



JUST MARRIED

Actress Parineeti Chopra and political leader Raghav Chadha tie knot at a destination wedding in Udaipur

LEISURE P2



ETHNIC CONFLICT

1,20,000 ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh will leave for Armenia as they do not want to live as part of Azerbaijan

INTERNATIONAL P10



ROWERS SHINE

Indian rowers shine at Asian Games bagging 2 silver, a bronze medal on opening day

SPORTS P12

DOC DIES IN ROAD MISHAP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: A young doctor was killed in a road mishap in Bomikhal area here, a police official said Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Amit Kumar Bisoyi, 28, who hailed from Berhampur in Ganjam district and had been staying in Ravi Talkies area.

Amit had been working at the Emergency and Trauma Care Department of Apollo Hospitals here. "The accident took place at around 1am Sunday when Amit was on his way home in his car after duty. He suddenly lost control over the vehicle at Bomikhal due to unknown reasons and crashed into the road divider. Locals rushed him to Apollo Hospitals where the doctors declared him brought dead," said Laxmisagar inspector in-charge (IIC) P Shyam Sundar Rao.

Amit's body was handed over to family members after post-mortem Sunday afternoon.

Narrative being set to 'lynch me': Danish Ali

New Delhi: BSP MP Danish Ali Sunday alleged that after his 'verbal lynching' in the Lok Sabha a narrative was being set for 'lynching' him outside the House as he hit back at BJP leader Nishikant Dubey for accusing him of making unsavoury remarks aimed at instigating BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri. Bidhuri's derogatory remarks targeting Ali during a discussion on Chandrayaan-3 in Lok Sabha Thursday triggered a furore. Reacting to Dubey's allegations, the BSP MP said, "I have seen Dubey's letter. My verbal lynching was done inside the House and now this is a narrative to get me lynched outside the House." P9

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We are fed up with so much work. We should demand one country one elections!

WEATHER		BHUB	CTK
MAX	31.8°C	31.5°C	
MIN	25.2°C	25.5°C	
Humidity	97%	97%	Cloudy sky with light rain
Rainfall	Nil	6.8mm	



ROARING WHEELS: Prima Pramac Racing (Ducati) team Spanish rider Jorge Martin leads during the MotoGP race at Grand Prix of India, at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida PFI PHOTO

Watery grave for 2 Class X students

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Two Class X students of a private coaching centre drowned while immersing the idol of Lord Ganesh in a pond in Pokhariput area under Airfield police limits here, Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Subham Jena and Prakash Maharana of the locality. According to sources, the mishap took place in the afternoon when a group of seven Class X students of a private coaching centre had gone to immerse the idol of Lord Ganesh in the pond.

"Two of the group were bathing after the idol immersion when they drowned. Locals rushed the two to Capital Hospital where the doctor declared them dead on arrival," said a police official.

As the news broke, family members and relatives of the deceased rushed to the hospital.

The bodies were handed over to the families after autopsy, said the official.

NIJJAR KILLING

US gave Canada info: NYT

American officials avoid triggering any diplomatic blowback from India, according to the paper

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, Sept 24: The US provided Canada with intelligence after the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, but communications intercepted by Ottawa were more definitive and led it to accuse India of orchestrating the plot, The New York Times has reported citing sources.

The report came Saturday as the top US diplomat in Canada confirmed that there was 'shared intelligence among Five Eyes partners' that had prompted Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's offensive allegation against India in the killing of a Khalistani extremist on Canadian soil.

The allegations have infuriated India, which rejected them as 'absurd' and 'motivated' and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case. India also accused Canada of being a safe haven for terrorists.

Nijjar, the chief of the banned Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF), was killed in Surrey in British Columbia June 18. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020.

The United States has urged India to cooperate with Canada in its investigations.

"In the aftermath of the killing, US intelligence agencies offered their Canadian counterparts context that helped Canada conclude that India had been involved," the NYT reported, quoting unnamed allied officials as saying.

Yet what appears to be the "smoking gun," intercepted communications of Indian diplomats in Canada indicating involvement in the plot, was gathered by Canadian officials, allied officials said.

David Cohen, US Ambassador to Canada, in an interview with CTV News said that 'shared intelligence among Five Eyes partners' had informed Trudeau of the possible involvement of Indian agents in the murder of a Canadian citizen in June.

"I will say this was a matter of shared intelligence information. There was a lot of communication between Canada and the United States about this, and I think that's as far as I'm comfortable going," Cohen told CTV News.

After Nijjar's death, American officials told their Canadian counterparts that Washington had not had any advance infor-

Crackdown on 19 Khalistani terrorists soon

New Delhi: A day after the National Investigation Agency (NIA) confiscated the properties of Canada-based 'designated individual terrorist' Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, it is learnt that the government has asked the investigative agencies to identify the properties of other terrorists wanted in India sitting abroad. Sources privy to the matter said that the government has asked the agencies to identify the properties of the terrorists settled abroad. The sources also said that the government has asked the agencies to identify Khalistani terrorists settled in countries like US, UK, Canada and Australia and cancel their Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) so that they don't come to India. The sources said that the step will help the government to choke the finances of these terrorists from India and also not allow them to visit here. The sources said that the government has identified 19 absconding Khalistani terrorists staying in countries like US, UK, Canada, UAE, Pakistan and other countries.

mation about the plot, and that if US officials had they would have immediately informed Ottawa under the intelligence agencies' 'duty to warn' doctrine, the newspaper reported.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss what has become a diplomatic firestorm, said Canadian officials had offered a general warning to Nijjar but had not told him that he was the target of an Indian government plot, according to the report.

While Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called on India to cooperate with the Canadian investigation, American officials have largely

tried to avoid triggering any diplomatic blowback from India, the paper said.

But the disclosure of the involvement of US intelligence risks ensnaring Washington in the diplomatic battle between Canada and India at a time when it is keen to develop New Delhi as a closer partner, it said.

When asked about Canada sharing any information in the case with India, the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi said: "No specific information has been shared by Canada on this case, either then or before or after. We have, you know, as we have said, or I think we have made very clear, we are willing to look at any specific information."

PM flags off state's second Vande Bharat

The semi-high-speed express train will connect Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, with Steel City Rourkela

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday flagged off a Vande Bharat Express on the Puri-Rourkela route through video conferencing from Delhi. This was Odisha's second Vande Bharat Express as the first semi-high-speed train service from Puri to Howrah was inaugurated in May.

Odisha Governor Ganeshi Lal, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and several MLAs graced the occasion at the Bhubaneswar railway station.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw was also present at the programme virtually.

Speaking on this occasion, Pradhan said, "Today is a historic and proud day for Odisha and also for the country as nine Vande Bharat Express trains have simultaneously been flagged off."

Vaishnaw had, in May, announced that the second Vande Bharat Express in Odisha would be launched soon. Pradhan requested the PM

and Vaishnaw to start such train services from Puri to Raipur.

"Many developmental works in the railway sector have been undertaken by the central government. Fifty-seven railway stations in Odisha are being re-developed with an estimated cost of Rs 1,400 crore," he said.

The semi-high-speed express train will connect Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, with the Steel City Rourkela. The train will also connect Bhubaneswar with industrial areas at Angul and Jharsuguda, and will run six days a week except Saturday, a railway official said. The new Vande Bharat Express will cover a distance of 505 km in 7.45 hours from Puri to Rourkela.

The express train will depart Puri at 5 am and will reach Rourkela at 12:45 pm on the same day. On its return journey, it will leave Rourkela station at 2:10 pm and reach Puri at 9.40 pm.

The train will have stoppages at Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Talcher Road, Angul, Rairakhol, Sambalpur City and Jharsuguda.

The new Vande Bharat train will reduce the average travel time between Puri and Rourkela as compared to Puri-Yog Nagari Rishikesh Express which takes 11.50 hours.

80 per cent cybercrimes from 10 districts: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Noida, Sept 24: Rajasthan's Bharatpur and Uttar Pradesh's Mathura have replaced Jharkhand's Jamtara and Haryana's Nuh as the infamous hotspots of cybercrime in India, according to a new study by an IIT Kanpur-incubated start-up. The study also revealed that just the top 10 districts collectively contribute to 80 per cent of cybercrimes in the country.

The findings have been mentioned by the Future Crime Research Foundation (FCRF), a non-profit start-up incubated at the IIT-Kanpur, in its latest comprehensive white paper named 'A Deep Dive into Cybercrime Trends Impacting India'.

Bharatpur (18 per cent), Mathura (12 per cent), Nuh (11 per cent), Deoghar (10 per cent), Jamtara (9.6 per cent), Gurugram

(8.1 per cent), Alwar (5.1 per cent), Bokaro (2.4 per cent), Karma Tand (2.4 per cent) and Giridih (2.3 per cent) are the top contributors to cybercrime cases in India, collectively accounting for 80 per cent of reported incidence, the FCRF claimed.

"Our analysis focuses on the top 10 districts in India that are most prone to cybercrime. As identified in the white paper, understanding the key factors contributing to cybercrime in these districts is essential for devising effective prevention and mitigation strategies," FCRF co-founder Harshvardhan Singh said. He said the analysis of the top 10 cybercrime hubs in India reveals several common factors contributing to their vulnerability and these include geographical proximity to major urban centres, and limited cyber security infrastructure.

NASA's first asteroid samples land on Earth

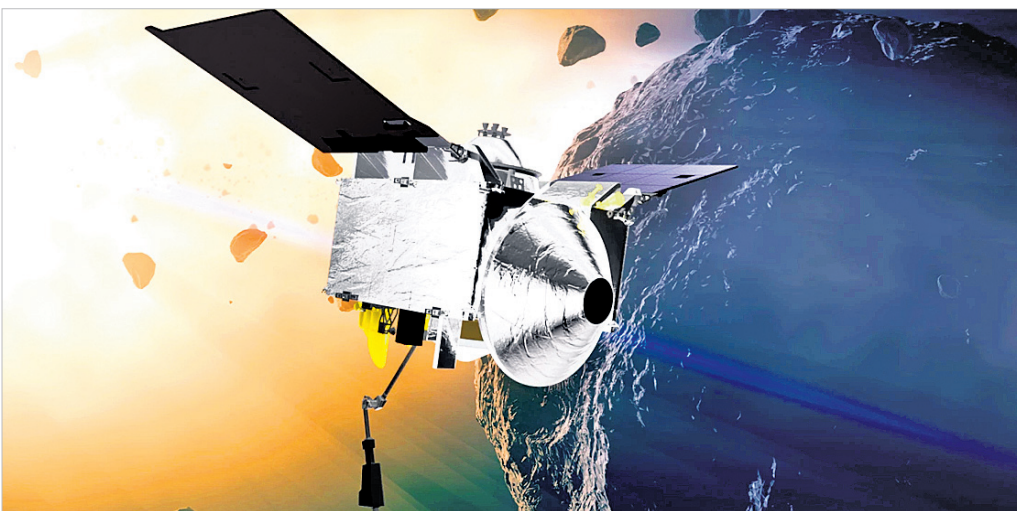
THE ASTEROID BENNU IS EXPECTED TO COME DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO EARTH IN THE YEAR 2182 - POSSIBLY CLOSE ENOUGH TO HIT

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Sept 24: NASA's first asteroid samples fetched from deep space parachuted into the Utah desert Sunday to cap a seven-year journey.

In a flyby of Earth, the Osiris-Rex spacecraft released the sample capsule from 63,000 miles (100,000 km) out. The small capsule landed four hours later on a remote expanse of military land, as the mothership set off after another asteroid.

Scientists estimate the capsule holds at least a cup of rub-



This illustration provided by NASA depicts the Osiris-Rex spacecraft at the asteroid Bennu

ble from the carbon-rich asteroid known as Bennu, but won't know for sure until the container is opened. Some spilled and floated away when the spacecraft scooped up too much and rocks jammed the container's

lid during collection three years ago. Japan, the only other country to bring back asteroid samples, gathered about a teaspoon in a pair of asteroid missions. The pebbles and dust delivered Sunday represent the biggest

haul from beyond the moon. Preserved building blocks from the dawn of our solar system 4.5 billion years ago, the samples will help scientists better understand how Earth and life formed. Osiris-Rex, the moth-

ership, rocketed away on the \$1 billion mission in 2016. It reached Bennu two years later and, using a long stick vacuum, grabbed rubble from the small roundish space rock in 2020. By the time it returned, the spacecraft had logged 4 billion miles (6.2 billion km).

NASA's recovery effort in Utah included helicopters as well as a temporary clean room set up at the Defense Department's Utah Test and Training Range. The samples will be flown Monday morning to a new lab at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. The building already houses the hundreds of pounds (kilograms) of moon rocks gathered by the Apollo astronauts more than a half-century ago.

Bennu is expected to come dangerously close to Earth in 2182 - possibly close enough to hit. The data gleaned by Osiris-Rex will help with any asteroid-deflection effort.

leisure



GISELE BUNDCHEN WANTED TO JUMP FROM NINTH FLOOR

Supermodel Gisele Bündchen revealed that she wanted to kill herself at the peak of her modelling career by jumping from the ninth storey of her apartment block. It was that time of her career when she suffered from panic attacks due to hectic work schedule, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.

HEIDI KLUM LEARNS TO LET GO OF HER OBSESSION

Supermodel Heidi Klum has become more laid-back about her appearance in recent years. The 50-year-old star was often worried about her appearance at the height of her modelling career, but Heidi has adopted a different attitude since she met her husband, Tom Kaulitz, reports *aceshowbiz.com*.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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

ARIES

Sometimes, pressure is a good thing, as it brings out the best in you. You will outshine your colleagues in whatever you choose to do. But your expectations may far exceed the outcome. Ganesh asks that you have patience. Results take time.

TAURUS

Today might be a day of untying and getting out of the tangles, says Ganesh. You may take the blame for the actions of another. Things may get frustrating around the afternoon and your confidence levels may stoop. Work on your strength and work out your weaknesses, advises Ganesh.

GEMINI

You had better start sharing your feelings with your family today, says Ganesh. Also, it's time to tell your family about your current financial status. It will help you feel better. Your energy levels will soar and you will approach everything with renewed vigour. Your spouse will bring good luck to you. How about a dinner extraordinaire with your loved ones?

