

**ACTRESS** **GROUNDBREAKING APPROACH**  
 Actor Wamiqa Gabbi adopts a new technique to establish direct connection with viewers in her upcoming movie **LEISURE P2**

**WAR CRIMES**  
 The UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine says it has found evidence of crimes committed by both sides in the war **INTERNATIONAL P10**

**GREEN INITIATIVE**  
 IOC unveils the nation's first green hydrogen-powered bus that emits just water **BUSINESS P11**

**SHORT TAKES**

**1st C-295 aircraft inducted into IAF**

**Ghaziabad:** The first C-295 medium tactical transport aircraft was inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) Monday, boosting its logistics capabilities. The induction ceremony took place at the Hindan Air Force Station here in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. He later took part in a 'Sarva Dharma Pooja' that was performed in the hangar to mark the occasion. IAF chief Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari along with senior officials of the IAF as well as Airbus attended the induction ceremony. The first C-295 aircraft was inducted into Squadron No. 11 of the IAF. It is one of the oldest squadrons of the IAF and is currently based at Vadodra Air Force Station.

**Pannun plans to divide India: NIA**

**New Delhi:** The NIA has alleged that Canada-based Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun had planned to create a territory called the 'democratic republic of Urduistan' in an attempt to separate Kashmir from India. The NIA report states that Pannun's primary agenda through the Sikh for Justice (SFJ) organisation is to divide India. Pannun aims to divide India along religious lines. The agency has claimed in its dossier that Pannun incited young individuals to engage in a secessionist movement and encouraged them to post provocative posters bearing pro-liberation slogans in Punjab.

**2 killed as truck hits motorcycle**

**Khalikote:** Two people including a woman were killed and three others critically injured in a freak road accident on NH-16 at Haridamula under Khalikote Police Station in Ganjam district. Sources said the accident occurred after a truck carrying edible oil from Andhra Pradesh to West Bengal skidded off the road, overturned and hit a motorcycle and car Sunday night. The deceased included the woman and the truck driver. The injured included the brother and son of the woman and the helper of the truck. The injured were rushed to Khalikote CHC but later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital Berhampur after their condition deteriorated.

**IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



'One Nation, One Election' will save a lot of wasteful expenditure that can be used to enhance our leader's image

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VAIATION
SENSEX	66023.69 ↑ 14.54
NIFTY	19674.55 ↑ 0.30
DOLLAR	83.11 ↑ ₹0.01
EURO	88.03 ↓ ₹0.42
GOLD	₹58,770 ↓ ₹176
SILVER	₹72,144 ↓ ₹1193

**WEATHER**

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP. MAX	33.8°C	33.0°C
TEMP. MIN	24.4°C	24.5°C
Humidity	92%	91%
Rainfall	0.3mm	1.2mm

Forecast: Cloudy sky with light rain



**GOLDEN GIRLS:** Indian players pose for photos after winning the gold medal in the women's cricket event at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou of China, Monday

**Asia's new cricket queens**

**Hangzhou, Sept 25:** Rookie pacer Titas Sadhu singlehandedly earned a gold medal for the Indian women's cricket team in its maiden appearance as it defeated Sri Lanka by 19 runs in a low-scoring final of the Asian Games here Monday.

On a pitch difficult for batting, the Indian women's team struggled to 116/7 but it was just about par score. However Titas, who is just four days shy of her 19th birthday, bowled a devastating first spell and finished with superb figures of 4-1-6-3 to play a big role in restricting Sri Lanka to 97/8 in 20 overs.

She had an able ally in leg-spinner Devika Vaidya (1/15), who kept a tight leash on the islanders. Left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad (2/20) and off-spinner Deepti Sharma (1/25) started off badly but were on target during the back-end as Indian women always looked in complete control.

This was one gold medal that India were expected to win, but the standard of cricket was pretty poor, and the nature of wicket didn't help matters.

