



## LEADING FROM FRONT

Actor Priyanka Chopra takes to Twitter to share a lengthy post over unnecessary boycott calls of Hindi movies

LEISURE P2



## PTI PRESIDENT ARRESTED

Police arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party president Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi from outside his residence in Lahore

INTERNATIONAL P10



## SEVILLA EMERGE CHAMPS

Spanish club Sevilla claim their 7th Europa League title after beating Jose Mourinho-coached Roma via penalty shootout

SPORTS P12

### SHORT TAKES

#### Mohapatra elected WMO vice-president

**Bhubaneswar:** Director General of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Mrutyunjay Mohapatra was elected Thursday as one of the vice-presidents of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). Mohapatra was elected as the third VP of the WMO receiving 113 votes out of 148. The development was confirmed by the WMO which declared the election results in a tweet. Apart from Mohapatra, the two others who were elected as vice-presidents were Eoin Moran, Director of Met Éireann from Ireland and Daouda Konate, Director of Meteorology of Cote d'Ivoire. Mohapatra, also known as the 'Cyclone Man' of India, has been heading the apex weather office of the country since 2019. The WMO is the United Nation's authoritative voice on weather, climate, and water.

#### OJEE results to be declared today

**Bhubaneswar:** The results of Odisha Joint Entrance Examination (OJEE)-2023 will be announced Friday at 11.00am, an official informed Thursday. Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Preeti Ranjan Gharai and Principal Secretary Usha Padhi will brief the press, the OJEE official added. Candidates can check their results by visiting the official website of OJEE. The entrance test was conducted May 8 to May 15 for admission into undergraduate courses such as B Pharm, BCAT and post-graduate courses like MBA, MCA, M Tech, M Arch, M Plan, M Pharm and M Sc Computer Science in various universities, government colleges and self-financed institutes in Odisha.

#### Alcoholic youth kills dad in Puri

**Puri:** An inebriated youth in Puri district allegedly beat his father to death after the latter objected to his regular alcohol consumption and demand for money, police said Thursday. The incident took place late Wednesday night in Sanakanti village under the Pipili police limits. The deceased has been identified as Hrushikesh Pradhan (60). Police have detained accused Madan Mohan Pradhan (28) and started investigation into the case. Police said that the accused beat up his father Wednesday night after an argument over money.

#### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I understand. One does not need to know about evolution or the periodic table to learn about pakodanomics

#### MARKET WATCH

INDEX	SENSEX	62428.54	↓	193.70	VARIATION
	NIFTY	18487.80	↓	46.60	
CURRENCY	DOLLAR	82.40	↓	₹0.31	
	EURO	88.39	↑	₹0.03	
	GOLD	₹60,271	↑	₹108	
	SILVER	₹72,644	↑	₹542	

#### WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK	Forecast
TEMP	MAX 39.9°C	38.8°C	Light to moderate rain
	MIN 26.5°C	26.4°C	
Humidity	61%	71%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



DREAMS IN THEIR EYES: Tiny tots express their happiness Thursday as they enjoy their first day of school in Thiruvananthapuram

## Bullet-riddled body of youth found in SNP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Baripada, June 1:** The bullet-riddled body of a 26-year-old tribal man was found Thursday morning in Talabandh range of Similpal National Park (SNP) in Mayurbhanj district. The incident, a day after Forest department personnel undertook an operation against poachers, has sparked tension. The deceased has been identified as Jagannath Hembram of Burudiha village under Bangriposhi police station area.

Talabandh range officer Shailendra Kumar Das said personnel undertook an operation in the core area Wednesday night, during which they encountered a group of hunters armed with bows and arrows. In order to disperse them, the Forest department personnel fired in the air, following which the hunters fled the spot, he said.

Locals, however, alleged that they were in the forest in search of a missing buffalo when they were fired upon. Jagannath's brother Kaluram lodged a police complaint, alleging that his brother was killed in a 'fake encounter' by the Forest staff, who mistook him for a poacher. The deceased's wife also claimed that he was 'innocent'.

However, Forest department officials dismissed the allegations stating that it is 'baseless' and 'proper probe will reveal the truth'.

## 50,000 GOVT STAFF STRIKE FOR PAY HIKE

WORKERS DEMAND INCREASE IN PAY GRADE FROM ₹1,900 TO ₹4,200

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** Demanding hike in their salaries, over 50,000 government employees under the banner of Odisha Ministerial Officers' Association (OMOA) launched an indefinite strike at different districts across the state, Thursday. The employees said they will be on mass leave for an indefinite period till their demand is met.

Sources said that Odisha government employees staged dharna in front of the offices of the collectors in 30 districts to press for the demand for increase in their grade pay from ₹1,900 to ₹4,200 as per Level IX under Odisha Revised Scales of Pay (ORSP) Rules, 2017. As the employees went on mass leave, work in many of the offices in districts was severely affected and the public deprived of services.

The association had placed its demand before the government in April this year and the employees subsequently staged demonstrations by wearing black badges. The employees had also staged a sym-



Government employees hold a demonstration in front of the District Collector's office in Bolangir town, Thursday

olic protest till Wednesday in all the districts for the fulfillment of their demands. Since it was not met, the association launched a state-wide strike by boycotting work Thursday onwards.

Officials of the association asserted that the employees will not cooperate with the government and resume their work till their demand is met. Till then the mass leaves and peaceful protests will continue, they added.

"We have only one demand and that is to hike the pay scale from Level IV to IX. We have been staging protests for more than 40 days now. We have submitted memo-

randums to Collectors, Chief Secretary and the Chief Minister. But, the government is yet to take any action," said Tripati Balaji Sahu, president, 'Odisha Rajaswa Amala Sangha'.

Similarly, Subhendu Routray, general secretary of 'Milita Amala Sangha', Bhubaneswar wing, said the officials are doing all the government work for the people at grassroots level. However, they are facing injustice as their demand is not being looked into.

Due to the protest, many people who visited government offices in various districts for work had to return empty-handed.

## Tikait promises to go to Prez over wrestlers' protest

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said Thursday the final decision on the issue of wrestlers' protests will be taken at a meeting Friday. The farmers and the khaps of Haryana have been extending support to the wrestlers and what remains to be decided is the strategy to pursue. Tikait made it clear that they will leave no stone unturned. "We will go to the President of India if need be... We are with you, you don't have to worry," Tikait said during a meeting in Muzaffarnagar.

Tikait also explained why the farmers and khaps are extending support to wrestlers. "It is good if the family is 'big'. You should understand what the Central government is doing. They broke Lalu Yadav's family in Bihar. They did so with Mulayam Singh Yadav's family. The same thing is happening in Rajasthan. So if the family is 'big', the Centre will find it difficult to break."

Meanwhile Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur said Thursday that the Centre was sensitively handling the issue of protesting wrestlers. He told reporters in Mumbai that the government has accepted the wrestlers' demand for a committee to probe their allegations and an investigation is underway.

## NCERT drops chapters on periodic table, democracy

As these deletions are permanent, scientists and teachers have expressed concerns about the long-term impact of omitting these crucial subjects from the syllabus

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** The 'Periodic Table', 'Democracy', and 'Sources of Energy' chapters will be deleted from Class X textbooks, officials of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) said Thursday. Complete chapters on the subjects now stand deleted as a part of a 'rationalisation' meant to reduce the 'burden on students', the NCERT said.

Earlier in April, the NCERT had announced the deletion of certain chapters from the Mughal era from Class XII history books. The move to erase Mughal history from syllabus attracted severe criticism from various political parties as well as intellectuals. Prior to that, it had also removed from text books chapters on Darwin's Theory of Evolution.

The removal of the Theory of Evolution from the Class X curriculum stoked significant concern. Newly released textbooks by NCERT have revealed further cuts, including a chapter on the 'Periodic Table' as well as various chapters on 'Democracy'.

The chapters on 'Democracy' that have been removed after the latest revision are: 'Popular Struggles

#### CHAPTERS DROPPED FROM CLASS X BOOKS

SUBJECT	CHAPTERS
Science	CHAPTER 5: Periodic Classification of elements
Democratic Politics-I	CHAPTER 5: Popular Struggles and Movements
	CHAPTER 6: Political Parties
	CHAPTER 8: Challenges to Democracy

and Movement', 'Political Parties' and 'Challenges to Democracy'. By removing the topics on democracy and the 'Periodic Table', the NCERT has once more courted controversy.

However, the NCERT has tried to defend its action. "Due to Covid-19, rationalisation of courses was going on to reduce the burden of studies on the child. Overlapping content and irrelevant content are some of the reasons why these chapters were dropped from the curriculum," Minister of State for Education, Subhas Sarkar has been quoted as saying by 'NDTV.com'.

## 2 GANJAM GIRLS MEET WATERY GRAVE IN SEA

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, June 1:** Two girls drowned in the Bay of Bengal in Ganjam district Thursday, police said. The incident happened at the Aryapalli beach where five girls of a family were bathing in the sea, they said.

As the sea was rough, police patrolling the beach asked the girls not to venture into the sea, but despite the instructions they went in, leading to the accident, said Sudeepa Kumar Sahu, the in-charge of the Marine police station. The girls went into deep waters and were swept away by huge waves. Hearing their screams, local fishermen rushed to their help. They

rescued four girls while another went missing. Later her body was also recovered after a search was launched by the police and ODRF personnel. The four girls who were rescued earlier were rushed to the Chhatrapur sub-divisional hospital where doctors pronounced one of them dead on arrival.

The deceased were identified as Swapnarani Pandit, a resident of Kanishi, and Pragyanari Tripathy of Harikrushnapur. While Swapnarani was a final-year undergraduate student, Pragyanari had appeared in her Class XII board examinations this year.

The condition of the three other girls are stated to be stable, officials informed.

## Now brain pacemaker to cure Parkinson's

Over 7 million people in India suffer from the disease and doctors feel that surgery can cure them to a great extent

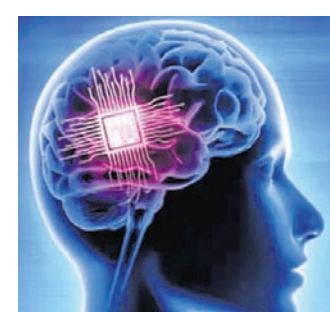
AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** Till now one had heard about pacemakers for the heart. However, in a first of its kind of surgery, doctors here have implanted a pacemaker in the brain of a woman suffering from Parkinson's disease. And the result has been amazing. Savitri Devi, 51, who has been suffering from Parkinson's disease for the last nine years, has now got a new

lease of life since the pacemaker has been implanted inside her brain to treat the neurological disorder.

After evaluation of her condition, doctors at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here suggested deep brain stimulation (DBS), often described as a pacemaker for the brain, are often very useful.

"Deep brain stimulation is a new surgery where you stimulate particular areas of the brain. It acts just like a pacemaker of the brain. In this case, we planned to stimulate the subthalamic nucleus of the brain. The purpose of the surgery is to help control the disease and improve the patient's lifestyle," said Dr Shrey Jain, a neurosurgeon with the hospital, in a statement.



"It is particularly useful in diseases like Parkinson's, tremors, dystonia and has been evaluated and successfully shown positive results for psychiatric conditions like depression and mania," Dr Jain added. Jain explained that in the surgery electrodes are passed bilat-

erally in the deep brain through two small holes in the skull and during the surgery, the patient remained conscious. "Her speech, eye movements, and power of the limbs were being monitored during the surgery and it was being observed how her symptoms are improving. During surgery, she stopped speaking at one point so electrodes were repositioned and her speech came back. Devi has improved quite well after the surgery and is able to lead a normal life," he informed.

Over seven million people in India are suffering from Parkinson's disease and it can be debilitating, informed Dr Ajit K Sinha, a senior consultant at the same hospital.

# leisure



## KIM CATTRALL RETURNS AS SAMANTHA JONES

Actress Kim Cattrall will reprise her iconic role as Samantha Jones in the Season 2 finale of *And Just Like That*, the revival of *Sex and the City*. But she will only appear in one scene. Cattrall shot her dialogue March 22 without speaking with the stars of the series.

## RYAN GOSLING RESPONDS TO CRITICS QUESTIONING HIS AGE

Actor Ryan Gosling has the perfect response to criticism about his casting in the *Barbie* movie. Shutting down critics who called him too old to play Ken in the live-action adaptation of the Mattel dolls, the actor claims people never cared about Barbie's counterpart before.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

If you get a chance to display your presentation skills, don't lose it, says Ganesh. Your eloquence may receive wide acclaim. Your children too may give you reason to be proud. Do remember to take time out for the elderly in your family.

#### TAURUS

You may feel that you woke up on the wrong side of the bed today, says Ganesh. The day is filled with a fair share of jittery moments and lingering worry. Stand firm and remember that every night has a dawn. The law of averages will make your evening more enjoyable. You may discuss certain intimate issues with your sweetheart for the betterment of your relationship.

#### GEMINI

You will meet someone special who is here to stay for good, predicts Ganesh. Your kind and considerate nature will benefit others. You need to understand that it's okay to spend a little on comforts and entertainment. Be ready for a busy, yet cheerful, day ahead.

#### CANCER

Those around you have always thought that there is something different about you, but could never put their finger on what exactly it was. You always knew. You are better than them, and today is the day to make them realise that. How? The best course of action is to do your job in the best possible manner.

#### LEO

Easy come, easy go – that is the best way to sum up money. Try holding on to it, advises Ganesh, as there is a strong possibility that you shall incur a lot of wasteful expenditures today. Always think twice before you spend your hard-earned money. Remember the Grasshopper, cautions Ganesh, and learn from the fable, if not the life philosophies of the famous rich men of our age.

#### VIRGO

Sense and sensibilities will prevail today as you address relationships. On the emotional front, you may be unclear and oscillate between what you feel and what you really expected of you. But in the end, you may well end up following your inner voice than depend on others. Your intuition is invincibly strong, says Ganesh.

#### LIBRA

The theatrical you comes to the fore. Ganesh expects you to put up a show in all that you do today, be it a display of devotion to your work, or dedication to your family. You may give the best in the business a run for their money as you prove to be the perfect choice for all tasks assigned to you.

#### SCORPIO

Signs indicate you may face unexpected expenses today. But this spending is likely to be on family and friends – especially in entertaining them. But keep track of every penny. To be on the safer side, Ganesh advises you not to have any pockets at all today.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Pack your bags today for a long business trip, which will bear rich fruits. Be ready to pick up important business pointers and learn your way into your trade. Ganesh predicts pleasant surprises in store later in the day.

#### CAPRICORN

It's time to party, whether or not you have no reason for it. Friends and even acquaintances will be invited to take part in the celebrations; you will be all charged up to have a blast of a day, says Ganesh. For those engaged in business, profits may come but it won't be the result of the efforts you put in.

#### AQUARIUS

You may be sorely disappointed today. With no support from family, and the kids driving you up the wall, you need to keep your cool. Family feuds are highly likely, and neighbours may attempt to interfere. For now, all you need is to remain unruffled, says Ganesh.

#### PISCES

While you may have a wide circle of acquaintances, it is only a select few who you bless with your munificence. And that is precisely what you will be busy with, as a day filled with socialising and leisure-filled activities beckons, says Ganesh.

## Priyanka breaks her silence on boycott calls

**Mumbai:** Actress Priyanka Chopra, who has been in the industry for two decades, took to Twitter and shared a lengthy post over unnecessary boycott calls of movies.

The film industry has always been a soft target for politicians and militant religious outfits. Several big films have suffered a lot due to the same, and one such instance was witnessed around the release SRK-Kajol starrer *Dilwale* and Bajirao Mastani starring Deepika and Ranveer.

Breaking her silence on the issue, the *Citadel* actress wrote, "I can't help staying silent on this anymore. It's too sad to see how films and actors become political pawns! Bans based on baseless propaganda.. People think films are just fun and games to make! They are made with blood, sweat and tears for entertainment!! Pls stand by the filmmakers who put in their life's money and hard work to make people laugh and smile. Don't let them be blackmailed and threatened by holding their films ransom just before release."

Priyanka admitted to being aware of the consequence of her statement but also added that she can't keep mum anymore. "I know I may get into trouble for saying all this but I can't be a silent witness to character defamation based on opinions anymore.. That is not what, the India I grew up, taught me," the actress quoted. AGENCIES



## Bakul's storytelling fest this weekend

**Bhubaneswar:** City-based Bakul Foundation is organising the Bakul Festival of Storytelling this weekend (Saturday and Sunday) here at the Bakul Library in Satyanagar to make children sing, dance and enjoy listening to the best storytellers of the city.

Since most of the summer camps organised by schools and different organisations are already over, and children still have a few weeks of summer vacation, Bakul decided to organise the event from 4pm to 8 pm on both days. More than 20 of the best storytellers from the City including professional storytellers, teachers, students, retired persons, grandmothers and homemakers will tell their favourite stories in English, Hindi and Odia, said the organisers.

Bakul Foundation, which had conceptualised and curated BhuFeSto in 2018 and organized it recently in 2023 with BDA as part of the Dot Fest, has played a pioneering role in bringing back the popularity of storytelling.

Sujit Mahapatra, the founder of the Foundation, said, "When we first curated BhuFeSto, we were struggling to find Odia storytellers to match the best international and national storytellers we had invited to the festival. But now, we have enough storytellers (more than 20) to have a Storytelling



A file photo of storyteller Prachi Tara attending a Bakul event

Festival only with local storytellers." Bakul has been organising regular storytelling sessions at the Bakul Library since its inception in 2007. Moreover, during the very popular online storytelling festivals during Covid, Storytime @ 9 and Rabibaar Gapabaar, children watched the storytelling sessions

organised by Bakul often with their parents and entire families. During the lockdown, Bakul had also invited the children, who were listening to the storytelling to tell stories and featured them in the online sessions as part of a series called *Tiny Tellers, Mighty Tales*. PNN

## Odisha is nation's cultural centre: LKA Chairman



**Bhubaneswar:** Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) Chairman V Nagdas Thursday attended the Artists Meet' here at the Akademi's Regional Centre and interacted with several eminent artists of the state over a series of issues.

Speaking to *Orissa POST* during the programme titled 'Coffee with Nagdas', he said, "Odisha is a cultural hub of the country and we have several plans to carry out in the coming days. We'll conduct workshops for 75 women artists in the state and have plans for a special one to be led

by eminent painter Jatin Das, which will be attended by many artists in the state. Additionally, orientation seminars will be offered at various art colleges for curators and critics so that they can market their works."

