am in close contact with all those people to do as much as we can to help them democratise Myanmar

BAN KI-MOON | FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN

## SHORT TAKES

### Russia destroys last warship of Ukraine

Moscow: Russia Wednesday claimed it destroyed the last major warship of the Ukrainian naval forces, which it said was stationed in the southern port of Odesa. "On May 29, a high-precision strike by the Russian Air Force on a ship anchorage site in the port of Odesa destroyed the last warship of the Ukrainian Navy, the 'Yuri Olefiyenko'," the Russian army said.

### Germany shuts 4 Russian consulates

Berlin: Germany says it has told Russia to close four out of five consulates in Germany in a tit-for-tat move after Moscow set a limit for the number of German embassy staff and related bodies that can operate in Russia. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Christopher Burger told reporters in Berlin on Wednesday that the measure is intended to create a "parity of personnel and structures" between the two countries. The Russian government recently said that an upper limit of 350 German government officials, including those working in cultural bodies and schools, can remain in Russia.

### Khan gets bail until June 19

Islamabad: A Pakistan anti-corruption court Wednesday granted bail to former premier Imran Khan until June 19 in the Al-Qadir Trust case involving an alleged corruption of over Rs 50 billion. Khan appeared before the Islamabad-based accountability court after the high court here earlier in the day extended the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief's protective bail for three days and directed him to seek bail from the anti-corruption court within this period. Accountability court Judge Muhammad Bashir, presiding over the hearing, granted Khan bail till June 19 against surety bonds worth Rs 500,000.

### Qatar PM, Taliban hold secret meet

Washington: The Qatari prime minister held secret talks with the supreme leader of the Taliban this month on resolving tension with the international community, a source briefed on the meeting said, signaling a new willingness by Afghanistan's rulers to discuss ways to end their isolation. The May 12 meeting in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar between Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani and Haibatullah Akhundzada is the first the reclusive Taliban chief is known to have held with a foreign leader.

# FROM SKY TO OCEAN NK spy sat launch meets watery grave

THE FLIGHT WAS THE NUCLEAR-ARMED STATE'S SIXTH SATELLITE LAUNCH ATTEMPT, AND THE FIRST SINCE 2016. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO PUT NORTH KOREA'S FIRST SPY SATELLITE IN ORBIT

REUTERS

Seoul, May 31: A North Korean satellite launch Wednesday ended in failure, sending the booster and payload plunging into the sea, North Korean state media said, and the South's military said it had recovered parts of the launch vehicle.

The new "Chollima-1" satellite launch rocket failed because of instability in the engine and fuel system, state news agency KCNA reported.

It prompted emergency alerts and brief evacuation warnings in parts of South Korea and Japan. The notices were withdrawn with no danger or damage reported.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the military was conducting a salvage operation to recover what is believed to be parts of the space launch vehicle.

The military shared pictures of a large cylindrical object floating in the sea about 200 km (124.27 miles) off the west coast island of Eocheongdo.

George William Herbert, adjunct professor at the Center for

Nonproliferation Studies and a missile consultant, said the images showed at least part of a rocket, including an "interstage" section designed to connect to another stage.

It is most likely a liquid-fuel rocket, and a round, brown object inside is likely a propellant tank for either fuel or oxidizer, Herbert added.

Officials from the United States, Japan, South Korea held a phone call, where they "strongly condemned" the launch, Japan's foreign ministry said.

"The three countries will stay vigilant with high sense of urgency", the statement said.

South Korea last week placed satellites in orbit with a domestically designed and produced rocket for the first time, and China sent three astronauts to its space station as part of crew rotation Tuesday.

The North Korean rocket plunged into the sea "after losing thrust due to the abnormal starting of the second-stage engine," KCNA reported, in an unusually candid admission of a technical failure by the North.

Pyongyang's National Aerospace Development Administration (NADA) will investigate the "serious defects" and take action to overcome them before conducting a second launch as soon as possible, KCNA said.

WARNINGS ISSUED North Korea appeared to have rushed its satellite launch after Seoul's recent space rocket launch, a South



Even if this satellite launch is a failure, General Secretary Kim Jong Un himself has made clear that this satellite is the first of many. This won't be the end of those efforts

ATSUHIITO ISOZAKI | PROFESSOR (NORTH KOREAN STUDIES), KEIO UNIVERSITY

Korean lawmaker said citing his country's intelligence agency.

Lawmaker Yoo Sang-beom told journalists that North Korea's leader was believe to have observed the launch and Pyongyang may need several weeks at least to fix its rocket's problems.

In data provided to international authorities before the launch, North Korea said the rocket would fly south, with stages and other debris expected to fall over the Yellow Sea and into the Pacific Ocean.

Air raid sirens wailed across the South Korean capital of Seoul

## NATIONS CONDEMN

The White House condemned a launch using ballistic missile technology and said it was assessing the situation in coordination with allies. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said North Korea's rocket disappeared from radar above the Yellow Sea and did not make it into space. Japan strongly condemns the launch and has lodged a complaint to Pyongyang through diplomatic channels in Beijing, he said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also condemned the launch, a spokesperson said, noting any launch by Pyongyang using ballistic missile technology breached Security Council resolutions.