The lanky Titas bowled quick and kept her deliveries on fuller length to get three wickets in her first two overs,

**SHOOTERS HIT THE MARK**

Indian shooters at the 19th Asian Games here won gold in the Men's 10m Air Rifle Team event and two bronze medals -- in Men's 25m Rapid Fire Pistol Team and Men's 10m Air Rifle Individual events at the shooting ranges at the Fuyang Yinhu Sports Centre Monday. The troika of World Champion Rundranksh Patil, Divyansh Panwar and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar shot brilliantly to set a new world record of 1893.7 on their way to victory in the Men's 10m Air Rifle Team competition. **MORE P 12**

including opposition skipper and their best batter Chamari Athapaththu (12).

The Indian women's team is missing a genuine quick bowler in its ranks since the retirement of Jhulan Goswami and Titas looks to be a worthy successor. However, her wares would be proved once she is pitted against players of SENA countries.

Smriti Mandhana (46, 45b, 4x4, 1x6), along with Jemimah Rodrigues (42, 40b, 5x4), added 73 runs for the second wicket.

**BRIEF SCORES:** India 116/7 (Harmanpreet Kaur 46, Jemimah Rodrigues 42; Udeshika Prabodhani 2/16) beat Sri Lanka 97/8 (Hasini Perera 25; Titas Sadhu 3/6) by 19 runs.

**People top priority**

Amid Opposition attack over excessive bureaucratic interference in government matters, CM defends the statewide visit of CMO officials to collect people's grievances

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Monday asserted that no ministers-versus-officers issue exists in the state, dismissing criticisms from various quarters over holding of people's grievance meetings by a controversial CMO official.

Patnaik said in the Assembly that the CM Grievance Cell has always been handled by the CMO, and ministers are not required to attend meetings, in which people seek redressal of their grievances, in Bhubaneswar.

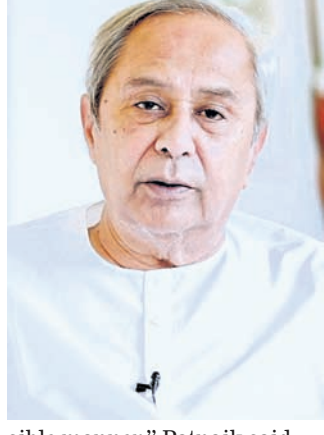
However, both the Opposition BJP and Congress ridiculed Patnaik's statement and alleged that the state is ruled by officers instead of the elected peoples' representatives.

As the Opposition alleged that there was huge expenditure on the chopper ride of the CMO officials, especially Patnaik's private secretary VK Pandian, an IAS officer of the 2000 batch, the Chief Minister said no excess expenditure was made.

Stating that the CM Grievance Cell is always handled by the CMO, Patnaik said once petitions are received, they are sent to the departments concerned. "Where is the issue of ministers versus officers in this?" the Chief Minister asked.

Noting that the ministers have played a major role as heads of the departments in resolving the petitions, he said it is teamwork at the highest level and is professionally done in a democratic set-up.

"The aim is to resolve people's grievances in the best possible manner," Patnaik said.



sible manner," Patnaik said.

He said 57,442 petitions, most of which are community petitions, have been received during the months-long grievance held by the CMO.

"Otherwise, the people would have to come to the CM Grievance Cell in Bhubaneswar. How much money would they have to spend on travel and stay? How much wage loss would they have? All these have been saved by the CM Grievance Cell travelling to the doorsteps of people," Patnaik said.

"Of those 57,442 petitions, 43,536 have been resolved or disposed of," he said wondering how someone could be unhappy if people's grievances are redressed. Patnaik said the mammoth grievance hearing exercise was carried out in more than 190 locations over a period of six months.

Referring to chopper use by officials, Patnaik said, "I would like to clarify that it would have taken one and half years to do the same exercise by road. Conducting three to five meetings daily in different locations is humanly impossible within a

window of 10am to 3pm. This period is convenient for people."

"In the last three and half years, we have spent about ₹40 crore on chopper," he said.