Nagdas said that the state government must show more interest in its artists and promote their works. "There is a plan in place to set up a new gallery in Bhubaneswar where more works can be displayed. A few international artists will also be invited to the state to give exposure to

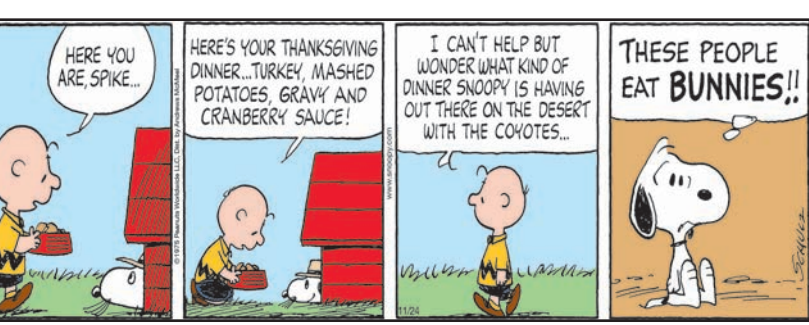
the local artists," he further said. Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi secretary Panchanan Samal, LKA secretary Rahas Mohanty, eminent painters Ramahari Jena, Baladev Moharatha, Ramakrishna Vedala, Chaita Basu Jena, Aparna Roy and Satyabhama Majhi were among the artists who attended the meet. An alumna of Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati University, Shantiniketan, Nagdas has vast experience in the field of printmaking, and his works have been exhibited in India and abroad. Before taking charge of Lalit Kala Akademi, he was the Head of Graphic Department at Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya, Khairagarh, Chhattisgarh. PNN

## NATYADHARA- DAY 1

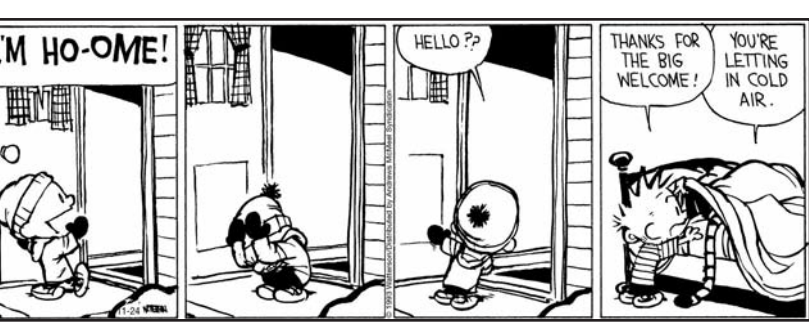


A scene from *Ek Dui Teen*, an Odia play, enacted on the first evening of Natyadhara at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Thursday. Written by Byomkesh Tripathy and directed by Debadutta Pati, the humorous drama, a sarcastic take on people's insatiable greed, was presented by the Asim Basu Foundation. Dramatists Balraj Tripathy, Pabitra Mohan Kar, Haren Sahoo and Prasanna Mishra were among the luminaries who graced the occasion. Four plays—three at Bhanjakala Mandap and one at Rabindra Mandap—by different theatre troupes of Odisha are performed every month under Natyadhara, a collaboration of the Culture Department and Odisha Natya Sangh. OP PHOTO

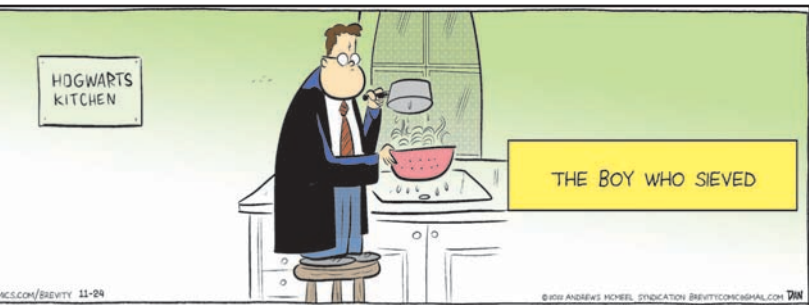
### PEANUTS



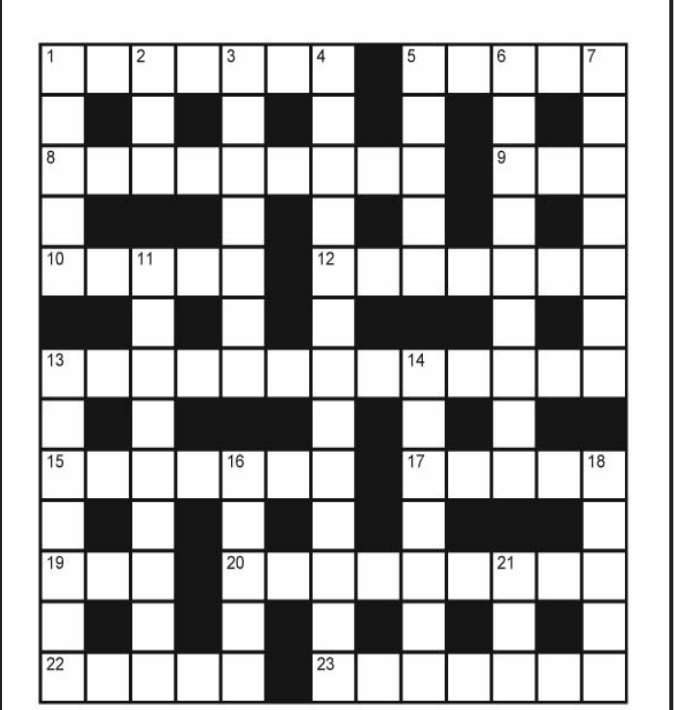
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Island music genre
  - 5 Balkan capital
  - 8 Devoted to a cause
  - 9 Barbary beast
  - 10 Cuban dance
  - 12 Binge
  - 13 From opposite ends, as in "opposed"
  - 15 Soapbox composition
  - 17 Bach
  - 19 Amazement
  - 20 Helps out (7,2)
  - 22 Gown fabric
  - 23 Cheese dish
  - 4 Small boat driver (8,5)
  - 5 Marsh plant
  - 6 Fipple flute
  - 7 In a proficient manner
  - 11 Has good intentions (5,4)
  - 13 Idle
  - 14 Itch reliever
  - 16 Sri Lanka coin
  - 18 Doctrine
  - 21 Blubber

### 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.

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

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

F	K	L	S	A	F
S	L	E	E	V	E
O	X	E	N	A	C
Q	U	E	L	L	E
S	T	A	L	K	G
E	O	H	R	I	
G	R	A	N	D	E
P	O	L	L	E	N
R	L	L	E	N	E
P	O	L	L	E	N
R	L	L	E	N	E

**SUDOKU**

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

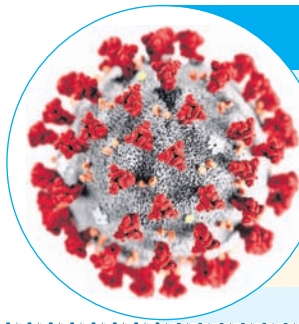
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown



## SUMMER FEST

Sital Sasthi Mahotsav organised by Shibanshi Foundation was inaugurated at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday



## 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

# 'Finish Baramunda bus terminal work by July'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** Acting on the instructions of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, Secretary to CM (ST) VK Pandian Thursday reviewed the progress of Baramunda Interstate Bus Terminal transformation work and asked the officials concerned to ensure that the entire work is completed by July this year.

After visiting the construction site, Pandian watched a video presentation of the construction work and held discussions with the officials concerned. The review revealed that 85 per cent of the project has been completed. Further, it is reported that the civil works will be completed by the end of June. Pandian directed the officials to complete the entire construction work by July this year.

Worth mentioning that Baramunda bus terminal is



Odisha's first world-class transit system. It has a capacity of 2,000 buses per day with all modern facilities. The terminal is being built on an area of 11 acres at a cost of ₹180 crore, while there is another 4 acres of land for future expansion.

It will have a food court, excavator, elevator, ample car parking facility, pick-up and drop-off facility for passengers. Along with this, there will also be facilities for pre-

paid auto-rickshaws, taxis, taxi aggregators like Ola, Uber and others. The entire terminal will be powered by solar energy.

It also has Wi-Fi and waste water treatment system. Aahar Plus centre will also be set up there for the convenience of passengers. Steps will also be taken for relocation of vendors who have been evicted for the bus terminal work.

From here, buses will be operated

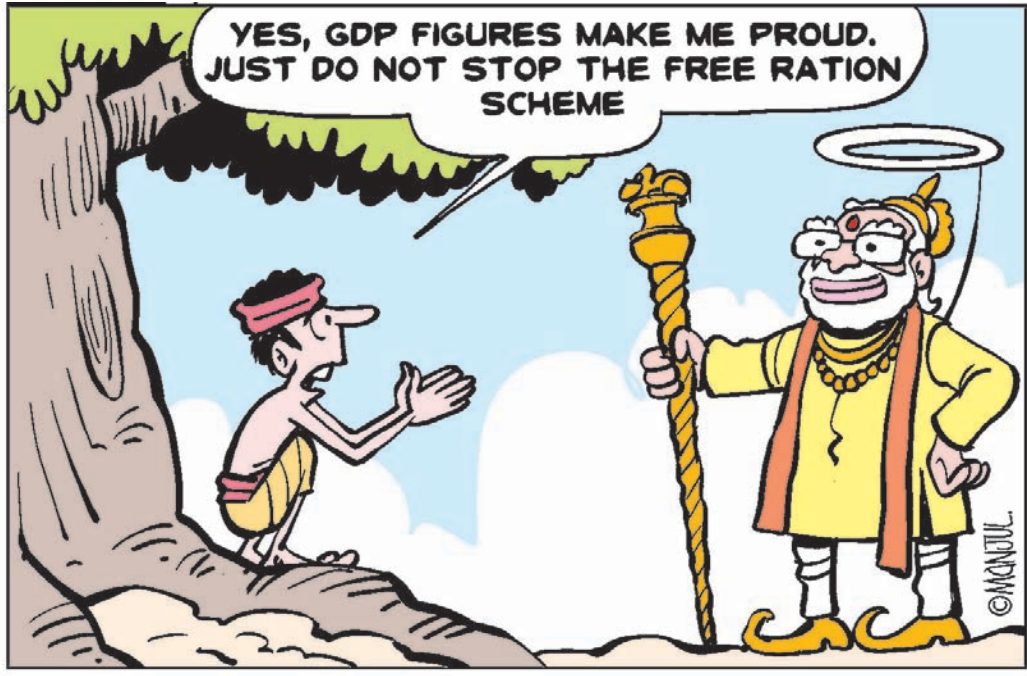
## IN A NUTSHELL

- Baramunda bus terminal is Odisha's first world-class transit system
- It has a capacity of 2,000 buses per day with all modern facilities
- The terminal is being built on an area of 11 acres at a cost of ₹180 crore
- The review revealed that 85 per cent of the project has been completed
- Civil work will be completed by the end of June

to many important destinations in the country including Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Raipur, Ranchi, Kolkata and Bangalore.

Transport commissioner Amitabh Thakur, BDA vice-chairman Balbant Singh, BMC commissioner Vijay Amruta Kulange and Bhubaneswar DCP Prateek Singh were present during the review.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



# GST collection up by 11.17% in May

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** The state has recorded a gross goods and services tax (GST) collection of ₹4,397.73 crore during May 2023 against the collection of ₹3,955.75 crore in the corresponding period of previous year – a growth rate of 11.17 per cent.

The progressive gross GST collection up to May of the financial year (FY) 2023-24 stands at ₹9,433.47 crore against a collection of ₹8,865.98 crore up to May of FY 2022-23. The gross GST collection recorded a growth rate of 6.40 per cent. Further, the collection to be retained by the state consisting of OGST and IGST settlement has recorded a growth of 30.28 per cent during May 2023 with collection of ₹1,675.77 crore against a collection of ₹1,286.29 crore during May 2022.

The progressive collection to be retained by the state (OGST + IGST Settlement) till May 2023 stands at ₹4,034.94 crore while the state had collected ₹2,966.29 crore from the source till May 2022. The



progressive OGST and IGST collection recorded a growth rate of 36.03 per cent.

The collection under all Acts monitored by the Commissionerate of Commercial Tax & GST, Odisha including GST, VAT, entry tax and professional tax is ₹2,711.04 crore during the last month. In May 2022, the state had collected ₹2311.78 crore. The entire revenue collection of the Commercial Tax & GST wing witnessed a growth rate of 17.27 per cent in May.

During May 2023, 20.40 lakh waybills were generated against 17.26 lakh generated during May 2022 recording a growth of 18.19 per cent reflecting the buoyancy in the economic sector.

# 80% of BJD leaders want to jump ship, claims BJP

**BJD LEADER AND ENERGY MINISTER PRATAP KESHARI DEB SAYS SOME SAFFRON PARTY MLAS ARE ALSO IN TOUCH WITH THE BJD**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** The Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state Thursday claimed that 80 per cent of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) leaders were in touch with it to change sides.

Speaking to reporters, BJP's state general secretary Prithviraj Harichandan claimed that these BJD leaders were disenchanted, and they want to end the "Ravan Raj" in Odisha.

"While only one Vibhishan was required to end Ravana's empire, there are hundreds of Vibhishans waiting as they are fed up with the ruling BJD," he claimed, drawing an analogy with Ramayana.

These BJD leaders are disillusioned with the rampant corruption, autocratic way of functioning and misrule in the state, Harichandan claimed.



They will support the BJP as it is for "dharma", he said.

Earlier this week, BJP state president Manmohan Samal had claimed that about 100 BJD MLAs were in touch with his party as they were not satisfied with the manner in which the government was being run by bureaucrats.

Prior to that, Union Minister Bishweswar Tudu and BJP MP

Earlier this week, BJP state president Manmohan Samal had claimed that about 100 BJD MLAs were in touch with his party as they were not satisfied with the manner in which the govt was being run

Jual Oram had made similar claims.

State Energy Minister PK Deb said some BJP MLAs are also in touch with the BJD.

"Some of our MLAs are in touch with the BJP, and some MLAs of the BJP are in contact with us. This is a natural phenomenon normally seen when elections approach," he said.

# ED attaches ₹11.35cr of OPHWC ex-dy manager

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth over ₹11 crore belonging to Pratap Samal, former deputy manager of Odisha Police Housing & Welfare Corporation (OPHWC), and his family members in connection with a case registered on the allegations of amassing wealth disproportionate to his known sources of income.

"ED initiated investigation under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 on the basis of an FIR registered by Vigilance Police Station, Bhubaneswar under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 against Pratap Kumar Samal & his wife Sasmita Samal for accumulating disproportionate assets to the tune of ₹14.88 crore (approx.)," ED mentioned in a press note released Thursday. The central agency sleuths found during the course of investigation that Samal has acquired huge properties using the wealth amassed through corrupt practices.

"Investigation under PMLA revealed that Samal acquired properties by way of corruption and acquired assets/properties in the name of his family members, concealed and possessed them so as to hide their original source and accordingly committed offence of money laundering. The said proceeds of crime have been provisionally attached under the provisions of PMLA, 2002," ED further adds.

Various movable as well as immovable assets worth ₹11.35 crore possessed by Samal, his wife Sasmita and son Pritam have been provisionally attached by ED as per provisions of PMLA.

■ The central agency sleuths found during the course of investigation that former deputy manager of Odisha Police Housing & Welfare Corporation Pratap Samal acquired huge properties through corrupt practices

■ Samal acquired properties by way of corruption and acquired assets/properties in the name of his family members, concealed and possessed them so as to hide their original source and accordingly committed offence of money laundering

November 9, 2021, the state Vigilance sleuths unearthed 27 immovable properties including two multi-storey buildings and flats possessed by Samal and his wife in the Capital city. The couple had also produced two Odia flicks including 'Nari Akhire Nia' (2003) and 'Baazi' (2001). Samal was one of the executive producers of 'Baazi' while his wife was the producer for both the movies. Vigilance sources claimed that its technical team valued the ill-gotten assets by Samal at ₹14.88 crore which is more than 1,000 per cent of his legal sources of income.

Interestingly, when the sleuths reached Samal's Nayapalli house, he made the officials wait outside his residence for around 45 minutes and threw away a paper carton containing ₹20 lakh to his neighbour's building. The sleuths seized ₹38.12 lakh cash during the search.

Notably, Samal was given compulsory retirement from services by the state government November 18, 2021.



# India carries out successful training launch of Agni-1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 1:** India Thursday carried out a successful training launch of Agni-1 ballistic missile that validated all operational and technical parameters of the strategic weapon.

The Defence ministry said Strategic Forces Command (SFC) carried out the missile launch from APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha.

"A successful training launch of a medium-range ballistic missile, Agni-1, was carried out by the Strategic Forces Command from APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha, June 1," it said in a statement.

"The missile is a proven sys-



tem, capable of striking targets with a very high degree of precision. The user training launch successfully validated all operational and technical parameters of the missile," it said.

In the last two decades, India has been focusing on enhancing its strategic deterrent capability by developing various ballistic missiles,

precision-guided munitions and related platforms.

India has developed various variants of the Agni series of missiles.

In December last, India successfully test-fired nuclear-capable ballistic missile Agni-V that can strike targets at ranges up to 5,000 km. The Agni 1 to 4 missiles have ranges from 700 km to 3,500 km and they have already been deployed.

In April, India successfully carried out the maiden flight trial of an endo-atmospheric interceptor missile from a ship off the coast of Odisha in the Bay of Bengal as part of its ambitious ballistic missile defence programme.

## GED SLUM MURDER CASE

# CP moves court seeking 7-day remand of accused

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** The Commissionerate Police Thursday sought the court's permission to take on remand the prime accused in the murder case of Sushant Nayak, alias Kalia, for seven days to investigate the motive behind the crime and involvement of any other persons.

Notably, the prime accused in the case, Sujit Kumar Nayak, had surrendered before the SDJM Court here Wednesday.

Sujit, a native of Saranakula in Nayagarh, has been staying near the residence of the deceased in same slum, GED Basti, of the City. "The Capital police want to bring

the prime accused Sujit on remand to interrogate him for further investigation. We have sought court's permission to take Sujit on remand for seven days for our probe. The team is continuously searching for the other absconding accused persons and we are positive that we will arrest them soon. As per our investigation, as many as four people were involved in this brutal murder," said DCP Prateek Singh.

As per sources, Sujit's nephew Vishal had reportedly abused Sushant's niece April 15 this year. Registering a case (no 262/2023) April 26 on the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim's mother, Capital police had launched a probe into the matter.

# Twitter bans record 25,51,623 accounts

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** Elon Musk-run Twitter banned a record 25,51,623 accounts in India between March 26 and April 25, for promoting child sexual exploitation and non-consensual nudity.

The micro-blogging platform, going through a churning under its new owner, also took down 2,249 accounts for promoting terrorism on its platform in the country.

In total, Twitter banned 25,53,881 accounts in the reporting period in India. Twitter, in its monthly report in compliance with the new Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021, said that it received just 158 complaints from users in India in the same time-frame through its grievance redressal mechanisms.

In addition, Twitter processed four grievances which were appealing account suspensions.

"We overturned three of these account suspensions after reviewing the specifics of the situation. The



## POLICY VIOLATIONS

Most complaints from India were about abuse/harassment (83), followed by sensitive adult content (41), hateful conduct (19), and defamation (12)

remaining reported accounts remain suspended," said the company. "We did not receive any requests related to general questions

Under the new IT Rules 2021, big digital and social media platforms, with more than 5 million users, have to publish monthly compliance reports

about Twitter accounts during this reporting period," it added.

Most complaints from India were about abuse/harassment (83), fol-

lowed by sensitive adult content (41), hateful conduct (19), and defamation (12).

Under the new IT Rules 2021, big digital and social media platforms, with more than 5 million users, have to publish monthly compliance reports.

Meanwhile, under Musk, Twitter recently approved a staggering 83 per cent of government requests to either restrict or block content globally, including in India and Turkey, the media reported.

Since Musk's takeover in October 2022, the micro-blogging platform received 971 requests from governments, according to a report in El Pais, a Spanish-language daily newspaper.

When Bloomberg columnist Matthew Yglesias shared the report on Twitter on Monday, with the caption "I'm a free speech absolutist", an angry Musk reacted: "You're such a numbskull. Please point out where we had an actual choice and we will reverse it."