CANCER

You may discuss certain serious issues with your beloved today, predicts Ganesh. Your time till afternoon will be spent in discussions and deliberations about the issue. However, this issue may not be enough in letting you off the hook on the work front. Think twice before you act.

LEO

After a long time, it seems as if the stars are aligning to bring something special for you. Call it your field day, but today, everything will go your way, says Ganesh. Expect to get appreciated for your hard work in office. As for the home front, you will get all the support you need from your family members for refurbishing your home.

VIRGO

Surf's up as you enjoy an unexpected achievement! But your joy ride today may well be spent in vexing about the problems you have. Expect to gain new money for a new venture. Your business will rise atop the highest wave today, foretells Ganesh.

LIBRA

Working for the government is always a key responsibility, says Ganesh. But today of all days proves to be fabulous and phenomenal for all those in government service. Your actions will translate into accomplishment and you may rest assured that you shall be duly recognized and rewarded for your meritorious service.

SCORPIO

Your business associates will emerge as intangible assets for you today, says Ganesh. You will probably start off an innovative joint venture without any doubt or indecision. Hard work and enthusiasm are always a good combination for achieving success. Your skill and business sense will bring you positive feedback from your seniors, feels Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

It is not your nature to warm the bench, but you will wake up feeling lazy and laid-back today, says Ganesh. This may be due to the fatigue of some recent endeavours. For a change, you will try and delegate your work and responsibility to those around you. Make sure that they do so wisely as they may not live up to your standards, warns Ganesh.

CAPRICORN

Plans for expanding business may require you to take risks, leaving you in a dilemma on more than one occasion. In such desperate circumstances, following your instincts can lead you to success, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS

Amid all the boring work buzz, you will manage to sustain your sense of humour. And, why not? After all, you are an expert at inducing a laugh riot! You are in a gregarious mood and that explains it. This also makes you a welcome guest at any party you may wish to grace.

PISCES

A day wherein you will be handling responsibilities on both the home front and at the workplace awaits you, says Ganesh. Expect to be involved in home refurbishing projects, where expenses are likely to soar. Appreciation and gratitude will come your way at the end of a hard day's work.

RagNeeti now married

Popular actress Parineeti Chopra and political leader Raghav Chadha exchange vows at The Leela Palace in Udaipur in the presence of a host of celebrities

Udaipur: It's official! Aam Aadmi Party leader Raghav Chadha and actress Parineeti Chopra, RagNeeti for their fans, are finally man and wife. The gorgeous couple tied the knot in a dreamy wedding ceremony held here at The Leela Palace in Udaipur. The newlyweds looked resplendent in designer traditional outfits as they exchanged vows in a lavish destination wedding.

Raghav Chadha and Parineeti Chopra exchanged engagement rings earlier this year. Now they embark on this journey together with the blessings of their family and friends. The ceremony commenced with Raghav's Seherabandi at the Taj Lake Palace after which the baraat procession left from the Taj Lake Palace in

boats. The 'jaimala' ceremony took place around 3:30 pm, while the pheras took place at 4 pm. Post their pheras, the couple also got done with a photoshoot followed by 'Bidaai' at 6.30.

This big fat Bollywood wedding saw the presence of many celebrity guests including Sania Mirza, Harbhajan Singh, Manish Malhotra among many others. Priyanka Chopra had earlier wished her sister Parineeti ahead of her big day. The entire week has been marked with pre-wedding festivities that commenced in Delhi. The couple hosted a 90s' themed musical night Saturday, and pictures and videos from the event soon took over the internet.



'Dev Anand @ 100' film fest kicks off

Waheeda Rehman reveals at the event that Dev Anand was the only actor she addressed by first name

Mumbai: 'Dev Anand @ 100 - Forever Young', a film festival celebrating the birth centenary of screen icon Dev Anand, opened Saturday evening with packed shows of the actor's popular films *Johnny Mera Naam* and *Guide* at PVR Juhu in Mumbai.

The two-day event, curated by Film Heritage Foundation (FHF), showcases four of the actor's movies. The other two films, *CID* and *Jewel Thief* were screened Sunday.

Waheeda Rehman, the legend's co-star in *CID* and *Guide*,



actor Jackie Shroff, filmmaker Sriram Raghavan, and FHF director Shivendra Singh Dungarpur introduced the two titles marking the opening of the festival.

"I feel very lucky that I did my first film *CID* with Dev sahab. When we were introduced, I called him 'Dev sahab', he said 'Waheeda, you won't call me Dev

Curtains come down on 4th IDFFB

THE THREE-DAY EVENT OFFERED VIEWERS A COMPELLING WINDOW INTO THE DIVERSE AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN NON-FICTION CINEMA

Bhubaneswar: The 4th Indian Documentary Film Festival Bhubaneswar (IDFFB), organised by the Film Society of Bhubaneswar (FSB), concluded here at Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre, Sunday.

The third day's schedule began with the screening of Farha Khatun's *Holy Rights*. The movie highlighted the courageous women in the Muslim community who are challenging traditional norms as they strive to become religious teachers (Qazis), breaking new ground in their pursuit of equality.

Another standout feature of the day was Varun Shekhar's *Too Much Democracy*, a deep dive into the resilience of the inspiring farmers' protest against the now-repealed three farm bills.

Multiple award winning director Himanshu Khatua's *The*



Documentary filmmakers Ruchika Negi, Lipika Singh Darai, Varrun Shukraj, OrissaPOST and Dharitri Editor Tathagata Satpathy, and director Amit Mahanti attending the closing ceremony

Sea and Seven Villages was also screened on the occasion. The film underlined the plight of Satabhaya residents in Kendrapara, known as the sub-continent's first batch of climate refugees.

The last film of the event was Joshy Joseph's striking portrait of a conservationist,

Aribam Shyam Sharma, who is dedicated to preserving an ancient oral culture rooted in Manipur.

The festival's closing ceremony was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including OrissaPOST and Dharitri Editor Tathagata Satpathy and FSB vice-president Ishwar Mohanty.

The luminaries encouraged the younger generation to continue with their pursuit of relevant cinema and emphasised the importance of reaching wider viewers beyond the boundaries of cultural sophistication.

OrissaPOST and Dharitri were the print media partners for the event.

Mozart's daily chores fascinate Samantha

Mumbai: Actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu is currently holidaying in Salzburg, which is called Mozart's birthplace. She revealed what fascinated her most about the legendary composer.

Samantha took to Instagram stories, where she shared a string of pictures and clips from her outing. In one picture, which features a letter from Mozart to his sister in Salzburg in Vienna. It is dated February 13, 1782.

The letter features what his daily routine is like. It states that his

personal-ity, dedicated, punctual and a thorough gentleman," she further said.

The screening was also attended by Vaibhav Anand, son of Vijay Anand, the families of Dev Anand, Chetan Anand, Prem Nath and Jagdish, as well as actors Mink Brar and Divya Dutta.

hair was always done by 6 o'clock in the morning and by the next hour he is fully dressed and gets on with his day.

Samantha wrote on the picture: "His daily routine was the most fascinating for me. The greatest mind I have noticed, seem to need only 5 hours of sleep. Meanwhile, I still need an alarm after 8 hours."

She then shared a picture of a cannon and captioned it: "Could use one of these babies for home too."

Samantha has currently taken a break from work for her health as she is dealing with Myositis.

On the work front, she was recently seen in *Kushi*. She will next be seen in the Hindi adaptation of *Citadel*, which also stars Varun Dhawan.

5-day nat'l drama fest begins today

Bhubaneswar: A five-day theatre festival, organised by Odisha Natya Sangh (ONS), will begin here at Rabindra Mandap, Monday.

One Assamese, one Bengali, one Hindi and two Odia plays will be staged during the festival, according to the organisers.

Written by Bijay Mishra and conceived by Ajit Das, the Ajit troupe of Bhubaneswar will present the Odia play *Shesha Pahacha* on the first evening. The viewers will witness the Assamese play *Abhinandan Macbeth* Tuesday. Jyotinarayan Nath has directed the play adapted from the original play by Shakespeare. Day three will witness another Odia play, *Remo* to be presented by Koraput Sanskrita Parishad of Koraput. Written by Hrudayaranjan Satpathy, the play will be directed by Yogendra Prasad Mohanty. Writer-director Atanu Sarkar's Bengali play *Mayapuri* will enthrall the viewers Thursday.

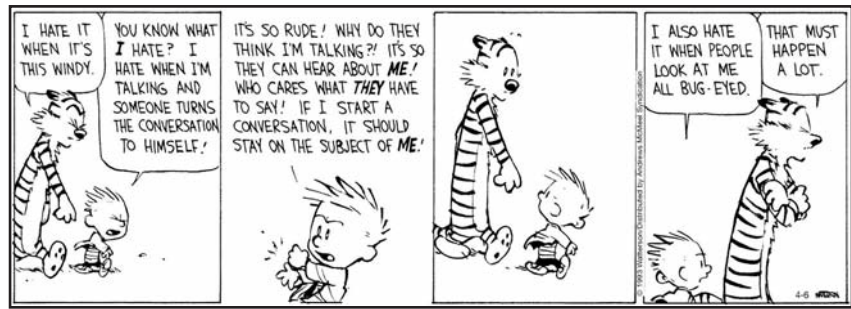
The last evening of the festival will have the Hindi play *Side Effect*, to be presented by the Indigenous People's Art and Cultural Society of Jamshepur. The play is written and directed by Jeetrai Hansda.

FUN post

PEANUTS



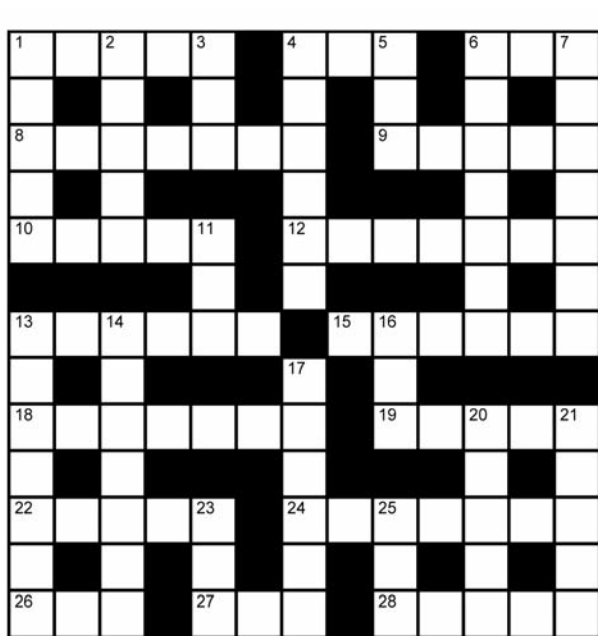
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



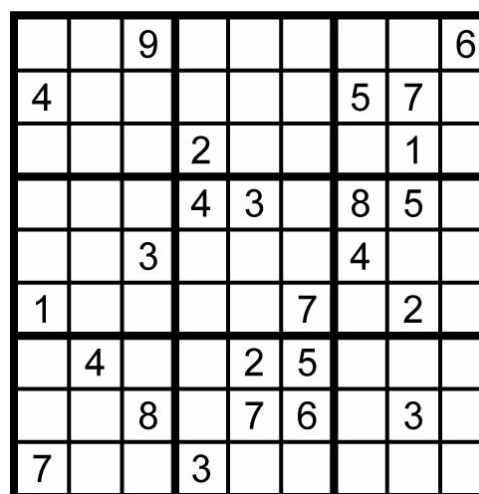
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 The white cliffs of ___ on the English Channel
 - 4 Prohibit
 - 6 Liturgical vestment
 - 8 Boat race meeting
 - 9 Tall stories
 - 10 Unguent
 - 12 Propriety of conduct
 - 13 Scoundrel (3,3)
 - 15 Old vehicle horn
 - 18 Resentment
 - 19 Fuzzy fruit
 - 22 Arboreal ape, briefly
 - 24 Seafarer with tenure (3,4)
 - 26 Nipper
 - 27 High rocky hill
 - 28 Aggregate
 - 5 Male sheep
 - 6 NZ flightless bird
 - 7 Wedding party member (4,3)
 - 11 Energy unit
 - 13 Polish beet soup
 - 14 Tooth extractor
 - 16 Mouth part
 - 17 Pergola
 - 20 Conform
 - 21 Tourist court
 - 23 Favourite
 - 25 Morse code signal
- Down**
- 1 Certain daggers
 - 2 Viewing
 - 3 Groove
 - 4 Distilled wine

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



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

PUJA IN MIND

Artisans polish silver ornaments to be used at Bidanasi Durga Puja Mandap in Cuttack, Sunday



Cong slams govt for reducing qualifying percentile to zero

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: The Congress Sunday termed 'shocking' the government reducing the qualifying percentile for NEET PG 2023 to zero and asked who benefits from completely doing away with the minimum basic standards.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) Wednesday reduced to zero the qualifying percentile for NEET PG 2023 to be eligible for counselling across all categories.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the decision of the Modi government to reduce the cut-off for entry for MD/MS degrees via PG-NEET to the zero percentile — making those who score the least in the exam eligible — is "absolutely shocking".

This is a complete U-turn from the stand taken by the government in the Delhi High Court last July, he said and posted a screenshot of a media report on the government telling the HC last year that it cannot lower NEET-PG cut-off so as to the minimum standard of education is maintained.

"While most agree that access to medical education and supply of doctors needs to be dramatically increased to meet the demands, whom does it benefit to

NEET PG

Will this not benefit only private medical colleges who want to sell the seats that are not being filled up to the highest bidder. Is this U-turn also being done to benefit children of very influential BJP leaders who would not have qualified without this scandalous dilution?

JAIRAM RAMESH
CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY

not have qualified without this scandalous dilution?" Ramesh said.

Union Health Ministry officials Friday said reducing the qualifying percentile for NEET PG 2023 to zero will increase the pool of qualifying candidates but not dilute the merit system for admission to PG medical courses.

Only those scoring the highest marks will get admission for PG medical courses, they said.

The admission will be done through a transparent counselling process and will do away with alleged backdoor entry that was offered by some private colleges, the officials said.

They dismissed as imaginary the speculation that students with zero percentile can also become specialist doctors.