## LeT terrorist, who trained 26/11 attackers, dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, May 31: Hafiz Abdul Salam Bhuttavi, an UN-designated terrorist who trained the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) attackers for the 2008 Mumbai terror attack and acted as the outfit's chief on at least two occasions, died in a prison in Pakistan's Punjab province while serving a sentence for terror financing, his aide said Wednesday.

Bhuttavi, who founded LeT headquarters in Muridke in Punjab, was deputy to the outlawed Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief and Mumbai attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed. The JuD is the front organisation for the LeT.

Bhuttavi, 77, was incarcerated at District Jail Sheikhpura, some 60 kms from Lahore, since October 2019 in a terror financing case. On May 29, he felt severe pain in his chest and was shifted to hospital where he was pronounced dead (due to cardiac arrest) on arrival, a JuD official told PTI.

His funeral was held at the LeTJuD headquarters in Muridke in which a large number of the supporters of the banned organisation participated amid high security.

An Anti-Terrorism Court in Lahore had given Bhuttavi a jail term of 16 years in a terror financing case in 2020.

The UN Security Council's ISIL (Daesh) and Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee added Bhuttavi to its list of designated terrorists in March 2012.

Bhuttavi was designated a terrorist by the UN Security Council for participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf of, or in support of" or "otherwise supporting acts and activities of LeT.

Saeed was detained days after the 2008 Mumbai attacks and held until June 2009. Bhuttavi handled the group's day-to-day functions during this period, and made independent decisions on behalf of the organization, according to the summary. Saeed was also detained in May 2002. Bhuttavi was also a scholar who issued fatwas authorising LeTJuD operations.

Bhuttavi helped prepare the operations for the November 2008 terrorist assault in Mumbai, India, by delivering lectures on the merits of martyrdom operations, the summary says.

## FACE-OFF AT SCS

# Beijing blames US provocation

The US military said Tuesday a Chinese fighter pilot performed an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" near an American surveillance aircraft operating over the South China Sea Friday

AGENCIES

China, May 31: Beijing blamed US "provocation" Wednesday for an incident last week when a Chinese plane crossed in front of an American surveillance aircraft over the South China Sea.

"The United States' long-term and frequent sending of ships and planes to conduct close surveillance on China seriously harms China's national sovereignty and security," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said when asked about the incident.

"China will continue to take all necessary steps to resolutely protect its own sovereignty and security," she said.

The US military said Tuesday a Chinese fighter pilot performed an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" near an American surveillance aircraft operating over the South China Sea Friday.

Video footage declassified and released by the US military shows a Chinese fighter plane crossing in front of the American aircraft, which can be seen shaking from the resulting turbulence.

The Chinese plane "flew directly in front of and within 400 feet of the nose of the RC-135, forcing the US aircraft to fly through its wake turbulence", the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) said in a statement.

"The RC-135 was conducting safe and routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace, in accordance with international law," it said.

The Pentagon said the incident was part of a pattern of behaviour by China.

It comes at a time of frayed ties between Washington and Beijing over issues including Taiwan and an alleged Chinese spy balloon that was shot down after traversing the United States earlier this year.

This kind of provocative, dangerous activity is the cause of the security issues on the seas. Immediately stop this form of dangerous provocation

MAO NING | FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESWOMAN, CHINA



A member of Guarani Mbya Indigenous people uses a bow and arrow during a protest as they close the Bandeirantes highway in Sao Paulo, Brazil

# Better data needed: NASA UFO panel

REUTERS

Washington, May 31: The first public meeting of a NASA panel studying what the government calls "unidentified aerial phenomena," commonly known as UFOs, kicked off Wednesday to discuss findings since its formation last year.

The 16-member body, assembling experts from fields ranging from physics to astrobology, was formed last June to examine unclassified UFO sightings, which it refers to as UAPs, and other data collected from civilian government and commercial sectors.

"If I were to summarize in one line what I feel we've learned, it's we need high quality data," said panel chair David Spergel during opening remarks.

NASA said the focus of

## FIRST PUBLIC BRIEF



Wednesday's four-hour public session at the agency's headquarters in Washington was to hold "final deliberations" before the team publishes a report, which Spergel said was planned for release by late July.

The team has "several months of work ahead of them," said Dan Evans, a senior research official at NASA's science unit, adding that

panel members had been subjected to online abuse and harassment since they began their work.

"Harassment only leads to further stigmatization of the UAP field, significantly hindering the scientific process and discouraging others to study this important subject matter," NASA's science chief Nicola Fox said.

The panel represents the first such inquiry ever conducted under the auspices of the US space agency for a subject the government once consigned to the exclusive and secretive purview of military and national security officials.

The NASA study is separate from a newly formalized Pentagon-based investigation of unidentified aerial phenomena documented in recent years by military aviators and analyzed by US defense and in-

telligence officials.

Panel officials Wednesday, having relied on unclassified data sensors, indicated they have run into much of the same obstacles as their Pentagon counterparts in studying unidentified objects.

"The current data collection efforts about UAPs are unsystematic and fragmented across various agencies, often using instruments uncalibrated for scientific data collection," Spergel said.

The parallel NASA and Pentagon efforts, both undertaken with some semblance of public scrutiny, highlight a turning point for the government after decades spent deflecting, debunking and discrediting sightings of unidentified flying objects - long associated with notions of flying saucers and aliens - dating back to the 1940s.