CAR FEST AHEAD: Chariot work in full swing at Rath Yard in Puri, Thursday

OP PHOTO



FRUIT FOR HEALTH: People buying black plums (Jamun) from a fruit seller near Jobra Anicut in Cuttack, Thursday

OP PHOTO

# EOW arrests builder in ₹9 crore cheating case

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, June 1: The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police has arrested Saroj Kumar Panda, one of the directors of Odysa Homes & Commercial Pvt Ltd, in a ₹9 crore cheating case.

Panda was arrested from Jeypore, Koraput, and brought to Bhubaneswar. The arrest was made in connection with a case ( 9/23) lodged against directors Odysa Homes & Commercial Pvt Ltd for misappropriation of crores of rupees by fraudulent means in providing commercial units at Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar, EOW officials said.

There are five landowners who entered into agreement and registered power of attorney with Maa Basudha Homes' Kharvel Nagar, Bhubaneswar represented by its proprietor Snigdha Pradhan for development and construction of commercial complex in 2012 on cost sharing basis.

Subsequently, Maa Basudha Homes made a collaboration agreement with the real estate company to develop, construct, market and to accept the booking amounts for sale of commercial units excluding the share of land owners.

During the period 2013-20, the real-estate firm represented by its directors accepted the deposits to the tune of ₹9 crore from different prospective buyers for the sale of 129 commercial units of Basudha Homes Project but failed to hand over the units till date and also did not return the booking amounts, the officials said.



The EOW found that the company, Odysa Homes & Commercial Private Ltd, has made multiple transactions in respect of most of the commercial units

The company also deceived the five land owners in giving the commercial units of their share and rather received the booking amount against their share of units

The EOW found that the company has made multiple transactions in respect of most of the commercial units. Again, without Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) approval, the company constructed the third floor in the said complex and also received booking amounts from different customers to provide the commercial units in that floor.

The company also received the five land owners in giving the commercial units of their share and rather received the booking amount against their share of units also, they said. Earlier, two directors Manoj Kumar Panda and Aurobinda Santara of Odysa Homes & Commercial Pvt Ltd were arrested for cheating ₹20 crore in their Ganapati Homes Project to provide flats to different investors.

Accused Saroj Kumar Panda was involved in both the cases and remained absconding to evade the police arrest. There are 10 more cases pending against the firm and its directors at different police stations.

# ₹2,961.52cr disbursed to construction workers

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 1: The state government has disbursed ₹2,961.52 crore to construction workers under different welfare schemes, Labour Minister Sarada Prasad Nayak said Thursday.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik reviewed the major activities of the Labour & ESI department and fulfillment of the commitments of the state government in Election Manifesto, 2019.

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, Nayak said Odisha Building & Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board has been formed for the welfare of construction workers.

During the period from December 15, 2008 to April 30, 2023, more than 38.40 lakh construction workers have been registered as beneficiaries under the board and more than ₹2,961.52 crore benefits have been



Labour Minister Sarada Prasad Nayak addressing the media in City, Thursday

Yojana to all active registered construction workers in two phases during Covid-19 pandemic.

In the first phase, Nayak said, an amount of ₹278.05 crore disbursed to 18.53 lakh active construction workers at their door steps through field level functionaries of the blocks and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Similarly, during the 2nd phase, an amount of ₹310.91 crore was disbursed to 20.72 lakh active construction workers of the state in DBT mode, he added.

The state government has been providing health care services to more than 7.41 lakh Insured Persons and their family members under ESI services through a network of 41 ESI dispensaries and 4 ESI hospitals in Odisha. Furthermore, 4 new hospitals have been approved at Paradip, Balasore, Jharsuguda and Duburi and 12 new dispensaries are under construction.

disbursed under different welfare schemes, out of ₹3,661.14 crore cess collected, he said.

To extend timely assistance to Odia migrant workers in destination states, Special Migrant Labour help desks have been opened in the state of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi and Surat.

Apart from this, 1, 07,330 migrant construction workers have been registered under the board as

beneficiaries, the Minister said.

Similarly, in order to cover the unorganised workers of the state under social security protection, Odisha Unorganised Workers' Social Security (OUWSS) Board has been constituted and more than 3.65 lakh unorganised workers have been registered so far.

Special financial assistance of ₹1,500 per beneficiary distributed under Nirman Shramik Kalyan

# Fruit distribution at Capital hosp by journalists' forum

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 1: The auspicious 56th birth anniversary of the spiritual head of Satsang, Param Pujyapad Sri Sri Acharyadev, was celebrated in various parts of the state Thursday. On this occasion, fruits and biscuits were distributed to patients at Capital Hospital, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Satsangee Journalists' Forum.



Odisha Construction Workers Welfare Board Chairperson Shreemayee Mishra attended the programme as the chief guest and distributed fruits to the patients. She expressed appreciation for the efforts of the journalists. Odisha Live CEO and Editor Nilambar Rath attended the event as the guest of honour and praised the efforts of forum.

Senior journalists Bhagbat Tripathi, Dalgobinda Panda, Srikant Sahu, Birbhadra Biswal, Prakash Chandra Sethi and Rudranayan Jena along with Sudheer Kumar Jena, Dhaneshwar Moharana, Nilakantha Sahu, Pradeep Kumar Dehuri, Shatruijit Mohanty, Bhruunaryan Maharana, Deepak Kumar Parida and Sudharani Mohanty contributed in organising the event. Senior journalist and Saha-Prati-Ritwik of Satsang, Dhruvikam Mohanty co-ordinated the programme.



IN SUPPORT OF WRESTLERS: Members of various trade union organisations, as part of a nation-wide protest, demonstrating at Master Canteen in Bhubaneswar opposing police action against the wrestlers, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Barbil, June 1: In a bid to support government of India's 'Mission LiFE' drive, JSW Steel and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF & CC) of India organised a meet at Barbil Wednesday.

Deputy Director General of Forests, MoEF & CC, Integrated Regional Office, Bhubaneswar AT Mishra was the speaker at the event.

Addressing the employees, Mishra said, "A small changes in environmental conscious lifestyle can minimize global warming. Under Mission Life, we need to follow seven steps— save energy, save water, say no to single use plastic, adopt sustainable food system, reduce waste, adopt healthy lifestyle and reduce e-waste to minimize the global

warming for better future."

Mishra invited all employees to practice sustainable lifestyle and contribute in healing the earth.

CSR team of JSW Foundation elaborated the initiatives that have been taken for the conservation of energy. The company promised to practice sustainable activities for the environment.

Mission LiFE is an India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment. Mission LiFE follows the P3 model, which stands for Pro Planet People, focusing on a lifestyle of the planet, for the planet, and by the planet. It advocates for a circular economy, where the concept of reduce, reuse and recycle is crucial to balance development, economic growth, and sustainability.

## INTERNATIONAL SEX WORKERS' DAY

# Endless agony, tears under the veneer of makeup

PATIT MANDAL, OP

Lisa (name changed) came to Bhubaneswar with the help of a friend searching for a stable job. But she resorted to the flesh trade after failing to secure any legitimate source of income in the City.

But that's not the only path that leads people into sex work, as Lisa says one of her friends was trafficked into the trade.

From distance, the lives of these workers may seem glamorous, but beneath those layers of glamour and flamboyance, there are people living through a ton of hardships.

On International Sex Workers' Day, OrissaPOST takes a look at the hardships faced by these workers and what steps are being taken to address them.

Apart from the psychological



A sexworker

trauma that comes as a by-product with the trade, Lisa elaborates about how she has been harassed almost at every step of her life as a consequence.

"I was in a relationship with someone who knew what I do for a living. He often used to get drunk, beat me up and extort money. Worse, he used to force me to get physical with his friends. However, help



Abharani Choudhury

was not forthcoming given my identity as a sex worker," she says.

Approaching police is often an exercise in futility as their behaviour remains hostile, she adds, mentioning that the police often force these workers to get physical with them.

However, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Prateek Singh had a different take on the issue. Singh



DCP Prateek Singh

explained that law being equal for everybody irrespective of their profession, police are careful while dealing with sex workers.

"We conduct regular training to sensitise our officers regarding their responsibility towards vulnerable groups and communicate each direction coming from higher offices to our personnel," he said speaking about

the steps taken by the police to ensure fair treatment of these workers.

He added that the police always take prompt action after receiving reports about human trafficking in the context of sex trade. "The City cops rescued five trafficked women and arrested six persons involved in their trafficking in 2022-23," he informed.

Besides, Singh assured, action will be taken if reports are filed in connection with harassment by the police. When the system fails, and when leaving the trade means losing livelihood, workers like Lisa seek external support to find some balance in life.

This is where NGOs like Odisha Patita Udhara Samiti (OPUS) come in. OPUS, for example, has implemented many targeted intervention programmes for the up-

liftment of sex workers.

Listing their initiatives, OPUS Secretary Abharani Choudhury says, "We provide free condoms, regular counselling and organise health camps to sensitise the workers regarding sexually transmitted diseases."

Besides, we ensure HIV-infected women to get anti-retroviral therapy to suppress viral replication, she adds. However access to health-care doesn't solve all the miseries of Lisa and many like her.

Choudhury recommends that ITPA protective homes (short-stay homes where rescued sex workers are kept) should be functional in state as per Supreme Court guidelines. "The workers who want to quit the trade should get proper rehabilitation from the government along with access to education for their children," she adds.

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# Devpt projects face resistance

## BHITARKANIKA TO BEAR BRUNT



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, June 1:** The state government's recent move to acquire land for three mega projects – a steel plant, riverine port and coastal highway – has come in for sharp criticisms and resistance from locals as well as environmentalists.

According to sources, the government has launched land acquisition process for establishment of a steel plant by ArcelorMittal, in partnership with Nippon Steel of Japan, in Mahakalpara block of the district.

Plans are also afoot for establishment of state's first riverine port project at Akhadasali under Mahakalpara block.

Moreover, a 49-km long coastal highway will be constructed in the district under Centre sponsored Bharatmala Pariyojana.

However, land acquisition for these three projects has evoked sharp reactions and protests from the residents and environmentalists as well. The resistance is coming mostly from people residing in forest lands for long. They have been demanding land pattas.

Similarly, fishermen fearing loss of livelihood and environmentalists apprehending ecological degradation in Bhitarkanika National Park, adjoining rivers and water bodies have been mulling for agitations.

It is apprehended that rare Olive Ridley turtles that visit Gahirmatha

and boost tourism and social development. However, the proposed steel plant and coastal highway project will lead to loss of biodiversity and natural environment in Bhitarkanika National Park and loss of livelihood for the fishermen, he added.

Similarly, green activist Prabhakar Samal said that Bhitarkanika, which is spread over 672 sq km of area, was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1975 while 145 sq km of its area was pronounced a national park in 1998. The area has also been designated as a Ramsar site in 2002.

The wetland, wildlife and rich biodiversity always attract nature lovers. The natural environment, flora & fauna, marine creatures and mangrove forests which act as a shield against natural calamities will be destroyed, he added.

Nature lover and Prakruti Bandhu awardee Aniruddh Rout said that Olive Ridley will stop coming to Gahirmatha after being deterred by the bright lights of scores of vehicles that would travel on the highway. He said that this has been observed in the past too.

Earlier, the turtles used to lay eggs on the 25-km stretch of coastline from Mangala river to Harchandi river mouth in Bay of Bengal near Brahmagiri in Puri district. However, the sea creatures have stopped visiting the place after 2014.

Gayadhar Dhal, district president of Odisha Krushak Sabha, Kendrapara said residents of 20 villages have been residing on forest land for the last 70 years. Penalty is collected from them in Form-K and receipt is handed over to them for encroaching on forest land.

He said that the government is acquiring land for the projects but the residents should be given land pattas before acquiring their land. The land patta will help them get compensation for which a memorandum has been submitted to the district administration. He warned that they would take to the streets if the administration tries to evict them from forest land.

IT IS FEARED THAT THE PROPOSED STEEL PLANT AND COASTAL HIGHWAY PROJECT WILL LEAD TO LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY IN BHITARKANIKA NATIONAL PARK AND LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD FOR THE FISHERMEN

ENVIRONMENTALISTS ARE OF THE VIEW THAT OLIVE RIDLEY WILL STOP COMING TO GAHIRMATHA AFTER BEING DETERRED BY THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF SCORES OF VEHICLES THAT WOULD TRAVEL ON THE HIGHWAY

marine sanctuary every year for mass nesting and breeding might stop coming to the area once the projects is implemented. It is also apprehended that these projects will speed up the coastal erosion which might spell havoc for the district.

Environmentalists Prabhuprasad Mohapatra said that 49-km stretch of the coastline in the district will be included in the coastal highway project like other coastal districts. The highway that will pass through Jambu forest, Gahirmatha forest range and Satabhaya inside Bhitarkanika National Park will connect Dhamra in Bhadrak district. The project will also have bridge over some of the rivers and nullahs, he said.

The coastal highway project will connect the ports on Odisha coast



**OPEN LIBRARY:** A girl student arranges book in an open library which was unveiled in the garden of Fakir Mohan University, Balasore in the presence of Vice-Chancellor Santosh Kumar Tripathy, students and staff, Thursday

# 96% of track doubling work completed

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 1:** More than 96 per cent of the construction work for super critical doubling of Talcher-Sambalpur line has been completed so far.

East Coast Railway (ECoR) sources here said the construction work is in full swing and would be completed soon.

A 9-km stretch between Maneswar and Sambalpur City stations has been completed and commissioned Tuesday for both goods and passenger traffic.

AM Chowdhary, Commissioner of Railway Safety, South Eastern circle inspected the doubling and electrification work between Sambalpur City and Maneswar in



Sambalpur Division Tuesday. Chowdhary inspected safety-related aspects like overhead equipment, bridges, signal & telecom-

munication equipment, railway track, manned level crossing and also conducted a speed trial between Sambalpur City and Maneswar stations.

General Manager Manoj Sharma advised the officials concerned to coordinate with stakeholders including state government officials for early completion of the projects.

Talcher and Sambalpur doubling work will boost the economy of the region and will provide hassle-free train operations between vital rail line connecting Western Odisha with coastal Odisha.

Doubling Work in Talcher-Sambalpur Super Critical (168.21 km) project was included in 2011-12 and the final sanction was given in 2018.

Works between Sambalpur City and Maneswar stations, a stretch of 9 km, was completed and commissioned.

This is a super critical and important coal route between Talcher and Brajarajnagar.

With this, a total of 162.212 km doubling work has been commissioned in a phased manner which is 96.38 per cent of total length of the project.

The remaining 6 km of this project between Sambalpur City and Sambalpur stations has been targeted to be completed in next couple of months.

About Rs 1,377 crore which is about 90 per cent of the anticipated project cost of Rs 1,539.28 crore has already been spent.

## 2 missing, 5 injured as hailstorm wreaks havoc

**Malkangiri:** At least two persons went missing and five others were injured as strong winds accompanied by rain and thunder wreaked havoc in Malkangiri district Thursday evening, officials said. The strong winds, which lasted for about 15 minutes, left a trail of devastation in the district, they said. A fisherman and a woman went missing in Satiguda dam after their boats capsized due to the winds. They were identified as Govind Sardar and Tulasi Madhi of Bhima Rangini village in the district, police said. Personnel of the fire services and ODRAF were searching for them in the reservoir. Five labourers were injured as the portion of an under-construction boundary wall of an airport collapsed, police said. Several kutcha houses were damaged, trees were uprooted and electric wires snapped in different parts of the district, an official said. District Collector Vishal Singh said fire services and ODRAF personnel have been asked to expedite the rescue and relief operation.

## Brown sugar seized, one arrested

**Baripada:** Excise sleuths of Mayurbhanj district Thursday arrested a peddler and seized 29 gram brown sugar worth Rs 2,90,000 from his possession. The accused was identified as Chandrashekhar Patra, 27, son of Kalicharan Patra of ward no-17 in Baripada Municipality area. Mayurbhanj excise superintendent Prashanta Kumar Kanhar informed Biswajit Dash, the inspector of Baripada excise department, about peddling of brown sugar in the area and directed him to conduct a raid.

## Lokayukta notice on scam in Sadha GP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Hatadihi, June 1:** A three-member bench of the state Lokayukta has directed 10 government officials including a public representative to file their replies over alleged financial irregularities in various developmental works in Sadha gram panchayat (GP) of Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district.

The Lokayukta had issued notice to Keonjhar Collector and Hatadihi BDO over a case (LY 613/2021), filed before it April 5, 2022. The BDO and the Collector had filed their replies, June 6, 2022. Later, Lokayukta directed for a probe into the irregularities September 26, 2022 which was submitted before it May 2, 2023.

On the basis of the preliminary



findings, a three-member bench of the state Lokayukta has issued notices to 10 government officials and a public representative to file their replies. The notices have been issued to the concerned officials which include former BDOs Susant Barik, Jaydev Das and Anand Chandra Sethy, three former assistant executive engineers Ninindra Nath Nayak, Sushil Seth, Ashis Banerjee, two engineers Prafulla Behera, Jyoti Ranjan Samantray, former PEO

Dambarudhar Pattnaik, former sarpanch Jayanti Samal.

Meanwhile, former assistant engineer Ninindra Nath Nayak was killed in a road mishap May 9, 2023 before the Lokayukta could serve its notice on them. The Lokayukta has also issued notice to the principal secretary of state Panchayati Raj department and sought his opinion.

When contacted, former engineers Prafulla Behera, Jyoti Ranjan Samantray, former sarpanch Jayanti Samal, former PEO Dambarudhar Pattnaik and former BDO Ananda Chandra Sethy said that they are yet to receive the notice and will file their reply after receiving the same. They ruled out any irregularities in developmental works being undertaken in the panchayat.



**YOGA FOR HEALTH:** Jawans of Central Reserve Police Force perform Yogasans on the park premises of Sahid Ranjan Dash memorial at Khandahata village under Sadar block in Barghar district, Thursday

## Gandhiji's statue unveiled in Kendrapara's Dhumat village

During the 1934 padayatra, Gandhi had spent five days in Kendrapara district and toured different places accompanied by freedom fighters

PNN & AGENCIES

**Kendrapara, June 1:** A statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at Dhumat village in Kendrapara district where the Father of the Nation stayed during his padayatra in 1934.

Kendrapara MLA and former minister Shashi Bhusan Behera unveiled the statue Tuesday night on the occasion of the 89th anniversary of Gandhi's visit to Dhumat May 30, 1934.

To remind people of the significance of the 1934 padayatra and highlight the Mahatma's role in the freedom struggle, the gram panchayat of Indupur has built the fibre statue.

People from various walks of life paid rich tribute to the Father of the Nation who stayed in Dhumat village May 30, 1934, during the march. The meeting was organised by the district freedom fighters' association and the district administration.

Mahatma Gandhi took a bath while sitting on a stone at Dhumat village during his padayatra. Some villagers carried water from the nearby river in buckets and Gandhi took a bath while sitting on the stone at Dhumat.

This stone is preserved in the place where Mahatma took a bath. A pedestal and the half-bust statues



of Gandhiji and Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das were built near the bathing stone of Babuji.

"We are lucky that the Father of the Nation had visited our riverside nondescript village. People here worship the bathing stone (Gandhi Sila) and the pedestal," said Biranchi Narayan Jagdev, a retired physician of Dhumat.

"The padayatra by Gandhiji was one of the most important events in the country's freedom struggle. Gandhi also allowed Dalits to enter the temples in some villages during his long walk in Odisha in 1934," said Bhajakrushna Rout, a retired school teacher of the district in the meeting.