The reality is that students with the highest marks will be eligible for admission to their choice of courses and colleges, they said.

There are 68,142 PG medical seats in the country.

Till now, candidates scoring above 50 percentile were eligible to participate in the counselling process for medical PG admission through NEET.

Last year, the qualifying criteria was kept at 20 percentile even then 3,000 seats remained vacant under the all India quota, the officials had said.



SCINTILLATING SHOW: Artists perform during an event organised by Odia Language, Literature and Culture department to mark Nuakhai at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

Mob vandalises hosp after 5-yr-old girl's death

AGENCIES

Jajpur, Sept 24: Alleging medical negligence, an irate mob Sunday vandalised a community health centre in Jajpur district after the death of a five-year-old girl.

The incident took place in Bari area after the girl, who was suffering from fever, died.

THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IN BARI AREA OF JAJPUR AFTER THE GIRL, WHO WAS SUFFERING FROM FEVER, DIED

Her father alleged her death took place after a doctor at the medical facility administered an injection.

Her family members and locals created a ruckus inside the health

THE GIRL'S FATHER ALLEGED HER DEATH TOOK PLACE AFTER A DOCTOR AT THE MEDICAL FACILITY ADMINISTERED AN INJECTION

facility alleging medical negligence, vandalised it and set some papers on fire.

Local police, Jajpur chief district medical officer (CDMO) and the local tehsildar visited the

spot to pacify the mob.

Things returned to normalcy after they promised action against anyone found guilty of the death of the girl.

Jajpur CDMO Shibaish Moharana said that the incident will be investigated to find out the exact reason for the death and if anyone is found guilty, stern action will be taken.

SC judge bats for simple language in legal profession

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Sept 24: Supreme Court judge Justice Sanjiv Khanna Sunday stressed the need for using simple language in the legal profession to enable the citizens to take informed decisions and avoid unintentional violations.

Justice Khanna, speaking at the valedictory session of International Lawyers' Conference organised by apex Bar body Bar Council of India, said laws were meant to resolve disputes, not become disputed themselves.

He said the question of simplicity of law, i.e., use of language that is understood by common man, required greater attention.

"Is law required to be demystified? Should law be a puzzle that needs to be solved? Laws are meant to resolve disputes, not become disputed themselves. Law should not be mystery to the common man. Law is not written as an edict meant for the legal experts. They apply and govern almost everything in our daily lives and therefore use of simple language is required. This enables the citizens to take informed decisions and avoid unintentional violations. This equally applies to our decisions and judgements," he said.

Inaugurating the International Lawyers' Conference here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his government is making sincere attempts to draft laws in a simple manner and in Indian languages to the maximum extent, asserting that the language in which laws are written and court proceedings conducted play a key role in ensuring justice.

"The common man should consider the law as his own," he said.

In his address on Sunday, Justice Khanna noted that commercialisation of litigation and legal professions were of utmost concern.

"Escalating cost of litigation exorbitant fees are formidable barrier to access to justice to ensure, and we must ensure that the justice remains accessible to all," Justice Khanna said.

As prime stakeholders of the profession, he said, it was imperative for the lawyers and judges to introspect and address the issue of the declining interest in litigation as a career choice.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL

IMPLEMENTING WOMEN RESERVATION IN 2024 IS NOT POSSIBLE

©MANJUL

20-day padayatra to start today: OPCC

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) will launch a 20-day padayatra across the state from Monday, its president Sarat Patnaik said here Sunday.

During the padayatra, Congress activists will visit every home in every panchayat and apprise the people about the failure of the BJP government at the Centre and the BJD government in the state on honouring the promises they made to the peo-

ple, Patnaik said.

The OPCC president released a leaflet listing the promises made by both the governments, and their failure to fulfil it as well as the scams allegedly happened during the period.

He said though the BJD is in power for more than two decades, the state is passing through a bad phase. Patnaik said similarly, the promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been found to be false. The prices of commodities have skyrocketed, the prices of petrol, diesel

and cooking gas has increased by almost two times than what it was in 2014.

The Congress leader said the income of the people has decreased due to demonetisation and GST. More than 66 lakh SMEs have been closed and over six crore people in the country have been pushed below the poverty line.

The OPCC chief said both the BJD and the BJP governments have no sincerity to strengthen the youths, farmers, and women economically.

NAVEEN HEAPS PRAISES ON MODI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik Sunday heaped praises on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and appreciated his 'steps to eradicate corruption'.

Patnaik was participating in an interactive session at the Odisha Literary Festival organised here by The New Indian Express group.

Rating the Modi government '8 out of 10', Patnaik hailed the Centre's foreign policy and work towards eradication of corruption.

"I rate the Modi government 8 out of 10 because of what he has done for foreign policy and also in various other matters... Also there has been less corruption in this (BJP) government," Patnaik said.

Replying to a question on the Women's Reservation Bill, Patnaik said, "I think it's a very important step. My party has always supported women empowerment. My father (ex-CM Biju Patnaik) had reserved 33 per cent of the seats for women in local elections, and I increased it to 50 per cent."

Patnaik said his party had fielded women candidates in 33 per cent of the Lok Sabha seats in Odisha in the 2019 polls.

The BJD president also supported 'one nation, one election', saying, "We have always wel-

comed it, we are prepared for it." Asked about his government's relationship with the Centre, Patnaik said, "We have a cordial relationship with the Centre. Naturally, we want the development of our state and it's important to have the Union government's partnership in the development."

Patnaik said politics 'need not be dirty' as it can be a great platform for serving the people.

He said the Odisha government has been dedicatedly working towards eradication of poverty and all-round development of the state.

Patnaik claimed that Odisha has been undergoing transformation in different sectors while maintaining its eternal values of peace, non-violence and social cohesion. The CM claimed that Odisha's women now feel empowered, delivering strong leadership in the society. "People of our state are more confident of their future now than they were ever before. Peace, non-violence and social cohesion will remain our eternal values as the roots of our growing identity," he said.

Landslide hits train services in Koraput

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Train services were affected in the Kothavasala-Kirandul line of Waltair division of East Coast Railway (ECOR) Sunday due to a huge landslide between Manabar and Jarati stations in Odisha, an official statement said.

The incident took place late Saturday night and the debris covered the tracks.

Restoration work is underway in full swing and railway officials are present at the spot, AK Tripathi, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager of the Waltair division said in the statement. Several trains were short-terminated due to the incident. The Rourkela-Jagdulpur Express, the Bhubaneswar-Jagdulpur Hirakhand Express and Visakhapatnam-Kirandul Night Express were short-terminated at Koraput.

Similarly, Kirandul-Visakhapatnam Passenger was short-terminated at Jeypore, while Jagdulpur-Howrah Samalwari Express will also be short-terminated at Jeypore.



Blue light from smartphones linked to early puberty in males

Exposure to blue light, like that from smartphones or tablets, may lead to early puberty in males, according to a study in mice.

The research, presented at the ongoing 61st Annual European Society for Paediatric Endocrinology Meeting in The Hague, Netherlands, sheds light on how environmental factors, such as screen time, impact early puberty and testicular tissue, which could eventually lead to future prevention strategies for children.

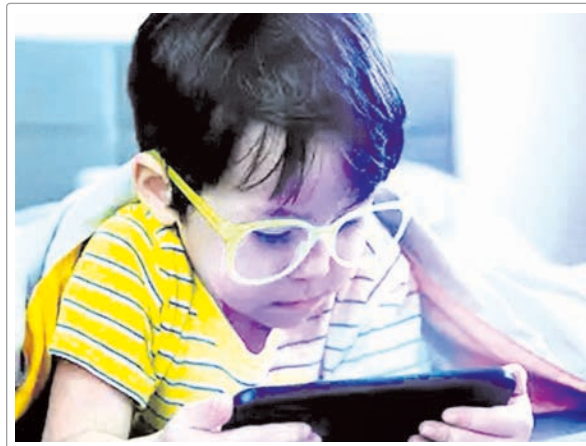
Early puberty for most children does not have an obvious cause. Sometimes it is due to genetics, or there is a problem in the brain, such as an injury or tumour, or in the thyroid, adrenal or sex glands.

In recent years, several stud-

ies have reported increases in early puberty onset for both girls and boys, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. One factor may be the increased use of blue light-emitting devices, but this is very difficult to assess in children.

In this study, researchers from the Ankara Bilkent City Hospital and Gazi University in Turkey examined 18 male rats aged 21-days-old, divided into three groups of six and exposed to either a normal light cycle, to six hours or 12 hours of blue light.

The researchers found that the first signs of puberty occurred significantly earlier in male rats exposed to blue light. Additionally, the longer the rats were exposed to blue light, the earlier their puberty



started, while they also showed suppressed sperm development and damaged testicular tissue.

"For the first time, we found

a direct relationship between blue light exposure and early puberty in male rats," said lead researcher Dr Aylin Kilinc Ugurlu from Ankara Bilkent City

Hospital. "Our findings align with our previous work on female rats, which also showed similar effects, thereby providing a more

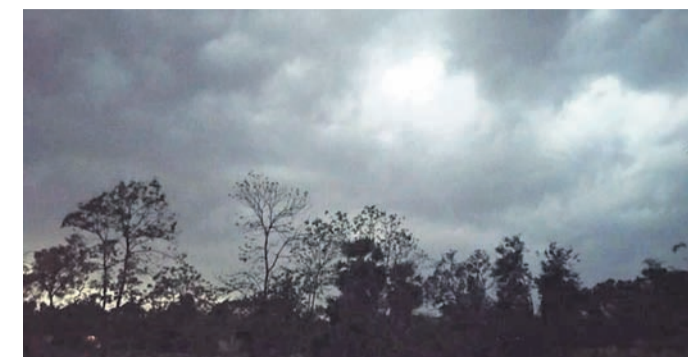
comprehensive view of how blue light may influence puberty in both male and female rats," Ugurlu added.

While the findings suggest that blue light exposure could potentially be a risk factor for earlier puberty onset, more research is needed, the researchers said in the paper published in Frontiers in Endocrinology.

"I want to emphasise that this is a rat study and direct results cannot be interpreted for humans. However, we provide an experimental foundation to further investigate the health consequences of ever-increasing screen time in modern society," Ugurlu said.

The researchers will next focus on assessing the impact of blue light exposure before puberty in adult rats.

Yellow alerts for heavy rainfall till Tuesday



Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Another wet spell is likely in the state next week due to the formation of low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal (BoB), according to the India Meteorological Department forecast Sunday. The low pressure area is likely to cause a fresh cyclonic circulation over the north Andaman Sea and neighbourhood September 29.

As a result, several places in the state are likely to witness light to moderate rainfall and thundershowers during the ensuing week. The regional Met department has also issued yellow alerts for heavy rainfall Monday and Tuesday in some places of Odisha.

In its latest bulletin, the weather office has forecast the formation of a low-pressure area over the north Andaman Sea and adjoining east-central Bay

of Bengal (BoB) during the subsequent 24 hours under the influence of the cyclonic circulation.

Thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Khurda, Nayagarh, Ganjam, Gajapati, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Angul, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Kandhamal, Malkangiri, Koraput and Rayagada district Monday, the IMD said.

At the same time, rain is also likely to occur in several parts of the state Tuesday.

“Thunderstorm with lightning is very likely to occur at one or two places in Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Angul, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Kandhamal, Khurda, Puri, Nayagarh, Ganjam and Gajapati,” the IMD said.



SKILLS ON WHEELS: Vehicles having tough time negotiating a potholed road at Bomikhal underpass in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Four Odias feted for their talents

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: To celebrate the talents of the state and their contribution to different fields, the 9th edition of Showcase Odisha Awards were organised in Hyderabad Sunday.

Accomplished individuals from several fields were honoured at this event managed by Prelude. The awardees included Aswini Kumar Acharya, a renowned athlete, Reena Das, a doctor celebrated for her contributions to the field of medicine, Mahesh Kumar Agrawal, the co-founder and CEO of Areteans, acknowledged for his remarkable leadership and entrepreneurial skills and Sandip Patnaik, the senior managing director of JLL India, recognised for his exemplary contributions to the corporate governance.

The 9th Edition of Showcase Odisha Awards introduced CSR awards for the first time. These awards were given to recognize organizations that have made CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities an integral part of their commitment to social responsibility. For 2023, the CSR Awards were presented to three organizations: Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC), Paradeep Phosphates Limited (PPL), and Jindal Group for their commitment to social responsibility and community development.

Kalyan Jewellers opens outlet at Master Canteen

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor inaugurated Kalyan Jewellers' new showroom here at Master Canteen Sunday in presence of CEO Sanjay Raghuraman. This is the company's fifth showroom in Odisha.

Speaking at the event, Kapoor said, “I am delighted to be part of the launch celebrations today. This magnificent showroom is a testament to our unwavering dedication to providing best-in-class shopping experience.”

Kalyan Jewellers' executive director Ramesh Kalyanaraman said, “As a company, we have taken major strides towards enhancing the shopping experience. Celebrating the launch, Kalyan Jewellers is offering 0 per cent making charges on half the purchase value for customers shopping for a minimum of Rs 1 lakh. This limited period offer is valid today and tomorrow.”



“Additionally, the Kalyan Special Gold Board Rate, which is the lowest in the market and standardized across all company showrooms, will apply, ensuring a seamless and service-backed shopping experience,” he said.

The jewellery retailed at Kalyan Jewellers is all BIS hallmarked and goes through multiple purity tests. Patrons will also receive Kalyan Jewellers 4-Level Assurance Certificate, free lifetime maintenance of ornaments and transparent exchange and buy-back policies.

The company's all-new show-

room offers Muhurat – the bridal jewellery line curated from across India. It also features Kalyan's popular house brands such as Tejasvi (Polki Jewellery), Mudhra (Handcrafted Antique Jewellery), Nimah (Temple Jewellery), Glo (Dancing Diamonds), Ziah (Solitaire-like Diamond Jewellery), Anokhi (Uncut Diamonds), Apoorva (Diamonds for Special Occasions), Antara (Wedding Diamonds), Hera (Daily Wear Diamonds), Rang (Precious Stones Jewellery), and the recently launched Lila (Coloured Stones and Diamond Jewellery).