Earlier this month, the Opposition BJP alleged that ₹500 crore has been spent from the state exchequer on the tours of Pandian so far.

Patnaik, however, said that on an average, ₹1 to ₹1.5 crore is spent on chopper every month. "In the past six months when chopper was used intensively to reach out to the people, the average expenditure was the same - around ₹1 to 1.5 crore per month. It's completely false and misleading to say that excess expenditure has been made," the Chief Minister said.

"This exercise was also used to explain to people about the schemes of the state government, the ongoing projects in their areas and the funds sanctioned for the same," the ruling BJD president said.

"It was my specific instruction to give timelines for resolving grievances. I sincerely appreciate ministers, the district administrations, the CMO, the departments and all others involved in carrying out this mammoth exercise so professionally," Patnaik said.

He also called upon the Opposition members to be happy that so many grievances in their areas have also been resolved. "People are happy... Opposition members should not be unhappy because of political reasons. For my government, resolving people's issues is a top priority and I will continue to do so in the best possible manner," Patnaik said.

**MAHANGA DOUBLE MURDER**

**Trouble mounts for Jena**

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** More trouble is brewing for BJD MLA and former minister Pratap Jena, as the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) court in Salipur has ordered to continue with the prosecution against him in connection with the murder of a BJP leader and his associate in Mahanga in 2021.

To recall, Kulamani Baral, the in-charge of Salipur mandal of the BJD, and his associate Dibyasingh Baral were hacked to death near Jankoti village in Mahanga tehsil January 2, 2021.

The trial will be conducted at the special designated court for MLAs/MPs in Bhubaneswar.

The JMFC court has transferred the case to Additional District and Sessions Judge-cum-Special Court in Bhubaneswar, the designated court here.

"After going through the statements of the complainant, witnesses, and other available materials on record, we found



Pratap Jena

that a prima facie case punishable for the offences under Sections 302, 506, and 120B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is made against the accused, namely Pratap Kumar Jena," the court order read.

"On further perusal of the case record, it is found that Pratap Jena is the MLA of Mahanga constituency. Hence, the case record be transferred to the court of the Additional District & Sessions Judge-cum-Special Court, Bhubaneswar,

for disposal in accordance to law," it added.

Earlier, the police had given Jena a clean chit by dropping his name from the charge sheet in the double-murder case despite the complainant mentioning his name in the FIR.

The court later directed the police to re-investigate the case and submit a call detail record (CDR) of the accused. The CDR revealed conversation between the private secretary of Umashankar Biswal and absconding accused persons before and after the murders.

The police had booked 13 persons, including Jena, in the case based on a complaint lodged by Ranjit Kumar Baral, the son of deceased Dibyasingh Baral.

Prafulla Biswal, the prime accused in the case, was also found dead under mysterious circumstances near the Tangi area of Cuttack a few days later.

As many as 10 persons have so far been arrested by the police in connection with the double-murder case.

**MONSOON WITHDRAWAL STARTS 8 DAYS LATE: IMD**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Sept 25:** Monsoon started withdrawing from India Monday, eight days after the normal date of September 17, the India Meteorological Department said.

"(The) southwest monsoon has withdrawn from parts of southwest Rajasthan today, September 25, 2023, against its normal date of withdrawal from southwest Rajasthan of September 17," it said in a statement.

The late retreat of the monsoon this year is the 13th consecutive delayed withdrawal. Withdrawal of the monsoon from northwest India marks the beginning of its retreat from the Indian subcontinent.

Any delay in the monsoon's retreat means a longer rainy season, which can significantly impact agricultural production, particularly for northwest India where monsoon rainfall plays a crucial role in the Rabi crop production.

**AIADMK cuts ties with BJP-led NDA**

AGENCIES

**Chennai, Sept 25:** Ending its four year-old ties with the BJP, the AIADMK Monday announced walking out of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and said it would lead a separate front for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The decision to break away from the NDA was taken at a high level meeting chaired by party chief Edappadi K Palaniswami at the AIADMK headquarters here. The decision was met with cheers from the Dravidian party workers who burst crackers outside the headquarters here.