# Earth is 'really quite sick now', in danger zone: Study

The planetary safety guardrail of 1.5 degrees Celsius hasn't been breached, but the "just" boundary where people are hurt of 1 degree Celsius has been

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, May 31: Earth has pushed past seven out of eight scientifically established safety limits and into "the danger zone," not just for an overheating planet that's losing its natural areas, but for well-being of people living on it, according to a new study.

The study looks not just at guardrails for the planetary ecosystem but for the first time it includes measures of "justice," which is mostly about preventing harm for countries, ethnicities and genders.

The study by the international scientist group Earth Commission

published in Wednesday's journal Nature looks at climate, air pollution, phosphorus and nitrogen contamination of water from fertilizer overuse, groundwater supplies, fresh surface water, the unbuilt natural environment and the overall natural and human-built environment. Only air pollution wasn't quite at the danger point globally.

Air pollution is dangerous at local and regional levels, while climate was beyond the harmful levels for humans in groups but not quite past the safety guideline for the planet as a system, the study from the Swedish group said.

The study found "hotspots" of

## CLIMATE CALAMITY



problem areas throughout Eastern Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, parts of Africa and much of Brazil, Mexico, China and some of the US West — much of it from climate change. About two-thirds of Earth don't meet the

criteria for freshwater safety, scientists said as an example.

"We are in a danger zone for most of the Earth system boundaries," said study co-author Kristie Ebi, a professor of climate and public health at the

This is a compelling and provocative paper - scientifically sound in methodology and important for identifying the dimensions in which the planet is nearing the edge of boundaries that would launch us into irreversible states

INDY BURKE | DEAN, YALE SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT

University of Washington.

If planet Earth just got an annual check-up, similar to a person's physical, "our doctor would say that the Earth is really quite sick right now and it is sick in terms of many different areas or systems and this sickness is also affecting the people living on Earth," Earth

Commission co-chair Joyeeta Gupta, a professor of environment at the University of Amsterdam, said at a press conference.

It's not a terminal diagnosis. The planet can recover if it changes, including its use of coal, oil and natural gas and the way it treats the land and water, the scientists said.

But "we are moving in the wrong direction on basically all of these," said study lead author Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

The team of about 40 scientists created quantifiable boundaries for each environmental category, both for what's safe for the planet and for the point at which it becomes harmful for groups of people, which the researchers termed a justice issue.



## of the day quote

Our 40 years' worth of insights on patient care is our biggest differentiator and we are committed to using the power of AI to positively disrupt the way we diagnose, treat and care for our patients

**SHOBANA KAMINENI** | EXECUTIVE VC, APOLLO HOSPITALS

We have announced a dividend of ₹7.80 per equity share to our shareholders. The payment reflects our confidence in the business model and prospects of growth in future

**RAJIB K MISHRA** | CMD, PTC

Alt Mobility has been partnering with exceptional technology providers to co-create comprehensive leasing offering with longer tenures and lowest monthly lease

**DEV ARORA** | CO-FOUNDER AND CEO, ALT MOBILITY

## SHORT TAKES

### Vedanta Resources pays \$400mn debt

**New Delhi:** Vedanta Resources Limited (Vedanta), the parent company of Mumbai-listed mining giant Vedanta Ltd, Wednesday said it has further repaid \$400 million of loans, cutting gross debt to \$6.4 billion. In a statement, the firm helmed by billionaire Anil Agarwal said it "has paid all its maturing loans and bonds due in May and June 2023. As such, gross debt has further reduced to \$6.4 billion, a \$3.3 billion reduction since Vedanta announced its deleveraging ambition in March 2022," it said.

### Renault crosses 9L sales milestone

**New Delhi:** French auto major Renault Wednesday said it has crossed the 9 lakh units milestone in cumulative sales in India in the last 11 years. The company, which started selling its made-in-India vehicles from 2012, currently sells entry level car Kwid, compact SUV Kiger and multipurpose vehicle Tribler.

### Patanjali Foods to dilute 6% share

**New Delhi:** Patanjali Foods Wednesday said its promoters plan to sell shares to institutional investors in June for dilution of a 6 per cent stake to meet minimum public shareholding norms of 25 per cent. Patanjali Foods Ltd (PFL), erstwhile Ruchi Soya Industries, was acquired in September 2019 by Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Group through a corporate insolvency resolution process. In an interview with PTI, Ramdev said: "We are planning to meet the minimum shareholding norms as prescribed by the market regulator SEBI."

### Adani to raise \$3.5bn

**New Delhi:** Billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate is looking to raise about \$3 billion through an equity share sale to institutional investors in the boldest comeback strategy after the ports-to-energy group was hit by a damning report of a US short seller. While boards of Adani Enterprises Ltd - the group's flagship firm - and electricity transmission company Adani Transmission Ltd have already approved raising up to ₹21,000 crore (over \$2.5 billion) through share sales to qualified institutional investors, the board of Adani Green Energy Ltd is likely to do so for raising up to \$1 billion in the next couple of weeks, sources aware of the matter said.