NAAC awards 'A' grade to FM varsity

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: A day after the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) awarded Fakir Mohan University (FMU) in Balasore an 'A' grade in the second cycle of assessment, the Higher Education department, in its social media account, shared that the success of FM University serves as an example of collaborative effort with resolution.

It said, “The department of Higher Education' strategic initiatives have been empowering universities. The success of FM University serves as an example of this collaborative effort. With resolution, FM University secured an 'A' grade in NAAC certification, placing itself at the pinnacle of Odisha's academic landscape.”



The university has received 3.18 cumulative grade point average out of 4 which is so far the highest GPA received by a state public university under the Higher Education department.

According to the NAAC certificate, the FMU received 3.2 grade points for curricular aspects, 3.43 for teaching learning and evaluation, 2.44 for research, innovations and extension, 3.65 for infrastructure and learning resources, 3.67 for student support and progression, 2.98 for governance, leadership and management and 3.78 for institutional values and best practices. The NAAC peer team visited the FMU campus from September 12 to 14 for assessment.

RSC organises seminar on maritime security



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, Sept 24: On the World Rivers Day, Regional Science Centre here Sunday organised a seminar on maritime security in collaboration with 'Forum for River and Ocean Scientists and Technologists' (FROST). The seminar was followed by a science quiz for students of City schools.

World Rivers Day, celebrated every year September 24, aims to increase public awareness about ecological significance of rivers and encourage improved stewardship of these water bodies around the world. Because of climate change, rivers in virtually all countries are facing an array of threats, lending more importance to the day.

The seminar talk was delivered by DIG Sanatan Jena of Indian Coast Guard, Paradeep to a group

of audiences comprising of students and professionals. Captain Naveen Sarma, advisor to JRG Education Trust was the chairperson for the event who discussed the challenges and security concerns for different stakeholders involved in maritime security.

“The seminar highlighted aspects of maritime security notably piracy, smuggling, legal framework, maritime cooperation and coastal surveillance network. SC Misra and Purnendu Misra, president and vice president of FROST along with others from Indian Navy shared their views at the event,” said a student present at the seminar.

The RSC project coordinator Shri Kapil Jain expressed his hope for organizing such programmes in the future to sensitise City people about such critical issues.

TPCODL advisory for safe connections

Bhubaneswar: To ensure safety and reliability during the festive season, TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited (TPCODL) advised event organizers and shopkeepers to obtain electrical connections only from authorized personnel for Puja pandals and temporary shops. It said unsafe and illegal electrical connections and installation is a risk to the public during festivals. In an unwavering pursuit of uninterrupted and safe power supply, dedicated TPCODL teams will monitor and maintain electricity provision at all pandals vigilantly.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Gitanjali Kailash Chandra Biswal, W/o Kailash Chandra Biswal, resident of At/P.O.-Mandira, P.S.- Patkura, Dist.- Kendrapara, Pin-754253, Odisha declare by this Affidavit No. 60AA158160, Dt.1.8.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as Gitanjali Biswal for all future purposes.

I, Kailash Chandra Brundaban Biswal, S/o Brundaban Biswal, resident of At/P.O.-Mandira, P.S.- Patkura, Dist.- Kendrapara, Pin-754253, Odisha declare by this Affidavit No. 12AA885575, Dt.9.8.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as Kailash Chandra Biswal for all future purposes.

BIDDING ADIEU: People immersing Ganesh idol at an artificial pond near Purighat Devi Gada on the bank of Kathajodi river in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

Rare gene variants linked to male hair loss identified

Researchers have identified rare gene variants that cause male pattern hair loss, also termed androgenetic alopecia.

Male-pattern hair loss is the most common form of hair loss in men, and is largely attributable to hereditary factors. Current treatment options and risk prediction are suboptimal, thus necessitating research into the genetic underpinnings of the condition.

To date, studies worldwide have focused primarily on common genetic variants, and have implicated more than 350 genetic loci, in particular the androgen receptor gene, which is located on the maternally in-

herited X chromosome.

In contrast, the contribution to this common condition of rare genetic variants has traditionally been assumed to be low. However, systematic analyses of rare variants have been lacking.

“Such analyses are more challenging as they require large cohorts, and the genetic sequences must be captured base by base, e.g., through genome or exome sequencing of affected individuals,” explained first author Sabrina Henne, doctoral student at the Institute of Human Genetics at the University Hospital of Bonn (UKB) and the University of Bonn in Germany. The statistical challenge lies



in the fact that these rare genetic variants may be carried by very few, or even single, in-

dividuals. Among other methods, the Bonn researchers used a type

of sequence kernel association test (SKAT), which is a popular method for detecting associations with rare variants, as well as GenRisk.

The research involved the analysis of genetic sequences from 72,469 male UK Biobank participants.

Within this extensive data set, Bonn geneticists examined rare gene variants that occur in less than one per cent of the population. Using modern bioinformatic and statistical methods, they found associations between the male-pattern hair loss and rare genetic variants in the following five genes: EDA2R, WNT10A, HEPH, CEPT1, and EIF3F.

Prior to the analyses, EDA2R

and WNT10A were already considered candidate genes, based on previous analyses of common variants.

“Our study provides further evidence that these two genes play a role, and that this occurs through both common and rare variants,” explained Dr. Stefanie Heilmann-Heimbach, who is a research group leader at the Institute of Human Genetics.

Similarly, HEPH is located in a genetic region that has already been implicated by common variants, namely the EDA2R/Androgen receptor, which is a region that has consistently shown the strongest association with male-pattern hair loss in past association studies.

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

DOWN A SLIPPERY SLOPE

Calamities ruin Raigad villagers' hopes

CLIMATE CHANGE, LANDSLIDE AND HEAVY RAIN PUSH RAIGAD VILLAGERS TO EDGE OF DESPAIR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Irshalwadi, Sept 24: The nightmare of a landslide that buried an entire village and the dread of watching a mammoth boulder on an unstable slope, fearing every day that it will roll down and kill them all.

That's how it is for thousands of people in Maharashtra's Raigad area, even two months after 84 people were killed when the hillside around Irshalwadi village literally crumbled on the July 19 night of incessant, heavy rain.

The trauma lives on - for those in Irshalwadi who escaped and live in makeshift container homes just down the road and for those in other villages around. Climate change, say experts and long-time residents, has come to their doorstep with extreme weather events that have led to hillsides getting increasingly fragile and maybe dangerous.

According to Prakash Gajbiye, director, Geological Survey of India (GSI), Pune, rainfall has almost remained the same but the span has reduced and intensity of precipitation increased.

"When there are high (heavy) rains in a shorter span, saturation of soil and rocks leads to sudden landslides. This is exacerbated by manmade activities like deforestation, slope cutting for construction of roads, houses and agricultural fields and changing natural drainage that re-



sults in deformation of slope forming material and this triggers landslides," he explained. As experts analyse broad trends, the villagers of the hill district of Raigad cope with their uncertain today and unknown tomorrow, wondering off and when they will have to move.

Nearly 350 lives have been lost due to extreme weather events from 2005 to 2021 in Raigad

18-year-old daughter, survived the massive landslide on July 19. And realises that nothing can ever replace their lives in the hill village of Irshalwadi. "Although it was an arduous climb of an hour from the approach road to Irshalwadi, life was good when we lived up there. We did not need fans, we drew water from our well and we ate vegetables we grew and also the ones we got from the forest," she said.

who had come as a guest that night, her mother-in-law, step mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law also died.

The July 19 landslide sealed the fate of the men and women of Irshalwadi. Questions loom large for many thousands living in the tribal area - should they stay on in their villages, home for many generations, or is a move to safer areas inevitable.

There is an increasing feeling that they might just have to leave their homes to move to safety.

On a nearby hill is the tribal hamlet of Changewadi, just below the Sondaigad hill. During the monsoons, the hill is pockmarked with scores of small waterfalls. It makes for great pictures. But villagers fear that the ground beneath a massive boulder, some 25-30 feet in height and 40-50 feet in width, is being eroded. And the boulder might come crashing down.

They have demanded that the boulder be removed. People in Changewadi are part of the Thakar tribe and work as daily wage labourers at hill station Matheran, or nearby Karjat and Khalapur towns.

Echoing the sentiments of many villagers in the area, 28-year-old Khadke said he does not want to leave but wondered if they had any choice in the matter.

The story is repeated in village after village.

TMC, BJP in war of words over Mamata, Modi trips

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Sept 24: Close on the heels of Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's return from an official tour of Spain and UAE, the Trinamool Congress and BJP engaged in a verbal brawl Sunday with the latter mocking the CM's trip and the TMC responding by questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign tours while ignoring the crisis in Manipur.

Senior BJP politician and leader of the opposition Suvendu Adhikari accused the TMC of "hobnobbing with corruption" for questioning Modi's overseas visit.

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh shot back saying, "Banerjee is more trustworthy" than Modi.

"PM @narendramodi embarked on foreign trips while Manipur was burning. He jettied off to the United States, France & UAE, but didn't bother to visit Manipur even once. Spare us the charade! We all know which leader is trustworthy & who is not!" Ghosh wrote on 'X'.

He was referring to Adhikari's post on 'X' that said, "Those who have tried to make an attempt to draw a parallel between Hon'ble Prime Minister @narendramodi ji's foreign trips with West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee's foreign vacation let me tell you the difference - his strategic trips was aimed to enhance the glory of the country' in the world but the other trip of CM was tinged with corruption."

"While hon'ble PM's strategic trips first laid the foundation for our country to be recognised as one with growing prominence to now being regarded as 'Vishwa Mitra' who can



On the other hand, judging by the current regime and ruling Talamool party's hobnob with corruption in WB, the only thing which might be achieved after CM's trip/vacation is a successful gathering of G20

SUVENDU ADHIKARI | LEADER OF OPPOSITION (BJP), WB

PM @narendramodi embarked on foreign trips while Manipur was burning. He jettied off to the United States, France & UAE, but didn't bother to visit Manipur even once. Spare us the charade! We all know which leader is trustworthy & who is not

KUNAL GHOSH | SPOKESPERSON, TMC

proudly host a successful G20," Adhikari said.

Adhikari told reporters Sunday, "When the dengue situation in West Bengal was taking an alarming proportion, the CM left for holidaying abroad with no concern for the outbreak. Meanwhile, as she has returned from a fruitless visit, the dengue situation has become worse."

Banerjee, who landed at the airport around 7pm Saturday, said she was happy as she could do something for West Bengal.

Why Sunderbans is on the UNESCO list



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, Sept 24: In 1987, when the Sunderbans National Park in West Bengal received the status of natural UNESCO World Heritage Site, many were unaware of the technical reasons behind this pride of Bengal getting the prestigious accreditation.

Experts like Dr Raja Raut explained that one of the reasons for Sunderbans National Park being put on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list was because of its outstanding contribution to ecological and biological processes so necessary for the development of the marine ecosystem, terrestrial habitat and for the survival of different communities of plants and animals there.

Another reason for the tag was that the Sunderbans National Park meets the criteria under the "in-situ conservation of biological diversity", which in layman's language means the conservation of a species in its natural habitat and the maintenance and recovery of a viable population of species in their original place. This pattern of "in-situ conservation of biological diversity" also includes threatened and endangered species, explained Raut.

In the opinion of experts, meeting these two criteria was the prime reason for Sunderbans National Park being put on the UNESCO's prestigious list.

They rubbish the argument that lobbying plays an important role in bagging such accreditations.

According to them, lobbying might play a minor role on this count, but no amount of influencing can get a region the tag if the site does not fulfill the basic criteria, especially in the

natural category.

According to experts, Sunderban is unique because not only does it contain the world's largest mangrove forests it also has a range of forests and waterways scattered over the coastal belts of South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas.

"While being the largest halophytic mangrove forest in the world is definitely a criteria we also have to keep in mind that it is one of the most productive natural ecosystems. It has a range of forests and waterways that support a huge diversity of fauna that includes threatened and endangered species," an expert pointed out.

In addition to that, the mangrove forest supports the largest population of Royal Bengal tigers unique for its capability of thriving in an amphibious environment and surviving suitably in both land and water, he added.

"The Royal Bengal Tigers are unique due to their capabilities of swimming long-distances and survive on a varied diet of fish, water-monitor lizards and even crabs. They have these capabilities as they adapted to their abode in the mangrove forestation," the expert said.

Another point that makes the Sunderban so precious is the fact that this mangrove forestation acts as a shelterbelt for the people of the region and protects them from severe climatic conditions.

Apart from that, the rich natural resources of the Sunderban are the economic backbone of millions of people, whose primary source of livelihood is wood and honey collection, subsistence fishing and shrimp farming.

The park is also immensely important to the local residents, the government, the tourism sector and other stakeholders due to its huge revenue potential.

MADAM SARPANCH

Panchayats change profile of women in Maha politics

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, Sept 24: Exactly 30 years after women's empowerment got a kick-start with 33 per cent reservations in local self-government bodies, which later went up to 50 per cent, the Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) have not only come a long way - but also gone a long way - to consolidate their position as a crucial factor in nation-building from below.

The past three decades have seen the EWRs unshackling themselves from familial and social chains, transforming themselves gradually from being timid, teary-eyed, confused or even some 'goongi gudiya's controlled by the menfolk to now becoming assertive, independent,



tough, capable of taking their own decisions, and if needed, yell at the man to 'go to hell', like veritable Durgas!

Presently, as per the Maharashtra Rural Development Ministry data, there are around 28,000 Gram Panchayats, 352 Panchayat Samitis (taluka level), 14,000 Madam Sarpanches (Madam Presidents), 17 Zilla Parishads (in 35 districts, except Mumbai), and a whopping 125,000 EWRs (of the total 250,000 representatives) in the state, said Bhim Raskar, Director, Resource and Support Centre for Development, Navi Mumbai, and Advisor to Mahila Rajsatta Andolan.

A prominent grassroots activist in multiple fields, Ulka Mahajan, Founder, Sarvahara Jan Andolan (Raigad), said that there are many movements in the state which helped women's empowerment, help increase their knowledge, exposure to governance, highlight their abilities and become vocal - which have played a role to help the women play a more effective role.