During 1934 padayatra, Gandhi had spent five days in Kendrapara

district and toured different places. Among those who had accompanied Gandhi were Meera Behn, Gopabandhu Choudhury, Rajkrushna Bose, Rama Devi, a German youth K Kuto, Uma Bajaj, Binod Kanungo, Surendranath Pattinayak, Manmohan Choudhury, Jadumani Mangaraj and many others, said Basudev Das a researcher of Kendrapara.

Villagers of Dhumat, Indupur and nearby areas took a plunge into the freedom struggle in response to a call given by Gandhi after his visit to their villages.

In memory of Mahatma Gandhi, a thatched Ashram was also built in 1938. But in the October 1999 Super Cyclone, the Ashram had been completely damaged, added Das.

## Tribals to perform 'Chhera Panhara' at Sabara Srikhetra

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Koraput, June 1:** The tribals here will perform the 'Chhera Panhara' rituals on the three chariots at the Rath Yatra festival of Sabara Srikhetra in Koraput, a report said.

Moreover, only women will be allowed to pull the chariot of Devi Subhadra during the festival as Sabara Srikhetra of Koraput will be holding its 51st Rath Yatra this year.

The matter came to the fore at a preparatory meeting for the 51st Rath Yatra celebrations held at Sadbhavana conference hall of the Collectorate, Wednesday. Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Rameswar Pradhan presided in the meeting.

### RATH YATRA AHEAD



Only women will be allowed to pull the chariot of Devi Subhadra during the 51st year of Rath Yatra at Koraput

In the meeting, it was decided that only women and girls will be allowed to pull the chariot of Devi

Subhadra during the festival. In order to have an inclusive approach towards all sections of society, a

tribal Dasi Nayak of Rangabali Kumbha village will conduct the Chhera Panhara rituals on the chariots of Lord Jagannath. Local tribals will also conduct the Chhera Panhara rituals on the chariots of Devi Subhadra and Lord Balabhadra during the festival.

Moreover, the Deba Shana Purnima of the Trinity will be held at Sabar Srikhetra June 4, Netrotsav and Naba Jaubana Darshan June 19 and Rath Yatra June 20 on the basis of traditional rituals. All steps are being taken to maintain law and order during the festival, the ADM said.

Attending the meeting, Jeypore MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati urged the temple management committee

to lay stress on the quality of 'Mahaprasad' during the nine-day-long festival. He also stressed on maintenance of proper sanitation and cleanliness on Badadanda and Gundicha temple during the Rath Yatra.

Apart from the Jeypore MLA, temple management committee secretary Jagabandhu Samal, Koraput Municipality chairman Lalat Ranjan Sethi, sub-collector Benudhar Sabar, DIPRO Swaraj Sisha, project director Arun Kumar Das of district water shed mission, SDPO Manoj Kumar Pujari, Koraput Town IIC Dhiren Pattnaik, all members of the temple committee and mediapersons attended the meeting.

**JATNI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, JATNI**  
P.O.: Jatni - 752050, Dist.: Khordha, Odisha  
**QUOTATION CALL NOTICE**  
No. 2591 Dt. 25.05.2023  
No. C-473: Sealed quotations are invited from Registered Firms/ Agency/WSHG/ALF/CLF and Event Management Group for supply of following materials as per the specification on hire basis for organising of different function like LFS Day, Republic Day, Independence Day and celebration of any Municipal function and any requirement as and whenever need to this office. The bidders should submit the bid paper along with rate per piece/per day in item wise in the prescribed proforma along with IT return and GST Certificate to the undersigned on or before 6th June 2023 by 12.30 P.M. and the same will be opened at 1 P.M. in the presence of tender committee member. The bidder may remit a sum of Rs.5000/- towards EMD in the shape of B.D. or Municipal money receipt in favour of Jatni Municipality. The authority reserves the rights for cancellation of quotation call notice at any time without any reason thereof.  
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Sd./- Executive Officer, Jatni Municipality  
OIPR-13041/11/0012/2324

A thought is an arrow shot at the truth; it can hit a point, but not cover the whole target. But the archer is too well satisfied with his success to ask anything farther.

SRI AUROBINDO



## Governing the Unknown

Technology is changing the world faster than policymakers can devise new ways to cope with it. As a result, societies are becoming polarised, inequality is rising, and authoritarian regimes and corporations are doctoring reality and undermining democracy.

For ordinary people, there is ample reason to be "a little bit scared," as OpenAI CEO Sam Altman recently put it. Major advances in artificial intelligence raise concerns about education, work, warfare, and other risks that could destabilise civilisation long before climate change does. To his credit, Altman is urging lawmakers to regulate his industry.

In confronting this challenge, we must keep two concerns in mind. The first is the need for speed. If we take too long, we may find ourselves closing the barn door after the horse has bolted. That is what happened with the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: It came 23 years too late. If we had managed to establish some minimal rules after World War II, the NPT's ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament might have been achievable.

The other concern involves deep uncertainty. This is such a new world that even those working on AI do not know where their inventions will ultimately take us. A law enacted with the best intentions can still backfire. When America's founders drafted the Second Amendment conferring the "right to keep and bear arms," they could not have known how firearms technology would change in the future, thereby changing the very meaning of the word "arms." Nor did they foresee how their descendants would fail to realise this even after seeing the change.

But uncertainty does not justify fatalism. Policymakers can still effectively govern the unknown as long as they keep certain broad considerations in mind. For example, one idea that came up during a recent Senate hearing was to create a licensing system whereby only select corporations would be permitted to work on AI.

This approach comes with some obvious risks of its own. Licensing can often be a step toward cronyism, so we would also need new laws to deter politicians from abusing the system. Moreover, slowing your country's AI development with additional checks does not mean that others will adopt similar measures. In the worst case, you may find yourself facing adversaries wielding precisely the kind of malevolent tools that you eschewed. That is why AI is best regulated multilaterally, even if that is a tall order in today's world.

Another big concern is labour. Just as past technological advances reduced demand for manual labour, new applications like ChatGPT may reduce demand for a lot of white-collar labour. But this prospect need not be so worrying. If we can distribute the wealth and income generated by AI equitably across the population, eliminating plenty of work would not be a problem. Far from being diminished by not working, feudal lords were aggrandised by their leisure.

The problem, of course, is that most people do not know how to use free time. Pensioners often become anxious because they do not know what to do with themselves. Now, imagine that happening on a massive scale across younger cohorts. If left unchecked, crime, conflict, and perhaps extremism would become more likely. Averting such outcomes would require modifying our education systems to prepare people for the leisure force. As in earlier eras, education would mean learning how to enjoy the arts, hobbies, reading, and thinking.

A final major concern involves media and the truth. In How to Stand Up to a Dictator, the Nobel laureate journalist Maria Ressa laments that social media has become a powerful tool for promoting fake news. As Amal Clooney points out in her foreword to the book, autocratic leaders can now rely on "an army of bots" to create the impression that "there is only one side to every story."

This is a bigger challenge than most people realise. It will not go away even if we pass laws prohibiting automated disinformation. As Amartya Sen pointed out more than 40 years ago, all description entails choice. Reality is so complex that we cannot possibly represent it without making decisions about what to include and what to omit. In a world that is drowning in information, savvy influencers do not need to make up news; they can simply be biased in what they choose to report. News outlets can influence voters' opinions in ways both subtle and flagrant. Just compare the images of Donald Trump and of Joe Biden that Fox News chooses.

We cannot solve the problem of authoritarian influence by banning fake news. Our best hope again lies in education. We will need to do a better job teaching people to be discerning and less susceptible to manipulation.

Innovation in law and policy must go hand in hand with innovation in education, and all are necessary to keep up with innovation in technology.

*The writer, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank and Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University and a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. @PROJECT SYNDICATE*

### WISDOM CORNER

- “If at first you don't succeed, then skydiving definitely isn't for you.” STEVEN WRIGHT
- “The greatest happiness is to know the source of unhappiness.” FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY
- “Find ecstasy in life; the mere sense of living is joy enough.” EMILY DICKINSON

### WORDSWORTH

#### Insinuating

This piece comes with a health warning: unwise use of this word may seriously damage your linguistic credibility. It is one of the few words in the Second Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary to which an editorial note has been attached: "A tasteless word", it says, signed with the initials of the then editor, Dr Robert Burchfield. It is an obvious blend of insinuation and innuendo, a portmanteau construction containing elements of both. Throughout its life (and it is more than a century old, as we shall see), it has been used either humorously, or to indicate that a speaker in a book or play is uneducated. The Oxford English Dictionary knows of it from 1885. Its first example says that it was invented by a legislator from South Carolina. This seems to be confirmed by this little squib, which appeared in Appleton's Journal of New York in 1875. It manages the trick of being both heavy-handed and tongue-in-cheek at the same time: The South Carolina Legislature has immortalized itself by coining the word "insinuendous." Seeing the wideness of its application, the Tribune begs to be "permitted to express the obligations which society, and especially society's representatives in official life, legislators, cabinet officers, and such, are under for an uncommonly fresh, beautiful, and expressive phrase. It admirably fits the time. It is a contribution to current politics as well as to philology." The unnamed legislator from South Carolina may have re-invented the word, but it was around earlier, since it appeared in 1871 in a now totally forgotten one-act comic drama by William R Emerson called Putkins.



DK Giri

**GEOPOLITICS IS NOT A CONSTANT BUT AN EVER-CHANGING PROCESS**

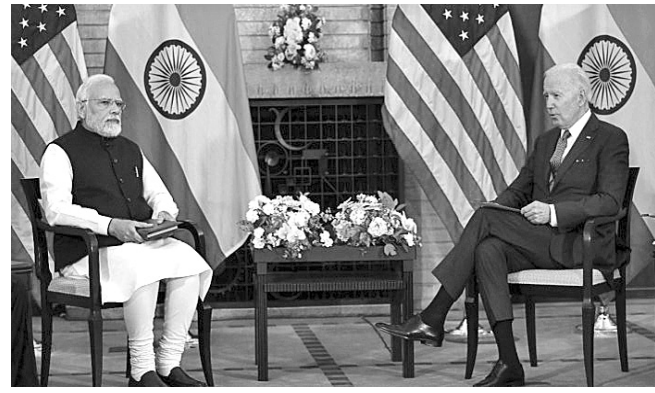


Kaushik Basu

**Major advances in artificial intelligence raise concerns about education, work, warfare, and other risks that could destabilise civilisation long before climate change does**

### FOCUS INDO-US TIES

# TO BE, OR NOT TO BE



**While US rivalry with China may theoretically enhance India's geopolitical value, it does not de-risk India in relation to China... Sino-American hostility should lend dividends to India mainly through a new security scenario and diversification of trade from China to India**

The current India-America relations reflect Hamlet's dilemma as expressed in his soliloquy in Act 3, Scene 1 of the legendary drama conceived by William Shakespeare. To quote: "To be, or not to be – that is the question; whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer... or to take arms against a sea of troubles." This is close to India's case vis-à-vis the United States. New Delhi appears to be in a continual dilemma of suffering the 'historic relations' with Russia, which is engaged in a mortal battle with Ukraine that disrupts the world economy and security, or embrace the US to contain or even confront China which is breathing down India's neck. The choice is becoming more urgent after the battle lines became sharper between the US and the West on the one hand and China and Russia on the other in the recent G-7 Summit.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov slammed the G-7 for indulging in their "own greatness with an agenda that purported to deter Russia and China." Likewise, the Chinese Foreign Ministry accused G-7 leaders of hindering international peace and said that "the Group needed to reflect on its behaviour."

From these reactions it is evident that Russia and China see America and its allies as their enemy. It goes without saying that Washington and Beijing are in a fierce competition for world supremacy and jostling for influences across countries. In this, there are three elements of US strategy on China one could decipher. One is to re-establish US hegemony by cutting off China technologically. The second is to "de-risk and diversify its economy," which means withdrawing its investments from China. The third is to surround China with allies to prepare for any military action by Beijing on any of the allies.

On the other hand, China and Russia are increasingly coming closer. Remember the "no-limits partnership" set-up on 4 February 2022. President Xi Jinping was hosting his counterpart, Vladimir Putin, at the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing. The two leaders, in a joint statement, declared their partnership was greater than a traditional alliance and their friendship would know "no limits." Twenty days later Russia invaded Ukraine.

In view of the above, New Delhi must re-think its American policy. While US rivalry with China may theoretically enhance India's geopolitical value, it does not de-risk India in relation to China. Indian observers on US-China relations have at least two points of view – one, Sino-American hostility should lend dividends to India mainly through a new security scenario and diversification of trade from China to India. The second viewpoint suggests that a breakdown between America and China would

be detrimental to the world as well as India. On the second one, the jury is still out whether a weakened or dismembered China which America and its allies would want would be catastrophic for the world including India. More so, when China is posing a systemic threat to the rules-based world order as many European countries have openly expressed.

It is true that Russia has been a dependent ally of India since 1971 Bangladesh War and America has been either hegemonic or unsteady in its dealing with India and in fact quite a few other countries. The US with all its military and economic might is not the smartest country to deal with global challenges. We have said before that Americans will create a demon and then go to fight it. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are a proof. The American writer Ambrose Bierce humorously said, "War is God's way of teaching Americans geography."

That said, geopolitics is not a constant but an ever-changing process. India-American relations have not been friendly in the past but coming critically close in recent past. Indian leadership is also partly to blame for not warming up to a large democracy and a superpower. It is Americans who offered the permanent membership of the Security Council to India but the then Indian Prime Minister Nehru decided to forgo it in favour of China.

Democracies provide an opportunity to change policies within and across countries whereas autocracies tend to be whimsical depending on who is at the helm. India, the largest democracy, has turned in the past for friendship with autocracies like China and the USSR. Democracies also give room for lobbying and creating new discourses. It is said that in a democracy every point, good or bad, has a counter-point. They also promote competitive and collective wisdom. If not anything, only for this reason that America and India, two democracies, need to become partners. This shared interest and culture puts China as a common threat. Let us admit that India has made all efforts in the past and currently to make peace with China, but Beijing has betrayed New Delhi time and again.

Our submission is that India's stand should be clear and transparent on human rights, democracy, and rules-based world order while talking about Chinese and Russian actions. America needs to demonstrate its commitment to long-term partnership with countries, and not just continue with a hit-and-run policy. India-America partnership based on mutual trust and interest should help usher in peace and security not only in Asia-Pacific but in the entire world.

*The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism. @INFA*

### SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

# The IMF's turn to lead on climate



Rakesh Mohan & Rishikesh Ram Bhandary

**THE IMF IS FACING A NOW-OR-NEVER MOMENT TO HELP FACILITATE A JUST TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON, CLIMATE-RESILIENT ECONOMY**

Emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) are feeling the financial squeeze. Two-thirds of low-income countries are already in or at high risk of debt distress. Russia's war in Ukraine is compounding financial shocks with high food and energy prices, and the rising cost of capital is leaving governments with little, if any, fiscal space.

At the same time, several EMDEs are bearing the brunt of a looming climate crisis to which they contributed little. And yet, with limited fiscal space and poor access to international markets, EMDEs are unable to invest in climate resilience as needed.

As a key multilateral body charged with promoting global macroeconomic and financial stability, the International Monetary Fund is facing a now-or-never moment to help facilitate a just transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

Since recognising the profound macroeconomic implications of rising global temperatures, the IMF has released a climate-change strategy, which outlines its plans for integrating the issue into its work, especially its macroeconomic surveillance and lending programmes. Most notably, following its historic allocation of \$650 in billion special drawing rights (SDRs) in 2021, the Fund established the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) in part to support climate action in EMDEs.

The latest UN Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report sounds the alarm about the rapidly mounting dangers of global warming and the limited time left to adapt. Against this backdrop, a new report from the Task Force on Climate, Development, and the IMF, of which we are members, assesses how the Fund's climate actions stack up against current needs.

We found that while the IMF has made welcome strides toward integrating climate considerations into its operations, important gaps remain in four key areas: modeling climate risks into its debt-sustainability analysis (DSA); tailoring policy advice to national contexts; upgrading its lending toolkit to address macro-critical imbalances and natural catastrophes arising from climate change; and, along with other institutions, facilitating the large-scale investments needed to help countries shift to a low-carbon pathway.

The IMF's preferred policy prescription has been to set a price on carbon emissions that is high enough to encourage polluters to emit less. Its working papers have suggested a globally coordinated and differentiated price floor to increase policy ambition and foster an orderly transition. Yet while establishing a carbon price is generally considered optimal in theory, implementation and impact raise many challenges.

The introduction of carbon pricing around the world is still uneven and poorly coordinated with

national energy policies such as increasing fossil-fuel subsidies. Moreover, several governments are introducing a broad range of instruments to implement climate policies that are better aligned with their unique circumstances. To be sensitive to national needs, the IMF needs to move away from a one-size-fits-all policy and develop an effective method to assess the effects of explicit and implicit carbon prices, which can vary considerably within and across countries.

In addition to expanding its surveillance activities and economic modeling to reflect the reality of diverse national circumstances, the IMF should encourage future-oriented measures such as a big investment push. This would require the Fund to retool its DSA framework to take a broader view of a country's financing needs.

To meet the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and their commitments under the Paris agreement, EMDEs will need to mobilise substantial resources, estimated by some to be as much as \$2.4 trillion per year – over 2% of current global GDP. Beyond that, IMF research has shown that investment in climate-friendly sectors can be a more powerful growth multiplier than investment in carbon-intensive sectors.

But the IMF's DSA framework does not properly incorporate countries' physical climate risks and their fiscal needs for financing a green transition. While the Fund has taken modest steps toward in-

tegrating climate shocks into its DSA framework, it is still falling far short in linking programme negotiations with climate policy. Until that changes, countries will lack the fiscal space needed to fund the green transition. After all, climate investments cannot be postponed until a country is in better financial health.

As for its lending toolkit, the IMF has modestly increased countries' borrowing limits. But, overall, the Fund still emphasises short-term fiscal stability at the cost of the longer-term resource mobilisation required to safeguard countries against future climate shocks.

Likewise, the rules for accessing the RSF are too restrictive. As matters stand, a country must have an IMF programme in place to access RSF funds. This excludes climate-vulnerable economies that still need to build resilience even if they are not actively in distress.

To maximise its impact, the Fund should bear in mind national contexts, tailor its macro-financial models, pay greater heed to the substantial investment push required for low-carbon transitions, and increase the size and scope of its lending tools. None of this will be easy, but ensuring a financially stable and climate-resilient future requires nothing less.

*The writers are members of the Task Force on Climate, Development, and the IMF. @PROJECT SYNDICATE*

#### Wrestlers' plight

Sir, The plight of the protesting wrestlers, who have had to endure oppression and apathy at the hands of the Delhi police and the radio silence on this by representatives of the Union government, are highly regrettable. The May 28 crass brutality of the Delhi police has shaken the conscience of many who hitherto were silent. And, it is heartening to note that many organisations, sports persons and celebrities have now come out in support of the protesting wrestlers. Distressingly, even before the wrestlers had decided to immerse their medals in the Ganga, justice and rectitude in their case had already sunk into deep waters. As the whole of India had seen how the protesting wrestlers were crushed on the day of the inauguration of the new Parliament building, the day will not be too far off when this crushed humanity will bring life back to Parliament. And then the Sengol will be sent back to where it belongs – a museum.