**BoB RuPay credit card customers can now directly link their credit cards with the UPI applications of their choice, such as BHIM, PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay, Slice, Mobikwik and PayZapp**  
**SANJIV CHADHA** | MD, BOB

# GDP expands 6.1% in Q4, 7.2% in FY23

THE GROWTH PROPELLED THE INDIAN ECONOMY TO \$3.3 TRILLION AND SET THE STAGE FOR ACHIEVING \$5 TRILLION TARGET IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS



**GDP EXPANDED 4.5% IN OCT-DEC AND 6.2% IN JULY-SEPT 2022. GROWTH WAS 13.1% IN APRIL-JUNE 2022**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** Firing on all cylinders, India continues to maintain its streak of world-beating economic growth after GDP for the March quarter beat all expectations with a 6.1 per cent expansion that helped push the annual growth rate to 7.2 per cent.

After this, the Indian economy is now \$3.3 trillion in size.

Asia's third-largest economy beat all estimates to grow at 6.1 per cent in January-March, the last quarter of the 2022-23 fiscal, up from a revised 4.5 per cent in the previous quarter; government data released Wednesday showed.

The growth was boosted by a 5.5 per cent expansion in agriculture and a 4.5 per cent growth in manufacturing. Other sectors of the economy - construction, services and mining - too posted handsome growth rates.

The economic expansion was recorded at 6.1 per cent during the March 2023 quarter, while it was 4.5 per cent in October-December and 6.2 per cent in July-September 2022.

The growth was 13.1 per cent in April-June 2022, as per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

For the full 2022-23 fiscal (April 2022 to March 2023), the growth now stands revised to 7.2 per cent, above the earlier projection of 7 per cent but lower than the 9.1 per cent expansion in 2021-22.

This helped it maintain the tag of

the fastest-growing emerging economy. China grew by 4.5 per cent in the first three months of 2023.

High-frequency indicators showed the economy gaining momentum in April thanks to higher tax collections and a booming services sector. But exports and imports declined, smudging the outlook.

Barring the monsoon and geopolitical risks, India's economy may exceed the initial estimate of 6.5 per cent for the current fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024).

A stable current account deficit, rising foreign exchange reserves and inflation slowing to an 18-month low of 4.7 per cent are positives for the economy. A below-normal monsoon or a hot summer impacting crops as well as volatile global commodity prices fuelling inflation pose some of the risks.

Gross value added (GVA) growth during the fiscal ending March 2023 was 7 per cent against an 8.8 per cent growth in the preceding year.

GVA growth in the manufacturing sector accelerated to 4.5 per cent in the March 2023 quarter against 0.6 per cent a year ago.

The growth in mining was 4.3 per cent in the fourth quarter compared to 2.3 per cent in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. Construction grew 10.4 per cent in the quarter; up from 4.9 per cent in the corresponding period of 2021-22.

The agriculture sector growth accelerated to 5.5 per cent from 4.1 per

We are very pleased to have been able to present a story of sustained economic momentum combined with macroeconomic, financial and fiscal stability, and we look forward to another year of solid economic performance by India

**V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN** | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER

## FARMERS' BODY WRITES TO PMO

Farmer organisation Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA) has written to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and finance ministry against the WHO recommendation that alternative crops should replace tobacco as it contributes to global food crisis. The recommendation is unscientific and there are no benefits of other crops replacing tobacco cultivation, they noted

# Fiscal deficit narrows to 6.4% of GDP in FY23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** The Centre's fiscal deficit narrowed to 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 2022-23 from 6.71 per cent in FY22, as anticipated by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget in February this year.

In the Union Budget, the government aimed to further bring down the fiscal deficit - a key indicator of borrowing - during the current financial year 2023-24 to 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the Union government for 2022-23, the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) said the fiscal deficit in absolute terms was ₹17,33,131 crore (provisional), marginally down from the amount projected in the Revised Estimates (RE) in the Budget.

CGA said the government received ₹24,56 lakh crore (101 per cent of corresponding RE 2022-23 of total receipts) during 2022-23.

It comprised ₹20,97 lakh crore tax revenue (Net to Centre), ₹2,86 lakh crore of non-tax revenue and ₹72,187 crore of non-debt capital receipts.

Non-debt capital receipts consist of the recovery of loans and miscellaneous capital receipts.

About ₹9,48 lakh crore has been transferred to state governments as devolution of taxes by the central government, which is ₹50,015 crore higher than the previous year (2021-22).

The CGA data further revealed that the Centre's total expenditure was ₹41,89 crore (100 per cent of corresponding RE 2022-23), out of which ₹34,52 lakh crore was on the revenue account and ₹7,36 lakh crore on the capital account.

Out of the total revenue expenditure, ₹9,28 lakh crore was on account of interest payments and ₹5,31 lakh crore towards major subsidies.

As per CGA, the revenue deficit for the fiscal ending March 2023 was 3.9 per cent of GDP while the effective revenue deficit worked out to be 2.8 per cent of GDP.

# Key infra sector growth slows to 6-month low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** The production growth of eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to a six-month low of 3.5 per cent in April 2023 due to a decline in the output of crude oil, natural gas, refinery products and electricity.

The core sector growth was 9.5 per cent in April 2022, while in March 2023, the key infra sectors recorded a growth rate of 3.6 per cent. The growth rate in April 2023 is the lowest since October 2022 when the sectors expanded by 0.7 per cent.

Coal production growth declined to 9 per cent in April this year, according to the official data released.

