



OLD SCHOOL

Alia Bhatt says it's widely believed that a woman-led film in an action franchise won't do very well

LEISURE P2



PAK PARL DISSOLVED

Pakistan President Arif Alvi formally dissolves the National Assembly three days ahead of its mandated period

INTERNATIONAL P10



INDIA FACE JAPAN

India take on Japan in the semifinal of the Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) hockey tournament today

SPORTS P12

Confidence won in absence

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 10: The NDA government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, won the motion of no-confidence with a voice vote in the Lok Sabha amid a walkout by the Opposition, Thursday.

The Opposition moved a no-confidence motion against the Modi government July 26 which was taken up by the Lower House.

The three days of the motion witnessed a fierce battle between the ruling and the Opposition coalitions over the Manipur violence and other raging issues.

Opposition MPs staged a walkout from the Lok Sabha as the PM was replying to a debate on the no-confidence motion, complaining that there was no reference to Manipur in the first 90 minutes of his speech.

This is the second time PM Modi faced a no-confidence motion. The first such motion against the government was introduced in 2018 over granting a special category status to Andhra Pradesh which was later defeated. In his over 130-minute reply in Lok Sabha to the no-confidence motion, Modi seized on Rahul Gandhi's now-expunged ref-

ADHIR RANJAN SUSPENDED

New Delhi: Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was suspended from Lok Sabha Thursday for 'repeated misconduct' pending an investigation by the privileges committee. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved a resolution for Chowdhury's suspension, saying he disturbs the House whenever Prime Minister Narendra Modi and ministers speak or a debate is going on. The resolution was passed by a voice vote. The Congress called the action against its floor leader as "unbelievable" and "undemocratic". Congress whip in Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore said, "First time for speaking against Modi, largest opposition (party) leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury suspended. Unbelievable. Undemocratic. Condemn the autocracy."

erence to his government's alleged assault on 'Bharat Mata' in Manipur during his speech a day before to launch a blistering counterattack, saying some are wishing death to 'Maa Bharti' even though their party has a history of dividing India and assaulting its people.



PARADISE LOST: The Waiola Church hall and nearby Lahaina Hongwanji Mission in Hawaii engulfed in flames. At least 36 people have died after wildfires, fanned by winds from a faraway hurricane, devastated much of the resort city Lahaina on Hawaii's Maui island (Report P10)

FREE TEXTBOOKS FOR PVT ODIA MEDIUM SCHOOL STUDENTS

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 10: The state government Thursday decided to distribute free textbooks to students of all the private and non-aided Odia medium schools across Odisha, an official said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approved the proposal to provide free textbooks to students of Class I to VIII from the 2024-25 academic year under the government's 5T initiative. About five lakh students of 3,260 private and non-aided Odia medium schools will benefit from the government decision. The state will have to bear an additional expenditure of ₹9.43 crore per year for this scheme.

The state government was providing free textbooks for the government-run schools. It took the decision to do the same for private and non-aided Odia medium schools after noticing that their students too perform well in the annual High School Certificate (HSC) Examinations and demonstrate their skills in various fields.

Apart from state-run schools, the Odisha government has been distributing textbooks free of cost to Odia medium schools in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Mr Speaker sir, you should give RaGa more time to speak. Every time he speaks, it's always your face on TV

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	65688.18	↓ 307.63
NIFTY	19543.10	↓ 89.45
DOLLAR	82.67	↓ ₹0.24
EURO	91.08	↑ ₹0.18
GOLD	₹58,815	↓ ₹158
SILVER	₹69,962	↓ ₹10

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	35.1°C	35.1°C
TEMP MIN	27.6°C	26.8°C
Humidity	77%	77%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

FIRST CUTTACK MAYOR NO MORE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, August 10: The first Mayor of Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC), Nibedita Pradhan, breathed her last at a private nursing home here, Thursday. She was 60.

According to sources, Nibedita was undergoing treatment at the nursing home for pneumonia and septicemia for a prolonged period.

Her mortal remains were taken on a procession to Khannagar crematorium where her last rites were performed.

Born July 7, 1963, Nibedita began her political journey by winning Cuttack Sadar Assembly seat on a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket in 2000. She also earned the glory of becoming the first Mayor of Cuttack on behalf of BJP.

CEC, EC SELECTION PANEL

BILL SEEKS TO DROP CJI

KULDEEP SINGH, OP & AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 10: The Centre Thursday tabled a contentious bill in Rajya Sabha that seeks to replace the Chief Justice of India (CJI) with a cabinet minister in the panel for selection of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs), in a move that will allow the government to have more control in the appointments of members of the poll panel.

The bill comes months after the Supreme Court in March ruled that a three-member panel, headed by the Prime Minister and comprising the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India (CJI), will select the CEC and ECs till a law is framed by Parliament on the appointment of these commissioners.

According to the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, tabled by Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal in the Upper House, a three-member Selection Committee comprising the Prime Minister, who will be the chairperson, the LoP and a Union cabinet minister, who will be nominated by the Prime

Minister, shall select the CEC and ECs.

The bill was introduced amid an uproar by the Opposition parties, including the Congress and AAP that accused the government of 'diluting and overturning' a Constitution bench order.

A vacancy will arise in the Election Commission of India (ECI) early next year when EC Anup Chandra Pandey demits office February 14 on attaining the age of 65 years.

His retirement will come just days before the likely announcement of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls' schedule by the ECI. On the past two occasions, the ECI had announced parliamentary elections in March.

The apex court in its March verdict had aimed at insulating the appointment of the CEC and ECs from the Executive's inter-



ference. It had ruled that their appointments would be made by the President on the advice of a committee comprising the Prime Minister, LoP in Lok Sabha and the CJI.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice KM Joseph, in a unanimous verdict, held that this norm will continue to hold good till a law on the issue is made by Parliament.

Before the Supreme Court ruling, the CEC and ECs were appointed by the President on the recommendation of the government.

Reacting to the government's move, senior advocate Prashant Bhushan said that even if the bill is passed in Parliament, it would be 'unconstitutional' in his view and it was likely to be struck down by the Supreme Court.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said he has always

maintained that the government will overturn any Supreme Court order that it doesn't like and this is a dangerous situation that can impact fairness of elections.

The proposed panel will have two BJP members and one from the Congress, and therefore, whoever is selected to the poll panel will be loyal to the ruling party, alleged Kejriwal, who is also Aam Aadmi Party's national convener.

Congress general secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal hit out at the government over the bill, calling it a 'blatant attempt at making the Election Commission a total puppet in the hands of the PM (Narendra Modi)'.

"What about the Supreme Court's existing ruling which requires an impartial panel? Why does the PM feel the need to appoint a biased Election Commissioner? This is an unconstitutional, arbitrary and unfair Bill - we will oppose this on every forum," Venugopal said on social media platform 'X'.

Congress MP and the party's whip in Lok Sabha, Manickam Tagore, alleged that PM Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah want to control the Election Commission by bringing the bill.

Another Manipur woman 'gangraped'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, August 10: Another case of sexual assault has come to light in Manipur after a 37-year-old married woman from Churachandpur district alleged she was gangraped by a group of men while fleeing her burning house May 3, the day on which the ethnic strife began in the northeastern state, police said.

An FIR in this connection has been registered in Bishnupur women police station August 9, police said, adding it was later forwarded to Churachandpur police station for further investigation.

According to the FIR, the woman was gangraped at Khumujamba Meitei Leikai in Churachandpur district by 'unidentified Kuki men'.

According to the woman's statement to police, around 6.30pm May 3, a group of Kuki miscreants set fire to several houses, including her's. Amid the chaos, she tried to flee. However, after running for about half-a-kilometre, she was stopped by a few men and was sexually assaulted, police said quoting the FIR.

According to the woman's statement to police, around 6.30pm May 3, a group of Kuki miscreants set fire to several houses, including her's. Amid the chaos, she tried to flee. However, after running for about half-a-kilometre, she was stopped by a few men and was sexually assaulted, police said quoting the FIR.

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged

AGENCIES

Mumbai, August 10: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Thursday left its key interest rates unchanged for a third straight meeting but signalled tighter policy if food prices drive inflation higher.

The monetary policy committee, which has three members from the central bank and a similar number of external members, held the benchmark repo rate (repo) at 6.50 per cent in a unanimous decision.

It retained the stance on 'withdrawal of accommodation' but Governor Shaktikanta Das sounded hawkish when he highlighted that headline inflation needs to subside sustainably below 4 per cent and any surge in the inflation print, if continued for a longer period, may necessitate fresh action.

The RBI raised its inflation forecast for the current financial year ending March 2024 to 5.4 per cent from 5.1 per cent earlier, citing pressures from food prices.

India's 'first' post office is right on LoC

The facility has not stopped delivering mail even at peak hostilities in 1965, 1971 or frequent cross-border shelling incidents

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Keran (JK), August 10: India's 'first' post office bearing PIN code 193224 is located on the banks of the Kishanganga river, the de facto Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district with Pakistan-occupied territory just across the stream at a stone's throw.

It was known as the last post office of the country until recently, when the signboard near it described it as the 'First Post Office of India', as it is the first one from the LoC or border in

terms of distance.

Abdul Hamid Kumar, Superintendent Post Offices, Baramulla Division, said, "Earlier it was known as the last post office as we cannot deliver beyond it. Then, the Army changed it to the first post office as it is the first post office from the LoC or the border in terms of distance."

The residents of this apparently sleepy hamlet said the post office has been functional even before India got Independence or Pakistan came into existence. It has not stopped delivering



mail even at peak hostilities in 1965, 1971 or the frequent cross-border shelling incidents that had become regular occurrences after eruption of Pakistan-backed militancy in 1990.

Shakir Bhat, the postmaster, said the post office, which has

been here since 1947, never stopped its services.

"Before the ceasefire (agreement between India and Pakistan in 2021), it was very risky to go out, deliver the mail or pick up the posts. Today, we feel peace and we want peace between the two

nations to prevail," Bhat told PTI. The post office was even washed away in the flash floods that hit the Keran sector in 1993.

"I was appointed to the department in 1992. After the 1993 floods, the post office has been functioning from my house," he said. Bhat said he does not get any rent for operating the post office from home and he is not seeking any.

He added that there are three mailmen, who work with him at the post office, providing a wide range of services to the local people and the security forces deployed at the first post of India.

The postmaster, however, said lack of dependable communication facility meant this post office cannot offer online services

like other post offices across the country.

"For now, there is no (online communication) network here, so no digital services are being offered," he added.

Bhat wants peace to prevail as it has brought tourism to Keran. "It is because of peace that everything is good. Tourism is here only due to peace," he said.

Kupwara Deputy Commissioner Ayushi Sudan said the communication connectivity issues were being addressed and an optical fiber cable project should be completed by the end of this year.

"We already have a connectivity project in the pipeline. The OFC link we hope will be completed by the end of this year," she said.

Earlier it was known as the last post office as we cannot deliver beyond it. Then, the Army changed it to the first post office as it is the first post office from the LoC or the border in terms of distance

ABDUL HAMID KUMAR | SUPERINTENDENT POST OFFICES, BARAMULLA DIVISION

leisure



OSCAR WINNING FOLK SONGWRITER SIXTO RODRIGUEZ DIES AT 81

American songwriter Sixto Diaz Rodriguez, who is just called Rodriguez, died August 8, aged 81. Having started his career in the 1970s, the singer is known for garnering an Academy Award for his 2013 documentary *Searching for Sugar Man*. The singer's death was later announced on his official website.

SWIFT TO RELEASE RE-RECORDED VERSION OF HER FIFTH ALBUM 1989

Pop singer Taylor Swift has been making history this year, first with her Eras Tour, then releasing a re-recorded version of her album *Speak Now* which quickly hit the Billboard 200. Now she is releasing another re-recorded version of her fifth album titled *1989*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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ARIES

You will make a great deal of progress which will help you set aside quite a chunk of money for lean times. There are yet more deals to be signed which will turn out to be landmarks in your business. Ganesh says that your current labours will bear fruits in the future.

TAURUS

In the more morning you are due to be gripped by an urge to acquire a fresh look, a complete make over. You will probably visit a beauty parlour for necessary treatment. Ganesh says that you will be desperate to make an impression on the people around you. In the evening you are likely to be vexed and puzzled by some particular issue.

GEMINI

You will be able to improve your social standing and status tremendously today. You will spend all your energies in making your heart's desires come true. You may end up proposing to that special someone and will find your life partner.

CANCER

With Ganesh's grace you will reap an unexpected gain, and help, joy and excitement on the home front. You will be affectionate towards family members. Yet in afternoon, you may have mood change. Ganesh counsels you to be calm, or else you will lose peace of mind.

LEO

You will think of decorating or renovating your house today. You will likely buy some new decorative articles for your house today. You will take a huge business related or financial risk today but due to Ganesh's blessings it will transform into substantial gain for you.

VIRGO

You will look up to your family to put you in high spirits, says Ganesh. However, you will have to loosen your purse strings and blow up some money on them to win their appreciation. Later in the evening you may start writing an account of a platonic affair.

LIBRA

The ghosts of 'old lovers past' are in the air. There is every possibility that you might end up reliving an old romantic affair; maybe even get treated to your heart's content by your soul mate. Everything is possible in love. The afternoon may bring with it mixed fortunes. But remember to put on your party hat in the evening. Being a special invitee to a stag party with your mates is always fun. Go have a riot, says Ganesh.

SCORPIO

Today is that day when you make a fine show of your commitment to work and dedication to family. At work, the right job has landed on the right table - yours. At home, cement your place as the quintessential family man, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

You are inclined to be over-protective of your personal belongings. Sensational love affairs are plotting to hold you ransom. All the work you have been pushing off to do later will be completed reasonably on time. Ganesh sees a rather hopeful day in store for you.

CAPRICORN

Striking a perfect balance between work and passion, you are likely to inspire people and leave them in awe with all that multitasking, says Ganesh. Of course, as the day progresses, work will gain more prominence and demand more attention, but for the time being, you will enjoy the break you may get from work. Amid all the happenings, your social life may take a back-seat, but you wouldn't as much as even realise it.

AQUARIUS

Your ideas may be excellent, says Ganesh, but it's your diplomacy and charm which will oil the wheels. You are a silver-tongued smoothie, and can even talk people into eating soap! Family and friends will revel in your company. If you are a student, you may get As in all your tests!

PISCES

Today is a day when the focus is solely on achieving your career goals. A joint venture you have been hankering after for quite some time ought to fall into place today. A tour for business purposes is also indicated. On the domestic front, all should be well, says Ganesh.

When Ash clapped back at a journalist

Mumbai: Actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan in an old interview had shut down a journalist slamming reports of her rift with Salman Khan, Aamir Khan and Shah Rukh Khan.

In 2004, when a journalist asked, "There is a feeling that that you have just not been able to strike the right chord with the Khan-daans, the Aamirs, the Salmans, the Shah Rukhs, and perhaps that's not held you in good stead."

Ash shut him down calling it a drama. Looking irked by the questions, Rai hit back at him and said, "You guys enjoy this drama so you can keep this going, it keeps you all entertained."

The journalist prods further and asks her about being replaced in films like *Mangal Pandey*. Ash once again

took the question with dignity and told him, "Why don't you just wait for an autobiography?"

Soon after the video surfaced on the web, a user wrote, "What grace, what courage and what confidence. I am floored. Aishwarya can walk over me and I won't complain. I love how she handled all the negativity and misogyny and patriarchy while still standing at the very top." AGENCIES



Ranveer's note for Big B, SRK

Mumbai: Actor Ranveer Singh who grew up 'watching and worshipping' Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan on screen, Thursday said he hopes to make the two Hindi cinema superstars proud as he takes on the mantle of the new 'Don'.

In an Instagram post, the *Bajirao Mastani* actor said he understood the responsibility that came with the iconic character first played by Bachchan, a role that Farhan Akhtar reimagined with Shah Rukh in his 2006 and 2011 film series.

"Gosh! I've been dreaming about doing this for a very, very long time! As a child I fell in love with the movies, and like the rest of us, watching and worshipping Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan - the two G.O.A.Ts of Hindi Cinema... My two supernovas, The Big B and SRK, I hope I can make you proud...I," the *Gully Boy* actor wrote in a heartfelt post.

"I dreamed of growing up to be like them. They are the very reason I wanted to become an actor and a Hindi film hero. Their impact and influence on my life cannot be overstated. They've shaped the person and actor that I am," the 38-year-old added.

Ranveer also thanked director Farhan and producer Ritesh Sidhwani for entrusting him with the role.

Alia opens up on woman-led actioner

Mumbai: Actress Alia Bhatt is all set to make her international debut with *Heart of Stone*, where she will be seen playing the antagonist in the Gal Gadot-starrer.

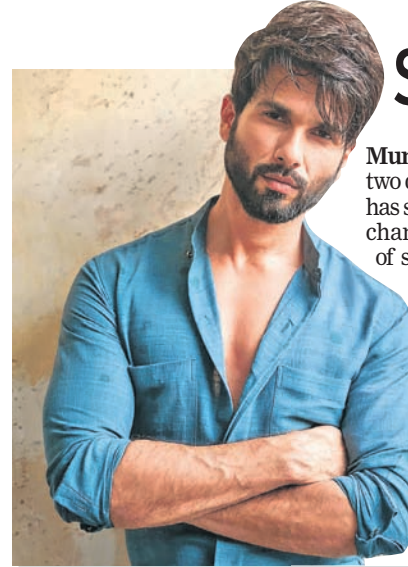
Speaking about her role in *Heart of Stone*, Alia shared, "What's amazing is how the narrative throughout the world is changing. I've experienced that even back in India, where I headlined this film called *Gangubai*, which did really well in theaters and on Netflix all over the world. And this was a film that was headlined by a woman. We come from a certain school of thinking that a woman-led film in an action franchise won't do very well."