People wade through a flooded road after heavy rainfall in Malda

PTIPHOTO

Mumbai's oldest Ganapati mandal celebrates 131st year

As the city's first and oldest pandal, the Keshavji Naik Chawl receives a lot of visitors from around the city and foreigners as well

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Sept 24: Nestled in the narrow lanes of Girgaon in south Mumbai is the city's oldest Ganapati mandal Sarvajanik Ganeshutsav Sanstha, which marks 131 years of celebrating the festival this year.

The Sanstha, established in 1893 under the leadership of Rao Bahadur Limaye and Godse Shastri, has been celebrating the festival at Keshavji Naik Chawl on Khadilkar Road in a traditional manner.

"Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's close associates Rao Bahadur Limaye and Godse Shastri started celebrating the festival here after he gave a call for public celebrations of Ganesh Chaturthi for people to come to-



gether against the British," says Kumar Walekar, secretary of the Sarvajanik Ganeshutsav Sanstha.

The 10-day festival is being celebrated with the same devotion since 1893, he says. Time seems to stand still as one walks into the chawl, where the city's mega festival had its humble beginnings. The one thing that makes the pandal stand out is that traditions have been followed for the last 131 years, says Walekar.

The Sanstha has kept the celebrations simple and traditional

since the beginning with a 2-foot idol made of clay.

"Residents celebrate the festival as one family and all the decorations are designed and made by them. Only the stage and pillars are brought from outside," says Walekar beaming with pride.

"We bring idols of the same size every year. There are children here who observe what is happening, they might not understand it now, but once they grow up, they will know what to do while following all the tradi-

Over 80K idols immersed on fifth day of festivities

More than 80,000 idols were immersed between Saturday, which was the fifth day of Ganesh festivities, and the early hours of Sunday in Mumbai, a civic official said. As per a release from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, 80,969 idols were immersed till 3am Sunday, comprising 1,410 'sarvajanik' or public idols, 71,821 household ones and 7,738 Gauri Ganesh idols. Of these, 32,509 idols were immersed in artificial waterbodies, comprising 581 public idols, 29,620 household ones and 2,308 Gauri Ganesh idols, it said. The immersions took place in Girgaum, Dadar, Juhu, Marve and Aksa beaches and 73 natural spots as well as 191 artificial ponds created by the civic body. In a statement, Mumbai police said 2,094 officials, 11,083 constables, 32 platoons of State Reserve Police Force (SRPF), Quick Response Team (QRT), Rapid Action Force and Home Guards have been deployed in the city in view of festivities.

tions," he says.

Santosh Rajwade, a former resident of the chawl, has been visiting the pandal for 40 years despite moving out of the locality. "I have shifted to Borivali now, but I make sure I visit the 'Bappa' here every year. I am very attached to the 'Bappa' here. I can never forget everything I learnt here and everything Girgaon has

given me," says Rajwade. Politicians Balasaheb Thackeray, Murlu Manohar Joshi, and Amit Shah have also visited the pandal to seek 'Bappa's' blessings.

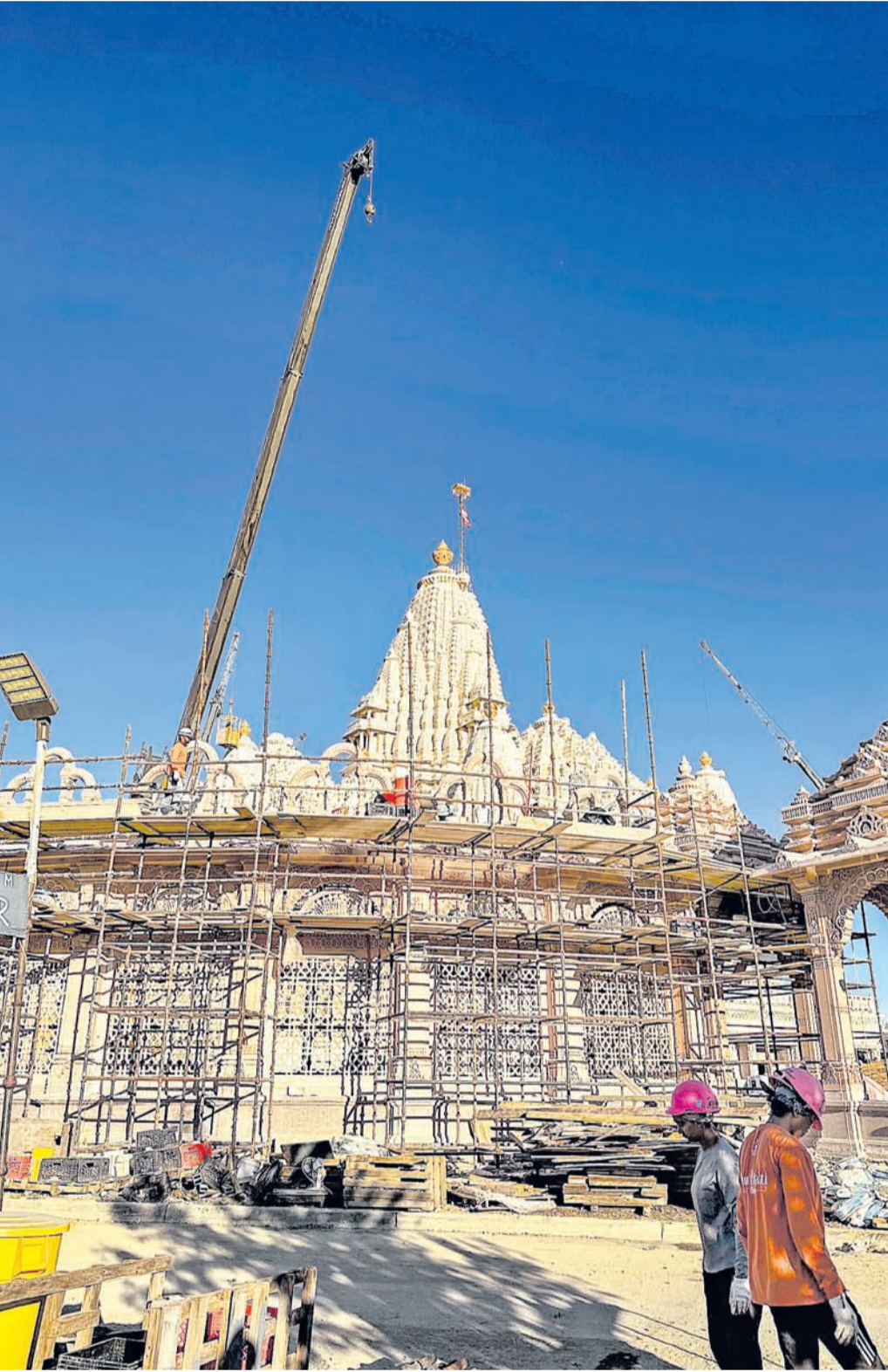
The idol here receives a traditional welcome in a palanquin without loud music blaring from speakers and is taken away in the same manner for 'visarjan' at Girgaon Chowpatty.



An activist from the climate protection group "Last Generation" is carried away by police officers during a protest prior to the start of the Berlin marathon, in Berlin



Children of Dawoodi Bohra community participate in a religious procession on the occasion of Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi, in Bhopal



BAPS Swaminarayan Akshardham, world's largest Hindu temple outside India in the modern era, which will be inaugurated October 8 in New Jersey, USA



United Hindu Front members stage a protest against Canada PM Justin Trudeau over his remarks alleging Indian involvement in the killing of a Sikh extremist leader in Canada, in New Delhi



CDS Gen Anil Chauhan visits the project Seabird sites at Naval Base Karwar



Students take selfies with the newly flagged off Vande Bharat train at Kasargod station in Karnataka



Union Home Minister Amit Shah presents 'Vidhi Ratna' to former Attorney General KK Venugopal during the concluding session of the International Lawyers' Conference 2023 organised by the Bar Council of India, in New Delhi

national

of the day quote

Tamil Nadu is leading the country in organ donation and this has only been made achievable because of those families who come forward to donate the organs of those who have been declared brain dead

MK STALIN | TN CM

India has moved from a sectoral and segmented approach to health service delivery to a comprehensive need-based healthcare service and is now seen as a role model in crisis management and preventive healthcare

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

This government has given 36,524 appointment letters of government jobs to the youth in the past 18 months of being in the office

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

SHORT TAKES

46 pilgrims injured

Palanpur: All 46 pilgrims travelling on a private luxury bus were injured after the vehicle moving down a slope hit a rock on the roadside near the temple town of Ambaji in Gujarat's Banaskantha district Sunday, police said. Eighteen of the passengers were shifted to a civil hospital in district headquarters Palanpur, while the remaining were being treated at a government hospital at Ambaji town, local police inspector Dhaval Patel said.

Two babies die

Muzaffargarh: Two newborns died at a private clinic in Shami district Sunday allegedly because they were kept in a room that was too cold, police said. The families of the newborns alleged that the owner of the clinic -- Dr Neetu -- on Saturday had kept the air conditioner on overnight because he wanted to sleep well. The babies were found dead the next morning.

15-yr-old girl raped

Ballia (UP): A man has been arrested for allegedly abducting a 15-year-old girl here and raping her for three months, police said Sunday. She was allegedly abducted by Pawan Bind on May 28 and taken to Surat in Gujarat. She was rescued from Ballia's Gadwar on August 28, they said. Based on a complaint by the girl's father, an FIR was registered in the matter on charges of rape and kidnapping under IPC and the POCSO Act. In her statement to the police, the girl claimed that she was taken to Gujarat by the accused, where he illegally married and raped her for three months, a police officer said.

INDIA in search of a Dalit leader

INDIA may have cobbled together 28 parties to give the BJP a be-fitting lesson in 2024 Lok Sabha polls. But it is in desperate search of a Dalit leader who is worth a salt. Since BSP's Mayawati has been kept out of INDIA, the alliance is looking for a Dalit leader who can sway those voters in UP and a couple of other states. More than Akhilesh Yadav, it's the Congress which is keen to get those Dalit voters who went away 30 years ago to BSP. There is a move to project Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as the party's Dalit face and field him for the Lok Sabha seat in UP.

How Kamal Nath put his foot down

INDIA alliance parties were left high and dry and Congress high command ran for cover when Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath declined to hold a joint rally of the Opposition parties in Bhopal on October 1. Kamal Nath was upset with the AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal that he was

Naidu's judicial remand extended till October 5



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh), Sept 24: A local court in Vijayawada Sunday extended TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu's judicial remand in the Skill Development Corporation scam case till October 5, following the expiry of judicial remand and police custody.

The order came after a team of Andhra Pradesh Police CID officials today concluded its two-day interrogation of Naidu in the Skill Development Corporation scam case at Rajamahendravaram Central Prison.

Special Public Prosecutor Y N Vivekananda, representing the CID, said that the Vijayawada ACB Court has extended Naidu's

judicial remand till October 5, in the wake of the two-day police custody ending at 5 pm on Sunday.

He noted that the CID is likely to file a separate petition seeking Naidu's custody on Monday. Further, the former chief minister's bail application and two more CID prisoner transit (PT) warrant petitions in the AP FiberNet and Amaravati Inner Ring Road cases are expected to come up for hearing on Monday. Meanwhile, Naidu has already moved the Supreme Court in connection with the Skill Development Corporation Scam case.

The Anti-Corruption Bureau Court had on Friday granted the CID two days' custody of the 73-year-old TDP chief for interrogation in the case, which expired Sunday.

In compliance with the court's orders, Naidu's questioning by CID officials was allowed from 9:30 AM to 5 PM on both days (September 23 and 24) with regular five-minute breaks given to him to consult his lawyer.

Coastal Andhra Range DIG of prisons MR Ravi Kiran said that Naidu was handed back to the jail authorities by CID officials after completing their interrogation.

Narrative to get me lynched: Danish Ali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: As more BJP MPs urged Speaker Om Birla to probe BSP MP Danish Ali's conduct in Lok Sabha, the lawmaker Sunday claimed a narrative was being set for "lynching" him outside the House and termed as baseless the allegation that he had instigated ruling party member Ramesh Bidhuri who made derogatory remarks against him. The opposition parties, which have demanded the strictest action including suspension of Bidhuri for his "vile and communal" remarks during a discussion on the success of Chandrayaan-3 in Lok Sabha on Thursday, hit out at the BJP, alleging that it was trying to defend its MP instead of punishing him. Addressing a press conference Sunday, Ali said, "I have seen Nishikant Dubey's letter (to Birla). My verbal lynching was done inside the House and now this is a narrative to get me lynched outside the House." "I would request the Speaker to investigate this baseless allegation. This baseless allegation makes a case for breach of privilege against Nishikant Dubey," he said.

A day after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla warned Bidhuri of "strict action" if such behaviour is repeated, Dubey on Saturday wrote to the Speaker, saying that while he condemns his party colleague's comments, there should also be a probe into the alleged "unsavoury"



DEFENCE MINISTER RAJNATH SINGH HAD EXPRESSED REGRET OVER BIDHURI'S REMARKS IN THE HOUSE AND THE BJP HAD ISSUED A SHOW-CAUSE NOTICE TO THE MP FROM SOUTH DELHI

OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE RALLIED AROUND ALI AND TARGETED THE RULING PARTY ON THE ISSUE. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS, TMC AND NCP AMONG OTHERS HAVE WRITTEN TO THE SPEAKER SEEKING THE STRICTEST ACTION AGAINST BIDHURI

conduct and remarks of Ali.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had expressed regret over Bidhuri's remarks in the House and the BJP had issued a show-cause notice to the MP from South Delhi. In the letter to Birla, Dubey had alleged that Ali made "highly objectionable and blasphemous" remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi that had provoked Bidhuri. BJP MPs Ravi Kishan Shukla and Harnath Singh Yadav also wrote to the Speaker on Sunday, questioning Ali's conduct in the House and demanding a probe into it.

Meanwhile, Dubey Sunday reiterated his condemnation of Bidhuri's comments, saying any



Devotees use a crane to immerse a Lord Ganesh idol at the Pattinapakkam beach during Ganesh festival in Chennai, Sunday

Armies of India, US to kick-start war game in Alaska today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: The Indian and US armies will kick-start a two-week war game in Alaska Monday that will feature a number of complex drills, officials said.