The move to call it quits comes days after senior AIADMK leaders called on BJP chief JP Nadda in New Delhi and apprised him about the ground situation in the state arising out of the saffron party's Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai's aggressive style of politics. They had then sought Annamalai's apology for making a remark on Dravidian stalwart CN Annadurai or that he be replaced.

Briefing reporters on today's deliberations, former minister and senior leader KP Munusamy said the party has unanimously adopted a resolution to part ways with the NDA and steer a combine of like-minded parties in next year's polls.

**Trained to charge at anything 'khaki': Dogs foil drug raid**

AGENCIES

**Kottayam (Kerala), Sept 25:** A surprise search planned by the Anti-Narcotics squad of the Kottayam police at the house of a man suspected to be a drug dealer resulted in a shock for them due to the presence of several violent dogs trained to bite anyone wearing 'khaki' attire.

The presence of the dogs hindered the search process Sunday night and also enabled the accused to escape from the police who were focused on avoiding the attacks of the canines. However,

the dogs were subdued and over 17 kilograms of ganja was seized from the site, police said.

Speaking to reporters, Kottayam SP K Karthick IPS said it was close to midnight when the search team, also comprising officers from the nearby Gandhinagar police station, arrived at the location.

"We did not expect there would be so many dogs here and that they would be violent. So, we faced difficulty initially in carrying out a proper search. Fortunately, none of the officers were injured. The accused had

imparted training to the dogs to bite on seeing khaki. He had been briefly trained in dog handling by a person retired from the BSI, but was kicked out from there for asking questions like how to make dogs bite someone wearing khaki," the SP said.

The top officer of the district police also said the accused under the guise of being a dog trainer was selling drugs and the same was evident from the seizure of over 17 kgs of ganja from the site.

"According to our preliminary investigation, he (accused) was living here on rent and was known



to everyone in the area as a dog trainer. Therefore, people used to leave their dogs with him, at the rate of ₹1,000 per day, when they went outside and he would look after the canines," Karthick said.

# leisure



## DWAYNE THINKS THERE'RE NO DRAWBACKS TO FAME

Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson shared a candid video message with fans, after being asked to explain the benefits and drawbacks of fame. "For me, there are no drawbacks to fame," Johnson said in the selfie clip shared on Instagram, which was taken inside a gym, reports *people.com*.

## OLIVIA RODRIGO GETS DATING ADVICE FROM A LITTLE BOY

Singer Olivia Rodrigo got some adorable dating advice from a little boy. "How do you think that I find love in my life," the 20-year-old asked the boy named Miles at her *Recess Therapy Show*. "Pick a person that looks kind," responded Miles.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

#### ARIES

Today is just another busy day. You may remain hassled sorting out problems at office and then at home. Your bosses may allow you certain concessions and this will ease things to some extent. Ganesh says you will gain valuable guidance from elderly people.

#### TAURUS

There will be a positive surge in your career prospects today. However, this progress may not be in the direction that you expected. Financial opportunities and success will knock at your door, a rare combination of guests. You will also achieve material progress, predicts Ganesh.

#### GEMINI

A fantastic day to enter into all kinds of partnerships. A day to bond with your close friends, open joint accounts, strike deals, and make plans for a bright future, says Ganesh. You will be at the top of your game in almost everything you do. Some of you, who want to go for further studies, may take a well-informed decision today.

#### CANCER

Today, you may find yourself marooned in a sea of emotions, and the tides of turmoil will keep on getting stronger as the day progresses. However, such dire circumstances bring out the best in you, and you will be able to wade through the storm with nothing but patience on your side.

#### LEO

Some promises are like whispers in the wind – never meant to be realised. Today holds something similar, in that you shall be so close and yet so far from what you desire most. Ganesh advises you to be a generous winner and a graceful loser. Remember, every day is not Sunday; also, you cannot win each time.