She added, "But I think Gal shattered that myth when she did *Wonder Woman*. Because at the end of the day it's all about the characters and what you're putting out there. So, similarly with *Heart of Stone*, when we met and chatted about it, she said, 'You don't really see a spy thriller action franchise that is led by women, so I wanted to start something on my own.' I love that thought. It was so unique, relevant and current."

Heart of Stone debuts August 11, on Netflix and the film also stars Gal Gadot and Jamie Dornan in this action-packed spy thriller.



Shahid's take on evolving stardom



Mumbai: Having been around for two decades, actor Shahid Kapoor has seen the definition of stardom change, especially with the rise of social media and OTT. Despite both of his recent projects on the medium *Farzi* and *Bloody Daddy* registering most-watched numbers in their respective categories, the actor continues to place greater importance on an entirely different marker.

"I have always craved to have the audiences' respect. I feel once an artist, whether it's a filmmaker or actor, even a sportsperson, has the people's respect, they will be able to create consistency in their graph. Things are very unpredictable," he says.

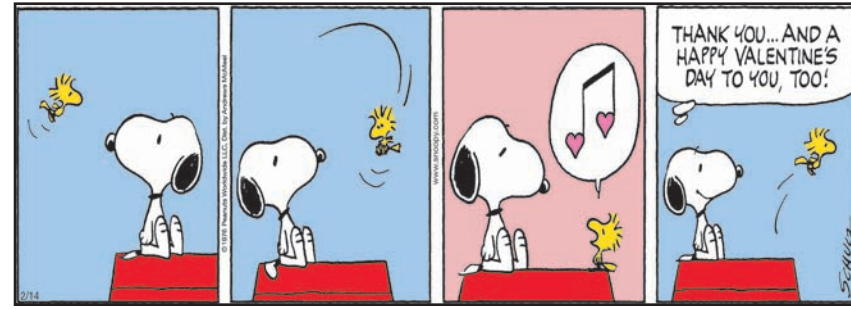
"As an actor, you should not just presume that just because you are a star, people will like you across the board, it doesn't work like that! The audience has become very mature and clear about whom they like. I was keen to

see how people respond to me in that space," he says.

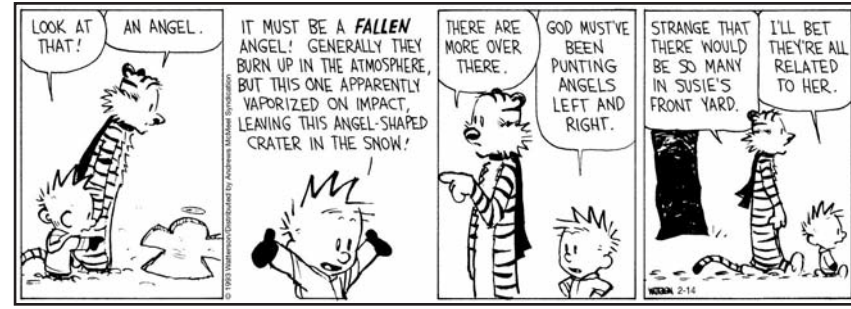
Explaining the unpredictability further, he says, "There are highs and lows which I feel are very opposing in nature. You can see that happening to various actors who are super successful, and nothing is working."

The *Jab We Met* actor concludes off by saying, "As a leading man, it is important to understand how long you want to be here, and if you are playing the big game." AGENCIES

PEANUTS



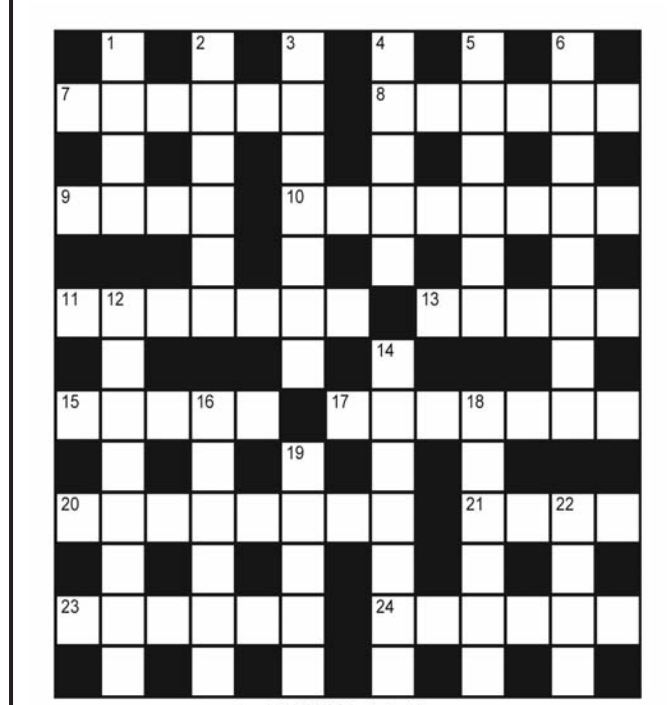
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



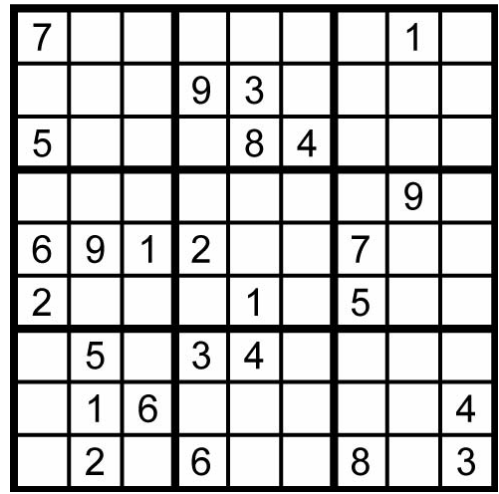
FUN post CROSSWORD



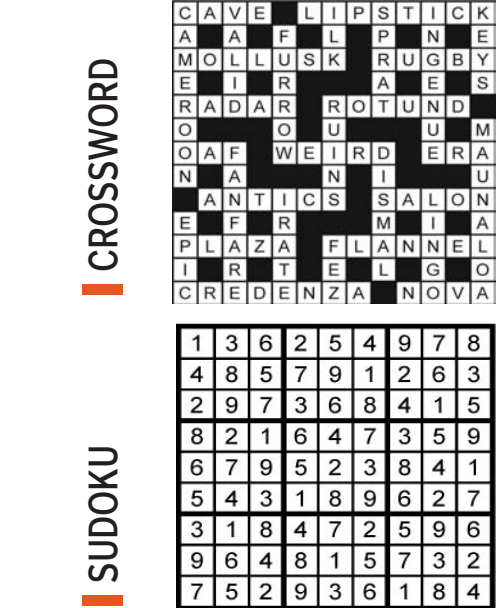
- Across
- 7 Dog palace
 - 8 Loathes
 - 9 Vega's constellation
 - 10 Abuse
 - 11 Stalemate
 - 13 Orchestra group
 - 15 Biscotto flavouring
 - 17 Woolly one
 - 20 Like the alpha male wolf
 - 21 Like some points
 - 23 Religious writings
 - 24 Kind of monkey
 - 3 Flaw
 - 4 Outmoded
 - 5 Little angel
 - 6 Decoration
 - 12 Snake killer
 - 14 Torch necessity
 - 16 Suppress
 - 18 Club associate
 - 19 Model wood
 - 22 Cross to bear
- Down
- 1 Tax
 - 2 Turkish capital

SUDOKU

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

BOOST TO EDUCATION

A smart classroom, built with funds donated by spiritual guru Chandra Bhanu Satpathy, was dedicated to the students of Ravenshaw Collegiate School in Cuttack, Thursday



Snake rescue and release only by certified handlers

AS PER THE FRESH GOVT GUIDELINES, PUBLICLY EXHIBITING RESCUED SNAKES, OR ANY OTHER FORM OF PUBLIC DISPLAY INVOLVING SNAKES, EVEN BY SNAKE HANDLERS, WILL ATTRACT LEGAL PENALTY

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 10: With snakebites accounting for 40 per cent of Odisha's disaster deaths, the state government has issued a set of guidelines for rescue and release of the reptiles from areas inhabited by humans.

The Forest, Environment and Climate Change department issued letters to the additional Special Relief Commissioner, PCCF of the Forest department, PCCF of Wildlife division, managing director of OSDMA, all the RCCFs, Collectors and DFOs in regard to the new guidelines.

According to the new guidelines, only certified snake handlers can participate in the rescue and release operations and they are required to adhere strictly to the stipulated protocols, failing which will invite penal actions as per the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

The guidelines clearly stated that intervention to save snakes will only be undertaken in situations where their presence poses a risk to human life, such as when they are found indoors or in close proximity to human habitation.

The snake rescue work should be confined to instances wherein the snakes have entered human dwellings, regardless of whether

COMMON SNAKES FOUND IN ODISHA

- ▶▶ Cobra (Naga)
- ▶▶ Monocled Cobra (Tampa)
- ▶▶ Spectacled Cobra (Kolothia Naga)
- ▶▶ Common Indian Krait (Chiti)
- ▶▶ Banded Krait (Rana)
- ▶▶ Russell's Viper (Chandan Boda)
- ▶▶ Pond snake (Dhanda)
- ▶▶ Rat snake (Dhamana)

they are of venomous or non-venomous species, it said.

The state government also said snake handlers are volunteers and will not receive remuneration for their services from the Odisha Forest Department, which may also use their services to create awareness in the local population on the ecological importance of snakes, identification of snakes and how to avoid snakebites.

"Any individual who obstructs the efforts of a certified snake handler during a rescue operation may face legal repercussions. Creating public panic, publicly exhibiting the rescued

snake(s), or any other form of public display involving snakes, even if conducted by the snake handler, will attract legal penalties," the guidelines said.

Located in the eastern coast of India, Odisha has about 34 per cent of its land covered in undulated forests. Snakes are found in abundance in most of these forests and are an integral part of the ecosystem.

Apart from this, snakes are also found in human inhabited areas due to deforestation and agricultural and forest-based professions, the guideline mentioned.

Stating that incidents of snakebites are common in Odisha and have been certified as a state disaster under the disaster management authority, it said 40 per cent of total disaster deaths are attributed to snakebites alone in Odisha.

In the last 7 years, Odisha has had approximately 6,351 incidents of snakebites. Till July this year, snakebite incidents have claimed at least 34 lives.

Though not all snakes are venomous, they too may cause injury and distress to human life.

- ODISHA HAS 34% OF ITS LAND COVERED UNDER FORESTS
- SNAKEBITE DEATHS ACCOUNT FOR 40% OF TOTAL DISASTER DEATHS
- AROUND 6,351 SNAKEBITES REPORTED IN LAST 7 YEARS
- 34 PERSONS HAVE DIED DUE TO SNAKEBITES TILL JULY

CM unveils Infosys BPM centre in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 10: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Thursday inaugurated a centre of Infosys Business Process Management (BPM) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of IT giant Infosys Limited here.

The new centre of Infosys BPM is the first such facility of the company in eastern India.

Addressing the gathering, Patnaik said, "I am very happy that Infosys BPM has opened operations from Bhubaneswar. I am sure that the talented youngsters of Odisha will make this high-end customer service centre a big success for Infosys."

He also outlined his government's commitment to provide Infosys with all support to further grow and contribute to the state.

Earlier, the company had established its Offshore Development Centre (ODC) in Bhubaneswar which was its first such centre outside its headquarters in Karnataka.

Established in April 2002, Infosys BPM Ltd has 42 delivery locations spread across 16 countries, offering an end-to-end outsourcing services provider.

While thanking the government for its support, Satish HC, executive vice-president and co-head of Delivery at Infosys, also praised the speed and responsiveness of the state government in facilitating the establishment of this centre.

He said, "The strength of Infosys will increase from 10,000 to 20,000 in near future and Infosys BPM will contribute immensely to the growth. This centre will create new job opportunities for the youth of the state."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



COLLEGE GIRL DEATH

OSCW seeks report from DCP

GYAN RANJAN MOHAPATRA, OP

Bhubaneswar, August 10: Taking suo motu cognizance of the suicide by a 18-year-old girl student in a city hotel last week, the Odisha State Commission for Women (OSCW) has sought an inquiry report from the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bhubaneswar UPD within 15 days.

Based on media reports, the Commission has reportedly registered a case over the suspicious death of the girl student, Subhalaxmi Sahoo, a native of Bhadrak district. The deceased was a Plus II student at city-based Kamala Nehru Women's College. Meanwhile, the autopsy re-



port Tuesday stated that Subhalaxmi had died due to asphyxiation (suffocation). Officers investigating the case claimed that the deceased might have hanged herself to death. However, they are yet to ascertain the reason behind her taking the extreme step.

The deceased had reportedly checked into a first floor room at

Hotel Deepali International in Laxmisagar area Friday. A hotel staff suspected something amiss when Subhalaxmi didn't go downstairs for lunch till late Saturday afternoon. He then alerted the manager of the hotel, following which the room was opened with duplicate keys. Subhalaxmi was found hanging from a ceiling fan with her stole. The Laxmisagar police which was summoned, registered an unnatural death report and launched an investigation into the incident.

The police have so far recorded the statement of the deceased's family members, acquaintances, hotel staff and alleged boyfriend.

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11th August | Bhubaneswar

MBBS ADMISSION FRAUD

ED files prosecution complaint against accused

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 10: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a prosecution complaint (chargesheet) before a special court here under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) seeking conviction of the accused involved in the MBBS admission fraud case.

The ED has also requested the court to confiscate properties of the accused worth ₹46 lakh attached by the Central agency and, have already been confirmed too.

The court of the Sessions Judge, Khurda – Cum- Special Court (PMLA), Bhubaneswar took cognizance of the prosecution complaint August 9, 2023.



“ED initiated investigation under PMLA on the basis of FIR and chargesheet filed by CID, Crime Branch Odisha under various sections of IPC against Raghunath Behera, Soumyakanta Mohanty and others in connection with duping a number of gullible students of Odisha and beyond with a false promise to provide MBBS seats

in different medical colleges. There were various other FIRs registered and chargesheets filed by different police stations in Odisha against accused persons and their accomplice in the similar matters,” ED said in a press note Thursday.

The Central agency had earlier attached assets worth ₹46 lakh by issuing a provisional attachment order December 9, last

year. The provisional order regarding confiscation was subsequently confirmed by the adjudicating authority (PMLA) June 1, 2023.

The accused duo - Raghunath and Soumyakanta - was arrested by the Crime Branch in 2019 on charges of duping an associate professor of a medical college in Assam of ₹69 lakh on the promise to get his daughter an MBBS seat in a medical college in Bhubaneswar. The prime accused in the pan-India admission fraud, Subhasish Pati of Bhubaneswar, was arrested from his flat in Bishnupur of South 24 Parganas in West Bengal few days back after three years run.

99 projects undertaken in Smart Cities of Odisha: Minister

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, August 10: As many as 99 projects worth ₹ 3,672.63 crore have been undertaken in Capital Bhubaneswar and steel city Rourkela under the Smart City Mission (SCM) till now.

This was informed by Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Kaushal Kishore in Lok Sabha, Thursday.

While giving a written reply to BJD MP Mahesh Sahoo's questions, the Union Minister said the Central government launched the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) June 25, 2015 and through 4 rounds of competition, between January 2016 and June 2018, 100 cities were selected for development as Smart Cities, including Bhubaneswar and Rourkela cities of Odisha.

As of July 7, 2023, work orders have been issued by 100 smart cities in 7,978 projects of which 5,909 projects (74%) have been completed, ₹73,454 crore has been released for 100 smart cities of which ₹66,023 crore (90 per cent) has been utilized.

In Odisha, a total of ₹3,672.63 crore has been sanctioned for execution of 99 developmental projects in the two cities, of which 85 projects involving cost of ₹2,707.30 crore have been completed while another 14 projects worth ₹965.33 crore are under implementation.



In the capital city Bhubaneswar, a total of 35 projects have been taken up till now with an investment of ₹2,159.77 crore. Of which, 26 projects worth ₹1,552.06 crore have been already completed while nine other projects of ₹607.71 crore are under different stages of completion.

Similarly, out of sanctioned 64 projects worth ₹1,512.86 crore, 59 projects involving ₹1,155.24 crore have been completed in Rourkela. Remaining five projects worth ₹357.62 crore are under progress.

For execution of all 99 projects in the state, so far, ₹1,888 crore has been released by both Centre and State governments to the implementation agencies under the SCM. Out of the amount, ₹1,667 crore has been utilized by the two corporation cities.

Various projects being implemented in the two cities include setting up of Integrated Control & Command Centres (ICCCs), place-making, smart roads, urban knowledge centre, upgradation of stadium, market area redevelopment, etc, the Minister said.

The period of implementation of SCM has been extended upto June 2024 and all smart cities, including those in Odisha, are expected to complete their projects within the stipulated time, he added.