The mega exercise comes amid a renewed push by both New Delhi and Washington to expand the overall scope of the India-US global strategic partnership.

The Indian Army contingent comprising 350 personnel has already reached Fort Wainwright in Alaska to participate in the 19th edition of exercise Yudd Abhyas, the officials said on Sunday.

It is an annual exercise conducted jointly by the Indian Army and the US Army. The previous edition of the exercise was conducted in Auli, Uttarakhand in November last year.

The exercise will also involve an exchange of views and best practices in drills on a wide spectrum of military skills, including combat engineering, obstruction clearance, and improvised explosive device warfare.

"The exercise Yudd Abhyas-23 will facilitate both armies to mutually learn from each other and further strengthen the bonds between the two armies," the Indian Army said in a statement.

The lead battalion from the Indian side in the exercise is affiliated with the Maratha Light Infantry regiment, it said, adding the 1-24 infantry battalion of the first brigade combat team will participate from the US side.

RAHUL PREDICTS 4 POLL RESULTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: Exuding confidence about a good showing in the upcoming assembly polls, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Sunday said that as of now the Congress is certainly winning Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, we are very close, and we think we will be able to win. That is what it is looking like, and by the way, that is also what the BJP internally is saying



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

I would say, right now, we are probably winning Telangana, we are certainly winning Madhya Pradesh, we are certainly winning Chhattisgarh. Rajasthan, we are very close, and we think we will be able to win. That is what it is looking like, and by the way, that is also what the BJP internally is saying

traction strategies," he asserted. The main issues in India are concentration of wealth, huge inequality in wealth, massive unemployment, huge unfairness towards the lower caste, OBCs, and tribal communities, and price rise, he said.

"Now, the BJP can't contest those. So let's have Mr. Bidhuri make a statement. Let's get together and sort of have elections together. Let's change the name of India'. This is all distraction. We know it, we understand it. And we're not going to let them do it," he said.

He asserted that his party not winning any of the states in the upcoming state polls is out of the question.

Asked about the party's chances, Rahul Gandhi said, "I would say, right now, we are probably winning Telangana, we are certainly winning Madhya Pradesh, we are certainly winning Chhattisgarh. Rajasthan, we are very close, and we think we will be able to win. That is what it is looking like, and by the way, that is also what the BJP internally is saying."

"It's one of the BJP's dis-

INDIA in search of a Dalit leader

INDIA may have cobbled together 28 parties to give the BJP a be-fitting lesson in 2024 Lok Sabha polls. But it is in desperate search of a Dalit leader who is worth a salt. Since BSP's Mayawati has been kept out of INDIA, the alliance is looking for a Dalit leader who can sway those voters in UP and a couple of other states. More than Akhilesh Yadav, it's the Congress which is keen to get those Dalit voters who went away 30 years ago to BSP. There is a move to project Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as the party's Dalit face and field him for the Lok Sabha seat in UP.

How Kamal Nath put his foot down

INDIA alliance parties were left high and dry and Congress high command ran for cover when Madhya Pradesh Congress president Kamal Nath declined to hold a joint rally of the Opposition parties in Bhopal on October 1. Kamal Nath was upset with the AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal that he was



for CM Yogi Adityanath as he was not in favour of Chauhan's recent return to the BJP but was overruled by Amit Shah. Though Yogi did campaign for Chauhan in Ghosi, it was acknowledged that his heart was not in it. Well aware of the CM's indifference, Shah gave charge of the election to Arvind Sharma, known as PM Narendra Modi's man. But nothing helped. Besides Chauhan, Yogi has also been smarting over Shah's decision to seal an alliance with Om Prakash Rajbhar of the

Nitish dumps liquor ban policy

Even as Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is emerging as a front-runner for the Prime ministerial race of INDIA, he has decided to look the other way in terms of his strict prohibition policy. The policy saw thousands going behind bars, millions bottles broken of liquor and families suffering since April 2016. While the success of the initiative remains debatable, the main question is whether Nitish, who is sort of the de facto convener of Opposition unity at the moment, has been maintaining a studied silence on whether he will propose to implement it all over the country. After all, he has spent the last seven years defending the policy despite vehement criticism. Now that the policy failed miserably, Nitish Kumar

PM Modi wants daily reports from ministers

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi was being feted by US President Joe Biden, his Cabinet colleagues back home are racing against time to complete the "homework" assigned to them before the expiry of the month-end deadline set for them. Tasked with highlighting the Modi government's achievements over the past nine years, Union ministers and Bharatiya Janata Party chief ministers have been busy addressing press conferences, holding meetings with various citizen groups and organising town halls for this specific purpose. The urgency is understandable as the ministers have to submit a detailed report about their mass contact programme and its media coverage.

Hooch tragedy leaves two dead in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Muzaffarpur (Bihar), Sept 24: In a suspected hooch tragedy in dry Bihar, two persons have died and as many have lost their eyesight after consuming spurious liquor in Muzaffarpur district, a police officer said Sunday.

According to Additional SP Awadhesh Dixit, the incident was reported from Qazi Mohammadpur police station area and the wife and daughter of the alleged supplier, who is on the run, have been taken into custody.

"We received information that in the Pokharia Pir Mohalla, Umesh Sah (55) and Pappu Ram have died. Their family members said they returned home drunk three days ago, took ill and their condition continued to worsen despite medical treatment," Dixit said.

international

of the day quote

An agreement on the revival of a 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), will be within reach if the US stops its contradictory behaviours

Nuclear energy is over. The issue of nuclear energy in Germany is a dead horse. Anyone who wanted to build new nuclear power plants would need 15 years and would have to spend 15-20 billion euros

The Silk Road did not bring the results we expected. We will have to evaluate, the parliament will have to decide whether or not to renew our participation

SHORT TAKES

Iran, Maldives resume ties

Tehran: Iran and the Maldives have announced the resumption of diplomatic relations after a seven-year hiatus. The decision was made "in line with the two nations' interests and aspirations," the Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Saturday in a statement.

Taiwan factory fire toll increases

Taipei (Taiwan): Search teams found the bodies of the last three missing people Sunday at the site of a golf ball factory fire in southern Taiwan, bringing the death toll to 10, according to Taiwanese media reports.

Israeli military raid kills 2 Palestinians

Nour Shams Refugee Camp (West Bank): Two Palestinians were killed during an Israeli military raid Sunday in the northern West Bank, Palestinian health officials said, the latest bloodshed in a surge of violence during a sensitive Jewish holiday period.

Nepal Army chief leaves for Delhi

Kathmandu: Nepal Army chief Gen. Prabhuram Sharma left for New Delhi Sunday to attend the 13th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs' Conference (IPACC) being held in the Indian capital from September 25 to 27.

31 injured in Pak train collision

Lahore: At least 31 people were injured when a passenger train collided on Sunday with a freight train parked on the main railway line in Pakistan's Punjab province, according to media report.



If you look at what we are having to pay for our long-term debt, it is higher now than it was at the Spring Budget

IRAN SAYS IT DEFUSED 30 BOMBS IN TEHRAN

Authorities in Iran have neutralised 30 bombs meant to go off simultaneously in Tehran and detained 28 terrorists linked to Islamic State, Iran's Tasnim news agency reported Sunday, citing the intelligence ministry



Ethnic Armenians to flee Nagorno-Karabakh

ARMENIA'S PRIME MINISTER ALSO SAID THE KARABAKH ARMENIANS WERE LIKELY TO LEAVE THE REGION, AND THAT ARMENIA WAS READY TO TAKE THEM IN, FOLLOWING A DEFEAT LAST WEEK AT THE HANDS OF AZERBAIJAN IN A CONFLICT DATING TO THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

Near Kornidzor, Armenia, Sept 24: The 1, 20,000 ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh will leave for Armenia as they do not want to live as part of Azerbaijan and fear ethnic cleansing, the leadership of the breakaway said Sunday.

The Armenians of Karabakh - a territory internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan but previously beyond Baku's control - were forced to declare a ceasefire September 20 after a lightning 24-hour military operation by the much larger Azerbaijani military.

"Our people do not want to live as part of Azerbaijan. Ninety-nine point nine percent prefer to leave our historic lands," David Babayan, an adviser to Samvel Shahramanyan, President of the self-styled Republic of Artsakh, told Reuters.

The Armenian leaders of Karabakh said in a statement that all those made homeless by the Azerbaijani military operation and wanting to leave would be escorted to Armenia by Russian peacekeepers.

Reuters reporters near the village of Kornidzor on the Armenian border saw some heavily laden cars pass into Armenia. One of the drivers said they were from Nagorno-Karabakh. It was unclear when the bulk



of the population would move down the Lachin corridor which links the territory to Armenia, where Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has faced calls to resign for failing to save Karabakh.

A mass exodus could change the delicate balance of power in the South Caucasus region, a patchwork of ethnicities crisscrossed with oil and gas pipelines where Russia, the United States, Turkey and Iran are jostling for influence.

Last week's Azerbaijani victory appears to bring a decisive end to one of the decades-old "frozen conflicts" of the Soviet Union's dissolution. President Ilham Aliyev said his "iron fist" had consigned the idea of an independent ethnic Armenian Karabakh to history and that the region would be turned into a "paradise" as part of Azerbaijan.

Armenia said more than 200 people were killed and 400 wounded in the Azerbaijani military operation. The fate of the ethnic Armenian population has raised concerns in Moscow, Washington and Brussels.

Nagorno-Karabakh, known as Artsakh by Armenians, lies in an area that over centuries has come under the sway of Persians, Turks, Russians, Ottomans and Soviets. It was claimed by both

SOME HEAVILY LADEN CARS LEAVE KARABAKH
RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS TO ESCORT REFUGEES
HUMANITARIAN AID STARTS TO ARRIVE

40K MARCH IN SPAIN



Madrid, Sept 24: Tens of thousands of Spaniards protested in Madrid Sunday against possible plans by acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to grant an amnesty to Catalan separatists to keep himself in office after an election he failed to win.

Waving Spanish flags, supporters of the Opposition conservative People's Party (PP) travelled from across Spain to attend the rally in Madrid. Authorities estimated the size of the crowd at 40,000.

Sanchez, who came second in an election in July, could stay in office if he wins the support of exiled former Catalonia leader Carles Puigdemont, whose Junts per Catalunya party controls seven seats in parliament.

Puigdemont, wanted in Spain for attempting the region's secession, has demanded that legal action be dropped against fellow separatists as a condition for his support.

Alberto Nunez Feijoo, leader of the PP which won the most votes July 23, said he would never concede to demands for an amnesty for organisers of a 2017 independence referendum in

Catalonia, which was held despite courts ruling it was illegal.

Withdrawing criminal cases against the separatists would amount to granting an amnesty to "coup plotters", he told supporters at the Madrid rally.

Gregorio Casteneda, 72, a pensioner, had travelled from Santander on Spain's north coast to show his opposition to any amnesty.

"I am not in favour of the government that we have. To me this is a disaster because it is going to divide Spain totally," he told Reuters. Sanchez held his own political rally in Gava, near Catalonia's regional capital Barcelona, on Sunday. He did not mention an amnesty but said the Socialists wanted to heal social divisions over the Catalan crisis. In 2021, Sanchez granted pardons to nine separatists jailed over their roles in the independence push.

Feijoo will take the first stab at a vote to become prime minister September 27, but his chances of winning are seen as slim since the PP opposes any concessions to separatists. If Feijoo fails, Sanchez will get a chance to see if he can muster support.

35 killed in petrol warehouse fire

Porto-Novo, Sept 24: At least 35 people were killed and more than ten seriously injured in a fire at a petrol warehouse in Benin, the government said.

The fire broke out in a town near the border with Nigeria when bags of petrol were being unloaded from a vehicle at around 9:30 a.m. (0830 GMT), the Beninese Ministry of the Interior and Public Security said in a statement.

The fire engulfed the place, causing an initial toll of 35 deaths, "including one child, and more than a dozen serious injuries sent to hospital, as well as significant material damage," said the statement, Xinhua news agency reported.

The fire brigade, police and medical teams were immediately mobilised to tackle the situation, said the statement, adding that the Public Prosecutor's Office has opened a full investigation into the cause of the accident. In Benin, smuggled petrol comes from its eastern neighbor, Nigeria, a major oil producer where fuel is cheaper.

Thousands of liters of petrol sold on the streets of Benin's towns and neighborhoods generally come from stations located along the Benin-Nigeria border. The trade, which generates huge profits, also entails major risks, given the precarious conditions in which the product is stored. As a result, fires occur frequently with heavy tolls.



Guardsmen encourage migrants waiting on a sand bar to turn around as they attempt cross the Rio Grande from Mexico into the US, in Eagle Pass, Texas

US prepares for potential government shutdown

Washington, Sept 24: With the US government on the brink of a shutdown this week as Congress remains at an impasse on a funding deal, federal departments and agencies have begun the mandatory process of planning to bring nonessential functions to a halt, local media reported.

Every department and agency has its own set of plans and procedures. That guidance includes information on how many employees would get furloughed,



The nearly 4 million Americans who are federal employees will feel the effect immediately

Essential workers will remain on the job, but others will be furloughed until the shutdown is over

None will be paid during the impasse, CNN reported

which employees are essential and would work without pay, how long it would take to wind down operations in the hours before a shutdown, and which activities would come to a halt. Those plans can vary from shutdown to shutdown, CNN reported.

The Office of Management and Budget reminded senior agency officials Friday to update and review shutdown plans.

HOW AI IS BEING USED TO FIGHT WILDFIRES

London, Sept 24: Wildfires fuelled by climate change have ravaged communities from Maui to the Mediterranean this summer, killing many people, exhausting firefighters and fuelling demand for new solutions. Enter artificial intelligence.

Firefighters and startups are using AI-enabled cameras to scan the horizon for signs of smoke. A German company is building a constellation of satellites to detect fires from space. And Microsoft is using AI models to predict where the next blaze could be sparked.

With wildfires becoming larger and more intense as the world

warms, firefighters, utilities and governments are scrambling to get ahead of the flames by tapping into the latest AI technology - which has stirred both fear and excitement for its potential to transform life. While increasingly stretched first responders hope AI offers them a leg up, humans are still needed to check that the tech is accurate.