#### Consumption challenge

Sir, This refers to the report "GDP expands 6.1% in Q4, 7.2% in FY23," OrissaPOST, June 1. India's GDP in the January-March quarter grew 6.1% outpacing all forecasts by a wide margin. Consequently, it also helped the 2022-23 GDP grow at 7.2%, a level higher than both RBI and private projections. This rate of growth makes India a standout performer among major economies in the world. The economy, when viewed from the standpoint of producers, showed broad-based growth. The takeaway from the production side is that not only is India's economy resilient, but there's also an underlying momentum that has offset unfavourable global factors. A sector that helped neutralise the fallout of the Ukraine war and the attendant commodity price surge was services exports. It was, however, not all good news. The biggest challenge in the economy is the anaemic performance of private consumption. It indicates that in an economy with a strong production momentum, there's a distribution challenge. This is corroborated by the Centre's urban jobs data for the January-March quarter. There's a marked deterioration over the last year in the quality of jobs, especially for women. Its impact is showing up in weak consumption growth. Thus, India needs stronger consumption to build on this momentum and that is linked to enabling better quality jobs.

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

N Sadhasiva Reddy, WASHINGTON

## of the day quote

Why did the SEBI come out with a consultation paper? The important recommendation by the Supreme Court committee said that India has suffered because of the removal of this rule

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONG GENERAL SECRETARY

The balloon of opposition unity efforts has been punctured by the likes of Banerjee and (Congress president) Mallikarjun Kharge

SUSHIL MODI | SENIOR BJP LEADER

We have done good work and (will) form the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. People will elect us for the country's development

NTIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Dalit attacked for wearing good attire

**Ahmedabad:** A Dalit man has been attacked in Gujarat's Banaskantha district by some persons of the upper caste for wearing fashionable clothes and sunglasses. Jigar Shekhalia was attacked as the upper caste persons felt he was "flying too high these days". When his mother tried to intervene, the accused also assaulted her and also tore her clothes. The assault took place on Tuesday night in Mota village, with the victims now receiving medical treatment at a hospital. Shekhalia lodged a complaint against seven persons, leading to the filing of a First Information Report (FIR) at Gadh police station.

### 2 charred to death

**Patna:** Two persons, including a minor daughter of the owner, were burnt alive after some miscreants set ablaze a roadside eatery in Bihar's Sitamarhi district Thursday, police said. The deceased were sleeping when fire broke out in the eatery. It soon engulfed 7 more adjoining shops located at Bariyarpur NH under town police station around 2 a.m.

### Heatwave scorches Bihar

**Patna:** There was no respite from heatwave conditions in Bihar Thursday as the mercury breached 40 degrees Celsius in at least 13 places, officials said. Khagaria district recorded a maximum temperature of 42.2 degrees Celsius, while Bhagalpur was at 42 degrees Celsius, East Champaran at 41.5 degrees Celsius, Sheikhpura at 41.2 degrees Celsius and Siwan at 41.4 degrees Celsius, they said. State capital Patna sizzled at 40.9 degrees Celsius, they added. The heat wave conditions are expected to prevail in the state over the next three-four days, the weather office said.

### Maoist killed

**Gumla:** A Maoist, who had a bounty of ₹2 lakh, was killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's Gumla district Thursday, police said. Acting on a tip-off, the forces began an operation to nab Rajesh Oraon from near Marwa forest, Superintendent of Police (SP) Ehtesham Waqarib said. "As the force reached there, Maoists started firing. In retaliatory firing, Oraon was killed on the spot," he said. A rifle and several cartridges were recovered from the area, he said. Meanwhile, four more Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) were found in the Tonto police station area of West Singhbhum district, police said.



**'GOOD DECISION'**  
Hailing the Centre's move of bringing tobacco regulation on OTT platforms, health experts and child rights activists have unanimously called for the proposed amendments to the COTPA Act in creating a tobacco-free environment for children

## 'GOOD DECISION'

Hailing the Centre's move of bringing tobacco regulation on OTT platforms, health experts and child rights activists have unanimously called for the proposed amendments to the COTPA Act in creating a tobacco-free environment for children



# Judicial probe, peace committee for Manipur: Shah

The Home Minister announced a CBI probe to investigate FIRs alleging five criminal conspiracies and one general conspiracy behind the violence in Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal, June 1:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday said a judicial probe headed by a retired high court chief justice to inquire into clashes which erupted in the north-eastern state of Manipur, will soon be announced.



He also announced at a press conference held at the end of a four day tour of the strife torn state, that a peace committee under the Governor of Manipur Anusuiya Uiquey with representatives of all political parties, the warring Kuki and Meitei communities and social organisations will be set up. "Dialogue is the only solution to the ongoing crisis in Manipur," Shah said. "We will soon announce a judicial probe headed by a retired high court chief justice and set up a peace committee," he said.

Soon after the press conference, a senior IPS officer Rajiv Singh, belonging to the neighbouring Tripura cadre, was formally appointed as the new director general of police of Manipur for a period of three years "as a special case in public interest", an official order said.

Singh, a 1993 batch IPS officer serving as the inspector general of operations at the CRPF headquarters in Delhi, replaces P Doungel, a 1987 batch IPS officer from Manipur, for whom a post of Officer on Special Duty (Home) has been created. He is due to retire at the end of the month.

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

This is expected to be the first of a major overhaul in the state administration. He, however, also said, "Violence is a temporary phase, misunderstandings will go away ... The situation will soon be normal."

Officials separately said the situation remained calm on Thursday after overnight reports of firing by militants.

Shah said the leaders of both Meitei and Kuki communities, as well as other civil society representatives who have met him, have assured him that they would work to assuage hurt feelings and remove misunderstandings. The home minister said an Inter-Agency Unified Command will also be formed for "better coordination" among all security agencies in Manipur as multiple forces are working on the ground.

Currently some 10,000 army and Assam rifles personnel have been brought into the state to keep the peace. Besides, as central police forces and state police is also functioning on the ground, it was felt that a unified command was necessary to avoid confusion.

Shah also told newsmen that he felt for a permanent solution to the Indo-Myanmar border issue, the fencing on the border between the two countries will have to be completed. There are apprehensions that the porous border is being used for drug smuggling and for movement of militants.

Appealing to citizens not to pay heed to rumours, the Home Minister said special telephone lines will be set up where people can ring and check the veracity of rumours being circulated.

The army and police forces are conducting state-wide search operations for hidden arms caches.



FUN TIME: Burqa-clad students play cricket in the J J Hospital premises at Byculla in Mumbai

PTI PHOTO

## Coach of halted train catches fire



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kannur (Kerala), June 1:** A coach of an express train which halted at the Kannur railway station in Kerala caught fire in the small hours of Thursday and one person is reportedly in police custody in connection with the incident.

The incident occurred on the Alappuzha-Kannur Executive Express train in which two months ago a man had set fire to his co-passengers, which resulted in three deaths including a toddler, leading to speculation that it might be a case of sabotage and connected to the earlier one.

Central agencies like the Intelligence Bureau and the National Investigation Agency arrived at the scene in the morning and are investigating all angles, including that of sabotage, sources said. The fire was noticed by some station staff at around 1.30 AM and they informed the Kannur Fire and Rescue Station which dispatched four units to deal with the blaze which was contained at around 3.15 AM, a fire rescue officer said.

## Sachin Pilot's video triggers speculations

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Jaipur, June 1:** With Assembly polls nearing in Rajasthan, the Congress high-command recently resolved the internal conflict between Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his former deputy Sachin Pilot after two months of constant exchange of barbs between the two camps.

As the party leadership is now trying to show that everything is fine in Rajasthan Congress, a tweet by Sachin Pilot has triggered speculations in the political circles.

Pilot has posted a video story on his Twitter handle, in which he is seen with the people of the state.

He captioned the video: "There is hope in my mind, there is a belief in the heart, will build a strong Rajasthan, when people are together."

While Pilot is visible in every slide in the video, no other Congress leaders, nor the party's symbol, could be seen in it. Actually, Pilot and Gehlot have not been in the best of terms ever since the Congress government was formed in 2018. On many occasions, Pilot has expressed his displeasure with the Congress



high-command for not resolving his pending issues.

While the party high-command may be claiming to have achieved reconciliation between the two leaders, Pilot has made it clear that he will not relinquish his stance on the three demands he put forth earlier this month, for which he even issued an ultimatum to the state government. The Congress leader's demands included disbanding and reconstitution of Rajasthan Public Service Commission; compensation for those affected by government job exam paper leak; and a high-level probe into the charges of corruption he had levelled against the previous BJP government led by Vasundhara Raje.

## Indian Coast Guard seizes over 32 kg gold worth ₹20.20 cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, June 1:** A joint operation by the Indian Coast Guard, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Customs has foiled an attempt to smuggle gold bars weighing 32 kgs into India, via the sea route from Sri Lanka.

The gold was being smuggled into India from Sri Lanka, an official release from the Coast Guard here said. The seizure was a result of a specific input from the DRI regarding smuggling of contraband between Sri Lanka and India, following which a joint operation was launched by the Indian Coast Guard and DRI May 30.



"A joint operation launched by Indian Coast Guard with DRI and customs resulted in seizure of 32.689 kg of gold valued at approximately ₹20.20 crore, from two fishing boats in the Gulf of Mannar area in Tamil Nadu. The consignment was being smuggled into India from Sri Lanka," it said.

# Deccan Queen completes 93 yrs of service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 1:** The iconic Deccan Queen, the first deluxe train of the Indian Railways, completed 93 glorious years of operations between Pune and Mumbai Thursday, according to the Central Railway.

Rail enthusiasts and authorities celebrated the occasion with a lot of zeal and cut two big cakes at the Pune railway station Thursday morning before the Deccan Queen departed for the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai.

Maharashtra minister Chandrakant Patil was also present on the occasion. "Over the last 93 years of its colourful history, the train has grown from a mere medium of transportation between two cities into an institution binding a generation of intensely loyal passengers," the Central Railway said.

As per a Central Railway release, the Deccan Queen had its maiden run on June 1, 1930, which was a major landmark in the history of the Great Indian Peninsula (GIP) Railway, the forerunner of the Central Railway.

It was the first deluxe train introduced to serve two important cities of the region - Mumbai and Pune - and was aptly named after Pune, which is also known as the 'Queen of Deccan' (Dakkhan ki Rani), the release said. Initially, the train was introduced with two rakes of seven coaches each, one of which



Passengers celebrate the birthday of Deccan Queen, Indian Railways' first deluxe train

was painted in silver with scarlet mouldings and the other with royal blue and golden lines, it said.

"The under frames of coaches of the original rakes were built in England while the coach bodies were built in the Matunga workshop (Mumbai) of the GIP Railway," the release said.

The Deccan Queen initially had only first class and second-class accommodation, but the first class was discontinued on January 1, 1949 and the second class was redesigned as first class, which continued up to June 1955, when a third class was introduced on this train for the first time, it said.

RAIL ENTHUSIASTS AND AUTHORITIES CELEBRATED THE OCCASION WITH A LOT OF ZEAL AND CUT TWO BIG CAKES AT THE PUNE RAILWAY STATION

FOR THE SPECIAL DAY, THE TRAIN WAS DECORATED WITH COLOURFUL GARLANDS, AND AN ATTRACTIVE 'RANGOLI' (COLOURFUL PATTERN) WAS MADE AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE PLATFORM

A MUSIC PARTY PLAYED TUNES OF VARIOUS SONGS TO MARK THE OCCASION

The coaches of the original rakes were replaced in 1966 by anti-telescopic steel bodied integral coaches built by the Integral Coach Factory, Perambur (Tamil Nadu).

These coaches incorporated an improved design of bogies for better riding comfort and also improvements in the interior furnishings and fittings, the release said.

The number of coaches in the rake was also increased to 12 from the original seven, providing additional accommodation. Over the years, the number of coaches in the train has been increased to the present level of 16, it said.

Since last year, Deccan Queen has been running with the new Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB) rake which is considered safer and comfortable as compared to the conventional ones. The LHB coaches are lighter in weight, have higher carrying capacity, speed potential, and better safety features.

## 'ISRO weighing options for another Mars mission'



India had successfully launched its first Mars Orbiter Mission called Mangalyaan November 5, 2013, which started orbiting the red planet from September 24, 2014

The orbiter lost contact in October 2022 and thus the Mangalyaan-1 mission came to an end

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangaluru, June 1:** The second mission to Mars is in the study phase as the Indian space agency is looking at various options available to make the mission happen, a senior ISRO scientist said Thursday.

The Mars mission has to be bigger with more scientific outcome, M Sankaran, Director, UR Rao Satellite Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) told PTI. "If you are talking about a new mission to Mars, then that is still in the study phase. We are looking at various options available to us for making a mission happen. It has to be significantly bigger or with more sci-

entific outcome with respect to Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM). We are still in the study phase and we are configuring it," Sankaran told PTI.

"The preparation is going on in Sriharikota. We do expect that sometime in July the launch will take place," he said. According to the space scientist, every aspect of the mission has been checked, especially those experiences that ISRO gleaned from its Chandrayaan-2 mission. "All possible precautions have been taken. The mood at ISRO is upbeat," he added. Regarding India's space mission Gaganyaan, Sankaran said it was an intense project with a lot of new development activities taking place.



## MEKEDATU DAM ROW

# AIADMK warns of protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, June 1:** The opposition AIADMK in Tamil Nadu Thursday warned neighbouring Karnataka of protests if it went ahead with the construction of the Mekedatu dam project, which the party sees as an attempt to transform TN into a desert.

Taking strong exception to the reported remark of Karnataka deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar on going ahead with the reservoir project across the Cauvery river, leader of the opposition K Palaniswami said the neighbouring state should not act against the interest of the lower riparian states.

"As per the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, Karnataka has no right to prevent or alter the natural course of a river. Even the final verdict on the Cauvery water dispute is clear that no irrigation project should be taken up without the approval of the lower riparian states," Palaniswami said in a statement here.

Being so, the announcement of the Congress government in Karnataka went against the interest of Tamil Nadu. Any move to build the reservoir project across the Cauvery at Mekedatu would only assay to transform Tamil Nadu, dependent on Cauvery water for irrigation and drinking, into a desert, he claimed.

"There's no point in depending on the ruling DMK here on the issue. The AIADMK strongly condemns the attempt of Karnataka Congress government to build a dam at Mekedatu and warns the Karnataka state government that the AIADMK will



**As per the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, Karnataka has no right to prevent or alter the natural course of a river. Even the final verdict on the Cauvery water dispute is clear that no irrigation project should be taken up without the approval of the lower riparian states**

K PALANISWAMI | AIADMK GENERAL SECRETARY

organise protests to prevent Tamil Nadu from turning into a desert," Palaniswami said.

Meanwhile, CPI state secretary R Mutharasan, too condemned the attempt to build the dam and said the final verdict in the Cauvery

disputes is clear that no construction should be taken up across the Cauvery river without the approval of Kerala, Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu government too strongly opposed Shivakumar's reported remarks on his state going ahead with the construction of a reservoir across river Cauvery at Mekedatu, expressing surprise over his 'teasing' the neighbour within days of coming to power.

State Minister for Water Resources Duraimurugan Wednesday sought to remind Shivakumar that the proposed project in Karnataka found no mention in the order of the Cauvery disputes tribunal or the Supreme Court's final verdict.

# MP declares June 1 as holiday from next year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, June 1:** Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan Thursday said people of Bhopal would get a holiday on June 1 from next year as part of 'Bhopal Gaurav Diwas' celebrations.

Bhopal was merged with the rest of India nearly two years after the country got Independence on June 1, 1949. Addressing a function to mark the foundation day of the state capital, the CM also said a research centre focusing on the history of Bhopal will be established.

"From next year on the occasion of Bhopal Gaurav Diwas on June 1, Bhopal will witness a public holiday so that people can celebrate the day," said Chouhan, who hoisted the national flag at Bhopal Gate and felicitated 100 cleanliness workers with shawls.

"Bhopal became an inseparable



part of the rest of India because of the sacrifices of innumerable persons and the struggle of brave men two years after the country got Independence on June 1, 1949," the Chief Minister said.

Chouhan, who lit a torch in honour of those who laid down their lives for the merger, said the new

generation was unaware that Bhopal did not merge with India on August 15, 1947 because the then nawab (ruler) refused to accept accession to India.

A protest began from Boras near Udaypura in Raisen district along the banks of the Narmada against

the nawab, which culminated in Bhopal state becoming part of India on June 1, 1949. The CM paid rich tributes to Uddhav Das Mehta, Balkrishna Gupta and former President of India Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma for their struggle and those who were martyred during the protests in Boras.

"A research centre focused on Bhopal's history will also be established so that future generations know about the city's background," Chouhan added. Madhya Pradesh medical education minister Vishvas Sarang, Bhopal Mayor Malti Rai and former mayor Alok Sharma were present on the occasion.

**BHOPAL WAS MERGED WITH THE REST OF INDIA NEARLY TWO YEARS AFTER THE COUNTRY GOT INDEPENDENCE ON JUNE 1, 1949**  
**ADDRESSING A FUNCTION TO MARK THE FOUNDATION DAY OF THE STATE CAPITAL, THE CHIEF MINISTER SAID A RESEARCH CENTRE FOCUSING ON THE HISTORY OF BHOPAL WILL BE ESTABLISHED**

# TN deploys tribal team to track 'Arikomban'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, June 1:** The Tamil Nadu forest department has deployed a five-member tribal team to track the rogue elephant, 'Arikomban' as its officials have not been able to locate the tusker so far.

A veterinary doctor, Dr. Rajesh, will also be part of the team comprising Meen Kalan, Bomman, Suresh, Shiva and Sreekanth. The team from the Muthamala Tiger Reserve will reach Theni on Tuesday to trace the elephant which was last detected near the Shanmukhanada river within 3 km from human settlement.

A 150-member forest department team is already camping at



Cumbum town to tranquilise the elephant and relocate it to some other place.

However, with the elephant moving into the deep forest, it is diffi-

cult to tranquilize it. They are waiting for it to reach the human settlement in Cumbum or Theni.

However, a high-level meeting of the department has decided to seek the support of the tribal group of Mauthumala who are experts in reading elephant behaviour and movement.

People of Cumbum town have carried out protests after the death of 57-year-old Palraj who died at Government Theni Medical College hospital after getting himself injured when the two-wheeler in which he was driving was attacked by the tusker last week when it reached Cumbum town. The elephant has since gone deep inside the forest.

# Brace for tough fight: Chouhan to Indore residents

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Indore, June 1:** Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has called upon the residents of Indore, which has consistently emerged as the country's cleanest city, to strive to retain the prestigious tag, claiming that other cities are trying hard to grab it.

Under the Swachh Survekshan, the Centre's annual cleanliness survey, the commercial capital of MP has been adjudged as India's cleanest city



for the sixth consecutive time.

"I have solid information that other cities of the country are making desperate bids to beat Indore in cleanliness this time around (in Swachh Survekshan-2023)," he told a gathering on Wednesday night on the occasion of Indore Pride Day here.

Urging the city residents to brace for a tough fight, the CM said cleanliness is Indore's identity and brand. "Stay on the top of the clean city rankings," the chief minister said.

Chouhan released a blueprint to turn Indore into a solar city and stressed the need to promote the use of this form of clean energy to conserve the environment.

To make a start in this direction, he said, one area of the city can be developed into an exemplary zone for solar energy.

The CM said that police and administration are making serious attempts to crush the illegal drugs business to ensure that youngsters don't get trapped and go astray.

He also announced that the Nehru Stadium in the city would be upgraded to have international standards.

# Few cheetahs to be shifted from Kuno

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, June 1:** A few African cheetahs translocated to the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh will be relocated to the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Mandsaur and Neemach districts of the state by November this year.