TOUCH OF CRAFT: An artist gives finishing touches to idols ahead of Ganesh Puja in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Patriotic song competition organised at BJEM School

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, August 10: As part of its golden jubilee year celebrations, Buxi Jagabandhu English Medium (BJEM) School organised an inter school group patriotic song competition Thursday.

Around 150 participants from 15 CBSE affiliated schools participated in the competition in 3 different slots and enthralled the audience with their songs on the theme of patriotism, love for culture and tradition.

Addressing the gathering, Principal Sandhya Jena said, “The objective of the holding such events is to commemorate the 75 years of Independence as well as 50 years of school's glorious presence. The song competition is to instill in the young citizens the spirit of love for the country and its glorious cultural heritage, she said.



Joining the event as guest, SMC chairman Raghunath Mishra underlined the importance of music in making one's life healthy and happy.

Principal Sandhya Jena extended a warm welcome to the gathering and highlighted the objectives of such an initiative to commemorate the 75 years of Independence of India (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav) and 50 years of the school's glorious presence. Moreover, the special objective of such a competition, is to instill in the young citizens the spirit of love for the country and its glorious cultural heritage, she said.

Building catches fire; 3 rescued

Bhubaneswar: Fire services personnel Thursday rescued three persons, including a woman and a child from a building here in which a devastating fire had broken out. The fire services official said that the three were sleeping in the first floor of the three-storey building at Nandan Vihar when the fire was detected in the AC at about 6am. On being informed, the fire fighters rushed in and rescued the trapped people through a balcony on the first floor. The rescued persons were later admitted to hospital with complaints of respiratory problems. Their condition is stated to be stable, the official said. While the exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, the fire officials suspect it to be a case of short circuit.

Classrooms' facelift in govt primary schools

Bhubaneswar: The School and Mass Education (S&ME) department is set to transform classrooms for more than 15,000 government primary schools to enhance primary education. The project aims for cultivating Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) skills among the students with an investment of '92, 03,85,000 being dedicated. The first phase covers 6,159 schools, with plans to include the remaining in subsequent phases. The mission seeks to foster interest, curiosity, and enthusiasm in the tender minds of young students by creating engaging and attractive classroom environments.

Teacher educators' promotion criteria revised

Bhubaneswar: The state government Thursday revised senior teacher educators' promotion criteria from 10 to 5 years in District Institute for Education and Training (DIETs)/ Teacher Education and State Council of Educational Research & Training (TE & SCERT). The move paves way for proficient educators to ascend to the posts of principals/assistant directors. The government will soon implement this decision. Earlier, the state government had also decided to promote elementary school teachers and headmasters by relaxing the provisions of Odisha Elementary Education (method of recruitment and conditions of service of teachers and officers) Rules, 1997.

Mass drug administration campaign launched

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, August 10: Health and Family Welfare Minister Naranjan Pujari inaugurated the Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign virtually across 11 districts of the state at an event here Thursday.

Speaking on this occasion, Pujari underlined the importance of receiving anti-filarial medicines to achieve the goal of eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis. He stressed the need for thorough monitoring of the campaign from the state level down to the last mile.

He urged for inter-sectoral collaborative efforts at every level to ensure drug consumption by every eligible citizen of 11 districts viz Angul, Bargarh,

Jharsuguda, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Sonepur, Sundargarh, Jajpur, Ganjam, Dhenkanal and Sambalpur. For the first time, triple drug therapy (Ivermectin + DEC + Albendazole) will be used in the state.

These medicines will be administered by trained drug administrators through booths, door-to-door visits to schools, colleges and offices. Importantly, these medicines will not be distributed under any circumstances. They are to be consumed in front of drug administrators.

Pujari also revealed that during this campaign around 65,646 trained drug administrators including ASHAs will visit every household to ensure drug consumption by 1.8 crore population.



Around 6,431 supervisors are also deployed to ensure the quality of the program. Pujari also encouraged district collectors to lead by example and consume these drugs themselves, fostering a positive environment for MDA within their respective districts.

Filariasis is major public health challenge transmitted through infected mosquito bites, a leading cause of long-term disability worldwide, primarily acquired in childhood but manifesting in adulthood. This condition affects the lymphatic system, leading to abnormal swelling of body parts, acute attacks, and irreversible disabilities. Individuals with Filariasis often endure complications such as Hydrocele, lymphedema, and Chyluria.

To break the chain of transmission, MDA plays a pivotal role in addressing this disabling disease, with anti-filarial drugs (Ivermectin, DEC, and Albendazole) administered by trained drug administrators. These medicines are safe and should be consumed by all population except children under 2 years of age, pregnant women, and seriously ill individuals.

13th Aditya Memorial Quiz August 12

Bhubaneswar: Loyola School, in association with Aditya Memorial Foundation, will organise the 13th edition of the Aditya Memorial Inter-School Quiz August 12. The competition is organised in the memory of Aditya Sahu who was a student of Loyola School. The foundation was formed by his father Mihir Kumar Sahu, Institute of Physics Director Ajit Srivastava and Jayshree Sahu. Around 200 students from Odisha, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand will participate in the competition.

Equality is essential to justice: Acharya

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, August 10: Utkal University, in collaboration with United India Anthropology Forum, University of Delhi, Sambalpur University and Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), organised the World Anthropology Congress here Thursday, with the theme of 'Anthropology in Public Sphere: Indigeneity, Social Justice, Sustainability and Global Peace.'

In her address to the gathering, university Vice-Chancellor Sabita Acharya said that emphasis should be given to improving the livelihood of indigenous people and enhancing their sources of income.

“Every person has the right to get equal opportunities in the



society. Social justice includes sanitation, healthcare, environment, education, housing etc. Therefore, it is important to consider equality in the context of social justice and give importance to the indigenous people in matters of justice,” she said.

Head of the anthropology department and convener of the World Anthropology Congress Debendra Kumar Biswal welcomed the guests, who attended two sessions at the event, while the delegates, scholars in attendance presented their abstracts.

Make inventory of Ratna Bhandar now: Oppn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, August 10: The opposition BJP and Congress Thursday separately demanded that the government immediately make an inventory of the valuables kept at the Ratna Bhandar (treasure chest) of the Puri Jagannath temple.

The parties alleged that there is a “glaring mismatch” between the figures of the quantity of gold and silver ornaments mentioned by the BJD government in the state assembly and by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) in an affidavit in the Orissa High Court.

“We have read the gazette notification and came to know that the details furnished with the high court are based on the inventory made 45 years back, in 1978. Looking at the govern-



ment's statement in the assembly and the affidavit, we suspect that the Ratna Bhandar has been looted,” senior BJP leader Samir Mohanty said.

The state government must take immediate steps to open the Ratna Bhandar now instead of waiting for the Ratha Jatra next year, he said.

Taraprasad Bahinipati also demanded immediate opening of the Ratna Bhandar for making the inventory.

“There is a glaring mismatch in the lists of ornaments in Ratna Bhandar. At least 50 kgs of gold and 70 kgs of other ornaments have been missing from there,” Bahinipati claimed.

Puri-based socio-cultural outfit, Jagannath Sena also alleged that the Odisha government provided the weight of the ornaments to the high court in kilograms, whereas the ornaments were weighed in “Tola” (Bhari) during the last inventory, held in 1978. So as per the difference in weight between Tola and Kilogram, there are 74 kgs less silver as compared to 1978, Sena leader Priyadarshan Pattnaik claimed.

Ruling BJD MLA Amar Prasad Satapathy said, “The matter is sub-judice. So it will not be proper for us to comment on it.”

Meanwhile, Congress MLA

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Bridges on Baitarani under threat

EXCESSIVE SAND MINING FROM RIVERBED, TRANSPORTATION THROUGH HEAVY VEHICLES LEAVE THE BRIDGES WEAK AND UNSTABLE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, August 10: Bridges built on Baitarani river in Jajpur district have come under serious threat owing to rampant illegal sand mining from the riverbed as well as frequent plying of sand laden heavy vehicles, a report said Thursday.

This has happened due to lack of stringent action and profiteering attitude of the tehsil and revenue officials under Vyasagar tehsil in the district. Sand smugglers grease the palms of the tehsil officials and carry on with their illegality with impunity.

Regular sand mining with the help of earth movers makes the riverbed hollow affecting the stability of the bridge adversely. This also alters the course of the river. Notably, bridges are the lifelines of the local residents as they solely depend on them for daily commute to workplaces.

It is alleged that sand traders in connivance with the tehsil and revenue officials illegally lift sand from various sand ghats of Baitarani river flowing through Jajpur district and smug-



gle the minor mineral to various destinations in Jajpur as well as in neighbouring Keonjhar and Bhatrak districts.

As a result, bridges built on the river at Mathurapur, Rudhia, Akhuapada and Jajpur have come under threat. The heavy sand laden vehicles are plying frequently on the bridges. Recently three sand laden tractors were seen plying on Mathurapur bridge after lifting sand from Mukundpur sand ghat of the river.

The tehsil officials and police personnel were conducting a check up of the vehicles plying on the bridge. However, these three vehicles managed to give slip and escape despite presence of police and tehsil officials. Eyewitnesses said that police

personnel chased the vehicles but in vain.

Sand extracted from riverbed has high demand for construction works and it is also used to fill up the mines where mineral extraction has been completed. The state government has framed rules to lease out the sand quarries in Baitarani as well as other rivers in the state. However, the sand smugglers, leaseholders and tehsil officials hardly care about these norms.

These bridges built on the river by spending crores have been pushed into endangered condition. Samantarapur bridge on Brahmani river under Dharmasala block in Jajpur district and the Mathurapur, Rudhia, Akhuapada, Jajpur bridges on

Baitarani river are some cases in this point.

As per technical guideline, permission should not be given for establishment of sand quarry within one kilometre radius of any bridge. However, the reverse is happening here as sand mining is going on in the concerned areas beyond the permissible limits. The superintendent engineer of the Rural Works department had alerted the Rasulpur tehsildar of wrongdoing and had asked him to take urgent measures in this regard.

However, the Rasulpur tehsildar took steps but that too only for few days and latter stopped it. Locals alleged that transportation of sand in heavy vehicles on the bridges of Baitarani river affects the stability of bridges and is also altering the river course. They alleged that neither the local tehsildar nor the tehsildars in neighbouring districts are serious about such sand smuggling.

When contacted, Vyasagar tehsildar Ashok Kumar Majhi said he can only speak on the issue if called during office hours while all sand quarries are closed due to flood in the rivers.

Outfits seek quick transfer of Rourkela Airport to AAI



RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

Rourkela, August 10: Several social organisations have appealed to the Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Schindhia for the total takeover of Rourkela Airport by the Airport Authority of India (AAI). Besides, they have also appealed for an increased share of flights in the winter schedule, which the ministry has declared recently.

In a joint letter written by Sachetana Nagarika Mancha (SNM) and Paschima Odisha Sanskritika Parishad (POSP), which have a long list of illustrious citizens of the city as members, the outfits have tried to draw the attention of the minister towards some genuine issues plaguing Rourkela Airport, the third airport of the state.

Bimal Bisi, vice-president of POSP and former secretary of Steel Executive Federation of India (SEFI) said, "Rourkela Airport badly needs more connectivity. But the recent winter schedule of the ministry shows that Rourkela's air connectivity remains limited to a single plane being operated by Alliance Air on a daily basis."

"This is the third airport of the state and as far as passengers' response is concerned there is nothing to complain about," he further argued adding, "Residents want more flights than just one with an ATR." While VSS Airport in Jharsuguda will get connectivity to Hyderabad, Bangalore, Vizag and other places, Rourkela Airport has just one despite registering good passenger response.

Meanwhile, PP Ray, the general secretary of SNM, a body fight-

Sachetana Nagarika Mancha (SNM) and Paschima Odisha Sanskritika Parishad (POSP) have also appealed for an increased share of flights for Rourkela Airport in the winter schedule

ing for many causes of the Steel City said, "It is unfortunate that we have an airport but do not have a night landing system or instrument landing system (ILS). Passengers are suffering and so is the credibility of the airport because even with slightly bad weather the only plane gets cancelled."

"Flight cancellation has taken place more than a couple of times during the last summer when the city was affected by nor-westerly. Now the monsoon is at its peak and the plane gets cancelled several times. It is a big embarrassment for us as people make fun of it" he said further adding, "We are glad that the state government has requested the ministry to send a team of AAI to inspect and start the process of installation of ILS."

"Owing to the absence of the system, many travelling for urgent works like exams, interviews or health concerns face a harrowing struggle after the flight is cancelled. So we have requested the ministry for immediate installation of the ILS at the airport for quickening the process to hand it over to the AAI," Ray said.

MAN KILLS SON IN UMERKOTE

Umerkote: A youth was allegedly beaten to death by his father at Bangiyakhanda village under this block of Nabarangpur district following a heated brawl, an official said Thursday. The deceased was identified as Samir Ray, 25, son of Bipul Ray. On being informed, Umerkote IIC Gobind Chandra Burada reached the spot with a forensic team and launched a probe. Bipul gave himself before the Umerkote police who registered a case in connection with the incident. According to reports, Samir would often return home drunk and create ruckus in the family. "Wednesday night, Samir returned home in an inebriated state and hurled abuses at his father. In a fit of rage, Bipul hit Samir on his head with a shovel, leaving him bleeding profusely. Samir died on the spot," said an official of Umerkote police.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/23-24/E-Tender/59 Dt. 02.08.2023
Tender No. e-Tender-SouthKUR-171-2023, Dtd. 31.07.2023
DESCRIPTION : NEW WORKS, ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO THE EXISTING STRUCTURES, ALL ORDINARY REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORKS OF MISCELLANEOUS NATURE AND SUPPLIES EACH COSTING RS. 5,00,000/- OR LESS IN THE SECTION AT PALASA UNDER SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER (W) / PALASA FOR THE PERIOD UPTO 30.06.2024.
Approx Cost of the Work (₹): 60.54 Lakhs, EMD (₹): 1,21,300.00, Completion Period : 12 (Twelve) Months.
Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 Hrs. of 21.08.2023.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website: <https://www.reps.gov.in>
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Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), PR-435/O/23-24, Khurda Road

IN THE COURT OF THE CIVIL JUDGE (JUNIOR DIVISION), BHUBANESWAR
C.S. No. 1105/2022
Ashis Mohanty ... Plaintiff
Versus
Ramesh Sahoo ... Defendant
To, Ramesh Chandra Shoo, aged about 62 years, Son of Maheswar Sahoo, residing At/P.O.: Junei, P.S.: Konark, Dist.: Puri.
SUMMONS BY PAPER PUBLICATION FOR SHOWING CAUSE AS TO WHY THE RELIEF PRAYED SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED
Take notice that the Plaintiff has instituted a Civil suit CS No. 1105/2022 in the Court of the Civil Judge, Junior Division, Bhubaneswar for decree of permanent injunction against the defendant. The above mentioned Defendant is therefore directed to appear before the Hon'ble Court through their representative or through their Advocate in support of his defense to show cause from the date of publication or on 02nd day of September 2023 at 10.30 A.M., as to why reliefs prayed for should not be granted by the Court.
Take notice that in case of default the Plaintiff will be heard and determined in your absence.
Given under my hand and seal of this Court on this 27th day of July 2023.
Sd./ (Civil Judge, Junior Division, Bhubaneswar)

IN THE COURT OF THE CIVIL JUDGE (JUNIOR DIVISION), BHUBANESWAR
C.S. No. 1104/2022
Ashis Mohanty ... Plaintiff
Versus
Niranjan Sahoo ... Defendant
To, Niranjan Sahoo, aged about 36 years, Son of Ramesh Chandra Sahoo, residing At/P.O.: Junei, P.S.: Konark, Dist.: Puri.
SUMMONS BY PAPER PUBLICATION FOR SHOWING CAUSE AS TO WHY THE RELIEF PRAYED SHOULD NOT BE GRANTED
Take notice that the Plaintiff has instituted a Civil suit CS No. 1104/2022 in the Court of the Civil Judge, Junior Division, Bhubaneswar for decree of permanent injunction against the defendant. The above mentioned Defendant is therefore directed to appear before the Hon'ble Court through their representative or through their Advocate in support of his defense to show cause from the date of publication or on 02nd day of September 2023 at 10.30 A.M., as to why reliefs prayed for should not be granted by the Court.
Take notice that in case of default the Plaintiff will be heard and determined in your absence.
Given under my hand and seal of this Court on this 27th day of July 2023.
Sd./ (Civil Judge, Junior Division, Bhubaneswar)



COMMUTERS' NIGHTMARE: Devotees and denizens find it hard to commute on the road connecting Samaleshwari and Pataneshwari temples in Sambalpur with the road getting covered with thick muck after rainfall

Bandh for new dist hits normal life in Aska

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, August 10: The dawn-to-dusk bandh called by different organisations demanding a new Rushikulya district crippled the normal life in Aska, also known as the Sugar Town, in Ganjam.

Public vehicles were off the road, while schools, colleges, banks, markets and business establishments remained shut during the bandh in the town, but government offices functioned as usual, a district official said.

At least three platoons of police forces were deployed in the town, he said.

"There was no untoward incident reported during the bandh," Aska police station inspector-in-charge P Swaroop Kishan said.

The bandh was called by a committee and the Aska Bar Association while several other organisations in the town extended their solidarity to the demand for carving out Rushikulya district from the existing Ganjam district for better administration and convenience of the people.