California's main firefighting agency this summer started testing an AI system that looks for smoke from more than 1,000 mountaintop camera feeds and is now expanding it statewide. The system is designed to find blaze command centers, where staffers will confirm whether



it's indeed smoke or something else in the air. The cameras, part of a network that workers previously had to watch, provide billions of bytes of data for the AI system to digest. While humans still need to confirm any smoke sightings, the system helps reduce

fatigue among staffers typically monitoring multiple screens and cameras, alerting them to look only when there's possible fire or smoke, SeLegue said. It's already helped. A battalion chief got a smoke alert in the middle of the night, confirmed it on his cellphone and called a

command center in San Diego to scramble first responders to the remote area. The dispatchers said that if they hadn't been alerted, the fire would have been much larger because it likely wouldn't have been noticed until the next morning, SeLegue said.

San Francisco startup Pano AI

takes a similar approach, mounting cameras on cell towers that scan for smoke and alert customers, including fire departments, utility companies and ski resorts. The cameras use computer vision machine learning, a type of AI. The images are combined with feeds from government weather satellites that scan for hotspots, along with other data sources, such as social media posts.

The technology gets around one of the main problems in the traditional way of detecting wildfires - relying on 911 calls from passers-by that need confirmation from staffers before crews and water-dropping planes can be deployed.

business

of the day quote

This year the festive season is spread across four months and we are optimistic as we started on a very positive note, from Onam onwards



SANTOSH IYER | MD AND CEO, MERCEDES-BENZ

Honestly I think we're just scratching the surface, if we think about the headroom. I see WhatsApp as next engine of growth for our company here in India, so absolutely business messaging and WhatsApp are a key priority for India Meta organisation



Global and domestic macroeconomic data, trend in global stock markets, crude oil prices, movement of rupee against the dollar, investment by FIs and DIs will be in focus



ARVINDER SINGH NANDA | SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MASTER CAPITAL SERVICES

SHORT TAKES

Ather losses swell

New Delhi: Hero MotoCorp-backed electric vehicle (EV) company Ather Energy's losses surged more than 2.5 times in the financial year 2022-23. The EV startup reported a loss of ₹864.5 crore in FY23, against a loss of ₹344.1 crore in FY22, according to its annual financial statements filed with the Registrar of Companies (RoC). Ather's total expenses more than tripled to ₹2,670.6 crore from ₹757.9 crore in FY22, despite strong sales. The surge in losses reported even after the firm's revenue from operations grew 4.3 times to reach ₹1,784 crore during the fiscal year ending March 2023. The company spent ₹1.5 to earn every ₹1 from operations in FY23, while EBITDA margin improved to -38.3 per cent, according to reports.

Chinese goods under govt lens

New Delhi: The commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR has "suo-motu" initiated probes against alleged dumping of three products, including unframed glass mirrors and fasteners, by Chinese companies as the authority seeks to guard MSME units against cheap imports from the neighbouring country. The move is aimed at granting much-needed protection to the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) producers against dumped goods from China. The DGTR said that it is probing alleged dumping of telescopic channel drawer, unframed glass mirror and fasteners.



JHESL will first cater to the domestic market and continue to explore markets like Middle East and Africa

NEERAJ KUMAR | GROUP CEO AND WHOLE-TIME DIRECTOR, JINDAL SAW

VIETJET TO EXPAND INDIA OPERATIONS

As Vietnam is largely becoming an emerging tourism destination for Indian travellers, Vietjet, the country's largest private carrier, is getting ready to tap this growing interest by expanding its service to India connecting more cities. A new route connecting Tiruchirappalli (Tamil Nadu) and Ho Chi Minh City is expected to be launched this November



INFLATION STILL HIGH

'RBI to maintain status quo'

Reserve Bank had raised the benchmark repo rate to 6.5% February 8, and since then it has retained the rates at the same level in view of the stubbornly high retail inflation and certain global factors including elevated crude oil prices in the international market



The RBI has gone along with the market sentiment of retaining the benchmark interest rate at 6.5 per cent for quite some time now. However, it's time for the central bank to contemplate a reduction of the interest rate with the objective of boosting growth

SANJAY BHUTANI | DIRECTOR, MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: The Reserve Bank is likely to maintain status quo on policy rates for the fourth time in a row at its bi-monthly monetary policy review meeting early next month, as retail inflation continues to remain high and the US Federal Reserve has decided to keep a hawkish stance for some more time, according to experts.

The Reserve Bank Governor-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting is scheduled for October 4-6, 2023. The last meeting of the MPC, the highest rating-setting panel, was in August.

"We do expect the RBI to hold on to a status quo position this time as inflation is still high and liquidity tight. In fact, going by RBI forecast on inflation, it would be above 5 per cent in Q3 too, which will ensure that the status quo prevails for the calendar year for sure and probably Q4 too," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Sabnavis further said there are uncertainties relating to Kharif crop, especially on pulses, which can increase prices.

"The comfort is that there is less concern on growth which is on target," he added.

Although the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation eased a bit to 6.83 per cent in August from 7.44 per cent in the preceding month in July, it remained above the Reserve Bank's comfort level of 6 per cent. It may be mentioned that the government has mandated the RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent with 2 per cent margin on either side.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Limited said the headline CPI inflation is expected to ease to 5.3-5.5 per cent in September 2023 from 6.8 per cent in August 2023, benefitting from the halving of the average price of tomatoes as well as a favourable base.

"... We expect the CPI inflation to ease to 5.6 per cent in Q3 FY2024 and further to 5.1 per cent in Q4 FY2024, amid upside risks to food inflation on account of the impact of uneven and sub-par monsoons and low reser-

voir levels on Kharif yields and Rabi sowing, respectively," she said. Nayar said ICRA expects the MPC to remain on hold in October 2023 policy, while continuing to demonstrate caution amid a cloudy outlook for food inflation and elevated crude oil prices.

The Reserve Bank has projected CPI inflation at 5.4 per cent for 2023-24, with Q2 at 6.2 per cent, Q3 at 5.7 per cent and Q4 at 5.2 per cent, with risks evenly balanced. CPI inflation for Q1, 2024-25 is projected at 5.2 per cent.

The Reserve Bank mainly factors in the CPI-based inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy.

The borrowing cost which started rising in May last year has stabilised with RBI keeping the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February, when it was raised from 6.25 per cent. Later in the next three bi-monthly policy reviews in April, June and August the benchmark rate was retained.

INVESTORS SPOOKED

FPIs outflow crosses ₹10,000 crore mark

Before the outflow, foreign investors were incessantly buying Indian equities in the last six months from March to August and brought in ₹1.74 lakh crore during the period

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have pulled out over ₹10,000 crore from Indian equities in the first three weeks of September, primarily due to rising US interest rates, recessionary fears, and overvalued domestic stocks.

According to the data with depositories, in the 15 trading days, so far in September, FPIs were sellers in 11 days with a net withdrawal of ₹10,164 crore.

This figure includes bulk deals and investments through the primary market.

Of the total pullout of ₹10,164 crore so far this month (till September 22), over ₹4,700 crore was withdrawn in the last week alone.

The latest outflow came after FPI investment in equities hit a four-month low of ₹12,262 crore in August.

FPI flows have displayed a subdued pattern over the past few weeks. This hesitancy among investors can be attributed to growing apprehensions about inflation and the interest rate landscape, particularly in the US, coupled with uncertainties regarding global economic growth, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

As a result, investors have turned cautious and adopted a "wait and watch" approach when considering investments in emerging markets like



Since valuations remain high even after the recent pullback and US bond yields are attractive (the US 10-year bond yield is around 4.49 per cent) FPIs are likely to press sales so long as this trend persists

VK VIJAYAKUMAR | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

India, he added.

On the other hand, FPIs invested ₹295 crore in the country's debt market during the period under review.

With this, the total investment by FPIs in equity has reached ₹1.25 lakh crore and close to ₹28,476 crore in the debt market this year so far.

The sectoral data revealed that as of September 15, mining, power, services, oil, and telecommunication registered the highest outflows, and sectors such as financial services, capital goods, consumer services, IT, and realty attracted cumulative buying.

WORLD TOURISM DAY

IRCTC declares offers to mark foundation day

IRCTC not to charge any convenience fees on air tickets bookings between Sept 25 to 27

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Sept 24: To mark its 24th Foundation Day September 27, which is also coinciding with the World Tourism Day, IRCTC will be offering a slew of offers to customers booking air tickets from it.

IRCTC will not be charging any convenience fees from the customers booking international as well as domestic flight tickets on its website from September 25 to 27.

Customers will be able to avail this offer by booking their tickets through IRCTC's air ticketing portal www.irctc.co.in as well as IRCTC Air mobile app.



Along with the zero convenience fees, IRCTC has also launched other offers on this occasion with discounts up to ₹2,000 on air tickets on card transactions of different banks.

Apart from the limited period offers, IRCTC Air also offers defence fares and leave travel concession (LTC) tickets for government officials, a statement issued by IRCTC said.

Further, as a value addition, IRCTC also provides a travel insurance of ₹50 lakh for every air ticket booked through its portal, it added.

Can't interfere in Akasa dispute: DGCA

REUTERS

New Delhi, Sept 24: India's aviation authorities have ruled out intervening in a dispute between Akasa Air and its pilots after the budget carrier accused the regulator of inaction, a legal filing shows.

Over 40 of Akasa's 450 pilots quit without serving their notice in recent weeks, and the airline has sued some of them and challenged Indian authorities in court for not acting on its requests to deal with alleged pilot "misconduct". The airline has also warned of a shut down due to the crisis.

India mandates a notice period of 6-12 months for pilots which some pilot organisations are challenging in court. Akasa argues its contractual obligations with pilots remain in force, and is suing the regulator for not intervening in the public interest.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the aviation ministry in a September 22 filing at the Delhi High Court said Akasa's plea should be



AKASA WARNED OF SHUT DOWN AFTER PILOTS QUIT

AIRLINE CALLS ON INDIAN AUTHORITIES TO INTERVENE

OVER 600 FLIGHTS CANCELLED IN AUG OVER PILOT LOSSES

thrown out as the regulator is unable to interfere in the matter.

The DGCA "does not have any power or delegated authority to interfere in any employment contract," it said.

Akasa has accused the DGCA of being "unwilling to take any action" which resulted in "significant financial and operational hardship" to the airline.

The pilot resignations caused 632 flight cancellations in August,

according to Akasa, an estimated 18% of the roughly 3,500 flights the airline usually operates in a month.

The DGCA contested that position in its court filing, saying it "categorically denies" that Akasa "provided any documents or reasons" in respect of cancellation as a result of pilot exits.

Sharing data, it said only 1.17% of Akasa's flights were cancelled in August. The 6,000 member Federation of Indian Pilots have also responded to Akasa's plea, saying flight cancellation numbers were "unsubstantiated" and that the DGCA cannot interfere in the dispute.

"Alleged mass resignation of pilots... also serves as an indication of employee discontent," the federation said.

MFs NOMINATION

Deadline to add nominee nears

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Sept 24: All individual demat account holders and mutual fund investors have time till September 30, to nominate a beneficiary or opt out of it by submitting a declaration form, failing which their demat accounts and folios will be frozen, and they will not be able to redeem their investments.

This mandate applies to both new as well as existing investors, according to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The move is aimed at helping investors to secure their assets and pass them on to their legal heirs.

"This will ensure smooth and hassle-free transfer of securities to the legal heirs of the investors in case of any unfortunate event," Tejas Khoday, co-founder and CEO at FYERS, said.

Under Sebi's rule, new investors must either nominate their securities or formally opt out of nomination through a declaration form when opening trading and demat accounts.

For existing investors, including jointly-held mutual fund folios, failing to meet this deadline will result in the freezing of folios for debits. Further, investors' demat accounts or mutual funds folios will be frozen and inaccessible until they nominate or declare opt-out.

In July 2021, Sebi had asked all existing eligible trading and demat account holders to provide choice of nomination on or before March 31, 2022, failing which the trading and demat accounts would have been frozen for debits. Later, this was extended by one more year till March 31, 2023.

With regards to mutual fund unitholders, the regulator in its circular June 15, 2022, made it mandatory for mutual fund subscribers to submit the nomination details or declaration to opt out of the nomination on or after August 1, 2022. Later, the deadline was extended to October 1, 2022, and again till March 2023.

Everyone wants a pie of India's largest green power producer

AGEL is one company within the Adani Portfolio, which has attracted a range of investors over the past few months even after stringent allegations against its parent firm

will hold the rest. The joint venture will hold a portfolio of 1,050 MW, including 300 MW of already operational capacity, 500 MW under construction and 250 MW under-development assets with a blend of solar and wind power.

Total already has a 19.7 per cent stake in AGEL. It also has an equal joint venture with AGEL, called AGE23L that holds a portfolio of 2,353 MW.

The \$300 million investment Total is making in the joint venture is the first since the Hindenburg report in January highlighted Adani Group's debt pile and alleged accounting fraud and stock manipulation, which Adani denies.

Sources said AGEL is one company within the Adani Portfolio, which has attracted a range of investors over the past few months including repeat strategic investor Total, one of the largest emerging market funds GQG



Capital Partners and one of the world's largest sovereign funds Qatar Investment Authority.

Together these three investors have invested \$1.63 billion or close to ₹14,000 crore over the past few months, taking advantage of the attractive valuations post the short-seller report, they said.

GQG Partners has taken a 6.8 per cent stake in AGEL while

QIA picked up 2.7 per cent. IHC International Holding Company has another 1.3 per cent stake.

Explaining the rationale of the investments, sources said India is now a leader in the renewable energy space, with dozens of solar and wind projects in the pipeline. Adani being the largest renewable power producer in India, with its strong execution ability and superior

track record, is in an extremely sweet spot.

This has made Adani the largest solar power producer in India as well as one of the lowest cost renewable power producers in the world. Average portfolio tariff is as low as ₹3.02 per unit as against average procurement price of the country of ₹3.75 per unit.

It already has a portfolio of 20.4 GW across operational, under-construction, awarded and acquired assets.

Sources said the firm has given a capex guidance of ₹14,000 crore for this year for around 3 GW of projects. Next year, it is likely to do at least 5 GW, which would mean another ₹23,000-24,000 crore.