#### VIRGO

The extraordinary way in which you do things will earn you many admirers. Superiors at work will laud you for your commitment. Evenings will be fun-filled and entertaining. Look to relax with some meditation or music... or both.

#### LIBRA

If ever there was a time when that industrious nature of yours was to listen to your conscience, it is today. Call it a positive day to embark upon new business adventures, particularly for freelancers. It is mighty hard to go wrong when you listen to your inner voice and back it up with zeal.

#### SCORPIO

Better get down to serious business if you want to reap the benefits of your past actions. You are liable to treat subordinates as equals when deciding the best course of actions to achieve your goals. A golden favourable day for you, says Ganesh.

#### SAGITTARIUS

The horizons of your thoughts are open and serene. Forgive and forget will be your mood today – even for the most serious mistakes. Generosity was never your Achilles' heel, says Ganesh.

#### CAPRICORN

Drag yourself out of the house, do some shopping, or better still, appoint an interior designer. You are very likely to move into a new house very soon, foresees Ganesh. This, of course, may also eat into your savings and force you to be thrifty by the end of the day, but you won't regret this once-in-a-while extravagant outing. It's all for a reason, after all.

#### AQUARIUS

It's a busy day at work, and you're probably involved in some pending project work. It's advisable that you don't get complacent. Keep an eye on your opponents to have an edge over them, suggests Ganesh. Colleagues will be supportive, and so will family.

#### PISCES

Being a graceful loser is just about as important as being a generous winner, for success does not come by every day. Lowering your expectations will help steel you against disappointments today. There are indications you will embark on a pleasure trip with your soul mate, says Ganesh.

## Wamiqa's mantra to connect with viewers

Mumbai: Actress Wamiqa Gabbi is all set to play the titular character in her upcoming series *Charlie Chopra and the Mystery of Solang Valley*. Directed by the visionary filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj, this series whodunnit murder mystery showcases a unique connection to the series *Fleabag*. Wamiqa's character, Charlie Chopra, shares a distinctive trait with Phoebe Waller-Bridge's iconic character in *Fleabag* by breaking the fourth wall, establishing a direct connection with the audience.

*Fleabag*, which gained immense popularity for its groundbreaking approach, featured Phoebe Waller-Bridge's character frequently breaking the fourth wall. This technique allowed the character to connect with viewers on a personal level, especially during awkward and realistic situations, bridging the gap between the reel and real worlds. Inspired by this revolutionary style, Wamiqa Gabbi has incorporated a similar approach in her portrayal of Charlie Chopra.

In *Charlie Chopra and the Mystery of Solang Valley*, Wamiqa's character engages in candid and direct conversations with the camera, effectively communicating with the audience on a one-on-one basis. This narrative technique added a layer of intimacy and authenticity to the storytelling.

Directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, the series is expected to be a roller coaster ride filled with suspense, mystery, and unexpected twists.



## Kangana wants to team up with Prabhas again

Chennai: Actress Kangana Ranaut who is currently busy promoting her upcoming Tamil film *Chandramukhi 2*, was recently asked if she would act with Prabhas again, with whom she had acted in the Telugu film titled *Ek Niranjan* in 2009.

Talking about working with Prabhas again, she said, "Of course, I would. I am so happy for his success. You know how he has been so incredibly successful as a pan-Indian star. We were both very young when we did that film (*Ek Niranjan*). I remember he was such a great host and treated us to such great food at his farmhouse. We were very young and used to be very chilled out. I remember we used to tease each other a lot. I would like to meet him for sure. I think it has been a decade or something like that. It would be so refreshing to see him."

In *Chandramukhi 2*, Kangana Ranaut is playing the titular role and is paired opposite Raghava Lawrence. Directed by P Vasu, the film, releasing September 28, is a sequel to Rajinikanth's 2005 film *Chandramukhi*.