Rushikulya Zilla Gathan Samukhya convenor Sameer Pradhan said the number of villages and population of the proposed district would be higher than the existing Deogarh (878 villages and 3.12 lakh population), Subarnapur (963 villages and 6.10 lakh population) and Boudh (1,182 villages and 3.73 lakh population).

VSSUT Burla hosts webinar on rocketry in collab with ISRO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, August 10: Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) organised a dynamic event under the aegis of the Veer Surendra Sai Space Incubation Centre in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

The event unfurled its curtains with an eco-conscious stride as a plantation drive set the tone for the day's proceedings. The gathering included esteemed dignitaries such as N Sudheer Kumar, Director CBPO, ISRO; Nishant Kumar, Deputy Director CBPO, ISRO; MRK Menon, Project Mentor, ISRO and Suresh Singh, Retd. Air Vice Marshal. The distinguished Vice Chancellor of VSSUT Bansidhar Majhi, and Prof. Harish Kumar Sahoo, the coordinator of VSSIC from the department of Electronics and Telecommunication, VSSUT, bestowed their scholarly presence to the occasion.

Following the green initiative, the Biju Patnaik E-learning Centre at VSSUT hosted a comprehensive seminar entitled "Rocketry and Space Programme and Demonstration of Agriculture and Surveillance Drones". Industry stalwarts from promising drone startups like Aero Agro Innovations Pvt. Ltd., Global Aerospace, and Vihan Spacotech imparted their insights, culminating in an expansive discourse on the present and future landscape of space technology in agriculture.

The event's highlight was the Joint Management Committee discussion, an intellectual symposium that delved deep into



the impending developments of VSLV, an indigenous satellite fabricated by students of VSSUT. The conversation stretched beyond its immediate scope, encapsulating the satellite's future prospects and contributions to the nation's scientific and technological canvas.

As the event reached its zenith, an enthralling drone show captivated the audience, orchestrated by the pioneering drone startups. The presentation vividly illuminated the possibilities of drone deployment for agricultural enhancement, igniting the imagination of the students present.

In the words of Bansidhar Majhi, "This event is emblematic of our commitment to fostering innovation and collaboration in the realm of space technology. It encapsulates the spirit of our students, who are the torchbearers of India's future in the cosmos."

As the sun set on this memorable event, it left a trail of inspiration and anticipation for the myriad possibilities that lie ahead in the uncharted expanse of space technology.

Paradip Port handles record cargo

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, August 10: Paradip Port achieved a major milestone by clocking record cargo throughput of 50.16 MMT August 8, by exhibiting 6.5 per cent growth over the corresponding period of previous fiscal, official sources said.

An official release said this feat has been achieved by the port in 129 days in the current fiscal compared to 140 days during the previous year.

Paradip Port Authority (PPA) has also handled record 942 vessels in comparison to 812 in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

PPA chairman PL Haranadh expressed his gratitude and said, "Together, with the unwavering support of our dedicated workforce and the collective will of our nation, we shall continue to script remarkable success stories for Paradip Port—a story that exemplifies growth, sustainability, and a brighter tomorrow for generations to come."

Haranadh also congratulated all officers and employees, the user industries, stevedores, steamer agents, trade unions, PPP operators to have their continued faith in the ability of the port to serve them.



PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that Susanta Parida, S/o. Gangadhar Parida, resident of 3R/97, At/Po- Charbatia, PS-Choudwar, District- Cuttack has lost Original ROR No. 859/5980 in the name of Sukanti Sahoo and Original Regd. Sale Deed No. 10432204114, dtd. 01.10.2022 executed by Arakshita Nayak & others in favour of Sukanti Sahoo relating to Plot No.244 (Saraad-2) area Ac.0.05 decimals under Khata No. 733 in Mouza- Kapaleswar, PS-Choudwar, District-Cuttack.
Susanta Parida of the above address has applied for a housing loan to the LIC Housing Finance Ltd., Cuttack by offering mortgage of the said property title documents.
All concerned therefore having any claim over the property purchased under the said documents, i.e. ROR No. 859/5980 and Original Regd. Sale Deed No. 10432204114, dtd. 01.10.2022 are required to file their claim with the undersigned within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which it will be presumed that the property having link with the said documents, is free from encumbrances and any claim in respect thereof against the applicant as a mortgagor and the Company as the mortgagee shall be void and ineffective after the lapse of 15 (Fifteen) days of publication of this notice.
Sd./- (U.K. MISHRA)
Advocate, Phone-9437314816
LIC Housing Finance Ltd.
Cuttack Area Office, Link Road, Cuttack

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank
(Together for the better)
CIRCLE OFFICE: SAMBALPUR,
Balaji Midtown, 1st Floor, Budharaja, Sambalpur- 768004, Odisha
PREMISES REQUIRED
Punjab National Bank, requires suitable ready built and well-constructed hall type building having Carpet Area (1000 sqft to 1200 sqft.), on lease /rental basis premises should be preferably in Ground Floor and if in first floor, with lift facility, At: Sambalpur, (in between Ashoka Talkies to Farm Road), Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha. Premises offered should have all clearance certificates from statutory authorities. Interested owners / registered Power of Attorney Holders of such premises in the desired locality who are ready to lease out their readily available premises on long term lease basis preferably for 15 (fifteen) years or more may send their offers in the prescribed format available on Bank's Website www.pnbindia.gov.in or the same may be obtained from the above address during office hours. The complete offer duly sealed & signed and should reach the undersigned on or before (28th August 2023- 02.00 PM) at the above address.
No brokerage will be paid by the Bank. Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion without assigning any reasons whatsoever.
Sambalpur Sd/-
Date: 11.08.2023 CIRCLE HEAD

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER BHUBANESWAR (R&B) DIVISION NO II, BHUBANESWAR
eerb2_bbsr@yahoo.com
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. C.C. (R&B) - 02
e - Procurement Notice No. 24 of 2023-24
No. B-649: The Superintending Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B) Division No-II, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for Three Numbers Road Works to be received in online bidding, single cover system as detailed in: <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from 16.08.2023 to 5.00 P.M. of 31.08.2023. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened at 11.00 A.M. of 01.09.2023 in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Bhubaneswar (R&B), Division No-II, Bhubaneswar. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal www.tendersorissa.gov.in. Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer, BBSR (R&B) Division No.II, BBSR
OIPR-34088/11/0012/2324

FOCUS DIPLOMACY

TAKING FORWARD TIES



India remains a key player in the Quad and the Indo-Pacific calculations through which the US hopes to check the challenge from an aggressive China

text of its rising economic and strategic status. India remains a key player in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the Indo-Pacific calculations through which the United States hopes to check the challenge from an aggressive China.

On the other hand, at times there are strident voices on The Hill, which flag contentious issues like human rights, minorities, and procurement of weapon systems from Russia with Members of the Congress asking the Biden administration to work with India and attend to these concerns.

India's outreach to the Congress, which is a separate branch, through official engagements has increased over the last few decades. These efforts were bolstered by contribution from the Indian-American community in providing a definite thrust to Congressional relations acquiring a higher trajectory.

However, what is missing is a formal and institutional engagement with Indian lawmakers. The CODEL as a group may on visits meet Indian Parliamentarians in informal settings; institutional interactions are conspicuous by their absence.

Interestingly, four years ago a joint statement issued after the 2+2 India-US Foreign and Defence Ministers dialogue observed the popular and political support for a robust bilateral partnership. The Ministers looked forward to the establishment of India-US Parliamentary Exchange to facilitate reciprocal visits by Parliamentarians of the two countries. There has been little movement on this aspect and needs a nudge from lawmakers on either side.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior journalist and Fulbright-Congressional Fellow.

This 15 August as India prepares to celebrate its seven-decade on-ward march and mark its Independence Day, among the host of dignitaries this year will be a delegation of Members of Congress from the United States.

The Congressional delegation (CODEL) comprising influential Members of Congress is led by Indian American Representative Rohit 'Ro' Khanna along with Michael Waltz, both Co-Chairs of Caucus on India and Indian Americans. The Caucus is one of the largest country-specific associations in the House of Representatives and enjoys bipartisan support on the Capitol Hill.

When members of the Khanna-Waltz CODEL take a seat on the ramparts of Red Fort to watch Prime Minister Narendra Modi unfurl the Tricolour and address the nation, it will usher in a significant milestone in the history of India's connection with the United States Congress.

The first Indian-American to be elected to the US Congress was Dalip Singh Saund who represented a district of California between 1957 and 1962. Khanna today represents the Silicon Valley district from the same state and traces his family roots to Punjab, from where Saund migrated to the United States.

Khanna takes pride in joining public service following in the footsteps of his grandfather Amarnath Vidyalankar, a freedom fighter who served as a Minister in Punjab and a Member of Parliament between 1971 and 1976.

Interestingly, Vidyalankar was associated with the socialist stream of the Indian National Congress, and his grandson, a resilient voice in the Democratic Party, is part of the Progressives (read Left) section.

Khanna remains at the fore-

front of supporting India on issues of strategic interests and is a strong advocate of increasing defence ties with New Delhi. He was instrumental in moving a piece of legislation to grant India a waiver from the impending sanctions for procuring a missile system from Russia. The initiative is to re-work laws and wean New Delhi away from its decades-old dependence on military hardware from Moscow.

Yet, on certain other issues Khanna straddles a different line as he raised the farmers' protests during his earlier tenure and lends voice to those underscoring violation of human rights and restricting space for democratic dissent in India.

Interestingly, among the CODEL is another Indian-American Congressman Shri Thaneedar, a Democrat from Michigan. He too is pushing for increased ties with India. On 4 August, before taking the plane to India, he introduced a resolution to designate 15 August as a "A National Day of Celebration of World's Two Largest Democracies."

The resolution, currently referred to the House Committee

on Foreign Affairs, refers to India's long journey under first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru; the new level of trust and mutual understanding underscored during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi; and, the country's contributions to democracy that inspired leaders across the globe including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Since the creation of the India Caucus on the House side in the 1990s, engagement with Members of the Congress and the government of the day in New Delhi witnessed a significant rise. There have been regular visits of CODEL, from the House of Representatives and Senators.

This year itself, Senators led by majority leader Chuck Schumer were in India and he piloted a move to bring about a change through the National Defence Authorisation Act that would instruct the Pentagon to consider appropriate security cooperation benefit accruing to India, which is already conferred with the status of Major Defence Partner.

These are clear signs the Congress is directing greater focus on India both in the con-



KV Prasad

INDIA'S OUTREACH TO THE CONGRESS THROUGH OFFICIAL ENGAGEMENTS HAS INCREASED OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES



Peter Singer

By taxing meat, governments would free up enough grain to feed the desperately needy around the world

Feed People

After Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, ships used to export grain from Ukraine's Black Sea ports stopped traveling there because they were liable to be attacked by Russian forces, which suspected them of carrying military supplies. That caused grain prices to soar to record levels and sparked fears of famine in countries in the Middle East and Africa that had previously imported Ukrainian grain, especially wheat.

Eventually, in July 2022, Russia agreed to give ships traveling to and from Ukraine safe passage, on the condition that Russian officials could inspect them. During the 11 months that the Black Sea Grain Initiative was in effect, Ukraine exported 33 million tons of grain, and world food prices declined by approximately 20%. According to the United Nations, 57% of the exported foodstuffs went to developing countries.

But now Russia has withdrawn from the arrangement. When Russia announced that it would let the agreement expire on July 17, the price of grain rose by 8%. UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that millions of people would now be facing hunger, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that "Russia is responsible for denying food to people who are desperately needy around the world." In Kenya, the government described Russia's conduct as a "stab in the back" for people in drought-stricken countries (a group that currently includes Kenya).

In addition to ending the agreement and declaring that it will regard any cargo ships heading for Ukrainian ports as potentially carrying military goods, Russia has targeted Ukrainian ports on the Danube River, which could offer an alternative export route, and has also attacked grain storage facilities in Odesa, destroying an estimated 60,000 tons of grain.

At a recent Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg, President Vladimir Putin attempted to show concern about possible grain shortages in Africa by promising 25,000-50,000 tons of Russian grain to six African countries (in four of which Russia's Wagner Group mercenaries operate). Kenya was not among them. In any case, the total quantity of grain pledged is less than 1% of the grain shipped by Ukraine while the agreement was in effect.

There can be no justification or excuse for Russia, in furtherance of its war of aggression against Ukraine, to target that country's grain exports, knowing that this will drive up grain prices and increase hunger among people in countries far from the conflict. Nevertheless, comments from leaders like Guterres and Blinken risk creating the false impression that the world relies on Ukraine to produce enough grain to feed its people.

Each year, the world produces about 750 million tons of wheat and 1.1 billion tons of maize. Of this, 20% of the wheat (150 million tons) and 61% of the maize (671 million tons) is fed to animals confined in what the industry calls "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations" or CAFOs. (That's in addition to 77% of the world's soybean crop.)

When we feed animals crops that we could eat, we end up with fewer calories and less protein than the crops themselves contain. That's because the animals use the majority of the nutritional value of their food to keep their bodies warm and functioning, and to develop bones and other body parts that we do not eat. One study carried out in the United States showed that grains and soy fed to beef cattle return less than 3% of the calories and protein that the crops contain, less than 10% when fed to pigs, and still only 21% when fed to chickens, the most efficient converters.

Putting all these figures together, and assuming that the average nutritional return across all the animals in CAFOs is 20% (although it is almost certainly less), we can conclude that feeding 150 million tons of wheat and 671 million tons of maize to animals is effectively wasting 120 million tons of wheat and 537 million tons of maize. In comparison, the 33 million tons of grain that Ukraine exported when the Black Sea agreement with Russia was in operation is a relatively modest quantity.

Blinken is right to say that Russia is responsible for denying food to desperately needy people around the world, but let's not pretend that other countries are powerless to prevent the food shortages brought about by Russia's willingness to attack ships carrying Ukrainian wheat. The US alone could easily offset the loss of Ukrainian exports by reducing the number of animals in CAFOs and exporting the resulting grain surplus. The task would be easier still if other countries that produce most of their meat from CAFOs did the same.

By taxing meat, governments would free up enough grain to feed the "desperately needy around the world." In the process, they would also reduce local air and water pollution, cut greenhouse-gas emissions, and improve the health of their people.

The writer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears. **JOHN LENNON**
- Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect. **MARK TWAIN**
- The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing. **SOCRATES**

WORDSWORTH

Metoposcopist

A metoposcopist is a person who practices metoposcopy. So far so good. Metoposcopy is the art of judging a person's character and fortune from his face, principally his forehead. This is not so strange an idea, since that part of the face is prominent and expressive. Persons with high foreheads are considered brainy; those with short ones are sometimes thought to be almost Neanderthal. The play of the muscles on the forehead in concentration or contemplation is an expressive reflection of the mind working beneath the skin. Metoposcopy was a medieval method of assessment, together with such related techniques as chiromancy (divination using the hand) and podomancy (which is prognostication from the condition of one's feet). The more general term that refers to the whole face is physiognomy. Metoposcopy is said to have been invented in the sixteenth century by Gerolamo Cardano, a man better known for his pioneering work in medicine and mathematics. His book, *Metoposcopia Libri Tredecim*, contained more than 800 woodcuts illustrating facial positions he suggested were associated with temperament and destiny. The word comes via Late Latin from Greek and derives from the Greek word metopon, forehead.

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

Not an occasion for celebration



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

THE KIND OF GROWTH THAT INDIA REQUIRES SHOULD BE MUCH MORE SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE

In 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to double the size of India's economy by 2024, lifting the country into the \$5 trillion-or-more club alongside the US and China. However, this has proved to be an illusion as the size of the economy is estimated to be \$3.75 trillion in nominal GDP in 2023. Given the present growth rate, within one year, the economy cannot grow to \$5 trillion.

Again, recently, even before being re-elected, he laid out the blueprint for a third term of his government and said this will be marked by faster economic growth and India becoming the third-largest economy. But there is nothing new in it and even not an occasion for celebration as it is a mathematical certainty. India's emergence as the world's third-largest economy in this decade has been forecast for quite some time now - whichever party forms the next government.

Most advanced countries are experiencing declining growth after reaching saturation point while developing countries like India and China are growing as there is enough scope for growth. It means when the rate of growth of advanced countries declines and India grows, then automat-

ically India will surpass Japan (\$4.4 trillion), and Germany (\$4.308 trillion) easily to become the third largest economy irrespective of which party rules.

Apart from the government, multiple global agencies including the IMF, World Bank, and a host of other rating agencies have predicted India to be the fastest-growing economy in this financial year. But India is not the fastest growing economy in the world as trumpeted. The UAE, Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are ahead of India.

But what the present government should introspect is that during the 1980s, the size of the Indian economy was the same as that of the Chinese economy. But now China's economy in terms of nominal GDP is more than five times that of India.

Then comes the target of making India a developed nation in the next 25 years. India currently has a per capita income of around \$2,000 and is categorised as a lower middle-income country in the comity of 42 countries. Again, per capita income is only an indicator of an average of GDP. But the average camouflages the suffering of the masses and their dismal conditions as India has extreme inequality, according to Oxfam India and

World Inequality Report. The top 1% of population in India owned more than 40.5% of total wealth in 2021, while the bottom 50% had around 3% of total wealth. The pandemic has exacerbated the divide. Additionally, the rich got richer during the pandemic and saw their wealth surge by 121% in real terms.