Earlier, it was said that the Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan will be the first priority for relocating some of the big cat. However, the Cheetah Task Force Committee has now decided to shift some of the big cats from KNP to the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Chandra Prakash Goyal, the Director General of Forest Ministry, who was in Bhopal to attend the National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) meeting, said that the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary is the first priority for relocating some of the cheetahs from KNP, and the next habitat (after Gandhi Sagar) for the cheetahs will be the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, the largest in Madhya Pradesh.

"The Madhya Pradesh government has informed that the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary will be ready to welcome the cheetahs by November this year, but the way preparations are going on, I believe that the habitat will be ready to receive the big cats before that. Kuno has space to accommodate 21 cheetahs while 20 cheetahs were introduced there. After that, four cubs were born there. Three cubs and three mature cheetahs have died so far at Kuno, but the number will increase in future," Goal said.

A senior forest official also said that Rs 20 crore will be spent for fencing a 80 sq km area and for developing grassland at the Gandhi Sagar

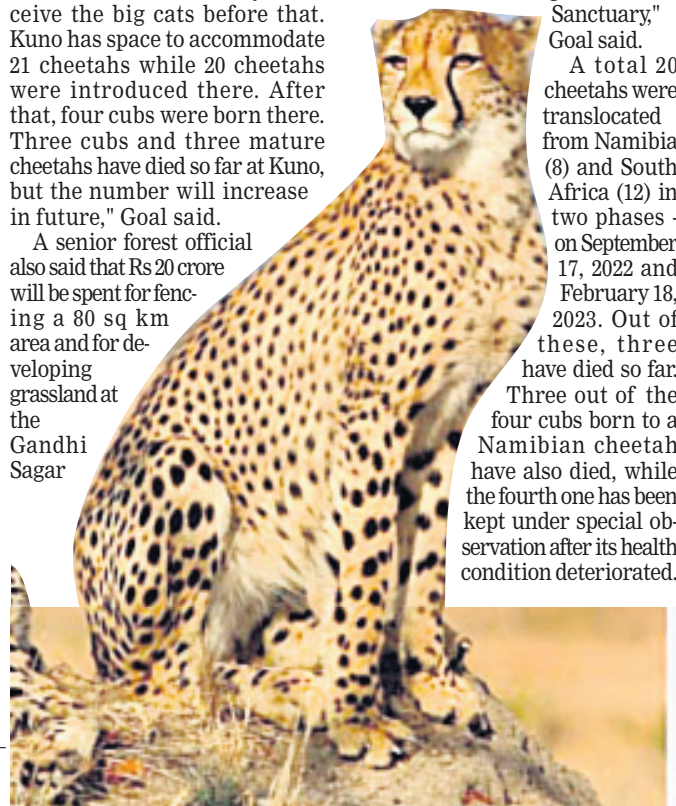
Wildlife Sanctuary, which is spread over an area of 368 sq km. The sanctuary was notified in 1974. Notably, the Chambal river passes through the sanctuary dividing into two parts - one in Mandsaur district and the other in Neemach.

The Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, which is spread over an area of 1,197 sq km, is spread across four districts - Sagar, Damoh, Narsinghpur and Raisen. When asked if some of the cheetahs will be shifted to the Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, Goal said, "We will proceed as per the cheetah action plan only, and at present, our first priority is Gandhi Sagar and the next is Nauradehi. Once the project succeeds in these two places, we will decide about the next location. The cheetah project will not be limited to one place, as it is a long-term project and relocation will continue on the basis of increase in the number of cheetahs."

On the death of six cheetahs, including three cubs, within a span of two-and-a-half months, Goal said the mortality rate of cheetah cubs is up to 90 per cent. "Even if 50 per cent of the cheetahs translocated from African countries survive, the project will be considered a success. Kuno can accommodate only 21 cheetahs at one time, which is why some of them will be shifted to the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary," Goal said.

A total 20 cheetahs were translocated from Namibia (8) and South Africa (12) in two phases - on September 17, 2022 and February 18, 2023. Out of these, three have died so far.

Three out of the four cubs born to a Namibian cheetah have also died, while the fourth one has been kept under special observation after its health condition deteriorated.



# MP ASSEMBLY POLLS BJP, CONG SET FOR CUT-THROAT FIGHT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bhopal, June 1:** With the BJP trying hard to highlight the differences within the Congress over the Chief Ministerial face in Madhya Pradesh, the latter has refuted the claims and indicated that their leader is decided.

As the Assembly election nears, the two national political parties - BJP and Congress - have pre-

▶ As the Assembly election nears, the two national political parties -- BJP and Congress -- have prepared their cadres for a heated and cut-throat political fight to grab the centre of the Hindi heartland

▶ For the last few days, the state BJP unit has been hitting the Congress by saying that the opposition 'is divided into factions and lacks unanimity on Kamal Nath as the Chief Ministerial face

pared their cadres for a heated and cut-throat political fight to grab the centre of the Hindi heartland. Besides strengthening the poll preparations like - formulation of strategies, election manifestos, social media and IT cells, election war rooms and frequent visits of central leadership, a psychological war to weaken the political opponent has also begun from both sides.



For the last few days, the state BJP unit has been hitting the Congress by saying that the opposition 'is divided into factions' and 'lacks unanimity' on Kamal Nath as the Chief Ministerial face. Nath has been leading the MP unit since the last Assembly election in 2018 and under his leadership, the Congress had managed to return to power after a gap of 15 years, however, a major crisis broke out within the grand-old party which resulted in its collapse within a period of 15 months.

Senior BJP leader and Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra, who hardly misses any opportunity to hit out at the

Congress leaders said Kamal Nath has 'declared himself as the chief ministerial candidate, whereas his other party colleagues are not in agreement.'

"Kamal Nath has declared himself as Swayambhu Chief Minister, but not his other party colleagues. Rahul Gandhi has also avoided the question on Kamal Nath as the Chief Ministerial face. Digvijaya Singh could not say it directly, which is why he expressed his view through Govind Singh (LoP). It is a clear indication of factionalism within the Congress," Mishra said while briefing the press.

It all started after former Congress president Rahul Gandhi

following a meeting with a group of Congress leaders from Madhya Pradesh in New Delhi, said, "We are going to repeat Karnataka in Madhya Pradesh. We will win 150." However, he had avoided the question on whether Kamal Nath would be the CM face in MP. Instead, he had reiterated that - "We are going to win 150 seats in Madhya Pradesh."

Notably, May 29, top Congress leaders from Madhya Pradesh met party chief Mallikarjun Kharge at the AICC headquarters in Delhi over the preparations for the upcoming Assembly elections in the state, which was also attended by Rahul Gandhi.

Following that meeting, senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition (LoP) here in Madhya Pradesh responding to the same query of the press persons said, "some are taking my name also, supporters do that, but I am not the leader; I am a party worker." And from here, the BJP leaders, especially Narottam Mishra attacked the opposition, claiming it was riddled with factionalism. However, two-time former CM and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, who had in February this year mentioned that "Kamal Nath will be the Chief Ministerial face in Madhya Pradesh" has maintained the same. Also, amid the fresh debate on this issue, Singh has said, "99 per cent of people of Madhya Pradesh want to see Kamal Nath as the Chief Minister. There should be no doubt about it."

# Agricultural scientists to guide farmers in TN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, June 1:** The Tamil Nadu state government will soon appoint agricultural scientists in each taluk to support and guide farmers in the state.

These scientists would be providing advice on the latest technology, high-yielding crop varieties, and also crop protection methods using the latest technical solutions. These agricultural scientists would be recruited from agriculture colleges, research institutions in agriculture and with the guidance and support from Tamil Nadu Agriculture University sources said.

The sources in the state agriculture department said that the state government is planning to infuse a fresh impetus and confidence among farmers by appointing these agricultural scientists in each taluk.

These scientists would be providing advice on the latest technology, high-yielding crop varieties, and also crop protection methods using the latest technical solutions

The sources in the state agriculture department said that the state government is planning to infuse a fresh impetus and confidence among farmers by appointing these agricultural scientists in each taluk

The agricultural scientists would warn the farmers of pest attacks locally and at the state level and direct them to take necessary precautions to prevent major crop losses

A senior officer of the state agriculture department said: "The appointment of agriculture scientists who are well versed in all the



modern methods of farming will provide a major support base to the farmers so that they feel confident and equipped to deal with any issues that come up including crop failure and withering of crops due to pest attack."

He added that these newly-appointed agriculture scientists would support farmers in value addition of their produce thus increasing commercial viability and thereby economic independence to farmers. The scien-

tists would also conduct research on basic statistics like rainfall, crop yield, details of the soil, pest statistics and infrastructure facilities and provide a roadmap to the farmers.

The agricultural scientists would warn the farmers of pest attacks locally and at the state level and direct them to take necessary precautions to prevent major crop losses. The farmers would be provided with marketing support and would be trained in post-harvest grading of crops with guidance from the scientists.

However, farmers are not impressed with the proposal. R. Arumugasamy, a farmer association leader at Erode said, "This is only a hype that the government is creating regarding the appointment of new agriculture scientists but instead they should be providing training to the farmers at the grassroots level."





**“The three cubs died due to extreme heat. The temperature soared to 47 degrees Celsius... We take responsibility for whatever happened. However, the project will be a major success and the whole country will be proud of it**

**BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER**

**STRICT ACTION**

Meta-owned WhatsApp banned a record of over 74 lakh bad accounts in India in the month of April, in compliance with the new IT Rules 2021, the company said Thursday



**of the day quote**

The dropping of students from state-run schools had pained those who admire the public education system

**PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM**

With regard to Mekedatu, we had marched for water (in 2021). Tamil Nadu will not have any problem

**D K SHIVAKUMAR | KARNATAKA DEPUTY CM**

The outpour of love for #JonoSanjogYatra, from thousands of you every day has convinced me that a Jono Jowar has taken over Bengal. People's growing support assures me that Trinamool Congress is set to outperform itself in the upcoming Panchayat Polls and beyond

**ABHISHEK BANERJEE | SENIOR TMC LEADER**

**SHORT TAKES**

**IAF's trainer aircraft crashes**

**Chamarajanagar (Karnataka):** A Kiran trainer aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed in an open field at a village in the district Thursday but the two pilots, including a woman, made it out safely after ejecting from the plane before the crash. District officials said the pilots, identified only as Tejpal and Bhumika, sustained minor injuries. No casualties were reported. No additional details were given by IAF. The training aircraft, which took off from the air force station in Bengaluru, crashed this morning at Bhogapura village.

**Massive landslide in Uttarakhand**

**Pithoragarh:** A massive landslide at Najang, about 45 km from Uttarakhand's Dharachula, has left over 200 Adi Kailash pilgrims stranded at different places, officials said Thursday. Pilgrims, both on the way to Adi Kailash and back, are stuck at different places as huge volumes of debris have accumulated on the road blocking it, Dharachula SDM Divesh Shashni said. The pilgrims are in Dharachula, Napalchu, Gunji and Bundi waiting for the route to be cleared of debris, the SDM said, adding that they are all safe.

**40 hurt as bus falls into gorge**

**Shimla:** A bus rolled down into a gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district Thursday, leaving 40 passengers injured, police said. Ambulances have been dispatched to the spot, according to the state emergency operation centre.

**Notices to over 60 govt doctors**

**Patna:** The Bihar state health department has issued notices to over 60 government doctors across the state for being on unauthorised leave for at least a year or more, officials said Thursday. A notice containing names of such doctors of different health centers and hospitals in this regard was uploaded on the department's website, they said.

**3 dead as rickshaw falls into drain**

**Thane:** Three women died and four persons were injured after the autorickshaw they were travelling in fell into a nullah (major drain) in Bhiwandi in Maharashtra's Thane district, a police official said Thursday. The incident took place under Kongaon police station limits on the Mumbai-Nashik highway in the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, he added.

**ORDINANCE ROW**

**Kejriwal meets Stalin**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, June 1:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin Thursday accused the Centre of creating a crisis in the non-BJP ruled states and said that the ruling DMK would strongly oppose the Central ordinance on control over administrative services in the national capital.

Also, the Central government was preventing duly elected governments from functioning independently, he claimed. "The Centre is creating a crisis to the Aam Aadmi Party and is preventing a duly elected government from functioning independently. Despite the Supreme Court verdict in favour of the AAP government, the Centre brought the ordinance. The DMK will strongly oppose it," Stalin, who is president of the DMK, told reporters outside his Alwarpet residence here.

Flanked by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann, Stalin described Kejriwal as his "good friend" and said the discussion between them on opposing the ordinance was fruitful.

This sort of healthy discussion among the opposition parties should continue to protect the democracy in the country, he said. Accusing the BJP-led government of bringing the ordinance nullifying the Supreme Court order, Kejriwal, who air-dashed to Chennai and sought Stalin's support, said the

**The Centre had May 19 promulgated the ordinance to create an authority for the transfer and posting of Group-A officers in Delhi, which the AAP government had called a deception with the Supreme Court verdict on control of services**

DMK agreed to strongly oppose it and stand by AAP government and the people of Delhi. "This ordinance should be collectively defeated in the Parliament as it is undemocratic, against the federal structure and unconstitutional," he said and termed the coming-together of opposition parties to defeat the ordinance as semi-finals to the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said the DMK government had to put up a fight against a Governor who not only refrained from passing the Assembly bills but also did not read out the speech prepared by the state government.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo has been reaching out to leaders of non-BJP parties to garner support against the ordinance so that the Centre's bid to replace it through a bill is defeated when it is brought in Parliament.



FACE THE FEAR: Tourists participate in river rafting on the Beas river near Manali

PTI PHOTO

**India, Nepal vow to deepen ties**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart Pushpakamal Dahal 'Prachanda' Thursday vowed to resolve the vexed boundary dispute under the spirit of friendship even as the two sides signed several major pacts including one on increasing New Delhi's import of power from the neighbouring country to 10,000 mega watt in the next 10 years.

In total, India and Nepal signed seven pacts which included a revised treaty of transit that was described by Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra as "once in a generation kind of an agreement" as it would provide Nepal access to inland waterways of India for the first time and expected to contribute very significantly to expansion of trade and investment linkages.

The two sides also firm up several new initiatives to expand cooperation in areas of hydro-electric power, petroleum infrastructure, railway connectivity, cross-border payment systems and trade and investment as part of a futuristic approach to expand the overall trajectory of bilateral ties.

In his media statement, Modi said he and Prachanda took many important decisions to make the partnership between the two countries a "super hit" in the future.

"We will continue to strive to take our relationship to Himalayan heights. And in this spirit, we will resolve all the issues, be it boundary related or any other issue,"



Modi said in his media statement in presence of Prachanda.

In his comments, the Nepalese Prime Minister said he and Modi discussed the boundary matter through the established bilateral diplomatic mechanism," he said.

Asked at a media briefing about the boundary dispute, Foreign Secretary Kwatra referred to the comments by the two prime ministers and said they not only speak of the intent of the two leaders and the two systems, they also speak about the specifics through

■ In the wide-ranging talks between Modi and Prachanda, the Indian side agreed to the first trilateral power trade from Nepal to Bangladesh through India for up to 40 mega watt of power

■ The country shares a border of over 1850 km with five Indian states - Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand

■ Land-locked Nepal relies heavily on India for the transportation of goods and services

which they intend this to be carried forward. To a question on whether the China factor figured in the talks, Kwatra said the discussions also covered wider developments and challenges and how the two countries should cooperate to mitigate them.

In his remarks, Modi also referred to his priority in strengthening ties with Nepal after he took charge as the prime minister nine years ago. In the talks, it was agreed to set up a fertilizer plant in Nepal by India.

**Franco Mulakkal quits as Jalandhar Bishop**

*His resignation, which came one-and-a-half years after he was acquitted by a local court in Kerala last year in the rape case, will pave the way for the appointment of a new Bishop to the diocese*



mission of the Holy See) in India said in a statement.

"In this regard, the Apostolic Nunciature wishes to specify that the Holy See respects the verdict of the Additional District and Sessions Court, Kottayam, Kerala, acquitting Bishop Mulakkal from the allegations concerning him, as well as the appeal against the acquittal, which has been admitted by the Kerala High Court," it said.

The nun, who says she was raped by the bishop, has moved the Kerala High Court against the trial court verdict in the case.

"Given the still divisive situation about the aforesaid matter in the Diocese of Jalandhar, the resignation has been requested from the Rt Rev Mulakkal not as a disciplinary measure imposed upon him, but as pro bono Ecclesiae, especially for the good of the Jalandhar diocese, which needs a new bishop," it added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, June 1:** Bishop Franco Mulakkal, who was temporarily relieved of his pastoral responsibilities by Pope Francis in 2018 following allegations of rape by a nun, has resigned from the Jalandhar Bishop's post, the Vatican's representative in India said Thursday.

His resignation, which came one-and-a-half years after he was acquitted by a local court in Kerala last year in the rape case, will pave the way for the appointment of a new bishop to the diocese, a church official said. "Today, 1 June 2023, the Holy Father Pope Francis has accepted the resignation submitted by the Rt Rev Franco Mulakkal as Bishop of Jullundur," the Apostolic Nunciature (top-level diplomatic

**Sisodia claims manhandling in court premises**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 1:** A Delhi court Thursday directed officials to preserve the May 23 CCTV footage of the court premises after AAP leader Manish Sisodia alleged he was manhandled by security personnel that day during his production in a case related to the alleged excise policy scam.

The police also moved an application seeking court's permission to produce Sisodia only via video conference (VC), after he levelled the allegation.

Police favoured Sisodia's virtual production contending that bringing him to court "creates chaos" due to the presence of Aam Aadmi Party supporters and media in the corridors. Special Judge M K



Nagpal, after taking note of both the applications, directed Sisodia's

production through video conference pending his decision on the prayers.

Sisodia was produced before the court Thursday via video conference. The AAP leader was arrested by the ED in a money laundering case related to the alleged scam March 9 from Tihar Jail where he is currently lodged in judicial custody.

**Heart attack linked with cognitive decline over years**

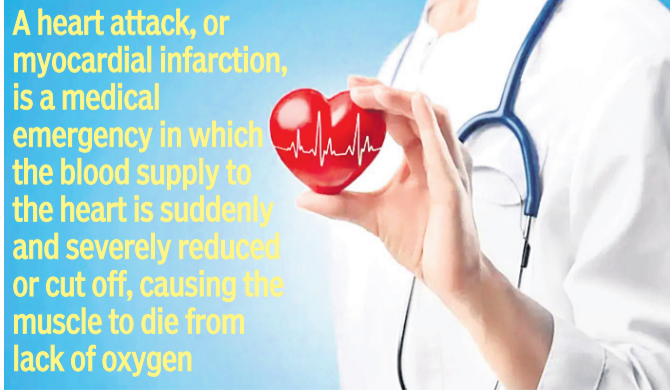
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 1:** A new research has found that for those who had a heart attack versus those who did not, there was a significantly faster decline in cognition over the years following the heart attack.

In a combined analysis of six different large studies of adults between 1971 and 2019, the research from Johns Hopkins Medicine, US, determined whether people who have had heart attacks showed cognitive changes compared with people similar to them in all respects except they had not had a heart attack. "Due to the fact that

many people are at risk for having a heart attack, we hope that the results of our study will serve as a wake-up call for people to control vascular risk factors like high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol as soon as they can since we have shown that having a heart attack increases your risk of decreased cognition and memory later on in life," said Michelle Johansen, an associate professor of neurology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. The study findings are published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Neurology.

A heart attack, or myocardial in-



faction, is a medical emergency in which the blood supply to the heart is suddenly and severely re-

duced or cut off, causing the muscle to die from a lack of oxygen. For those who suffered a heart

attack, while the researchers did not find significant cognitive decline immediately after their first heart attack, the participants' cognitive tests showed a decline over the years following the event.