## ONS' 2ND NATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL KICKS OFF

# Shesha Pahacha: A poignant show of senior citizens' plight



A scene from Odia play *Shesha Pahacha* staged at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Monday

PHOTO: MAUSAM NANDA

Bhubaneswar: The members of Abhinaya Jagruti Institute of Theatre (AJIT), a City-based drama troupe, presented Odia play *Shesha Pahacha* here at Rabindra Mandap, Monday.

The drama was part of the second national theatre festival being organised by Odisha Natya Sangh (ONS) to celebrate its foundation day.

Written by Bijay Mishra, the play was designed by eminent theatre and film personality Ajit Das.

After the demise of Das, his student Aman assisted in direction under the supervision of Maya Das.

The famous play was a poignant presentation of the condition of seven elderly people who are considered a liability on the society.

Devanand, Kalinga, Amiya, Upendra, Nilamani, Rajeswar, KP, Aurojit, Bibhu, Jagannath, Tapoban, Shweta, Kaberi, Puja and Archita

performed on stage while Rajesh and Kailash scored the music.

Dignitaries who graced the occasion included Labour & ESI minister Sarada Prasad Nayak, Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi vice-president Manmath Satpathy member Samar Mudali, ONS advisor Mihir Kumar Meher, vice-president Jitendra Pattnaik and joint secretary Siba Prasad Tripathy.

## Amy slays trolls for mocking her look

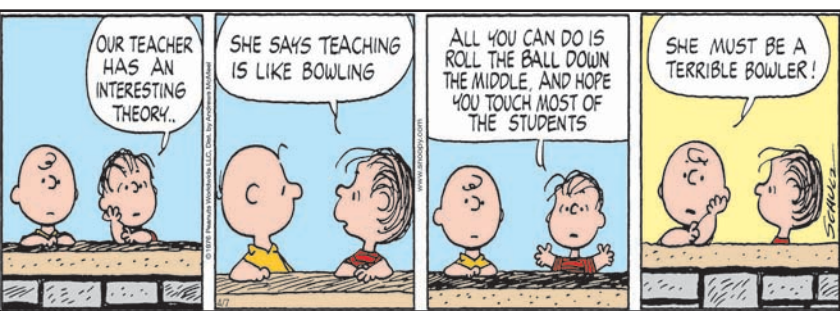
Mumbai: Actress Amy Jackson has broken her silence on the negative comments on her latest look which she posted on Instagram and called it 'quite sad'.

"The *Ekk Deewana Tha* actor said, 'I'm an actor and I take my job very seriously. For the last month, I've been filming a new project in the UK. So, for the character I am playing, I had to slim down and fully commit myself to the role. The online outcry from the (mainly male) Indian demographic is quite sad. I have worked with male co-stars who had to drastically change their look for a film, and they were highly praised for it. The moment a woman does it through unusual hair and makeup that doesn't conform to their idealism of beauty, they think they have the right to troll you."

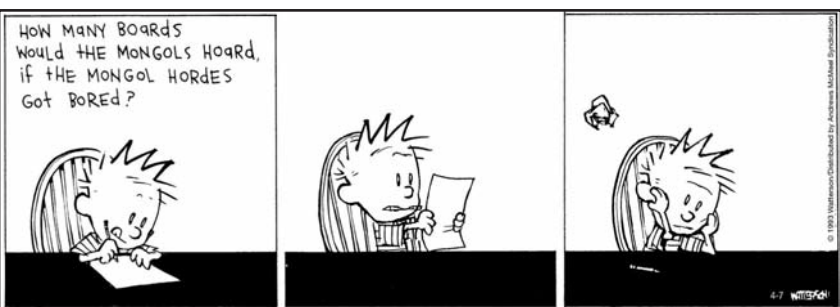
Responding to many users comparing her to Cillian Murphy, Amy said that she is 'over the moon' that so many people think she looks like the Peaky Blinders star and is ready to get her Birmingham accent ready for a comeback.

Many commented on how she had an uncanny resemblance to Thomas Shelby, a popular character played by Cillian in *Peaky Blinders*.