Hence if per capita income of a country has increased, it doesn't mean that the income of the entire population has also increased.

Yet even as India is projected to become the third largest economy in terms of nominal GDP, same do not reflect the grim reality for crores of Indians who struggle to eke out a basic existence. In India the growth is propelled by the voracious consumption of the country's upper strata but its benefits never percolate beyond the urban elites.

Environmental degradation, rapid depletion of natural resources and the impoverishment of the masses is in part a product of the growth-at-all-costs ambitions of the present regime. India is home to the largest number of poor, hungry, modern slaves and homeless people in the world.

India is not only abysmally placed in all international in-

stances, but the growth also is still not translating into enough jobs. As a result, educated young people are frustrated and becoming violent. A far larger number of Indians eke out a living in the informal sector without any job security and social security. They have been pulverised in recent months by high inflation, especially in the rise in food prices.

Growth at any cost has ignored the true well-being of society with concomitant erosion of moral and social values; growing corruption, black money; increasing violence, crimes, dreaded diseases, suicide; disintegration of families, declining peace and happiness. There is annihilation of the justice delivery system, and decimation of the voice of the voiceless.

The kind of growth that India requires should be much more socially inclusive, and equitable; growth that creates jobs, ecologically sustainable, and raises the living standards of people. Priorities should ultimately be given to the well-being of people which is missing.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist. Views are personal.

Trump's popularity

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Russagarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Sir, Despite being repeatedly indicted over various charges Donald Trump's rating is quite high in the United States as he still appears to be the clear frontrunner to secure a Republican ticket to fight President Joe Biden next year. What explains his popularity despite the plethora of charges against him? As President, the brash and calculative Trump endeared himself to some sections of the people who were tired of watching presidents with a large degree of monotony in their demeanour. His belligerence was a treat for many of his supporters. Perhaps, being more than a match to his critics in international diplomacy won him brownie points. He also rooted for some firm domestic decisions. It is evident that a sluggish Joe Biden, who has invited criticism for his follies on the international front, and is not a great hit domestically too, has contributed to Trump's rise in the popularity graph.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Contentious issue

Sir, The INDIA bloc's heated debate over the contentious Delhi Services Bill was short-lived. The Rajya Sabha approved the Government of the National Territory of Delhi Bill 2023 on Monday. The Bill received 131 votes in favour and 102 votes against it. As a result, the Opposition in Rajya Sabha became inherently weak in blocking this law. On 3 August, the Lok Sabha passed this Bill. Reaching of this magical figure was expected once YSR Congress and BJD endorsed it. Due to suspension from the Rajya Sabha, Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh was unable to participate in the debate or vote. Mayawati's BSP and a few other smaller parties had already stated that they would not vote. It should be remembered that the BJP and the Aam Aadmi Party have had a long-running feud over this law. Since 2015, there has been a conflict concerning Delhi's administrative responsibilities. Earlier the decision of the Supreme Court was based on the basic argument that the bureaucracy should be under the control of the elected government with a mandate. This is natural in a democratic system based on people's representation. Overturning the reasoned decision of the Supreme Court, the Central government has issued this Ordinance and therefore it cannot be considered justified.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

COVID-19 RULE VIOLATION

Karnataka Cabinet drops cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, August 10: The Karnataka Cabinet Thursday decided to withdraw criminal cases relating to violation of COVID-19 guidelines by state Congress and its leaders including, now Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar during the 'Mekedatu padayatra' organised by the party in 2022.

The Congress, then in opposition, had organised the padayatra (foot march), demanding implementation of the Mekedatu project, across the Cauvery river, despite COVID restrictions during the time.

"It has been decided to withdraw nine criminal cases booked in various police stations of the state. It is to do with only Mekedatu agitation, violating COVID rules and Section 144 and others," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said.

Briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting, he said the decision has been taken based on



The Congress, then in opposition, had organised the padayatra (foot march), demanding implementation of the Mekedatu project, across the Cauvery river, despite COVID restrictions during the time

the application of Congress MLA Ashok Pattan, who is also the government's Chief Whip in the Legislative Assembly

"The cases are related to violation of COVID-19 guidelines

Several Congress leaders who had attended the march were infected by coronavirus. The party resumed the padayatra in February end and it culminated at the National College Ground at Basavanagudi March 3

by Congress party with its state President D K Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah (then Leader of Opposition), D K Suresh (Bengaluru Rural MP) by organising party convention and

holding Mekedatu to Bengaluru, based on the complaint filed by Tahsildar Ramanagara, and nine other cases connected with these offences," he added.

The march with the theme 'Namma Neeru, Namma Hakku' (Our water, Our right) that had initially begun at Sangama, the confluence of Cauvery and Arkavathi rivers at Kanakapura in Ramanagara district, on January 9, 2022 was scheduled to conclude at Basavanagudi here on January 19, after spanning a total distance of nearly 139 km.

It was however temporarily halted on January 13, with limited options before the party, amid surging COVID-19 cases, government prohibiting movement of people, and the Karnataka High Court's strong observations regarding violation of curbs. Several Congress leaders who had attended the march were also infected by coronavirus. The party resumed the padayatra in February end and it culminated at the National College Ground at Basavanagudi on March 3.

Rise in elephant population

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, August 10: Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre Wednesday said the elephant population in the state has increased from 6,049 to 6,395 according to the latest survey.

Releasing the elephant census report conducted in May, he said this is a jump of 346 pachyderms in comparison to last census conducted in 2017.

"Although elephants are mighty wildlife species, they are under threat worldwide, including in India. In order to protect the endangered animal, the World Elephant Day is being celebrated on August 12 to create awareness about conservation of their habitat so that they can also live comfortably," the minister said at a press conference here.

According to Khandre, the elephant census is conducted every five years and the previous census was held in 2017. In 2022, an attempt was made to take up survey as part of the All India Tiger Census but it did not include sample block count and population structure assessment of elephants. This method is very important for census and numerical classification of the jum-



bos (sex and age), he said.

The minister said the elephant census was conducted from May 17 to May 19 this year simultaneously by Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. A similar census was conducted in Andhra Pradesh on the same period, he said.

The census was carried out by the Karnataka Forest Department with the technical assistance of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) headed by Prof R Sukumar, who guided in preparing the format of the census, training the field staff, analysis of census results and report preparation, he said.

According to Khandre, more than 3,400 personnel from 32 di-

visions of the state participated in this elephant census, which was undertaken in three ways - direct enumeration or block enumeration, transect survey or dung count method, and water-hole counting.

The census was conducted in 32 divisions of the state and pachyderms were found in 23 divisions. The total number of elephants enumerated directly on the day of survey was 2,219. It was conducted in 6,104 sq km area out of 18,975 sq km area in these 23 divisions, he explained. "Since this is the first time such a large area has been surveyed, this survey and report are highly accurate and reliable," the minister said.

ASI, Bihar govt at loggerheads

While Goutami Bhattacharya, superintending archaeologist (ASI, Patna circle) alleged 'indifference' of the local administration in removing encroachments around

Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda district magistrate Shashank Shubhankar said non-utilisation of areas around UNESCO world heritage site by the former for a long period invite hawkers to reoccupy the vacant space

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, August 10: The Patna circle of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) and Bihar government continued to be at loggerheads over removal of encroachments around Nalanda Mahavihara, a world heritage site, in the state's Nalanda district.

While Goutami Bhattacharya, superintending archaeologist (ASI, Patna circle) alleged 'indifference' of the local administration in removing encroachments around Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda district magistrate Shashank Shubhankar said non-utilisation of areas around UNESCO world heritage site by the former for a long period invite hawkers to reoccupy the vacant space.

"In a letter to Bhattacharya on December 23, 2022, the district administration, after removing all unauthorised shops on both sides of the entrance of Nalanda Mahavihara, requested the former to immediately start ASI's facelift work related to the world heritage site. The letter stated that vacant land (encroachment free) may again start getting encroached if it is not utilised for long," Shubhankar said.

"The district administration has been maintaining a 'zero tolerance' policy towards encroachments. We regularly conduct encroachment removal drives in the district city and also in the vicinity of Nalanda Mahavihara and take action against encroachers. But the ASI should also play a proactive role and start its facelift work around the world heritage site. Currently, encroachments are being removed around Nalanda Mahavihara. I hope that the ASI will now utilise the vacant land,"

said the DM, mentioning that he recently received a letter from Deepak Anand, additional secretary-cum-director (archaeology), art, culture and youth department of Bihar government regarding immediate removal of encroachments around the heritage site.

In a letter dated July 21, 2023, addressed to Harjot Kaur Bamhraha, additional chief secretary (ACS) art, culture and youth department of Bihar government, Bhattacharya had sought the former's intervention in clearing encroachment around Nalanda Mahavihara.

The superintending archaeologist had expressed her annoyance over continued encroachment around Nalanda Mahavihara and alleged 'indifference' of the local administration towards the same.

"The recurring encroachment around Nalanda Mahavihara and archaeological museum in Nalanda does not bode well for maintaining the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage site as well as its authenticity and integrity. The issue needs to be resolved at the earliest to the satisfaction of all stakeholders so that the sanctity of the site is not compromised", Bhattacharya had written to the ACS, which was also marked to the DM (Nalanda).

Reacting to the Nalanda DM's comment, Bhattacharya said on Thursday, "ASI's functional and territorial jurisdiction does not allow for expenditure beyond the boundary wall of Nalanda Mahavihara. The ASI can't do anything on land which is not under its territorial jurisdiction. The district administration has to do its job. If they (district administration) cannot do anything, they can hand over the land to us, and then only ASI can do something."

Water level of several Bihar rivers reaches danger mark



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna/ Muzaffarpur, August 10: The Bihar government Thursday directed officials to remain alert as water levels of several rivers in the state were rising.

The situation was grim in north Bihar as a number of rivers, including the Sone, Gandak, Punpun, Bagmati and Ganga, were either flowing above their danger levels or were nearing the danger mark, officials said.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Wednesday inspected the situation near JP Setu in Patna where the water level of Ganga was rising. He asked the district administration to remain in a state of preparedness to tackle the situation if the water level crossed the danger mark.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Wednesday inspected the situation near JP Setu in Patna where the water level of Ganga was rising

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The CM also travelled along Atal Path and JP Ganga Path to take stock of the situation up to Gandhi Ghat. The water level of Ganga at Gandhi Ghat on Thursday reached 48.54 metres, which was .06 cm below the danger level. Ganga was flowing just below the danger mark at Hathidah, Munger, Bhagalpur and Kahalgaon, officials said.

The Patna Meteorological Centre predicted light to moderate rain in most parts of the state over the next two days. In Muzaffarpur, the rising water level of the Bagmati river flooded many villages. At least 16 panchayat areas have been cut off from the district headquarters as the temporary bridge in Katra has been closed as the water is flowing over the bridge, officials said.

"Officials have been directed to provide immediate relief to the flood victims in Katra and surrounding areas," said Gyan Prakash, the sub-divisional magistrate of Muzaffarpur (East).

Gandak was flowing 0.35 cm above the danger mark near Sidhwalia in Gopalganj, and Koshi was flowing 0.33 cm above the danger level at Baltara in Khagaria district, officials said.

'Teachers not to engage in caste survey during school hours'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, August 10: The Bihar Education Department has asked district authorities in the state not to engage teachers in caste survey exercise during school hours.

Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Education Department, K K Pathak, in a missive dated August 8, 2023, to all District Magistrates in the state, urged them to make it sure that teachers are not engaged in caste survey exercise during school hours.

"The field-related activities of the caste survey exercise are almost complete now in the state. Now the data entry work is going on. Therefore, now it is requested that the services of teachers for the data-entry work should not be taken during school hours. Teachers should not be engaged for the remaining works of the caste-survey exercise during school hours", said Pathak in his letter to DMs.

Earlier, Pathak, in another letter, dated August 1, 2023, to all DMs had urged them to make it sure that no schools in their respective districts remained with-

The Bihar government recently resumed the caste survey exercise after the Patna High Court August 1 judgement

The Patna HC August 1 held the caste survey being conducted by the Bihar government as valid and legal

out teachers while engaging them in caste survey exercise.

"DMs are requested to ensure that except caste survey exercise, teachers are not engaged in any other administrative works", he had written in his letter maintaining that the quality of education in government schools should not be affected.

The Bihar government recently resumed the caste survey exercise after the Patna High Court August 1 judgement. The Patna HC August 1 held the caste survey being conducted by the Bihar government as valid and legal. The court also dismissed petitions that were filed against the caste survey started by the state government in June 2022. The decision of the Patna HC has now been challenged in the Supreme Court.



Coffee planters heave sigh of relief as prices go up

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, August 10: After the prices of tomatoes disrupted the budgets of common people across the country, now it is going to be the turn of coffee prices to send their heads spinning.

The coffee crop has begun to fetch good prices due to various factors at the international market after almost a decade and the trend has brought cheers among coffee planters who toiled with the stagnant pricing of the commodity for 10 to 15 years.

Coffee production in India is dominated in the hill tracts of south Indian states with Karnataka accounting for 71 per cent, followed by Kerala with 21 per cent, and Tamil Nadu 5 per cent of overall production.

Following the trend of rising prices, the price of coffee is likely to go up in hotels, restaurants, and coffee shops. Recently, the price of milk was also hiked in Karnataka. A cup of coffee now costs ₹12 to ₹15 in common hotels. While roadside vendors have also upped the price by 10 to 20 per cent, the rates in posh coffee shops, and hang outs would go upwards much further.



Sujith Vajuvalli Biliyappa Gowda, a fourth generation coffee planter and owner of Biligiri Coffee Estate in Alduru of Chikkamagaluru district, said: "We are getting ₹6,200 per 50 kg bag. Last year we used to get ₹3,000 to ₹3,500. There is a jump of ₹2,000 per bag. In my expectation the coffee prices may go up by ₹1,000 more by next year."

Coffee fetched low rates when arecanut, and pepper prices went up. It was an issue for planters, as the sale price was low, but the labour prices, and cost of

manure, and pesticides went up. For almost 10 to 15 years, coffee prices remained at ₹2,800 to ₹3,500. The labour price, which was ₹150 then, is now touching ₹450. The tree shading which cost ₹300 then now costs ₹1,000. Then it was a burden and managed with bank loans, he said.

Now, the planters are saving some money, Gowda added. The Indian production of coffee is increasing year by year. Last year, there was a drop due to heavy rain and this year, there is a drop because of low rainfall.

Coffee is a sensitive crop and it won't yield much when the temperature is high or there is heavy rainfall. Some stretches are affected and some are not affected, he said.

Gowda also said that the

Indian coffee market won't affect the world market trends as there are countries who grow much more than India. Brazil, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and Vietnam grow coffee in huge quantities.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, G.UDAYAGIRI
 No.1771 Date:10.08.2023
"e" Tender Notice
BID Identification No. GUDGR-NAC-03/2023-24
 No.C-1024: Bid Documents consisting of work, Estimated Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, Time of completion, Class of Contractors and set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
 1. Name of the works : As per DTCN
 2. No. of works : 5 Nos.
 3. Estimated Cost : Rs. 06 Lakh to 09 Lakhs
 4. Period of Completion : 60 Days
 5. Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal : Dt. 11.08.2023 at 10.00 A.M. to Dt.21.08.2023 upto 5.00 PM
 6. Last date & time for submitting : Dt.21.08.2023 upto 5.00 PM online Bid
 7. Bids shall be opened on : Dt.22.08.2023 at 10.00 AM
 8. Bid shall be evaluated on : Dt.23.08.2023 at 10.00 AM
 9. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Executive Officer, N.A.C., G. Udayagiri
 Further details can be seen from the procurement portal i.e. www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd./- Executive Officer, N.A.C., G. Udayagiri
 OIPR-13066/11/0005/2324





Indian Navy's indigenous frontline warship INS Sahyadri, which along with INS Kolkata will participate in exercise 'Malabar 2023', off Sydney from August 11-21



The national flag hoisted atop the newly renovated Ghanta Ghar at Lal Chowk in Srinagar



Officials and others during a search and rescue operation to find missing people as five members of a family are feared trapped under the debris of a house that collapsed after cloudburst in Sirmaur district, Himachal Pradesh



BJP workers burn tyres to block the NH 12 during a protest over alleged abduction of a BJP panchayat 'Pradhan', at Dhubuliya in Krishnanagar, Nadia, West Bengal



Women in Ahmedabad shout anti-government slogans during a protest against the alleged sexual assault in Manipur



Special 50 pence coins, created to mark King Charles III's coronation in May, start to appear in circulation across the UK



CPI(M) MPs V Sivadasan and A A Rahim interact with a shopkeeper whose shop was demolished by the administration in a drive against illegal construction, in Nuh district, Haryana



A 25-ft high statue of legendary Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar installed near Kurichikulam lakefront as part of a Smart City project in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu



Union WCD minister is very angry. But, I cannot understand where that anger goes away when, just two rows (in Parliament) behind her, a person called Brij Bhushan Singh sits
SWATI MALWAL | DCW CHIEF

SC INTRODUCES 'SUSWAGATAM'

The Supreme Court Thursday announced the launch of portal 'SuSwagatam', which would enable advocates, litigants, interns and others to register themselves online and request for e-passes to enter the apex court



of the day quote

What is regretful is that the Hon'ble Prime Minister has not found the time to visit Manipur in the last 100 days
P CHIDAMBARAM | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

With hikes of Rs 250, the monthly aid to women will be increased to Rs 3000 under Ladli Behna Yojana. Besides, I will give you something on Rakshabandhan
SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | CHIEF MINISTER OF MP

Community engagement will contribute significantly in garnering success in this mission by the involvement of all stakeholders starting from the grassroots levels
MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

ED freezes ₹30cr land linked to Balaji

Chennai: A 2.49 acre land valued at more than Rs 30 crore belonging to the sister-in-law of Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji has been frozen as part of an ongoing money laundering investigation against him, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said Thursday. The property located in Karur was unearthed by the agency during searches undertaken Wednesday and it, along with an under-construction bungalow being built on the land, has now been placed under a freeze order in accordance with the section 17(1A) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Two elephants killed by trains

Guwahati: Two elephants, including one pregnant, were killed when two goods trains knocked them in Assam and West Bengal Thursday, prompting the Northeast Frontier Railway to alert all animal corridors, officials said. NFR chief public relations officer Sabyasachi De said the first incident happened in between Chalsa-Nagrakata section under Alipurduar division in West Bengal around 2.40 am. The second incident took place at 7.10 am in the Digaru-Panbari section under Lumding division in Assam, he added.