The study sample comprising 30,465 people had not experienced a heart attack or stroke and did not have dementia at the time of the first cognitive assessment. Of these, 1,033 individuals went on to have at least one heart attack, and out of that, 137 had two heart attacks.

Of the overall sample, 29 per cent were Black, 8 per cent Hispanic and 56 per cent women. Individuals who experienced heart attacks were more likely to be

older and male.

The researchers scored various aspects of participants' cognition across several different cognitive tests, which were then combined to represent one cognitive domain. A decrease in points indicated a decline in that cognitive domain.

The various aspects of participants' cognition measured were their global or overall cognition over time, including their memory and executive functioning, which is the ability to make complex cognitive decisions.

Johansen said that the next steps were to look at other aspects of heart health and how they might affect brain health.

# international



The US should stop any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, refrain from negotiating agreements with Taiwan that have sovereign connotations or official nature and refrain from sending wrong signals to the Taiwan independence secessionist forces

MAO NING | DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF CHINA

## NEW DIRECTIVE

The Bangladeshi government has issued a directive banning first-class travel for all government employees till further notice. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed the directive in this regard, her Press Wing said in a statement



## of the day quote

Good to meet FM Sergey Lavrov of Russia in Cape Town on BRICS FMM sidelines. Our discussions covered bilateral matters, BRICS, G20 and SCO

S JAISHANKAR | INDIA'S EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

NATO wants to bring Sweden into the fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12. The allies also hope to make progress on long-term funding and the security plan for Ukraine at the same event

JENS STOLTENBERG | SECRETARY GENERAL OF NATO

I feel fine but I am afraid I have turned COVID-19 positive again. My doctors say it is a COVID rebound, which happens in 5-10 per cent of cases

LEE HSIEN LOONG | SINGAPORE PM

## SHORT TAKES

### 300 firefighters to battle wildfires

Halifax (Canada): More than 300 firefighters from the United States and South Africa are heading to Canada in the coming days to help the country battle an unprecedented wildfire season. Federal officials said Thursday that at least 100 US firefighters will be arriving in Nova Scotia over the weekend to help knock down out-of-control wildfires that have forced about 21,000 people from their homes since Sunday. Another 200 firefighters arriving from South Africa will likely end up in Alberta, though officials say the wildfire situation in the country is fluid.

### Abide by truce: US

Cairo: The United States urged Sudan's warring sides Thursday to return to cease-fire talks and make a concerted effort to abide by a lasting truce after peace efforts collapsed yet again. The appeal from the US State Department came after Sudan's military on Wednesday suspended its participation in the talks, hosted in Saudi Arabia, with a rival paramilitary force. The fighting between the Sudanese military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, broke out in mid-April. The violence has killed at least 866 civilians, according to a Sudanese doctors group, though the actual toll is likely much higher.

### Four injured

Stockholm: Four teenagers were injured in an incident Thursday in the town of Eskilstuna, west of Stockholm, police said, adding it was unclear what had happened but "several people were involved in a fight that resulted in personal injuries". Those injured were four boys aged 15, police said in a statement. The case is being classified as attempted murder, but police said they had no information on how serious the injuries were. Two young men have been detained and more people can be expected to be nabbed, they added.

### 17 kids hurt

Ottawa: Seventeen children and one adult were injured after falling off an elevated walkway in central Canada, local media reported. The accident happened at Fort Gibraltar in Winnipeg's St. Boniface area on Wednesday when the children aged 10-11 from St. John's-Ravenscourt School were on a field trip, reports Xinhua news agency.

# Putin overshadows BRICS talks

REUTERS

Cape Town, June 1: A meeting of foreign ministers from the BRICS countries in South Africa Thursday was overshadowed by questions about whether Russian President Vladimir Putin would be arrested if he attended a summit of the five-nation bloc in August.

South Africa's Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor said it was mulling legal options if Putin, the subject of a war crimes arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), did attend the planned Johannesburg summit. As a member of the ICC, South Africa would theoretically be required to arrest Putin if he attended, and Pandor was bombarded with questions about the issue as she arrived for a first round of talks with representatives from Russia, China, India and Brazil. "Our government is currently looking at what the legal options are with respect to this matter," she told reporters. "The answer is the president (Cyril Ramaphosa) will indicate what the final position of South Africa is. As matters stand an invitation has been issued to all (BRICS) heads of state," Pandor said.

Putin has not confirmed his plans, with the Kremlin only say-



South Africa's foreign minister Naledi Pandor meets Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov ahead of the BRICS foreign ministers meeting in Cape Town, South Africa

- Ukraine war repercussions fuel impetus to strengthen BRICS
- Foreign ministers likely to discuss admitting new members
- Meeting is prelude to summit in August
- South Africa under scrutiny over potential Putin summit visit
- ICC has issued war crimes warrant against Putin

ing Russia would take part at the "proper level". The ICC accused Putin in March of the war crime of forcibly deporting children from

Russian-occupied territory in Ukraine. Moscow denies the allegations. South Africa had invited Putin in January.

Foreign ministers from Brazil, Russia, India were attending Thursday's meeting in Cape Town, while China was represented by a deputy minister. No official agenda has been made public. Analysts said the bloc was seeking to turn itself into a counterweight to the West in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. An expansion of the group could be on the agenda, they said.

'ALTERNATIVE TO THE WEST' "BRICS is positioning itself as an

alternative to the West and as a way to make space for emerging powers," said Cobus van Staden of the South African Institute of International Affairs. Anil Sooklal, a senior South African official involved in preparing for the meeting, told reporters the ministers would discuss the global geopolitical situation and financial architecture.

He said BRICS' New Development Bank, which stopped funding projects in Russia to comply with sanctions, would be discussed.

Once viewed as a loose, largely symbolic association of disparate emerging economies, BRICS has in recent years taken more concrete shape, driven initially by Beijing and, since the start of the Ukraine war in February 2022, with added impetus from Moscow. BRICS leaders have said they are open to admitting new members, including oil producing countries.

Venezuela, Argentina, Iran, Algeria, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are on a list of those who have either formally applied to join or expressed interest, officials said. "If they can bring in the oil producer countries that will be key, given the petrodollar system," said William Gumede, a South African political analyst who has written extensively on BRICS.

# Debt ceiling deal now goes to Senate



Washington is rushing after a long slog of debate to wrap up work on the package to ensure the government can keep paying its bills, and prevent financial upheaval at home and abroad

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, June 1: Veering away from a default crisis, the House overwhelmingly approved a debt ceiling and budget cuts package, sending the deal that President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy negotiated to the Senate for swift passage in a matter of days, before a fast-approaching deadline.

The hard-fought compromise pleased few, but lawmakers assessed it was better than the alternative—a devastating economic upheaval if Congress failed to act. Tensions ran high as hard-right Republicans refused the deal, but Biden and McCarthy assembled a bipartisan coalition to push to passage on a robust 314-117 vote late Wednesday.

"We did pretty dang good," McCarthy, R-Calif., said afterward. Amid deep discontent from Republicans who said the spending restrictions did not go far enough, McCarthy said it is only a "first step".

Biden, watching the tally from Colorado Springs where Thursday he is scheduled to deliver the commencement address at the U.S. Air Force Academy, phoned McCarthy and the other congressional leaders after the vote. In a statement, he called the outcome "good news for the American people and the American economy".

Washington is rushing after a

long slog of debate to wrap up work on the package to ensure the government can keep paying its bills, and prevent financial upheaval at home and abroad. Next Monday is when the Treasury has said the US would run short of money and risk a dangerous default.

Biden had been calling lawmakers directly to shore up backing. McCarthy worked to sell sceptical fellow Republicans, even fending off challenges to his leadership. A similar bipartisan effort from Democrats and Republicans will be needed in the Senate to overcome objections.

Overall, the 99-page bill would make some inroads in curbing the nation's deficits as Republicans demanded, without rolling back Trump-era tax breaks as Biden wanted. To pass it, Biden and McCarthy counted on support from the political centre, a rarity in divided Washington.

A compromise, the package restricts spending for the next two years, suspends the debt ceiling into January 2025 and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and greenlighting an Appalachian natural gas line that many Democrats oppose. It bolsters funds for defence and veterans, and guts new money for Internal Revenue Service agents.

Raising the nation's debt limit, now USD 31 trillion, ensures Treasury can borrow to pay already incurred US debts. Top GOP deal negotiator Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana said Republicans were fighting for budget cuts after the past years of extra spending, first during the COVID-19 crisis and later with Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, with its historic investment to fight climate change paid for with revenues elsewhere.

## PTI president arrested in Lahore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, June 1: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party president Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, a close aide to former Prime Minister Imran Khan, was arrested outside his residence here Thursday, the party said.

"Shameful how the regime doesn't stop their fascism. The inflation has skyrocketed to 38%, and their response is arresting former CM Punjab Pervaiz Elahi. Absolutely ridiculous!" the party tweeted along with a video in which the 77-year-old leader was seen being dragged by security personnel from his residence, Zahoor Elahi.

The former Punjab chief minister was arrested as he was leaving his house, the Dawn newspaper



reported, quoting Elahi's spokesperson Iqbal Chaudhry. The spokesperson alleged that authorities also "misbehaved" with women accompanying Elahi, who had been evading arrest since May 9.

On May 26, a district court in Lahore issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Elahi. "The pre-arrest bail of the accused was dismissed due to non-prosecution vide order dated May 25 and he is not appearing before the court and also not joining the investigation. In view of the request of the IO, let non-bailable arrest warrants of accused Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi be issued for June 2, 2023," the court order read.

## Top Australian soldier loses war crimes defamation case

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sydney, June 1: Australia's most decorated living war veteran unlawfully killed prisoners and committed other war crimes in Afghanistan, a judge ruled Thursday in dismissing the claims by Victoria Cross recipient Ben Roberts-Smith that he was defamed by media.

Federal Court Justice Anthony Besanko ruled that the articles published in 2018 were substantially true about a number of war crimes committed by Roberts-Smith, a former Special Air Service Regiment corporal who now is a media company executive.

Besanko found Roberts-Smith, who was also awarded the Medal

of Gallantry for his Afghanistan War service, "broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement" and disgraced Australia through his conduct.

The ruling is regarded as a significant win for press freedom against Australia's extraordinarily restrictive defamation laws following a hard-fought trial over 110 court hearing days that is estimated to have cost more than 25 million Australian dollars (USD 16 million) in legal fees.

Proven allegations included that Roberts-Smith, the son of a judge, used a machine gun to shoot a prisoner with a prosthetic leg in the back at a Taliban compound codenamed Whiskey 108 in Uruzgan province in 2009. He kept the man's pros-



thetic as a novelty beer drinking vessel. The man was one of two unarmed Afghans that Roberts-Smith's patrol had dragged from a tunnel. Roberts-Smith pressured a "newly deployed and inexperienced" soldier to kill the second, older man to "blood the rookie", the court found. The proven accusations also included that Roberts-Smith killed an

unarmed, handcuffed farmer named Ali Jan by kicking him from a cliff top and into a riverbed at the Afghan village of Darwan in 2012. Roberts-Smith then directed a soldier under his command to shoot Jan dead.

Also found to be true were accusations that Roberts-Smith, who stands 2.02 metres (6 feet, 7 inches) tall, bullied soldiers and assaulted Afghan civilians. Two of six unlawful killings Roberts-Smith was accused of involvement in were not proven to the civil court standard of balance of probability, the judge found.

Reports of domestic violence allegedly committed by Roberts-Smith were also found to be unproven and defamatory.

## China's meeting snub unfortunate: Austin

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tokyo, June 1: US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin stressed the importance of communication during a stopover Thursday in Tokyo, calling it unfortunate that his Chinese counterpart is refusing to meet him at an upcoming annual security conference in Singapore, which both men are attending.

On the way to the annual Shangri-La Dialogue Asian security summit this weekend, Austin held talks with Japanese Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada. Noting China's increasingly assertive military actions in international air-



space and waterways in the region, he told a joint news conference in Tokyo. "The provocative intercepts of our aircraft and also our allies' aircraft, that's very concerning, and we would hope that they would alter their action."

The United States military said Tuesday that a Chinese fighter jet flew aggressively close to a U.S. Reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, forcing the American pilot to fly through the turbulent wake.

"I'm concerned about at some point having an incident that could very, very quickly spiral out of control," Austin said.

## El Nino may hammer Asian farms with dry weather

REUTERS

Singapore, June 1: Early signs of hot, dry weather caused by El Nino are threatening food producers across Asia, while American growers are counting on heavier summer rains from the weather phenomenon to alleviate the impact of severe drought.

El Nino, a warming of water surface temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific Ocean, is expected to develop in the coming months, according to meteorologists. The impact of the phenomenon typically causes hot, dry weather across Asia and Australia while bringing heavier-than-normal rainfall to the southern U.S. and southern South America.

As El Nino looms, wheat output in Australia, the world's second-largest exporter of the grain, is expected to take a hit from dry weather, while palm oil and rice production is likely to suffer in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand,



CREDIT: WIKIPEDIA

forecasters and analysts said. Soil is drying in India and Pakistan, which is expected to hamper summer crop planting, while El Nino is also forecast to blunt the impact of South Asia's crucial June-September monsoon season. "We are looking at longer term dryness in Australia from now until at least August," said Chris Hyde, a meteorologist at U.S.-based

Maxar. "The seasonal outlook in India is a weaker than normal monsoon for the entire country, extending into Pakistan."

Lower production of cereals and oilseeds in Asia because of El Nino is likely to heighten food inflation worries for some of the world's most vulnerable consumers, dashing hopes for further relief from lower prices in recent months.

Even if the weather pattern ends up boosting crop output in the Americas, the impact in Asia could reverberate across global food markets.

Wheat prices dropped to two-and-half year lows this week, while corn and soybeans have eased from multi-year peaks set in 2022, when the Russia-Ukraine war and COVID-19 disrupted world supplies.

Australia, which has produced bumper wheat crops for three years, had a good start to the 2023/24 planting season with ample soil moisture but is forecast to see below-normal rains and higher temperatures during the crucial southern hemisphere winter months.

For Indonesia and Malaysia,

DRYNESS IN AUSTRALIA, PARTS OF INDIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA METEOROLOGISTS FORECAST BELOW NORMAL RAINS IN ASIA US, SOUTH AMERICA TO GET MORE RAINS, THOUGH TIMING CRUCIAL

## of the day quote

We are living in the world of politics, but we should be clear of our objectives... We remain focused on economic development and economic growth that is India's priority

We expect GDP growth in a range of 6.5-6.7 per cent in 2023-24, supported by strong domestic drivers and robust capex momentum of the government

FAME II will gradually reduce over the next few quarters. The company will continue to deliver delightful product options and great value proposition to propel the electrification and green energy penetration in two-wheelers in the country

## SHORT TAKES

### Foxconn to make iPhones in K'taka

**Bangalore:** Apple Inc supplier Foxconn will start manufacturing iPhones in the southern Indian state of Karnataka by April 2024, the state government said Thursday. The land for the factory would be handed over to Foxconn by July 1, the government said, adding that the project, valued at 130 billion rupees (\$1.59 billion), is expected to create around 50,000 jobs. Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, has set a target of manufacturing 20 million iPhones a year at the plant in Devanahalli, on the outskirts of state capital and tech hub Bangalore.

### Coal India output grows 9.5 per cent

**New Delhi:** State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) has reported a 9.5 per cent year-on-year rise in monthly production to a record 60 million tonne (MT) in May 2023. The miner, along with its subsidiaries, had produced 54.7 MT of coal in the same month last year, CIL said in a statement Thursday. "CIL's May 2023 production rose to a record 60 MT, logging 9.5 per cent growth over the same month last year with an increase of 5.2 MT. Considering the production for May generally hovers in the range of 40-48 MT, the CIL output surge in the current fiscal's May was substantial. All the subsidiaries have listed positive growth," the statement said. Progressive production in April-May 2023 was 117.5 MT, 8.6 per cent higher from 108.2 MT in the year-ago period.

### Petrol, diesel sales soar in May

**New Delhi:** India's petrol and diesel sales soared in May as agriculture demand picked up and cars yanked up air-conditioning with the onset of summer, preliminary industry data showed Thursday. Demand for diesel, the most consumed fuel in the country accounting for about two-fifths of the demand, soared 9.3 per cent to 7.46 million tonne in May compared to the year-ago period. In April, diesel demand had risen 6.7 per cent year-on-year and the consumption in May was better than that. Month-on-month sales rose 4.2 per cent when compared with 7.16 million tonne of diesel consumed in April. Petrol sales rose 10.4 per cent to 3.08 million tonne in May 2023 when compared with the same period last year. Sales were up 16.5 per cent month-on-month, the data showed. Petrol and diesel sales have been on the rise from the second half of March on the back of a pick-up in industrial and agriculture activity.



**India is in the mode of stability with a proactive government strengthening every element of the economy in a manner which will hold us in good stead in our pursuit to make India a developed nation by 2047**

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

## WHITE COLLAR HIRING ACTIVITY FLAT IN MAY

The hiring activity in India's white-collar professional segment, remained steady in May and witnessed multi-sectoral growth across sectors such as real estate, banking, oil and gas and pharma. According to the Naukri JobSpeak Index, the job postings for white collar hiring in May 2023 was at 2,849, as against 2,863 in May 2022.



# India's chip-making plan flounders

## COMPANIES STRUGGLE TO FIND TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS

REUTERS

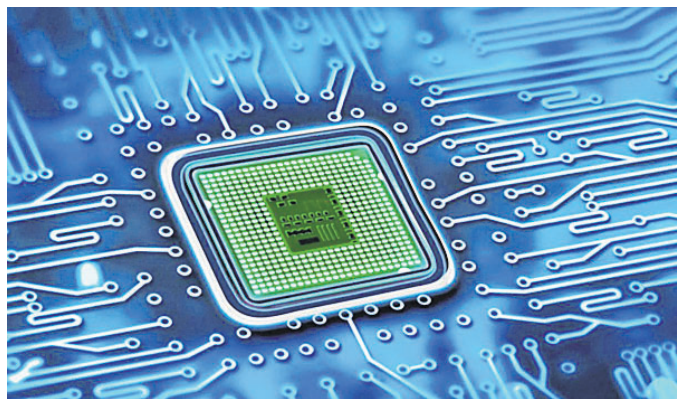
**New Delhi/Oakland, June 1:** Big companies including a Foxconn joint venture that bid for India's \$10 billion semiconductor incentives are struggling due to the lack of a technology partner, a major setback for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's chip-making ambitions.

A planned \$3 billion semiconductor facility in India by chip consortium ISMC that counted Israeli chipmaker Tower as a tech partner has been stalled due to the company's ongoing takeover by Intel, three people with direct knowledge of the strategy said.

A second mega \$19.5 billion plan to build chips locally by a joint venture between India's Vedanta and Taiwan's Foxconn is also proceeding slowly as their talks to rope in European chipmaker STMicroelectronics as a partner are deadlocked, a fourth source with direct knowledge said.

Modi has made chip-making a top priority for India's economic strategy as he wants to "usher in a new era in electronics manufacturing" by luring global companies.

India, which expects its semiconductor market to be worth \$63 billion by 2026, last year received three applications to set up plants under the incentive scheme. They were from the Vedanta-Foxconn



JV; a global consortium ISMC which counts Tower Semiconductor as a tech partner; and from Singapore-based IGSS Ventures.