Fertiliser production soared by 23.5 per cent, steel by 12.1 per cent and cement output by 11.6 per cent in April, the data showed.

The output of crude oil, natural gas, refinery products and electricity declined by (-) 3.5 per cent, (-) 2.8 per cent, (-) 1.5 per cent and (-) 1.4 per cent, respectively.

The eight core industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).



**FISCAL DEFICIT IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE CURRENT FISCAL WAS 7.5% OF THE BUDGET ESTIMATE, UP FROM 4.5% RECORDED IN APRIL 2022. IN ABSOLUTE TERMS, THE DEFICIT WAS ₹1,33L-CR**

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head - Research and Outreach, Icria, said the government was able to restrict its FY2023 fiscal deficit at ₹17.3 lakh crore, a shade below the FY2023 RE, with higher than estimated revenue receipts and a small undershooting in revenue expenditure, offsetting the disinvestment miss and a healthier than expected capex.

"In FY2023, the government's net tax revenues reported a healthy growth of 15.2 per cent, amidst a 17.8 per cent contraction in non-tax revenues, 7.8 per cent increase in revenue expenditure, and a robust 24.2 per cent expansion in capex," she said.

# Govt to sell up to 3% stake in CIL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** The government Wednesday proposed to sell up to three per cent stake in Coal India Ltd through the offer for sale route from June 1.

The Offer for Sale (OFS) will be open for retail and non-retail investors June 1 and 2.

The proposal is to offload 9.24 crore shares amounting to a stake of 1.5 per cent in the coal producer. Besides, there will be a green shoe option for selling an equal amount of stake in case of over subscription, according to a regulatory filing.

At the closing price of ₹241.20 apiece on BSE Wednesday, the sale of 3 per cent stake in Coal India would be worth around ₹4,400 crore.

"The seller proposes to sell up to 9,24,40,924 equity shares of face value of ₹10 each of the company (representing 1.50 per cent of the total paid-up equity share capital of the company) (base offer size), on June 1st and 2nd for retail investors and non retail investors," the filing said.

There will be an option to additionally sell 9,24,40,924 (1.50 per cent) equity shares of the company, it added.



# Bank credit to industry decelerates

Bank credit growth to the services sector accelerated to 21.6% annually in April 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, May 31:** Growth of bank credit to industry decelerated to 7 per cent in April 2023 as compared to the corresponding month in the previous year, according to Reserve Bank data.

The Sectoral Deployment of Bank Credit - April 2023 of the RBI also said personal loans growth registered a growth of 19.4 per cent (y-o-y) in April 2023 against 14.4 per cent a year ago, mainly driven by housing and vehicle loans.

Loan to agriculture and allied activities improved to 16.7 per cent (y-o-y) in April 2023 from 10.6 per cent a year ago.

"Credit to industry registered a growth of 7 per cent (y-o-y) in April 2023 as compared with 8 per cent in April 2022," it said.



Size-wise, credit to large industry rose by 5.3 per cent as compared with 1.3 per cent a year ago. Credit growth of medium industries was 19.1 per cent as against 53.7 per cent last year. Credit to micro and small industries registered a growth of 9.7 per cent in April 2023 (29.8 per cent a year ago).

RBI further said among major industries, credit growth (y-o-y) to 'basic metal & metal products' and 'petroleum, coal products & nuclear fuels' accelerated in April 2023 as compared with the corresponding month of the previous year.

Credit growth to 'chemicals & chemical products', 'food processing', 'infrastructure' and 'textiles' decelerated.

Bank credit growth to the services sector accelerated to 21.6 per cent annually in April 2023 from 11.2 per cent a year ago, primarily due to the improved credit offtake to non-banking financial companies and trade.

RBI said data on sectoral deployment of bank credit for April was collected from 40 select commercial banks, accounting for about 93 per cent of the total non-food credit deployed by all banks.

## Jansuraksha Saturation Drive by SBI

**Bhubaneswar:** A Jansuraksha Saturation Drive was organised by State Bank of India Jatni branch and Regional Business Office, Khurda May 30 at Panchupalli Gram Panchayat, Khurda. It was presided by



Pannambalam M, General Manager of State Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Circle. Bibek Beuria, DPM OLM Khurda; Narendra Kumar Jena, Regional Manager, State Bank of India, Khurda region; Tapan Kumar Sahoo, AGM (Lead Bank), SBI; Banaja Jena, Sarpanch, Panchupalli Gram Panchayat and Itishree Jena, Member Jatni Block were among the other dignitaries. More than two hundred villagers, many farmers, SHG members, entrepreneurs, social workers, borrowers, teachers, students as well as many officials of State Bank of India were present in the meeting. GM Pannambalam M addressed the gathering and sensitized them regarding the importance of insurance in life and made them aware of various social security schemes like PMJJBY, PMSBY, APY. He also discussed about the leading role of SBI in implementation of various government sponsored schemes like PMMY, PMEGP, SUI, PMFME, MKUY etc. Many progressive farmers, meritorious students, social workers and successful entrepreneurs were felicitated by SBI. The meeting was co-ordinated by Chief Manager, SBI Jatni branch Sujit Kumar Behera, and Chief Manager Umakanta Pujari.

# 40-50 FDI proposals from India's neighbours pending for nod

The government has a commitment to clear these proposals in three months time, but it takes about seven months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** About 40-50 foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals from countries sharing land border with India under the provisions of Press Note 3 are pending for approval with the government, official sources said.