Conman Kiran Patel arrested

Ahmedabad: Conman Kiran Patel, who faces half a dozen cheating cases already, was arrested Thursday on charges of cheating a businessman in Gujarat's Morbi of Rs 48 lakh. Produced in court by the city police Crime Branch, Patel, and his wife Malini Patel, faces allegations of impersonation, breach of trust, cheating, and criminal conspiracy. The complaint against Patel, filed in May, details how he deceived businessman Bharat Patel by portraying himself as a Class 1 officer in 2017 and promising to assist in obtaining a permit from the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) for his chemical business.

Student dies in university hostel

Kolkata: A first-year student of Jadavpur University in Kolkata died after allegedly falling from the second-floor balcony of the main hostel, police said Thursday. The 18-year-old boy Swarnodip Kundu, a resident of Bagula in Nadia district, was an undergraduate student of Bengali (honours). He allegedly fell from a hostel building around 11.45 pm Wednesday, they said.

134 MPs, MLAs have cases of crime against women: ADR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 10: A total of 134 sitting MPs and MLAs have cases related to crimes against women, which includes 21 MPs and 113 MLAs.

Seven BJP members are facing rape charges, maximum in any party, a report revealed on Thursday.

In a report, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch (NEW) said that of 762 sitting MPs and 4,001 sitting MLAs analysed, 134 sitting MPs or MLAs have declared cases related to crimes against women.

The report said that among the 134 sitting MPs or MLAs with declared cases related to crimes against women, 21 are sitting MPs and 113 are sitting MLAs. The report also pointed out that among various parties, BJP has the highest number of sitting MPs or MLAs with 44 members against whom cases of crime against women have been registered.

In the second spot is the Congress with 25 followed by AAP with 13 sitting MPs or MLAs who have declared cases related to crimes against women.

The report said: "Of 134 sitting MPs and MLAs who have de-

Among the parties, the BJP has the highest number of sitting MPs and MLAs with cases of rape registered

clared cases related to crimes against women, 18 sitting MPs and MLAs have declared cases related to rape. Among these, 18 sitting MPs and MLAs with declared cases related to rape, four are sitting MPs and 14 are sitting MLAs." It said that cases of rape have been registered against seven BJP MPs and MLAs, while

six Congress MPs and MLAs are facing cases of rape.

It said that 134 sitting MPs/MLAs have declared cases of Crimes against women such as charges related to assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty (IPC Section-354), kidnapping, abducting or inducing woman to compel her marriage, etc.

(IPC Section-366), rape (IPC Section-376), husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty (IPC Section-498A), buying minor for purposes of prostitution, etc. (IPC Section-373) and word, gesture or act intended to insult

the modesty of a woman (IPC Section-509). The report also said that among the states, West Bengal has the highest number of sitting MPs and MLAs facing declared cases of crimes against women. The report said that 26 MPs and MLAs from West Bengal, followed by Maharashtra and Odisha each with 14 sitting MPs and MLAs, who have declared cases related crimes against women. While with one case each, Rajasthan, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh have the lowest number of MPs and MLAs with declared cases of crime against women.

Meitei, Kuki MLAs urge PM not to remove Assam Rifles from security duties



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, August 10: The Meitei and Kuki MLAs of Manipur have written separate letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and made conflicting demands over the presence of Assam Rifles in the ethnic strife-affected state.

While 40 legislators, most of whom are Meiteis, sought removal of the country's oldest paramilitary force from the northeastern state, 10 Kuki MLAs urged Modi not to do so asserting this could jeopardise the security of the tribals.

Assam Rifles and other central forces including the Army were deployed in Manipur in early May to control the situation after clashes between Meiteis and Kukis broke out. In a memorandum to the PM, the 40 legislators said Assam Rifles need to be transferred from their present location of deployment and "trustworthy Central forces" along with state security can replace them to "neutralise and sanitise" all threats to peace, security and stability.

They also said, "For the immediate establishment of security, simple deployment of forces is inadequate. Although it is imperative to halt the violence in the peripheral areas, a complete

"The Assam Rifles has the majority of their troops from the northeastern states and they have been guarding Manipur for very long, hence, they are aware of the local dynamics," the Kuki MLAs said

disarmament is the key to achieve this goal."

These MLAs also demanded the withdrawal of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) Agreement with Kuki militant groups, implementation of NRC in the state and strengthening of the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). In the memorandum submitted to Modi Wednesday, they opposed the demand for a 'separate administration' by Kuki groups. On August 8, the Manipur unit of the BJP also requested Modi to replace Assam Rifles with any other paramilitary force "permanently from the state in the interest of the public". In another memorandum to the prime minister Thursday, the Kuki-Zo-Hmar MLAs asserted that the Assam Rifles stood the test of time and did their work without prejudice or bias in Manipur.

The tribal MLAs also described as a "worrysome trend" that the Manipur Police have started removing Assam Rifles posts from key areas and lodging "false and fabricated" FIRs against the paramilitary force to hinder them from doing their duties.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 10: Opposition parties Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over a new Bill seeking to regulate the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners, saying it is a "blatant attempt" at making the poll watchdog a "total puppet in the hands of the Prime Minister".

While the Aam Aadmi Party said the Prime Minister is "weakening" Indian democracy and the ECs appointed will be "loyal" to the BJP, the Trinamool Congress alleged that this is a clear step towards "rigging" the 2024 elections.

Congress leaders appealed to all democratic forces to oppose the proposed legislation and asked whether the BJD and YSRCP will also join hands to oppose the bill.

The BJD and YSRCP have been extending support on crucial issues to the government in the Rajya Sabha, where the BJP does not enjoy a majority of its own. The Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in the post-lunch session amid uproar by opposition parties, after which the house was adjourned.

Congress general secretary organisation K C Venugopal hit out at the government over the Bill, calling it a "blatant attempt at making the Election Commission a total puppet in the hands of the PM".

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala said it is a "black day"



According to the Bill, future chief election commissioner and election commissioners will be selected by a three-member panel headed by the Prime Minister and comprising leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Cabinet minister

This is in contrast to a Supreme Court judgment of March this year which said the panel should comprise the PM, LoP in Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India

Before the SC ruling, CEC and Election Commissioners were appointed by the President on the recommendation of the government

for democracy and noted that the "2024 Lok Sabha election is before us and the Modi government is on the verge of defeat, after losing out in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh".

Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal said he had already said that "the prime minister does not have faith in the Supreme Court" of the country. TMC MP Sushmita Dev said the Bill is in "absolute contravention" of the Supreme Court ruling, as the SC had said the process of selecting ECs must come through a process which is not dominated by the executive. AAP MP Sushil Gupta said the Supreme Court has given a verdict that the CEC should be unbiased but the Modi government has brought a Bill

for selection of EC. Congress MP and whip in Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore alleged that Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah want to control the Election Commission by bringing the Bill. Surjewala said the Bill is in "direct violation" of the Supreme Court's judgment and it is in "complete defiance" of it that skews the balance in favour of the ruling regime. The government introduced the Bill in the Rajya Sabha to regulate the appointment of the CEC and other ECs. According to the Bill, future chief election commissioner and election commissioners will be selected by a three-member panel headed by the prime minister and comprising leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and a Cabinet minister.

No change in age limit for civil service aspirants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 10: Union minister Jitendra Singh Thursday said it has not been found feasible to consider any change in the existing provisions regarding number of attempts and age-limit in respect of the civil services examination.

The civil services examination (CSE) is conducted annually by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) in accordance with the CSE rules notified by the government, the minister of state for Personnel said.

"Based on the judgments passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the writ petitions filed by some CSE candidates and in light of the views expressed by the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee, the matter has been duly considered in the Department of Personnel and Training and it has not been found feasible to consider any change in the existing provisions regarding number of attempts and age limit in respect of the CSE," Singh said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

He said the dates and the

places for conducting the preliminary examination and main examination of CSE are fixed and notified by the Commission.

"The civil services (preliminary) examination, 2023 has been conducted by the Commission on 28.05.2023 and the results declared on 12.06.2023 wherein adequate number of candidates (i.e. 14,624) have been declared qualified. Some unsuccessful candidates of the civil services (preliminary) examination, 2023 have approached courts of law," the minister said.



Kerala Police contingent during rehearsals for the Independence Day celebrations, at Central Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram

Mars may've been habitable at some point in its past

STUDY OF MUD CRACK PATTERNS ON EARLY MARTIAN SURFACE, OBSERVED BY NASA'S CURIOSITY ROVER, SUGGESTS AN IRREGULAR OR EPISODIC PRESENCE OF WATER, MEANING WATER COULD HAVE BEEN PRESENT FOR A TIME AND THEN EVAPORATED

AGENCIES

New Delhi, August 10: Mars may have seen dry and wet season cycles and thus, may have been habitable at some point in its past, according to scientists.

Study of mud crack patterns on early Martian surface, observed by NASA's Curiosity Rover, suggests an irregular or episodic presence of water, meaning water could have been present for a time and then evaporated.

The process may have repeated until mud cracks formed, the scientists from France, US and

Canada said in their study.

Nina Lanza, principal investigator of the ChemCam instrument onboard the Curiosity Rover and one of this study's authors, said, "These exciting observations of mature mud cracks are allowing us to fill in some of the missing history of water on Mars. How did Mars go from a warm, wet planet to the cold, dry place we know today?"

"These mud cracks show us that transitional time, when liquid water was less abundant but still active on the Martian surface," added Lanza.



On Earth, mud cracks are known to assume a T-shape initially. However, subsequent wetting and drying cycles can cause these cracks to take more of a Y-shape. The Y-shape of the mud cracks on the Martian surface,

therefore, could mean that the red planet saw wet-dry cycles, the scientists said in the study published in the journal Nature.

Further, these cracks were only a few centimetres deep, suggesting that these wet-dry cy-

cles could have been seasonal or could have occurred more quickly, such as through flash floods, they said.

These findings, thus, point to the possibility of Mars once having had Earth-like wet climate and that Mars may have been able to support life at some point.

"(The wet-dry cycles create) the perfect place for the formation of polymeric molecules required for life, including proteins and RNA, if the right organic molecules were present at this location," said Patrick Gasda, co-author of the paper.

"Wet periods bring molecules together while dry periods drive reactions to form polymers. When these processes occur repeatedly at the same location, the chance increases that more complex molecules formed there," said Gasda.

"These features point to the existence of 'wet-dry' environments that on Earth are extremely conducive to the development of organic molecules and potentially life. Taken as a whole, these results give us a clearer picture of Mars as a habitable world," said Lanza.

international

of the day quote

Khoun Sudary will take office as the president of the National Assembly of Cambodia in the new five-year-term National Assembly, becoming the first woman to hold this top job in the country
SAMDECH TECHO HUN SEN | CAMBODIA PM

A close relationship with India will not affect the island nation's sovereignty and integrity
RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | SRI LANKA PRESIDENT

Ukraine hopes to increase its exports through Moldova after the construction of a new bridge over the Dniester river on the joint border
DENYS SHMYHAL | UKRAINE PM

SHORT TAKES

Boat capsizes leaves 17 dead

Bangkok: A boat carrying minority Rohingya migrants from Myanmar has capsized in the Bay of Bengal, leaving at least 17 people dead and about 30 missing, a rescue official said Thursday. About 55 people were on the boat when it left Buthidaung township in the western state of Rakhine last weekend, said Byar La, general secretary of Shwe Yaung Metta Foundation. Eight people survived the weekend accident in the sea near Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine, he said. The boat was headed for Malaysia and the exact time and cause of the capsizing were unknown, he said.

Lebanese minister's car hit by bullets

Beirut: Two bullets hit the car of Lebanon's caretaker defence minister Thursday as he was driving in a convoy near Beirut, a senior security official said. No one was hurt. In a brief statement, Defence Minister Maurice Sleem confirmed the shooting, which occurred in the Beirut neighborhood of Hazmieh, but did not provide further details. An investigation was underway to find out if the minister was targeted, a senior Lebanese official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Amazon Summit in Brazil ends

Belem (Brazil): Brazil's Amazon Summit closed Wednesday with a roadmap to protect tropical rainforests that was welcomed as an important step in countering climate change, but without the concrete commitments sought by some environmentalists to end deforestation. Leaders and ministers from eight Amazon nations signed a declaration Tuesday in Belem, Brazil, that laid out plans to drive economic development in their countries while preventing the Amazon's ongoing demise "from reaching a point of no return."

Nepali Congress lawmaker held

Kathmandu: A lawmaker of Nepal's ruling party - Nepali Congress - was Thursday arrested by the police on charges of forging educational certificates. A team of the Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police arrested Sunil Sharma from Kathmandu, Police spokesperson Kuber Kadayat said. The lawmaker has been accused of forging educational certificates.



The country intends to put 10,000 soldiers along its border with Belarus
MARIUSZ BLASZCZAK | POLAND'S DEFENCE MINISTER

KHANUN DRENCHES S KOREA

Tropical Storm Khanun was pouring intense rain on South Korea Thursday, turning roads into chocolate-coloured rivers and leaving at least one person dead as it advanced north toward major urban centres near the capital



STAGE SET FOR FRESH POLLS

Pak National Assembly dissolved

Islamabad, August 10: Pakistan President Arif Alvi formally dissolved the National Assembly three days ahead of its mandated period following which outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held formal consultations with the Leader of the Opposition Thursday over the nomination for a caretaker premier to conduct the general elections later this year.

Sharif will continue to perform his duties as the premier until the appointment of a caretaker prime minister. A notification issued by the Presidential Palace on Wednesday late night said the National Assembly was dissolved under Article 58 of the Constitution.

According to Article 58, if the President fails to dissolve the assembly within 48 hours after the Prime Minister has recommended so, the assembly automatically stands dissolved. "The Prime Minister's advice at para 6 of the summary is approved," President Alvi said in a statement.

"President Dr. Arif Alvi dissolved the National Assembly. The President dissolved the National Assembly on the ad-



Thursday, Sharif held a formal round of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Raja Riaz over the nomination for the caretaker premier at the Prime Minister's House

Sharif will continue to perform his duties as the premier until the appointment of a caretaker Prime Minister

vice of the Prime Minister under Article 58-1 of the Constitution," his office posted on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Thursday, Sharif held a formal round of consultation with the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Raja Riaz over the nomination for the caretaker premier at the Prime Minister's House.

They have three days as per the Constitution to finalise a name for the caretaker prime minister. When asked about any names

from his side for nomination, Riaz said, "I bear three names in mind."

According to local media reports, three names have been proposed, including two nominations — former diplomat Jilil Abbas Jilani and former chief justice of Pakistan Tassaduq Hussain Jilani — sent by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori, by Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Geo TV reported.

However, there's no public an-

nouncement by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on the issue, it added. Riaz, a dissident leader of PTI, is considered close to PML-N and PPP and is expected not to make a show and support the government candidate.

But if the prime minister and opposition leader fail to agree on a name, the matter would be referred to a committee formed by the NA Speaker that is supposed to finalise a name for the interim premier within three days.

If it too fails to reach a consensus on the name, then the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will pick the caretaker prime minister within two days from the names proposed by the opposition and the government.

The move to dissolve the NA came as former premier Imran Khan is fighting to overturn a corruption conviction. Khan, 70, was sentenced to three years in prison by an Islamabad trial court on Saturday in the Toshakhana corruption case for unlawfully selling state gifts during his tenure as prime minister from 2018 to 2022. He was subsequently arrested by the Punjab police from his residence in Lahore.

CHINA SLAMS INVESTMENT CURBS BY US

Beijing, August 10: China accused Washington Thursday of trying to block its development after President Joe Biden stepped up a feud over technology and security by tightening controls on US investments that might help Beijing develop its military.

The Foreign Ministry accused the Biden administration of pursuing "technology hegemony" and demanded Washington "immediately revoke its erroneous decision." It warned that the lat-



est restrictions in a spreading conflict over Beijing's industrial development would hurt global supply chains.

An order signed by Biden on Wednesday targets advanced computer chips, micro electronics, quantum information technologies and artificial intelligence. The order says it wants to limit US investment in industries that might help develop the ruling Communist Party's military wing.