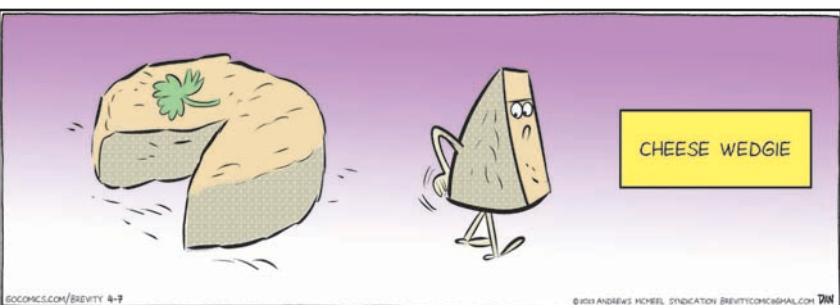
### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

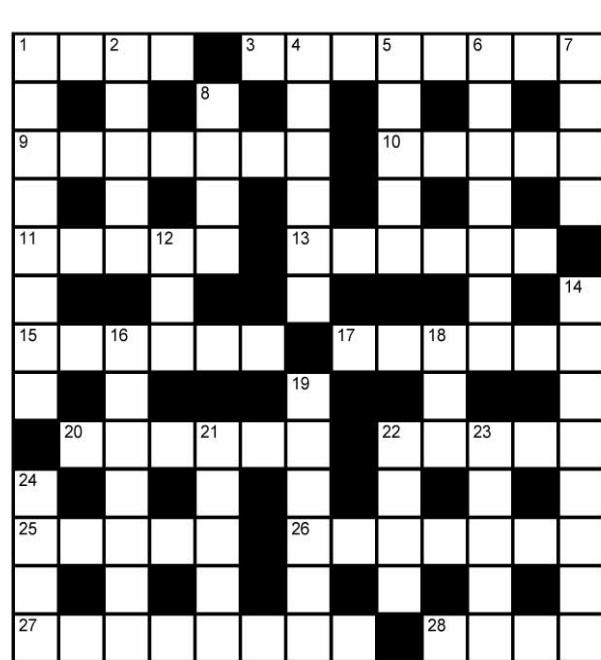


### BREVITY



### FUN post

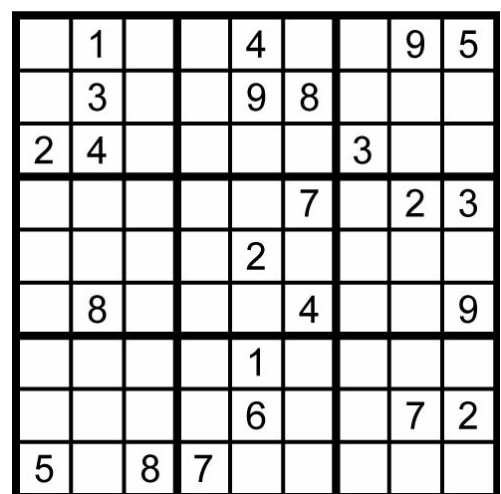
### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Norse thunder god
  - 3 Thick woolen coat
  - 9 Colonist
  - 10 Spiritual leader
  - 11 Tally (3,2)
  - 13 Fatal
  - 15 Anticipate
  - 17 Doyle character
  - 20 Monkey meal
  - 22 Salad oil holder
  - 25 Santa's reindeer, e.g.
  - 26 Mexican dish
  - 27 Photographer's lab
  - 28 Burden
  - 6 Space clouds
  - 7 Lash
  - 8 Links hazard
  - 12 Island strings, briefly
  - 14 Smarmy
  - 16 Serving dish
  - 18 High craggy hill
  - 19 Woody tropical plant
  - 21 Rose perfume
  - 22 Wagon
  - 23 Marriage, e.g.
  - 24 Ship part
- Down
- 1 Spigot juice (3,5)
  - 2 Anointed
  - 4 Fleet
  - 5 Divided land