Under Press Note 3, the government has made its prior approval mandatory for foreign investments from countries that

share land border with India. These countries are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

As per that decision, FDI proposals from these countries need government approval for investments in India in any sector.

"About 40-50 proposals are pending with the commerce and industry ministry as they require security and political clearances," one of the sources said.

Sources added that there is no consideration at present to ease norms under this press note.

"FDI is not totally banned from these countries. It is just that they (investors from these countries) have to follow the government approval route and of course that



takes times," a source said.

As per industry sources, MG Motor, a British brand owned by China's largest automaker SAIC Motor Corp, has been awaiting

government approval for around two years now to raise funds from its parent.

MG Motor India recently said it plans to offer a majority stake to

local partners and investors over the next 2-4 years as it looks to raise around ₹5,000 crore capital to fund next round of its growth in the country.

The automaker has been looking to raise capital for some time now to fund its expansion.

With little success so far, it has now started looking for other options to raise the required capital.

Total FDI flows into India, which include equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital, declined 16 per cent to \$70.97 billion in last fiscal year as against \$84.83 billion in 2021-22 due to lower inflows in important sectors such as automobiles, computer hardware and software.

Press Note 3 was introduced in

April 2020 as the government wanted to curb opportunistic takeovers of domestic firms following the Covid-19 pandemic.

An inter-ministerial committee has been formed by the government to scrutinise these proposals.

All administrative ministries and departments have been advised to have dedicated FDI cells to process these proposals expeditiously.

India received \$2.5 billion FDI equity from China during period April 2000 to March 2023.

During the period, India received \$0.076 billion investments from Bangladesh, \$3.31 billion from Nepal, \$9 million from Myanmar and \$2.57 billion from Afghanistan.



# BOWLERS FOCUS ON WORKLOAD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Portsmouth, May 31:** The Indian cricket team is focussing on building workload for the bowlers, who had an extensive run in the IPL, ahead of the World Test Championship final against Australia starting June 7 at The Oval.

In the bowling department, while the likes of Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, Axar Patel, Jaydev Unadkat and Umesh Yadav were part of the first batch to travel to England, pace spearhead Mohammed Shami's departure was delayed as the IPL final in Ahmedabad last Sunday was moved to the reserve day after incessant rain.

The middle-order mainstay Virat Kohli was also among the players who left in the first batch along

with the Rahul Dravid-led coaching staff. Kohli joined the camp on Monday along with Cheteshwar Pujara, who linked up with the squad in England as he was busy playing County Championship for Sussex.

The Indian team is expected to have a few practice sessions at the Arundel Castle Cricket Club in Sussex ahead of the big final.

"The preparation has been good so far. The initial bit was to ease into the practice session but the last two sessions have been pretty happy — I think we pushed them a little bit. Just adding a little bit of workload for the bowlers, just kind of preparing them for the Test match," said India's bowling coach Paras Mhambrey in a video released by the BCCI.

"(We are) happy with the conditions, I think it is a lovely ground,

(it is) kind of what you can expect. The weather is holding up, it has been sunny, a little windy, a little chill but something that we have to get used to (when) playing in England," he said.

India's fielding coach T Dilip said the focus will be on close-in catching since the running part of the fitness drill was covered in the IPL. "The players have been coming from an IPL so a key thing for us to take care of was the workload, how much they have run, how much they have taken care.

"What we understood and got out of that is things (like) ground fielding have been covered in the IPL, so the focus here was more on the volume of catching, especially when you are talking about close-in catching, the slip catching and the flat catches. These are the

catches that we tend to increase the volume (of)," he said.

Mhambrey said while the bowlers will get some rest in days leading up to the WTC final, the group is determined to extract the maximum benefits from the training sessions.

"We have two more sessions now, we want to build up especially with the bowlers in a couple of sessions. One day before the Test match, all of us have an easier option, the bowlers' option is they take an off and maybe one or two sessions before that.

"If you look at it, we have three quality sessions in which we can push them in and try to get the best out of every session we have," he said.

India batting coach Vikram Rathour said the focus will also be on adapting to the longest format. "They have all played a lot of cricket. Whatever time we are getting, it is about adapting to a different format, getting used to playing with the red ball and getting a few sessions in and getting used to the format," he said.



Umesh Yadav during India's practice session ahead of WTC final against Australia

## Pujara's inputs for teammates invaluable, believes Gavaskar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Portsmouth, May 31:** Former captain Sunil Gavaskar Wednesday reckoned Cheteshwar Pujara could provide valuable insights to his Indian teammates ahead of the World Test Championship final against Australia, having played extensively in the English County Championship.

With Pujara's knowledge and captaincy experience (at Sussex), his inputs could prove invaluable, especially against Australian batter Steve Smith, who is also a part of his county side. The WTC final is scheduled to be held at the Oval in London from June 7-11.

"The fact that he is been around will mean that he will have also seen how the pitch has been behaving at The Oval. He might not have played at The Oval, he might be in Sussex not too far away from London but he will have kept an eye on what is happening and his inputs will be invaluable as far as

the batting unit is concerned or even as far as the captaincy is concerned," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"He will have the captains here as far as the Oval pitch is concerned and don't forget he has also been captaining the team, so he definitely will have worked out quite a few strategies seeing that Steve Smith, the Australian is his teammate at the moment."