The order adds to restrictions that limit Chinese access to US processor chips used in smartphones, artificial intelligence and other technology on security grounds.



Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande inspects a Guard of Honour by British Army personnel, at Horse Guards Parade in London, United Kingdom

Ecuador presidential candidate shot dead

SHOCKING INCIDENT

Quito, August 10: An Ecuadorian presidential candidate known for speaking up against cartels and corruption was shot and killed Wednesday at a political rally in the capital, amid a startling wave of gang-driven violence in the South American country.

President Guillermo Lasso confirmed the assassination of Fernando Villavicencio and suggested organised crime was behind his slaying, less than two weeks before the August

20 presidential election. "I assure you that this crime will not go unpunished," Lasso said in a statement. "Organised crime has gone too far, but they will feel the full weight of the law."

Ecuador's attorney general's office said that one suspect died in custody from wounds sustained in a firefight after the killing, and police detained six suspects following raids in Quito. In his final speech before he was killed, Villavicencio promised a roaring crowd that he would root out corruption and lock up the country's "thieves."

Prior to the shooting,



Villavicencio said he had received multiple death threats, including from affiliates of Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel, one of a slew of international organised crime groups that now operate in Ecuador.

He said his campaign represented a threat to such groups. "Here I am showing my face.

RACE AGAINST TIME

Hawaii wildfires kill 36

CREWS BATTLED BLAZES IN SEVERAL PLACES ON THE ISLAND WEDNESDAY AND THE FLAMES FORCED SOME ADULTS AND CHILDREN TO FLEE INTO THE OCEAN



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wailuku (US), August 10: Thousands of Hawaii residents raced to escape homes on Maui as blazes swept across the island, destroying parts of a centuries-old town and killing at least 36 people in one of the deadliest US wildfires in recent years.

The fire took the island by surprise, leaving behind burned-out cars on once busy streets and smoking piles of rubble where historic buildings had stood in Lahaina Town, which dates to the 1700s and has long been a favourite destination for tourists. Crews battled blazes in several places on the island Wednesday, and the flames forced some adults and children to flee into the ocean.

At least 36 people have died, according to a statement from Maui County late Wednesday that said no other details were available. Officials said earlier that 271 structures were damaged or destroyed and dozens of people injured. The 2018 Camp Fire in California killed at least 85 people, destroyed nearly 19,000 homes, businesses and other buildings, and virtually razed the town of Paradise.

Lahaina residents Kamuela Kawaakoa and Iulia Yasso described a harrowing escape under smoke-filled skies Tuesday afternoon. The couple and their 6-year-old son got back to their apartment after a quick dash to the supermarket for water, and only had time to grab a change of clothes and run as the bushes around them caught fire.

"We barely made it out,"

Kawaakoa said at an evacuation shelter on Wednesday, still unsure if anything was left of their apartment. As the family fled, a senior centre across the road erupted in flames. They called 911, but didn't know if the people got out. As they drove away, downed utility poles and others fleeing in cars slowed their progress.

Kawaakoa, 34, grew up in the apartment building, called Lahaina Surf, where his dad and grandmother also lived. "It was so hard to sit there and just watch my town burn to ashes and not be able to do anything," Kawaakoa said. "I was helpless."

Maui County Mayor Richard Bissen Jr said the island had "been tested like never before in our lifetime." "We are grieving with each other during this inconceivable time," he said in a recorded statement. "In the days ahead, we will be stronger as a kaiaulu, or community, as we rebuild with resilience and aloha."

As the fires rages, tourists were advised to stay away. About 11,000 visitors flew out of Maui on Wednesday, with at least another 1,500 expected to leave Thursday, according to Ed Sniffen, state transportation director. Officials prepared the Hawaii Convention Centre in Honolulu to take in the thousands who have been displaced.

The fires were whipped by strong winds from Hurricane Dora passing far to the south. It's the latest in a series of disasters caused by extreme weather around the globe this summer. Experts say climate change is increasing the likelihood of such events.

MAN WHO THREATENED BIDEN KILLED

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Provo, August 10: An armed Utah man accused of making threats against President Joe Biden was shot and killed by FBI agents hours before the President was expected to land in the state Wednesday, authorities said.

Special agents were trying to serve a warrant on the home of Craig Deleuw Robertson in Provo, south of Salt Lake City, when the shooting happened at 6:15 am, the FBI said in a statement. Robertson was armed at the time of the shooting, according to two law enforcement sources who spoke on the condition of



anonymity to discuss details of an ongoing investigation.

Robertson posted online Monday that he had heard Biden was coming to Utah and he was planning to dig out a camouflage suit and "clean the dust off the m24 sniper rifle," according to court documents.

In another post, Robertson refers to himself as a "MAGA Trumper," a reference to former President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan. The posts indicated he did appear to own a long-range sniper rifle and numerous other weapons, as well as camouflage gear known as a "ghillie suit," investigators said in court records.

Jakarta world's most polluted major city

AIR POLLUTION IS ESTIMATED TO CONTRIBUTE TO SEVEN MILLION PREMATURE DEATHS EVERY YEAR AND IS CONSIDERED BY THE UNITED NATIONS TO BE THE SINGLE BIGGEST ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RISK

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jakarta, August 10: Indonesian capital Jakarta has become the world's most polluted major city, according to air quality monitoring firm IQAir, topping global charts for days as authorities fail to grapple with a spike in toxic smog.

Air pollution is estimated to contribute to seven million premature deaths every year and is considered by the United Nations to be the single biggest environmental health risk.

The capital and its surroundings form a megalopolis of about 30 million people that has outpaced other heavily polluted cities including Riyadh, Doha and Lahore all week for its con-



centration of tiny particles known as PM2.5.

It has topped Swiss company IQAir's ranking of pollution data — which only tracks major cities — every day since Monday, according to an AFP tally. Jakarta has regularly recorded "un-

healthy" levels of PM2.5, which can penetrate airways to cause respiratory problems, many times the World Health Organization's recommended levels.

President Joko Widodo told reporters Monday he plans to tackle pollution levels by re-

ducing "Jakarta's burden" as the country prepares to move its capital to Nusantara on Borneo island next year. He also said a planned metro train network across Jakarta "must be finished" to reduce pollution.

Residents have complained that the pollution caused by industrial smog, traffic congestion and coal-powered plants was affecting their lives and health.

"I have to wear a mask all the time. Both my body and my face are suffering," Anggy Viola, a 32-year-old officer worker in Jakarta, told AFP. "Last week my entire family was sick for a week and the doctor told me I should stay indoors," the mother-of-two added.

In 2021 a court ruled in favour of a lawsuit filed by activists and citizens against the government, ordering Widodo to clean up the city's notorious air pollution and ruling he and other top officials had been negligent in protecting residents.

Indonesia has pledged to stop building new coal-fired power plants from 2023 and to be carbon neutral by 2050.

But despite an outcry from activists, the government is expanding the enormous Suralaya coal plant on Java island, one of the biggest in Southeast Asia.

According to Greenpeace Indonesia, 10 coal-fired power plants are operating within a 100-kilometre (62 miles) radius of the capital.

of the day quote

EPFO has invested Rs 13,017 crore in exchange traded funds in the April-July period of the current fiscal year

RAMESWAR TELI | MINISTER OF STATE FOR LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

About 55 people, out of which 24 are non-full-time employees. Closer to 22 per cent. Business is in the best shape ever but this 400 per cent increase in GST is a bazooka pointed at us

KAVIN BHARTI MITTAL | FOUNDER AND CEO, HIKE

The need of the hour is a holistic consideration of all demand and supply-related enablers for Indian EV market growth

RAHUL WALAWALKAR | PRESIDENT, IESA

RESULTS CORNER

LIC Q1 net profit jumps multifold

New Delhi: Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Thursday reported a multifold jump in its April-June quarter net profit to ₹9,544 crore. The state-run life insurance behemoth had a net profit of ₹683 crore in the year-ago period. The total income increased to ₹1,88,749 crore for the June quarter as against ₹1,68,881 crore in the year-ago period, LIC said in a regulatory filing. However, the first-year premium for the reporting quarter came down to ₹6,811 crore as against ₹7,429 crore in the year-ago period, it said. The insurer earned ₹53,638 crore as against ₹50,258 crore in the same period a year ago. Net income from investments during the quarter rose to ₹90,309 crore as compared to ₹69,571 crore in the April-June period of 2022-23.

Ola Cabs loss widens in FY22

New Delhi: Ride-hailing company Ani Technologies Pvt Ltd, popularly known as Ola Cabs, saw its loss widening to ₹3,082 crore in 2021-22, according to financial data accessed by business intelligence platform Tofler. The company's losses have more than doubled on a year-over-year basis, the data showed. "Ani Technologies Pvt Ltd, an online transportation network company (popularly known as Ola Cabs), reported its revenues for the 2021-22 financial year at ₹1,350 crore, a 49 per cent jump since the last financial year," Tofler said in a statement. "The company further reported a net loss of ₹3,082 crore during the fiscal. This is a 132 per cent higher than the last financial year," the statement said. The company's total expenses for the fiscal were reported as ₹1,539 crore, the statement said.

Bajaj Electricals Q1 profit drops

New Delhi: Bajaj Electricals Ltd Thursday reported a 9.85 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹37.13 crore in the June quarter. The company had posted a net profit of ₹41.19 crore in the year-ago period, Bajaj Electricals said in a regulatory filing. Its net sales were down 1.5 per cent to ₹1,107.98 crore in the first quarter of the current fiscal as against ₹1,124.88 crore in the year-ago period. Bajaj Electricals' total expenses were almost flat at ₹1,079.02 crore during the quarter, while total revenue maintained its level from the previous year at ₹1,132.04 crore. Its revenue from the consumer products segment was up 2.01 per cent at ₹872.60 crore in the quarter under review as against ₹855.36 crore last year.



In 2022, there was only three per cent growth in the global economy. The World Bank has said in 2023, it will decline to 2.1 per cent

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

EGYPT INFLATION AT RECORD HIGH

Egypt's annual inflation rate reached a record high in July, as price hikes continue unabated in the cash-strapped North African country, official figures said Thursday. Consumer prices rose 38.2 per cent from a year earlier, up from 36.8 per cent in June



RBI KEEPS HAWKISH STANCE

RESERVE BANK HIKES CRR TO SUCK OUT OVER ₹1 LAKH CR EXCESS LIQUIDITY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 10: The Reserve Bank Thursday raised the cash reserve ratio in an incremental 10 per cent in proportion to banks' liquidity, a move that will suck out over ₹1 lakh crore from the system.

The move, announced along with the bi-monthly policy review, was the best option under the current circumstances and there is enough liquidity in the system for the banks to continue their lending operations, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das told reporters.

The RBI monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously left the repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent, but reduced the money supply by raising the cash reserve ratio (CRR) to 10 per cent on the incremental NDTL (net demand and time liabilities) over the last three months, for a limited period till September 8.

"The move will suck out a

KEY INTEREST RATES UNCHANGED FOR THIRD STRAIGHT TIME AT 6.50%
RBI RETAINS GDP PROJECTION AT 6.5% FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL
INFLATION FORECAST RAISED TO 5.4% FROM 5.1% EARLIER



little over ₹1 lakh crore of excess liquidity from the system," Das said.

According to latest data, at ₹2.48 lakh crore, the surplus liquidity in the system in August was at a 14 month high -- the highest since June 2022.

Das' deputy and the head of the monetary policy department, Michael Patra said the proposed

September 8 review will purely be data-dependent.

The Governor further noted that "the job on inflation is still not done. Inflationary risks persist amidst volatile international food and energy prices, lingering geopolitical tensions and weather-related uncertainties."

One of the reasons for the spike in liquidity is due to the fact that over 90 per cent of the ₹3.6 lakh crore of the ₹2,000 banknotes withdrawn May 19, have come back to banks, Das said. He assured that the public won't face any crunch as they prepare for the long festive season nor will the system and industry face any liquidity issue to pay the advance tax (September 15) or GST (September 20).

"We have done our internal assessment which showed that there will still be adequate liquidity left with the banking system," Das said.

The Reserve Bank-led MPC left the key interest rates un-

We will have to go beyond Arjuna's eyes and act quickly if the spiraling vegetable prices become more widespread and become generalized, forcing us to deploy any appropriate tool under our command to tame it and that it may not just be a rate hike, but any tool under our command will be deployed

SHAKTIKANTA DAS
GOVERNOR, RESERVE BANK

changed for a third straight time at 6.50 per cent but signalled a tighter policy if rising food prices drive inflation higher.

The MPC retained the stance on "withdrawal of accommodation" but Das sounded hawkish when he highlighted that headline inflation needs to subside sustainably below 4 per cent and any surge in the inflation print, if continued for a longer period, may necessitate fresh action.

"Bringing headline inflation within the tolerance band is not enough; we need to remain firmly focused on aligning inflation to the target of 4.0 per cent," the Governor said.

Accordingly the central bank also raised the inflation forecast to 5.4 per cent from 5.1 per cent earlier, citing pressures from food prices. In the September quarter, it sees inflation at 6.2 per cent, significantly higher than the 5.2 per cent earlier forecast.

Headline inflation, after reaching a low of 4.3 per cent in May 2023, rose in June and is expected to surge during July-August led by vegetable prices.

"While the vegetable price shock may reverse quickly, possible El Niño weather conditions along with global food prices need to be watched closely against the backdrop of a skewed south-west monsoon so far," Das said. "These developments warrant a heightened vigil on the evolving inflation trajectory."

"We do look through idiosyncratic shocks but if it shows signs of persistence, we have to act," he said detailing decision of the MPC, which drew confidence to leave the rates unchanged from moderation in core price prints and expects a seasonal correction in food prices in the fourth quarter of 2023.

The RBI also retained its GDP projection at 6.5 per cent for the current fiscal, saying aggregate demand conditions continue to be buoyant.

Other measures announced Thursday included a proposal to put in place a transparent framework for reset of interest rates on floating-interest loans. It will also provide borrowers options for switching to fixed-rate loans or foreclosure of loans.

RBI also allowed 'conversational payments' on UPI, which will enable users to engage in conversation with AI-powered systems to make payments. It also introduced offline payments on UPI using Near Field Communication (NFC) technology through 'UPI-Lite' on-device wallet and enhanced the transaction limit for small value digital payments in off-line mode from ₹200 to ₹500 within the overall limit of ₹2,000 per payment instrument.

Markets fall post RBI MPC decision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 10: Benchmark equity indices declined Thursday post the RBI monetary policy, dragged down by banking counters, after the unexpected announcement of reducing cash in the financial system.

Investors also remained on the sidelines ahead of the US inflation data announcement.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Thursday left its key interest rates unchanged for a third straight meeting but signalled tighter policy if food prices drive inflation higher.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 307.63 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 65,688.18. During the day, it tanked 486.67 points or 0.73 per cent to 65,509.14. The NSE Nifty declined 89.45 points or 0.46 per cent to end at 19,543.10.

From the Sensex pack, Asian Paints, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Nestle, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, HCL Technologies, Maruti and Hindustan Unilever were the major laggards. IndusInd Bank, JSW Steel, Titan, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra and Power Grid were among the gainers.

"The stock market was taken by surprise by RBI's action to remove excess liquidity from the system, due to the influx of ₹2,000 bank notes, among other factors," Amar Ambani, Group President & Head - Institutional Equities, YES Securities (India) Limited, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets Thursday as they purchased shares worth Rs 331.22 crore, according to exchange data.

Relief for home, auto loan takers

The Reserve Bank today said it will come out with a framework allowing borrowers to switch to fixed interest rate from floating interest rate, a move that would provide relief to borrowers of home, auto and other loans reeling under the impact of high interest rate. Unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy, Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said under the framework, to be put in place shortly, the lenders will have to clearly communicate with the borrowers about tenor and EMI. "The supervisory reviews undertaken by the Reserve Bank and the feedback and references from members of public have revealed several instances of unreasonable elongation of tenor of floating rate loans by lenders without proper consent and communication to the borrowers," he said. To address the issue, it is proposed to put in place a proper conduct framework to be implemented by all Regulated entities to address the issues faced by borrowers, he said.

INDIA HALTS EXPORTS

Rice prices soar to 15-yr high in Asia

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, August 10: Rice prices soared to the highest levels in almost 15 years in Asia on mounting concerns over global supplies as dry weather threatens production in Thailand and after top shipper India banned some exports, media reports said.

Thai white rice 5 per cent broken, an Asian benchmark, jumped to \$648 a tonne, the most expensive since October 2008, according to data from the Thai Rice Exporters Association, Bloomberg reported.

That brings the increase in prices to almost 50 per cent from the past year.

Rice is vital to the diets of billions of people in Asia and Africa, and the surge in prices could add to inflationary pressures and boost import bills for buyers, the report said.

The latest threat to supply comes from Thailand, the second-biggest shipper. Authorities are encouraging farmers to switch to crops that need less water as the nation braces for drier conditions with the onset of El Niño.

Last month, India widened its shipment ban to protect domestic supplies, spurring panic buying in some countries. The curbs exacerbated worries over a global shortage amid growing world consumption.

Domestic PV wholesales rise 2.57% in July: SIAM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 10: Domestic passenger vehicles wholesales registered a 2.57 per cent year-on-year increase in July at 3,50,149 units, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers said Thursday.