The Vedanta JV plan is to come up in Gujarat, while ISMC and IGSS each committed \$3 billion for plants in two separate southern states. The three sources said ISMC's \$3 billion chip-making facility plans are currently on hold as Tower could not proceed to sign binding agreements as things remain under review after Intel acquired it for \$5.4 billion last year. The deal is pending regulatory approvals.

Talking about India's semiconductor ambitions, India's deputy IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar told Reuters in a May 19 interview ISMC "could not proceed" due to Intel acquiring Tower; and IGSS

"wanted to re-submit (the application)" for incentives. The "two of them had to drop out," he said, without elaborating.

Tower is likely to re-evaluate taking part in the venture based on how its deal talks with Intel pan out, two of the sources said.

ISMC consortium partners Next Orbit Ventures did not respond to a request for comment. Tower and Intel declined to comment. Singapore-based IGSS and India's federal IT ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Most of the world's chip output is limited to a few countries like Taiwan, and India is a late entrant. Amid much fanfare, in September, the Vedanta-Foxconn JV announced its chip-making plans in Gujarat. Modi called the \$19.5 billion plan

# GST mop-up crosses ₹1.5 lakh crore for third month in a row



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** GST collections crossed ₹1.50 lakh crore for the third month in a row, recording a 12 per cent increase in May at over ₹1.57 lakh crore, according to the official data released Thursday.

The collections, tax experts said, reflect a continuation of the good economic performance across states witnessed since last year.

The gross GST revenue collected in the month of May, 2023 is ₹1,57,090 crore of which Central GST is ₹28,411 crore, State GST is ₹35,828 crore, Integrated GST is ₹81,363 crore (including ₹41,772 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹11,489 crore (including ₹1,057 crore collected on import of goods), a finance ministry statement said.

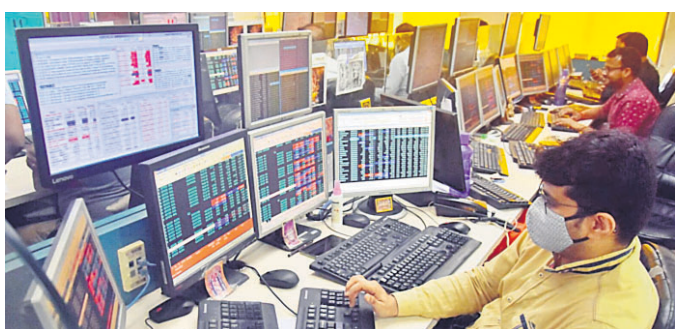
"The revenues for the month of

May 2023 are 12 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year," the ministry said.

During the month, revenue from import of goods was 12 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 11 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year. May is the third month in a row that tax collections from goods sold and services rendered have crossed ₹1.50 lakh crore. In April GST revenues had touched a record high of ₹1.87 lakh crore, while in March it was ₹1.60 lakh crore.

May is the 14th month in a row when monthly GST revenues came in more than ₹1.4 lakh crore. Collections have crossed the ₹1.5 lakh crore-mark for the 5th time since the implementation of GST July 1, 2017.

# Markets extend losses for 2nd day in volatile trade



AGENCIES

**Mumbai, June 1:** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower in highly volatile trade Thursday due to selling in banking, metal and energy counters amid a mixed trend in the global markets.

Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 193.70 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 62,428.54 even after a positive beginning. During the day, it fell 263.1 points or 0.42 per cent to 62,359.14.

The NSE Nifty fell 46.65 points or 0.25 per cent to finish at 18,487.75.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel fell 3.42 and Kotak Mahindra Bank declined 3.31 per cent. ICICI Bank, ITC, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, HCL Technologies and Maruti were the other major laggards. Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, Nestle, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers.

Meanwhile, S&P Global Ratings said Reliance Industries Ltd's operating performance is likely to remain resilient over the next two years, as the firm's growing pres-

ence in the digital and retail segments will temper softer earnings in the energy business.

Reliance shares fell 0.51 per cent to close at ₹2,462.05 apiece on BSE. Institutional investors lapped up Coal India's share in the maiden government's stake sale this fiscal, with ₹6,500 crore bids pouring in on the first day of the offer for sale.

Investors sought 28.76 crore shares against the 18.48 crore total shares offered in the 2-day OFS, stock exchange data showed.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.61 per cent and the midcap index advanced 0.11 per cent.

Among the indices, bankex fell 0.82 per cent, metal declined 0.79 per cent, energy (0.65 per cent), financial services (0.41 per cent), telecommunication (0.27 per cent) and commodities (0.18 per cent).

Realty jumped 1.19 per cent, healthcare (0.84 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.64 per cent), utilities (0.68 per cent) and IT (0.52 per cent).

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) continued to remain, net buyers, as they bought equities worth ₹3,405.90 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

# Auto sales on growth track riding on demand for SUVs

Market leader Maruti Suzuki India reported a 15 per cent rise in total domestic passenger vehicle sales at 1,43,708 units as compared with 1,24,474 units in the same month last year

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** Automakers led by Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra, Toyota Kirloskar Motor Thursday reported robust wholesales of passenger vehicles in the domestic market in May riding on strong demand for SUVs.

Other manufacturers such as Tata Motors, Kia and MG Motor India also reported increase in their dispatches to dealers during the month.

Market leader Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) reported a 15 per cent rise in total domestic passenger vehicle sales at 1,43,708 units as compared with 1,24,474 units in the same month last year.

The company's sales of mini cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, fell 30 per cent to 12,236 units as compared with 17,408 units in the year-ago period, while compact cars sales, including models such as Swift, Celerio, Ignis, Baleno and Dzire, increased 5 per cent to 71,419 units as against 67,947 units in May 2022.



On the other hand, utility vehicle sales, including those of Brezza, Grand Vitara and Ertiga, rose 65 per cent to 46,243 units as against 28,051 vehicles in the year-ago month, MSI said. Sales of mid-sized sedan Ciaz last month increased to 992 units from 586 units in the year-ago period, it added.

Rival Hyundai Motor India Ltd said its domestic sales grew 14.91 per cent at 48,601 units as compared to 42,293 units in the year-ago month. Tata Motors, however, had a moderate domestic passenger vehicle sales growth at 6 per cent posting 45,878 units last month as compared to 43,341 units in May last year.

Sales of passenger electric vehicles, including international business, were at 5,805 units as against 3,505 units in the same month a year ago, a growth of 66 per cent, the company said in a statement.

Another homegrown automaker Mahindra & Mahindra posted a

total passenger vehicle sales of 26,904 units in May 2022.

The company's utility vehicles sales last month were at 32,883 units, as against 26,632 units in the year-ago period, a growth of 23 per cent. Sales of cars and vans were at 3 units as compared to 272 units in May last year.

Automaker Kia India said its total wholesales increased 3 per cent to 24,770 units in May. The company undertook a plant maintenance shutdown from May 15-20. It had dispatched 24,079 units to dealers in May 2022.

In contrast, Toyota Kirloskar Motor posted its highest-ever sales in a month with a two-fold increase to 20,410 units in May. The automaker had dispatched 10,216 units in the same month last year.

MG Motor India also reported a 25 per cent rise in retail sales at 5,006 units in May compared to the same month last year. The company had sold 4,008 units in May 2022.

# India to be world's most significant new aircraft mkt: Barclays

**INDIA IS CURRENTLY THE THIRD LARGEST AVIATION MARKET IN THE WORLD, ONLY BEHIND THE US AND CHINA, IN TERMS OF DOMESTIC TRAFFIC**

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 1:** With one of the highest traffic growth rates in the world, India is the focal market for the global aerospace and defence industry and the world's most significant new aircraft market, Barclays said in a report.

India is currently the third largest aviation market in the world, only behind the US and China, in terms of domestic traffic.

"The growing middle-class population with an increased propen-

sity to travel stimulated by a government initiative through the UDAN Regional Connectivity Scheme has made India a key source of demand for new aircraft," the brokerage said.

Indian carriers have the second-largest order book behind the US. India currently takes 7 per cent of all Boeing and Airbus deliveries, and the country is seen taking nearly that proportion over time as annual traffic growth is forecast to remain 200 bps above the long-term global average.

"With important fleet decisions to make by IndiGo, Akasa Air, Jet Airways, the battle for market share is likely to continue. Any wins in the Indian market will ensure a permanent stream of delivery at a time when the share of China compared to the last decade is expected to decline with the recent entry into service of Comac's C919," it said.

The importance of India to fu-



ture aftermarket can be seen in the fact that it accounts for 10 per cent of the GTF (geared turbofan) and Leap engines installed fleet compared to 1 per cent for the previous V2500 and CFM56 engines generation.

"India is a focal market for the global aerospace and defence industry," Barclays said. "With do-

6 per cent of the industry backlog, behind only the US."

It said the importance of India to future aerospace financial performance can also be seen in the fact that it accounts for 10 per cent of the GTF and Leap engines installed fleet (these engines are installed on A320neo and MAX planes) compared to 1 per cent for the previous V2500 and CFM56 engines generation (installed on the A320ceo and 737NG).

In Defence, India's total defence spend of USD 81.4 billion was globally the fourth largest in 2022, after the US, China, and Russia. India has been the biggest importer of defence equipment (ahead of Saudi Arabia), accounting for 11 per cent of global military equipment imports over 2018-22.

"With the fleet of Indian carriers skewed toward narrow body, we view Airbus as better positioned than Boeing, driven by the A320 family's competitive position.

Specifically, Airbus has won 65 per cent of orders from Indian carriers since 2009 and accounts for 74 per cent of India's backlog share," it said.

The challenge lies in near-term production ramp-up execution, including the availability of the GTF engine.

"India's defence spend has seen an increasing upward trajectory, a 9 per cent-plus CAGR over the last two decades, and we expect demand to remain elevated given the rise in China's military spend," it said, adding, an analysis of Indian military equipment indicates a critical need for more fighter jets for the Indian Air Force.

With dependence on Russia on the decline and two squadrons of Rafale fighters, it saw Rafale as well positioned for additional orders on top of the Marine variant order expected to be finalised later in the year for the Navy (26 jets).

Spanish side leave poor league show behind wrapping up the season with their seventh Europa League title as they beat Roma in penalty shootout

# SEVILLA IN 7TH HEAVEN



ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Budapest, June 1:** Five months after scoring the winning penalty in the World Cup final, Gonzalo Montiel converted the clinching spot-kick for Sevilla in the Europa League final to beat Jose Mourinho's Roma. It earned Sevilla a seventh title in the competition Wednesday. The Argentina international sent Roma goalkeeper Rui Patrício the wrong way with his retaken penalty to seal a 4-1 win in the shootout after the match finished 1-1 after extra time in Budapest, where Mourinho was aiming to maintain his record of having never lost a final in European competitions. Gianluca Mancini and Roger Ibanez failed to convert for Roma from the spot against Sevilla goal-

keeper Yassine Bounou. Montiel missed his first attempt but had another chance after Patrício was judged to have come off his line. Sevilla has still never lost a final it has contested in the Europa League or its precursor, the UEFA Cup—the team also won the competition in 2006, '07, '14, '15, '16 and '20—and secured a place in next season's Champions League. At one stage close to the relegation zone in the Spanish league and already eliminated from the Champions League, it had looked like a season to forget for Sevilla. But clearly it was not over yet. A new coach, Jose Luis Mendilibar came in and things turned around quickly. Before the final, Mourinho actually had more European title wins than Mendilibar had total

games managed in those same competitions. The 62-year-old Mendilibar's career is peaking since joining Sevilla just two months ago. As Sevilla players celebrated on the field, Mourinho kept his calm and congratulated the Spanish club on the victory. "We lost a game but not dignity. I've never gone home prouder than today," Mourinho said. "Great match, great final. Intense, vibrant." After receiving his runners-up medal, Mourinho took it off and gave it to a young fan. Paulo Dybala had put Roma ahead in the 35th minute at Puskás Aréna in the Hungarian capital. Mancini sent a through ball for Dybala, who netted past Bounou with a low left-foot shot. The Argentina forward had recovered

from an ankle injury in time to be declared fit for the final. It was Dybala's fifth goal of the Europa League, and 17th overall this season. Sevilla were only slowly getting into the match but Ivan Rakitic came close to equalizing in first-half stoppage time with a low drive from 20 meters (yards) that bounced off the post. Mendilibar sent on midfielder Suso and forward Erik Lamela, a former Roma player, as substitutes at the start of the second half to rejuvenate his team. Sevilla equalised through Mancini's own-goal 10 minutes into the second half when he was under pressure from Youssef En-Nesyri. Captain Jesus Navas set up the goal with a cross from the right. Navas, a 37-year-old veteran,

was on the team that won Sevilla's first Europa League title in 2006. Substitute Andrea Belotti failed to beat Bounou in a one-on-one following Lorenzo Pellegrini's free-kick seven minutes from time. Suso had a long-distance shot saved by Patrício in the dying seconds. Sevilla held the upper hand in extra time but didn't create a clear scoring chance, and Roma defender Chris Smalling headed the ball onto the crossbar at the end. Replacing former Argentina coach Jorge Sampaoli in March, Mendilibar became Sevilla's third coach this season with the team just two points clear of the La Liga relegation zone. His lineup has lost only two of 11 league games since then and is now one point off seventh place going into the final round this weekend.

## Pujara, Kohli would be in Aussies' minds: Ponting



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, June 1:** Australia will have to guard against the "thorn in their side" Cheteshwar Pujara and a "back at his best" Virat Kohli if they are to counter India in the World Test Championship final at The Oval next week, feels legendary cricketer Ricky Ponting. India's Test batting mainstay Pujara could provide valuable insights to his teammates, having played extensively at Sussex in the English County Championship, while Kohli is at his absolute best having cracked two centuries and six half-tones for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the recently-concluded Indian Premier League. "The Australian team will be talking about Virat, no doubt about it, and they'll be talking about Pujara. They're the two," Ponting said on "The ICC Review". Pujara is known to relish the challenges thrown at him by Australian bowlers, having scored more Test runs and centuries against them than any other side, and his contribution would be crucial to India's chances of lifting the WTC trophy in their second attempt. "Pujara has been a thorn in their side a lot in the past, and in Australia, and this wicket will potentially be a lot more like an Australian pitch. They know that they'll have to get him early," opined

the former Australian captain. Pujara, who bats at No.3, has 2,033 runs and five centuries in 24 Tests against Australia, and skipper Rohit Sharma will hope he makes a couple of more vital contributions for the side in the WTC final. Kohli, apart from his sparkling form in the IPL, had smashed 186 in the fourth Test against Australia in March during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and would be itching to have a go at the Pat Cummins-led side. "They also know that Virat over the last few weeks is probably just about back to his absolute best, albeit in T20 cricket. He told me that the feeling he's getting right now is that he's almost back to his best, and that's an ominous warning for the Australians going into a one-off game," said Ponting. Ponting is also mildly impressed with young Shubman Gill's performance in the IPL and the 23-year-old's exploits in the last two Tests of the Border-Gavaskar series. "He looks like a terrific young guy. He's got that bit of attitude about him as well. He's got a bit of swagger. He has some serious class. That sort of front-foot pull shot that he plays against the fast bowlers will be a shot that he'll probably need against this Australian attack," said Ponting.

## Australia wary of dismal Oval record

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Melbourne, June 1:** As Australia begin preparations for the World Test Championship final against India, the men from Down Under would be eager to put their past struggles at The Oval behind them. In over 140 years of Test cricket in England, Australia have had one of the worst records at The Oval, which will host the final from June 7 to 11 between the top two Test sides. Australia, who played at The Oval in 1880 in what was the first-ever Test in England, have managed a mere seven wins from 38 Tests at the famous South London venue, putting their success rate at the venue at 18.42 per cent, their poorest across England. Australia have won just twice in the past 50 years at The Oval. On the other hand, they have 17 wins



from 29 matches at The Oval's at a success rate of 43.59 per cent, which is better than hosts England's 39.72 per cent from 141 games and South Africa's 33.33 per cent at the same venue. Australia have a success rate of 34.62 per cent at Headingley, 30.43 per cent at Trent Bridge, and 29.03

per cent and 26.67 per cent at Old Trafford and Edgbaston respectively. India, on the other hand, haven't fared too well at the venue either having won two, drawn seven and lost five games. But the Rohit Sharma-led side will be boosted by the 157-run win over England here in 2021, which was its first victory at the venue in a Test match in 40 years. According to cricket.com.au, Australia will have their first full training session in the UK on Thursday in Beckenham, which is 20km from central London. Pat Cummins and his men will train at Kent's out-ground across the weekend as both sides will be granted access to facilities at The Oval only two days prior to the fixture. And while The Oval is likely to favour the pacers, Beckenham is known to have a batter-friendly track. Australia finished the 2021-23 WTC cycle on top of the table, their only loss being the 2-1 away defeat to India earlier this year. They haven't beaten the Men in Blue, both home and away, in eight years – four successive series defeats.

## Djokovic wants to emulate 'Iron Man'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Paris, June 1:** So what exactly was that metal-looking object about the size of a bottle cap that was taped to Novak Djokovic's chest at the French Open? He was asked about it. He didn't give a straight answer. During the changeover between the end of the first set and the start of the second during the 22-time Grand Slam champion's 7-6(7-2), 6-0, 6-3 victory over Marton Fucsovics at Roland Garros Wednesday night, Djokovic removed his reddish polo shirt and swapped it for another. Nothing out of the ordinary there, especially after a set that lasted one and half hours. Here's what was unusual: TV cameras in Court Philippe Chatrier zoomed in on some item that was placed right in the middle of Djokovic's chest. Commentators on Tennis Channel's broadcast joked about it having something to do with the Marvel Comics character Iron Man, portrayed on the big screen by Robert Downey Jr. Maybe someone told Djokovic about that observation. Because that was the faux explanation the 36-year-old father of two offered when a reporter wanted him to explain precisely what that thing really was. "When I was a kid I liked Iron Man a lot, so I try to impersonate Iron Man," Djokovic said with a smile. And then he went a step further. "My team delivers an incredibly efficient nanotechnology to help me deliver my best on the court, so that's the biggest secret of my career," Djokovic said sarcastically. "If it wasn't for that, I probably wouldn't be sitting here." Perhaps a sequel to this saga will come Friday. That's when Djokovic will continue his pursuit of a third title at the French Open

— and what would be a men's record 23rd major championship overall, breaking a tie with rival Rafael Nadal — when he faces No. 29 seed Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain. The 'Kosovo comments' Djokovic sure seemed like someone ready to move on from the latest non-tennis issue he's been involved in during a Grand Slam tournament. Criticised for his previous match for comments about clashes in northern Kosovo between ethnic Serbs and NATO-led peacekeepers, the 22-time major champion stayed away from political matters on Wednesday night. It was quite different following his win Wednesday from what happened after his victory Monday, when Djokovic drew attention for writing in Serbian, "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence," and then speaking out about the matter at a news conference with reporters from his home country. That drew rebukes from a member of France's government, French Open tournament director Amelie Mauresmo and the Kosovo tennis federation. Sports Minister Amelie-Castera warned Djokovic Wednesday morning not to wade into such international issues again at Roland Garros, saying his comments were "not appropriate." Speaking on TV station France 2, Oudea-Castera said Mauresmo encouraged Djokovic and his entourage to maintain "neutrality" on the field of play. Asked about Oudea-Castera and Mauresmo, Djokovic responded: "I have no more comment on that. I said what I needed to say." As for the underlying topic, Djokovic said: "Of course I'm aware that a lot of people would disagree, but it is what it is. It's something that I stand for. So that's all."