Gavaskar also said the Indian batters, coming off the IPL, will have to adjust their bat speed ahead of the WTC final, and advised them to play as late as possible.

"I think they are going to look at their bat speed. Coming from T20 where the bat speed is very fast to Test cricket where the bat speeds got to be a lot more control, that is something they'll need to do," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

He also emphasized the need for batters to play as late as possible in English conditions, allowing for swing and avoiding the mistake of reaching out for the ball.



Cheteshwar Pujara heads out to train in Arundel, Tuesday

## Sarandeep shares view on playing XI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** Former India selector Sarandeep Singh says picking KS Bharat over Ishan Kishan as the wicketkeeper for the WTC final against Australia is a no brainer and he would also choose Umesh Yadav over Shardul Thakur in the playing eleven.

In the absence of the injured Rishabh Pant, Kishan, who is yet to play Test cricket, can provide the x-factor but Sarandeep feels Bharat walks into the eleven as the front-line wicketkeeper.

"KS Bharat for sure. He is a proper Test match wicketkeeper and we saw that against Australia at home, he kept superbly. He has been around for a while and he should get the opportunity," Sarandeep told PTI Wednesday.

The WTC final will be played at the Oval in London from June 7. The former India spinner said Kishan's time will come. "Ishan is an opener. I am not saying he is not capable of playing Tests. He is one for the future but he opens in limited overs cricket. Things will be different at number six.

"Yes he goes hard from ball one, which can be counterproductive in England, but Bharat can also bat well and play shots also," he reasoned.

Backing Umesh Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj, who were breathing fire in the recently-concluded IPL, will share the workload in the pace department and the Indian team will need to choose between Umesh and Shardul as the third fast bowling option.

"I am picking Umesh ahead of Shardul because he has that extra

pace and he can reverse the old ball, he can be very helpful on that Oval track," said Sarandeep. "All of India's batters are in good form going into the one off game and that bodes well for the team," he said.

"I don't see any concerns with regards to batting or bowling going into the final. All of them are in form. Yes, the conditions will be challenging in England as always and they will be shifting to Test mode from T20s. The weather can

change on a daily basis and India will have to adapt.

"Facing bowlers like Starc, Cummins and Hazlewood is a huge challenge but we have a world class batting attack. Shubman is the only one who has not played a lot in England but he is in the form of his life and should do great things there," said the 43-year-old, who was part of the selection panel when India won the historic series in Australia in 2021.



Ishan Kishan bats at the net during India's practice session

## Smith expects potential spin threat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, May 31:** Australia's batting mainstay Steve Smith is expecting batting friendly conditions at The Oval for the World Test Championship final but feels they could face India like conditions as the game goes on.

The venue offers one of the best batting conditions in the UK with true pace and bounce. India are expected to play their frontline spinners R Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja in their bid to make the most of the conditions. "The Oval can present itself with some spin occasionally particularly as the game wears on so we could face some sort of similarities to what we had in India at certain stages of the game.

"But The Oval is a wonderful place to play cricket in. Lightening fast outfield, the square goes whole way across the ground so it is a nice place to bat when you get in and has some decent pace and bounce for

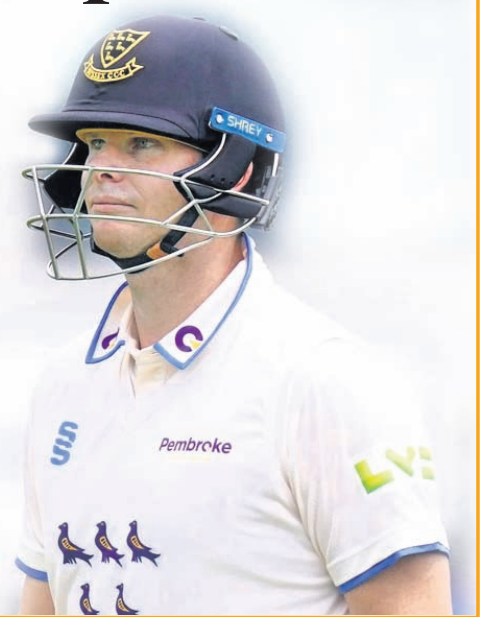
an English surface. Should be an absolute cracker," Smith told cricket.com.au ahead of the final beginning June 7.

Australia recently lost the Test series in India 1-2 though their spin play improved as the series progressed. Smith was the captain when the team won the third Test in Indore.

"The WTC is a great initiative. It gives every game we play a lot of relevance and for us to have qualified on top and face India in the final is incredibly exciting. It is going to be India and us at the Oval.

"I am sure there will be plenty of fans out there, probably more Indian than Australian but I am sure it is going to be great fun and guys are looking forward to it," he said.

Smith is among the Australian batters who played county cricket in England as part of the preparations for the WTC final and subsequent Ashes.



## India colts thrash S Korea, enter Junior Asia Cup final



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Salalah (Oman), May 31:** The Indian hockey team produced a dominant performance to outclass South Korea 9-1 and enter the final of the Junior Asia Cup here Wednesday. In the title clash Thursday, India will meet the winner of the second semifinal between Malaysia and Pakistan.