As per the latest data issued by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), dispatches of passenger vehicles (PVs) from manufacturers to dealers were at 3,41,370 units in July 2022.

Two-wheeler domestic wholesales were down at 12,82,054 units last month, as against 13,81,303 units in July 2022.

Motorcycle sales were lower at 8,17,206 units last month, as compared to 8,70,028 units in July 2022.

Scooters sales were also down at 4,28,640 units, from 4,79,159 units in the same month last year.

Three-wheeler wholesales were higher at 56,034 units, as compared to 31,324 units in the year-ago month.

Total vehicle dispatches across categories, excluding Tata Motors, were at 16,40,727 units, as compared to 17,06,545 units in July 2022, SIAM said.

Though the passenger vehicle and three-wheeler segments are performing well, there has been a de-growth in the two-wheeler segment in July 2023,



We expect that the positive economic environment, good monsoon, and upcoming festive season will support continued growth in the auto industry

VINOD AGGARWAL | PRESIDENT, SIAM

compared to July 2022.

SIAM Director General Rajesh Menon, said, "Sales of passenger vehicles of July 2023 has been the highest ever in July, with a marginal growth of 2.57 per cent, compared to July 2022."

He further said, "three-wheelers also posted a decent growth of 78.9 per cent compared to the last year, which is the second highest in the month of July, after the peak of 2018-19."

However, Menon said after posting growth in each of the previous three months in this financial year, the two-wheeler segment witnessed a decline in July 2023, compared to the same month last year.

\$10BN MEDIA GIANT

NCLT okays Zee-Sony merger

The merger, which was announced in 2021, hit problems after SEBI banned Zee's CEO, who had been lined up to run the merged entity, from the boardrooms of listed companies for a year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 10: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Thursday allowed the merger of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd and Culver Max Entertainment (earlier known as Sony Pictures Networks India).

This order by the Mumbai bench, headed by H V Subba Rao and Madhu Sinha, will pave the way for the creation of a \$10-billion media company, the biggest in the country.

The tribunal also dismissed all objections regarding the merger. The NCLT, July 11, had reserved its order on the merger after hearing objections from several creditors.

It heard arguments from creditors, including Axis Finance, JC Flower Asset Reconstruction Co, IDBI Bank, Imax Corp and IDBI Trusteeship.

In December 2021, Zee



Entertainment and Sony Pictures agreed to merge their businesses. Both media houses approached the tribunal for sanctioning the merger after obtaining permissions from National Stock Exchange, BSE and sectoral regulators such as the Competition Commission of India and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

However, the process stopped at the tribunal when a few creditors raised objections. Several creditors of Essel Group raised objections against the non-compete clause added to the scheme.

NSE and BSE had informed the Mumbai bench of NCLT about two orders related to the Essel Group entities, where the promoters allegedly diverted funds from the listed entity for the benefit of their associate entities.

This also included the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) order against Punit Goenka barring him from hold-

ing a directorial position in any listed company.

SAT upheld SEBI the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (Sebi's) interim order which restrained both Zee Entertainment promoters Subhash Chandra and Punit Goenka from holding board positions in public listed companies for a year on account of alleged fund diversion.

According to the creditors objecting to the merger, the order has a direct bearing as one of the integral parts of the scheme of merger is the appointment of Goenka as the Managing Director of the merged entity.

As there is a regulatory bar on Goenka holding such positions, the merger shouldn't go through, they submitted.

Zee's shares were up 16.6% after the National Company Law Tribunal cleared the long-delayed deal to create a company which will be nearly 51% owned by Sony Pictures Networks India and 3.99% by Zee's founders.

Air India unveils new brand logo, livery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 10: Air India Thursday unveiled a new brand identity and aircraft livery as the airline moves ahead with its transformation plan since being taken over by Tata Group more than one-and-a-half years ago.

The new look re-imagines the iconic Indian window shape, historically used by Air India, into a gold window frame that becomes central to the new brand design system. It symbolises a 'Window of Possibilities', according to a release.

Air India's new logo symbol 'The Vista' is inspired by the peak of the gold window frame, signifying limitless possibilities, progressiveness, and the air-



Our transformative new brand reflects an ambition to make Air India a world class airline serving guests from around the globe, and that represents a new India proudly on the global stage

CAMPBELL WILSON | CEO & MD, AIR INDIA

line's bold, confident outlook for the future, it said in a release. The airline said the new air-

craft livery and design features a palette of deep red, aubergine, and gold highlights as well as a chakra-inspired pattern.

"It also boasts a striking new custom-made 'Air India Sans' font, marrying confidence with warmth to position Air India as premium, inclusive, and accessible," the release said.

The new brand identity has been designed in partnership with the brand transformation company FutureBrand.

Travellers will begin to see the new logo throughout their journey starting December 2023, when the airline's first A350 enters the fleet in the new livery.

Tata Group took control of loss-making Air India in January 2022.

Earlier this year, Air India placed orders for 470 aircraft from Airbus and Boeing at \$70 billion (based on published list prices). The deliveries of the new planes will start from November this year.

As part of its transformation plan, the airline is leasing and buying 20 wide-body aircraft this year. Besides, a \$400 million programme to completely refurbish the interiors of its legacy fleet of 43 widebody aircraft will commence in the middle of next year.

Govt importing tomatoes from Nepal to check prices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 10: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Thursday said the government is taking steps to control inflation and as part of the measures tomatoes are being imported from Nepal to meet the demand and check prices.

"Lot of steps have been taken to contain inflation. Group of Ministers has been taking timely steps to control prices which are hitting common people," Sitharaman said while participating in a debate on the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha.

Sitharaman said Tur dal is being imported from Mozambique, Urad dal will be im-



ported from Myanmar, while around three lakh tonnes of onions have been procured to create a buffer stock.

She said tomatoes are being procured from Maharashtra and Karnataka, and distributed in Delhi-NCR, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan through the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and other cooperative societies.



Sreejesh shares future plans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, August 10: Veteran Indian hockey goalkeeper PR Sreejesh is taking one tournament at a time as far as his future is concerned and says he will "see how things happen" after the Asian Games in China in September-October.

The 35-year-old goalkeeping legend is nearing 300 international matches after making his India debut in 2006. He is currently sharing the goalkeeping duties for India with Krishan Bahadur Pathak in the ongoing Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) here.

"At this age, better don't ask me about the next two years. It's all about the next one. I am at the Asian Games, and after that, I'll see how things happen. I will take it one tournament at a time," Sreejesh told PTI when asked about the possibility of him featuring in another ACT.

The ACT is a biennial tournament, but the venue and dates of the next edition is yet to be announced. "As (Novak) Djokovic said, '35 is the new 25'. So, I'm definitely there," Sreejesh said after India thrashed arch-rivals Pakistan 4-0 Wednesday.

Sreejesh, who has featured for India in several matches against Pakistan, does not want to get carried away with the dominant win.

"All the matches are important for us at this stage. Also, once you come to a certain level, it's all about your and your team's performance. It's just a pool game (vs Pakistan). So, you don't need to be too excited about it, but just gain the three points."

"We are not at a stage to say that we will win it. But, the way we are playing and showing it on the field, we believe we will put up a strong show against the sides coming up," he said.

Need more goals: Hardik India vice-captain and midfielder Hardik Singh hailed the team's final execution inside the box in the convincing win against Pakistan, but noted that more patience would be needed to get



more goals against Japan in the semifinal.

"Our final execution inside the box has been good. We haven't conceded any goals (vs Pakistan), which is a good thing. We expect to carry the same momentum in the upcoming matches," he told PTI.

"But, we still need to have more patience inside the box, which is extremely important. Also, we need to set up the tempo of the game. We will be treating them (Japan) as a top team."

India and Japan had played out a 1-1 draw in the round-robin league stage. Talking about the confidence level of the side, Hardik said, "Confidence in the team is at the topmost level right now. Regardless of which team we are up against now, even if it's Australia, we would have moved in with the same mindset."

Commenting on the umpiring decisions, Hardik said, "I believe the umpiring could be a bit better, as there is always room for improvement."

Japan test awaits India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, August 10: Maintaining intensity throughout the 60 minutes of the game and consistency in finishing would be India's targets when the hosts take on Japan in the semifinal of the Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) hockey tournament here Friday.

No doubt, India will start as favourites after their unbeaten run in the round-robin stage, winning four matches and drawing one to top the points table. However, India would be wary of Japan, the only side the hosts have not beaten. The league match between the two sides had ended in a 1-1 draw.

There is a wide gap in the world rankings between the two teams as India are at fourth spot as against 19 of Japan. But the home side should not forget that they had lost to Japan 3-5 in the semifinals of the 2021

edition in Dhaka after thrashing their opponents 6-0 in the league stage.

India have scored the most number of goals - 20 - so far in this tournament but they missed chances galore against Japan in their league match, and the hosts will have to make amends of their poor finishing against the same opponents Friday.

Craig Fulton's side could also utilise just one of the 15 penalty corners they had earned against Japan in the earlier match and they now will have to find ways to score from the PCs.

Following India's 4-0 thrashing of arch-rivals Pakistan on Wednesday, Fulton noted that it would be vital for his side to maintain consistency in all the four quarters of the match.

"We had some good consistency in each quarter (against Pakistan), which we did the same during the Japan game. We also had more penetration into the cir-

MATCH SCHEDULE

Pakistan vs China (3:30 pm)

Malaysia vs S Korea (6 pm)

India vs Japan (8:30 pm)

Telecast

Star Sports channels

As far as Japan is concerned, they sneaked into the semifinals ahead of Pakistan on better goal difference, though the two sides collected five points each. Japan had minus two goal difference as against minus five of Pakistan.

Overall, Japan's performance in the competition has been far from convincing. They managed just a win (vs China) and lost and drawn twice. Even though, India are favourites to win Friday, Japan will try to take a cue from their earlier performance against the hosts.

Although Japan have impressed defensively, especially in how their defenders were tackling the Indian attackers during the penalty corners, their attacking line-up has been disappointing.

Before the India vs Japan match, second-placed Malaysia will take on third-placed and defending champions South Korea in the semifinals Friday.

cle in each quarter than Japan. So, it will be about maintaining consistency and not doing it just one way," he said.

India vice-captain and midfielder Hardik Singh agreed with his coach but felt that besides the final execution inside the box, more patience would be needed to get more goals against Japan.

"We expect to carry the same momentum. But, we still need to have more patience inside the box, which is extremely important. Also, we need to set up the tempo of the game. We will be treating them (Japan) as a top team."

Dhawan 'shocked' at exclusion from Asiad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, August 10: Senior India batter Shikhar Dhawan was a "bit shocked" at his exclusion from India's Asian Games squad but remains determined to make a national comeback in the near future.

With the first-choice players busy with preparation for the ODI World Cup at home, the BCCI named a squad full of youngsters for the Hangzhou Asian Games in September-October.

The 37-year-old left-hander was tipped to lead the second-string India team in China, a role he performed until 10 months ago, but the selectors did not pick him and named Rituraj Gaikwad as captain.

"When my name was not there (for Asian Games), I was a bit shocked. But, then, I was like they have a different thought process, you just have to accept it. Happy that Rutu (Gaikwad) will lead the side. All the young boys are there, I am sure they will do well," Dhawan told PTI Thursday.

With Shubman Gill joining Rohit Sharma at the top, it seems the Indian team has moved on from Dhawan, who had become a one-format player until he was dropped from the ODI side following the Bangladesh tour in December 2022.

The ever-optimistic Dhawan, who has been among India's leading ODI batters over the past decade, said he can't foresee what is in store for him but will be ready if an opportunity knocks on the door.

"I will be ready, of course (for the comeback). That is why I keep myself fit (so whenever I get a chance I am ready). There is always a chance whether it is one percent or 20 percent."

"I still enjoy training and I still enjoy the game, these are the things in my control. Whatever decision is made, I respect that," said the southpaw who remains a centrally-contracted cricketer and spends a lot of time at the National Cricket Academy.

If the India comeback doesn't happen, Dhawan has an IPL trophy to win for Punjab Kings. He also expressed his keenness to play in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy and 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy before the IPL.

"I have not spoken to any selector (about my future). I keep going to NCA. I enjoy my time there, the facilities are great. NCA has shaped my career and I am grateful for it.

"Also I have to prepare for the IPL. I will be playing the Syed Mushtaq Ali and, hopefully, the Vijay Hazare as well," he said referring to the two domestic tournaments.

No.4 slot in ODIs an issue for India: Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, August 10: No batter has succeeded in settling into the vital number four slot in the Indian ODI team since the retirement of Yuvraj Singh, captain Rohit Sharma said Thursday, raising serious concerns before the World Cup.

With the 50-over World Cup less than two months away, India are struggling to find a batter for the No.4 slot, something that has also troubled them in the previous edition in 2019 in England.

Shreyas Iyer, who is on a comeback trail after a long injury lay-off, did well in his 20 matches at No.4, scoring 805 runs at 47.35 with two centuries and five fifties.

"Look, No.4 has been an issue for us for a long time. After Yuvi (Yuvraj Singh), nobody has come and settled themselves in. But, for a long period of time, Shreyas (Iyer) has actually batted at No.4 and he has done well - his numbers are really good," Rohit told reporters on the sidelines of a La Liga event here.

"Unfortunately, injuries have given him a bit of trouble; he has been out for a while and that is honestly what has happened in the last 4-5 years. A lot of these guys have got injured and you will always see a new guy coming and playing there," he said.

The India captain said the per-



centage of injuries to players in key positions has hampered the team in the longer run.

"The percentage of injuries that have happened in the last 4-5 years, it is massive. When the players get injured or are not available, you try doing different things with different players - that is what I have to say about

No.4," he said.

"Even before, when I was not the captain, I was watching no? There were so many guys who came in and went out. But injuries kept them away or they were not available or someone lost form," Rohit added.

With both KL Rahul - India's preferred option for No. 5 as

wicketkeeper-batter - and Iyer on comeback trail, Rohit said they will wait and watch how these two players go.

"No one is an automatic (selection), even I am not. We have this thing where nobody is guaranteed a spot. We cannot say that 'you are there after all' or things like that," Rohit said.

"Yes, some players know that they are going to play but at this point in time, playing three ODIs in the West Indies was a good opportunity to look at a few guys. In the Asia Cup, again, we will face good opposition," he said.

The Asia Cup is scheduled to be held just before the World Cup. "Shreyas and KL are coming off not playing anything for four months, big injuries, surgeries rather. Both had surgeries. I know, I had to undergo surgery once and how it feels afterwards, it is quite tough. We have to see, how they respond, what they do."

"The selection (meeting) will be there in a few days, we will have a good debate about what we can do. But honestly nobody is an automatic choice - they all have to fight for the spot - everyone has to, whether it is a top spot or a bottom spot."

"We have got a lot of names there. We will see what is right combination for us to go in the World Cup but before we have the Asia Cup," the India skipper said.

Rani slams coach for national snub, demands answer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, August 10: Former India captain Rani Rampal Thursday hit out at women's hockey team chief coach Janneke Schopmann for being overlooked for the past two years and said that she has no plans to retire anytime soon.

Rani has been sidelined for a lengthy period since leading the Indian women's team to a first-ever fourth-place finish at the Olympics in Tokyo. The 28-year-old star striker demanded answers from Schopmann as to why she is being ignored.

"Whatever happened with me in past two years is not right. As far as my career is concerned, despite coming back from injury, faring well and even playing during the National Games, I was not selected for the senior side.

"Only the coach will be able to explain the reason," an angry Rani said after being named as the Indian U-17 girls team coach. "But that incident has not forced me to plan for my retirement yet. I know I still have more to give to the sport as a player. I never want to give up. If I had to, I'd have given up after the Olympics," she added. "I will continue playing hockey since I believe I still have my playing career left," Rani said.



Messi's MLS regular-season debut delayed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, August 10: MLS fans will have to wait a little longer for Lionel Messi's first regular-season match with Inter Miami CF. Miami's August 20 match against Charlotte FC would have been Messi's first in MLS play, but it was postponed to an unspecified date after both clubs advanced to the Leagues Cup quarterfinals.

Inter Miami will face Charlotte in the quarterfinals Friday at DRV PNK Stadium. One of the two clubs will play in either the final or third place match August 19. Messi's first MLS match now is expected to be Saturday, August 26, at the New York Red Bulls.

Messi will also compete in the US Open Cup August 23 when Miami visits MLS-leading FC Cincinnati for a semifinal match.

Messi scored on another free kick in last week's round of 16 elimination game against Dallas. The tying goal led to a victory on penalty kicks and gave Messi his third consecutive two-goal game for Inter Miami.

The World Cup champion's goal in the 85th minute was reminiscent of the game-winner in his Inter Miami debut. Both were on free kicks from just outside the penalty box in the waning moments, each sneaking past the goalkeeper into the upper corner of the net.

Messi has scored in all four

matches for Inter Miami, with seven goals total. His new US club is 4-0 - all in the Leagues Cup - after going winless in nine consecutive MLS matches before the 36-year-old arrived.

Messi, seven-time winner of the Ballon d'Or, the soccer world's most prestigious individual award, signed with Miami last month after two years with Paris Saint-Germain. In a career spanning more than 17 years with Argentina's national team, Messi has scored more than 100 goals.

He signed for 2 1/2 seasons worth between USD 50 million and USD 60 million annually, meaning a total contract value between USD 125 million and USD 150 million in cash alone.