The management attributes its ability to produce lowest cost power to its execution, which includes site identification acquisition, concession and regulatory agreements, investment case development, engineering

and design, sourcing and quality checks, equity and debt funding for the project and highly tech-enabled O&M.

The company has built most of the portfolio during the post-Covid era and has a track record of delivering each of its projects before time. As against, 18 months period permitted from the effective scheduling of the PPA to commissioning, the company has a track record of executing this in less than a year, sources said.

With its capacity target to reach 45 GW, it has the potential to deliver 6X growth from FY23 and FY30, they said, adding around 40 GW worth resource assessment has already been done - sites, geotechnical studies, sourcing equipment etc. With constantly upgrading technology, there are chances that there could be an upside surprise in terms of output.

Rowers, shooters start medal rush

INDIA BEGIN ASIAN GAMES CAMPAIGN WINNING 3 SILVER AND 2 BRONZE MEDALS ON OPENING DAY



SHOOTING STARS: The silver-winning trio of (from L) Ramita Jindal, Mehuli Ghosh and Ashi Chouksey

WATER WARRIORS: Rowers Arjun Lal Jat (L) and Arvind Singh proudly pose with their medals Sunday

AGENCIES

Hangzhou, Sept 24: Even though India did not have any gold to show for on the opening day of the Asian Games here Sunday, the rowers and shooters did the country proud by winning silver and bronze medals in a number of events. Indian rowers powered their way to two silver and a bronze medal while the shooters finished with a team silver and an individual bronze in the women's 10m air rifle competition.

On a pleasant morning with the conditions just perfect for rowing at the Fuyang Water Sports Centre here, Arjun Lal Jat and Arvind Singh opened the country's account with a silver medal in the men's lightweight doubles sculls event. The Indian

duo clocked 6:28.18s to finish behind China's Junjie Fan and Man Sun, who won gold with a time of 6:23.16s.

Arvind said they were aiming for gold but an injury two months ago hampered his training. "We missed training for 20 to 25 days as I was having lower-back pain for the last two months. I wasn't able to push myself as much due to the injury," said Arvind.

The silver was just a precursor of the things to come as the gruelling men's coxed eight event saw a keen tussle between China and India before the latter finished second with a time of 5:43.01s, which was 2.84s behind the host team, who clocked 5:40.17s.

The Indian side comprised Neeraj, Nareekh Kalwaniya, Neetish Kumar, Charanjeet Singh, Jaswinder Singh, Bheem Singh,

Puneet Kumar and Ashish.

"It was a great race for us. It went according to the plan we had gone over with our coach and teammates yesterday (Saturday)," said Dhnanjay Uttam Pande, who performed the role of a coxswain to perfection in the team.

The achievement is all the more creditable given that rowers from powerhouse Uzbekistan and Japan finished fourth and fifth respectively.

In the coxless pair event, India's Babulal Yadav and Lekh Ram settled for a bronze with a time of 6:50.41 seconds, behind Hong Kong (6:44.20s) and Uzbekistan 6:48.11s.

The experienced trio of Mehuli Ghosh, Ramita Jindal and Ashi Chouksey bagged the women's team silver while

Ramita also clinched an individual bronze in the 10m air rifle event as Indian shooters made an impressive start to their Asian Games campaign.

A combined score of 1,886.0 earned the Indian trio the second spot behind hosts China, who smashed the Asian record with a score of 1,896.6. Junior world champion Ramita then won the individual bronze in her event, shooting 230.1 in the eight-shooter finals. Mehuli, the other Indian to make the eight-shooter final, finished fourth with a score of 208.43.

Indian shooters are looking to better their previous best show of nine medals at the Asian Games which they achieved in Jakarta. Mehuli said winning a silver medal in such a strong field felt 'prestigious'. "Winning

the first medal for India is special for me and my teammates. The (aggregate qualification) score is a very good one. It was a very tough competition and winning a team silver is prestigious," said Mehuli.

INDIA BEGIN WITH A BANG

MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM SCORE 16 GOALS AGAINST UZBEKISTAN WITH 3 PLAYERS GETTING HAT-TRICKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Sept 24: Lalit Upadhyay, Varun Kumar and Mandeep Singh slammed a hat-trick each as India started their men's hockey campaign at the Asian Games with a 16-0 rout of lowly-ranked Uzbekistan here Sunday.

Ranked third in the world, India began the match as clear favourites against the World No. 66 Uzbeks and expectedly dominated the proceedings from start to finish in the Pool A match.

Lalit (seventh, 24th, 37th, 53rd) and Varun (12th, 36th, 50th, 52nd) fired in four goals each, while Mandeep (18th, 27th, 28th minutes) found the net thrice. Abhishek (17th), Amit Rohidas (38th), Sukhjeet (42nd), Shamsheer Singh (43rd) and Sanjay (57th) were the other goal scorers for India.

India skipper Harmanpreet Singh did not play the match as he was rested after donning the responsibility of being the joint flag-bearer along with Olympic



A tense moment in front of the Uzbekistan goal during their game against India, Sunday

TODAY IN SPORTS
Asian Games
Live on Sony Sports
4.45am onwards

Ramita on the other hand, pointed out that she still has to improve a lot to perform well at the senior level.

"The competition from the Chinese shooters was really tough. They rarely miss," Ramita said. "I am just hoping that I continue to improve on a consistent basis," she added.

SHORT TAKES

Bezzecchi wins maiden Indian GP

New Delhi: Marco Bezzecchi displayed remarkable temperament and riding skills to emerge winner in the inaugural Indian Grand Prix here Sunday. Bezzecchi, riding for Mooney VR46 Racing Team, had to ward off stiff competition from Jorge Martin and Francesco Bagnaia, the championship leaders, before standing atop the victor's podium at the Buddh International Circuit.

The race started with Martin of Prima Pramac racing into the lead at Turn 1, followed by Bagnaia and Bezzecchi was in third place this time.

Bezzecchi, however, regained his top spot soon. First, he overtook Bagnaia to claim second place and then raced into the lead when an error at Turn 4 sent Martin wide.

Odisha clubbed in tough squads

New Delhi: Odisha have been clubbed with heavyweights Bengal and Punjab in the Santosh Trophy groupings that were announced Sunday. The fourth team in the group are Delhi.

Defending champions Karnataka, runners-up Meghalaya along with hosts Arunachal Pradesh have been exempted from playing the first group stage. In the final group stage, 12 teams will be divided into two groups that will determine the semifinalists.

Arsenal, Spurs play out exciting draw

London: Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur shared four goals and points while Liverpool hammered West Ham 3-1 to maintain pressure on defending English Premier League champions Manchester City in matches played Sunday. The game between the Gunners and Spurs was an exciting affair. Arsenal twice took the lead, first through an own goal by Cristian Romero and then a penalty converted by Bukayo Saka. However, Spurs came back strongly after conceding with Son Heung-min (42nd and 55th) restoring parity.

Medal guaranteed for eves cricket team

VASTRAKAR DECIMATES BANGLADESH AS INDIA SEAL SPOT IN FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Sept 24: Pooja Vastrakar (4/17) bowled a sharp and incisive spell to take the Indian women's cricket team to their maiden Asian Games final, crushing Bangladesh by eight wickets in a lop-sided semifinal here Sunday. It was Vastrakar's career-best figures as Bangladesh were bowled out for 51 in 17.5 overs - their lowest ever T20 score against India.

India will face Sri Lanka in the final Monday. The Lankans defeated defending champions Pakistan, who had won the gold at Incheon Games 2014, by six wickets in the semifinals.

Vastrakar and her young new-ball partner Titas Sadhu (1/10) had the Bangladeshi batters on the hop right from the word go. The only Bangladeshi to reach double figures was skipper Nigar Sultana (12).

The victory target of 52 was a cakewalk for India with Jimimah Rodrigues (20 n o) leading the charge. The two



Pooja Vastrakar bowled a match-winning spell for India

Indian wickets to fall were that of skipper Smriti Mandhana (7) and Shafali Verma (17).

The good news for India is that skipper Harmanpreet Kaur will be back for the finals. She is currently serving a two-match suspension which ended Sunday. She was suspended due to her angry public outburst and criticism of the quality of Bangladeshi umpiring while playing against them in an away series a few months back.

BRIEF SCORES: Bangladesh 51 in 17.5 overs (Pooja Vastrakar 4/17) lost to India 52/2 in 8.2 overs (Jimimah Rodrigues 20 n o) by 8 wickets.

Boxers shine on day of mixed fortunes

SHARATH KEEPS MEN'S TT TEAM IN FRAY, BUT WOMEN PADDLERS SUFFER SHOCKING EXIT

AGENCIES

Hangzhou, Sept 24: In a rematch of the World Championship final, top Indian boxer Nikhat Zareen outclassed Vietnam's Thi Tam Nguyen 5-0 to move to the women's 50kg pre-quarterfinals while Preeti Pawar (54kg) sealed a place in the quarterfinals of the Asian Games here Sunday. Zareen controlled the proceedings from the word go to emerge winner by a unanimous verdict.

"I had not expected it (to be a one-sided bout) but my plan was to make it one. I didn't want to give any chance to her," Zareen said after her bout.

With coveted Olympic quotas at stake, Zareen said she is concentrating on qualifying for the Paris Olympics first. All four semifinalists in the light flyweight category will earn Olympic quotas.

In the other bout on the day, Preeti notched up an RSC (referee stops contest) win over Jordan's Silina Alhasanat.

Khatri misses out

India narrowly missed out on a medal in Asian Games fencing when Taniksha Khatri lost to World No. 2 Man Wai Vivian Kong of Hong Kong 7-15 in in-



DOMINATING SHOW: Nikhat Zareen (in red) lands a solid right hook on her opponent's face during the bout Sunday

dividual epee quarterfinal Sunday. A win would have guaranteed a bronze for the Indian fencer. Earlier in the day, Khatri topped her pool winning all her three matches.

Sharath raises the bar

Veteran Achantha Sharath Kamal raised his game just in time to help the Indian men's team escape unscathed against Kazakhstan but the women's

two games down, but came back strongly to win the decisive rubber 5-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-9.

Embarrassing losses

The Indian women's Rugby 7s team suffered humiliating defeats Sunday in their first two matches of the Asian Games to bow out of the competition. India lost 0-38 to Hong Kong in the first match and later in the day defending champions Japan hammered the Indians 45-0.

Football eves bow out

The Indian women's football team failed to qualify for the knockout stage of the Asian Games after suffering a narrow 0-1 loss to Thailand at Wenzhou. India had lost Friday their opening match 1-2 to Chinese Taipei. Thongrong Parichat got the winning goal for Thailand in the 52nd minute of the match.

Tennis players cruise

India's top tennis player Sumit Nagal moved to the men's singles pre-quarterfinals of the Asian Games without losing a game as he expectedly thrashed Macau's hapless Ho Tin Marco Leung 6-0, 6-0. In men's doubles, the second-seeded Indian pair of Saketh Myneni and Ramkumar Ramanathan outplayed Nepal's Abhishek Bastola and Pradip Khadka 6-2, 6-3.

ASHWIN FINDS FORM AFTER INDIAN BATTERS PUMMEL AUSTRALIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Sept 24: Shubman Gill (104, 97b, 6x4, 4x6) showed his insatiable hunger for runs with his fifth hundred of the year while Shreyas Iyer (105, 90b, 11x4, 3x6) hit a timely ton under pressure to set up a series sealing 99-run win for India in the second ODI against Australia here Sunday. More importantly however, Ravichandran Ashwin (3/41) found his ODI mojo as India look for a replacement for the injured Axar Patel.

Gill and Iyer shared a stroke-filled 200-run stand off 164 balls before Suryakumar Yadav (72 n o, 37b, 6x4, 6x6) unleashed carnage to fire India to 399 for five, the hosts' highest total against Australia in ODIs. Skipper KL

India seal series victory



Shreyas Iyer got a fine hundred in his comeback game; (Inset): Shubman Gill

Rahul (52, 38b, 3x4, 3x6) also chipped in with a swashbuckling knock.

Rain stopped play for the second time in the game when Australia were 56 for two in nine overs. With the revised target of 317 in 33 overs, they fell fur-

ther behind in the game and ended with 217 all out in 28.2 overs.

David Warner (53, 39b, 7x4, 1x6), who batted right-handed against Ashwin and Sean Abbott (54, 36b 4x4, 5x6) were the only two Australian batters to offer

some resistance.

Prasidh Krishna (2/56) provided the initial breakthroughs while Ravindra Jadeja (3/42) destroyed the tail. The series win without their five main players will certainly be huge boost for India ahead of the World Cup at home.

While Gill extended his sensational run with a fifth ODI hundred in 2023, runs were more than welcome for Iyer who missed the majority of Asia Cup with a back spasm soon after returning from a long injury lay-off.

Brief scores: India 399 for 5 (Shreyas Iyer 105, Shubman Gill 104, Suryakumar Yadav 72 n o, KL Rahul 52) beat Australia (target revised to 317) 217 in 28.2 overs (Sean Abbot 54, David Warner 53, Ravi Ashwin 3/41, Ravindra Jadeja 3/42) by 99 runs.

Footballers defy odds, reach pre-quarterfinals



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Sept 24: Riding on a Sumit Chhetri strike, the Indian men's football team held Myanmar to a 1-1 draw and progressed to the round of 16 in the Asian Games here Sunday. They will play Saudi Arabia in the pre-quarters. It is indeed a great achievement by the team considering the fact that they did not have a single proper session of training before leaving the country.

Chhetri scored from the spot

in the 23rd minute but it was Rahim Ali who earned the penalty when he was brought down inside the box by Hein Zeyar Lin. While Lin was shown a yellow card for his sliding tackle, the peerless Chhetri made no mistake in finding the back of the net, in what was a repeat of the act he performed against Bangladesh in the second group game two days ago.

Coming off the bench, Kyaw Htwe found the equaliser for Myanmar when he headed the ball past Dheeraj Singh in the 74th minute at the Xiaoshan Sports Centre Stadium here.

However, despite the two teams having same the number of points, India progressed as the runners-up from Group A, as the Chhetri-led side had scored more goals than Myanmar.