Dhimi Bobby Singh led the way for India with a hat-trick, and was declared the Player of the Match at the Salalah Sports Complex. While Dhimi found the net in the 31st, 39th and 55th minutes, it was Lakra Sunit who opened the scoring for India with his 13th minute strike.

In the 19th minute, Hundal Arajjeet Singh doubled the lead

before Dhimi got into the act. Angad Bir Singh and Uttam Singh scored in the 34th and 38th minute respectively as India led 6-0 by the end of the third quarter in what was turning out to be a thoroughly one-sided match.

The Koreans found their only goal through Keonyeol Hwang in the 46th minute, as the Indian juggernaut continued in the remaining minutes of the game. Vishnukant Singh made it 7-1 when he found the net in the 51st minute, which was India's first strike in the fourth and final quarter.

Barely two minutes after Dhimi completed a fine hat-trick and with just three minutes left in the match, India rounded off the tally with a goal from Sharda Nand Tiwari.

## SAINA, LAKSHYA, SATWIK-CHIRAG TOO WIN, SINDHU BOWS OUT Kiran stuns World No.9 Shi Yuqi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangkok, May 31:** India's Kiran George scripted a stunning straight-game win over world number 9 Shi Yuqi of China but double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu made an opening round exit from the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here Wednesday.

Ashmita Chaliha and Saina Nehwal also made winning starts to their campaign in women's singles, while Lakshya Sen and World No.4 pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also progressed to the pre-quarterfinals.

On a day when Kidambi Srikanth and B Sai Praneeth also failed to cross the opening hurdle, 2022 Odisha Open winner Kiran, a product of the Prakash Padukone academy, notched up a 21-18, 22-20 win over third seed Shi Yu Qi, who is a 2018 World Championships silver medallist. Kiran will take on China's Weng Hong Yang next.

His academy mate Lakshya also dug deep to eke out a hard-fought 21-23, 21-15, 21-15 win over Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei. He is likely to square off against All England champion Li Shi Feng of China.

Commonwealth Games champion and top seeds Satwik and Chirag too had to work hard to outwit the Danish combination of Rasmus Kjaer and Frederik Sogaard 21-13, 18-21, 21-17 in a thrilling match.

Sindhu, however, faltered in the opening round, going down fighting 8-21, 21-18, 18-21 to Canada's



Michelle Li in 62-minute match.

In other matches, Ashmita, who came through the qualifiers, beat compatriot Malvika Bansod 17-21, 14-21, while London Olympics bronze medallist Saina defeated Canada's Wen Yu Zhang 21-13, 21-7. Ashmita will next face Carolina Marin, while Saina is likely to meet He Bing Jiao of China.

Srikanth lost 8-21, 21-16, 14-21 against China's Weng Hong Yang. Praneeth also found France's Christo Popov too hot to handle, going down 14-21, 16-21 in another match.

Orleans Masters winner Priyanshu Rajawat too couldn't cross the opening hurdle, going

down 19-21 10-21 to Malaysia's Ng Tze Yong. Former World No.11 Sameer Verma went down 15-21, 15-21 to Denmark's Magnus Johannesen. Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam lost to Korea's third seed Baek Ha Na and Lee So Hee 11-21, 6-21 in women's doubles.

The BWF World Tour is divided into six levels, namely World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300 in order. One other category of tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points. The Super 500 is a Grade 2 (level 4) event in the BWF tournament ranking system.

## Protesting wrestlers return to their homes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, May 31:** The "shell-shocked" protesting wrestlers, except Sakshi Malik, have returned to their homes in Haryana, and did not speak with the waiting media in Haridwar due to a silence vow, a member of the protest group said Wednesday.

The grapplers had resumed their agitation against Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh April 23 at Jantar Mantar and stayed there till May 28, the day they were detained by the Delhi Police during their march towards the new Parliament building.

Immediately after their detention, the police cleared the protest site and made it clear that wrestlers will not be allowed back to the Jantar Mantar. The police action against the wrestlers drew criticism from different quarters.

Tuesday, they threatened to immerse their medals into the holy river Ganga but the farmer leaders stopped them from taking the extreme step.

"They were crying since morning. It is not easy to throw away even a medal won at district level and they were ready to throw away those big international medals. They were shell-shocked, not a word was coming out of their mouths," said a member of the protesting group.

"They had taken a silence vow for Tuesday and that's why they did

not speak with anyone in Haridwar. All have returned to their respective homes but Sakshi is still in Delhi," he added.

While the wrestlers did not address the media, they were seen having discussions among themselves, whispering in each other's ears.

The mood was sombre when the wrestlers arrived at the famous Har ki Pauri with their medals as they wept and were being consoled by their family members. They did not carry out their threat and returned with their medals after farmer leaders sought five days to sort out their issues.

The wrestlers have been demanding the arrest of Brij Bhushan, who they have accused of sexual exploitation. Two FIRs were filed against him, including one in POCSO act, but it is now being claimed that the 'minor' who has filed a complaint against the WFI chief is actually not a minor.

The oversight panel, which was formed by the government to probe the allegations, did not make its findings public but sources had claimed that the six-member committee did not find any incriminating evidence against Brij Bhushan.

The WFI chief has denied all the charges and said that even if one allegation is proved, he will "hang himself". Brij Bhushan has alleged political conspiracy behind the protest.