### 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.

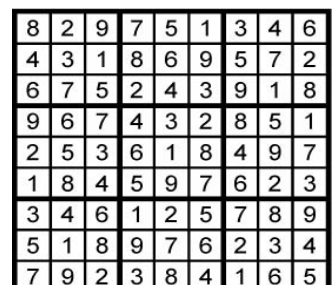


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

# downtown

IN FULL SWING

Artisans shape clay idol of Goddess Durga at Ranihat Mandap in Cuttack, Monday



# Pandemonium as BJD, BJP trade charges

SIX ADJOURNMENTS DISRUPT PROCEEDING

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** The Assembly Monday was adjourned at least half a dozen times as Opposition BJP members protested the rejection of their notice for a discussion on the governance style of the BJD dispensation.

While the opposition members disrupted the proceedings, the ruling BJD members also raised the issue of alleged non-maintenance of the national highway connecting Cuttack and Sambalpur.

Unable to run the House, Speaker Pramila Mallik first adjourned the House for one hour till 11:30am, but as the ruckus continued, the House was adjourned till 4pm. The House re-assembled after the lunch, similar situation prevailed leading to back-to-back four adjournments.

The Speaker held an all-party meeting to resolve the issue, but the BJP members continued to protest over the rejection of their notice for discussion on the governance style of functioning.

The government, however, introduced four different Bills amid the din in the well.

Even before the House assembled for Question Hour, BJP members were present in the well and raised slogans protesting the rejection of their notice.

BJD members were also on their feet, protesting the alleged non-maintenance of the national highway connecting Cuttack and Sambalpur.

Outside the House, Opposition Chief Whip Mohan Majhi said that the BJP's notice for a discussion on the admissibility of an adjournment motion was rejected by the Speaker without giving any reason.

"We wanted a discussion on whether a secretary is superior or a minister in the government protocol. The democratic system has completely collapsed in the state," Majhi told reporters.

He also cited instances of the Assembly rejecting written questions of some BJP members who



## IN THE HOUSE

*The ruling BJD members raised the issue of alleged non-maintenance of the national highway connecting Cuttack and Sambalpur*

wanted to know the amount spent on tours of a secretary-level officer.

"The government is acting like an escapist," Majhi alleged. Congress member Tarapasra Bahinipati accused both the BJP and the BJD for adjournment of the House.

"They (BJD and BJP) are one and not different. They got the House adjourned to prevent a discussion on issues to be raised by Congress. The verbal duel between the two parties is just eyewash," Bahinipati said.

BJD member Dipali Das said her party MLAs raised the issue of central negligence in repairing the national highway, which is the lifeline for the people of western Odisha. She claimed that many lives were lost in accidents due to poor maintenance of the highway.

## 1,771 lives lost to drowning in 3 yrs

Odisha recorded 1,771 deaths due to drowning in rivers and other water bodies in the last three years, with an average of 590 fatalities annually, Minister of State (MoS) for Home Tusharkanti Behera told the Assembly while replying to a question by BJD MLA Mousadhi Bag.

While 469 drowning death cases were reported in 2020, it went up to 576 in 2021 and 726 in 2022, Behera said. Mayurbhanj district recorded the highest 198 cases of drowning deaths during the three years, followed by 154 in Ganjam, Cuttack (146), Koraput (137) and Khurda (102), he said.

Informing about the steps taken by the government to check the problem, the Minister said fire and emergency services personnel along with necessary equipment were deployed at vulnerable points of different rivers during festive seasons. As the drowning cases are rising in the state, the government has asked all fire station officers to identify vulnerable points of different water bodies and launch public awareness drives, he added.



FOR A CAUSE: ASHAs clash with police personnel during their agitation at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar, Monday, to press for fulfilment of their demands, including regular employment

# State bans glue traps for rodent control

Odisha joins 20 other states & UTs in the country to prohibit the manufacture, sale and use of glue traps which cause slow and painful death to rats and other target animals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Sept 25:** Odisha has joined 20 other states in the country to ban glue traps as a rodent control measure.

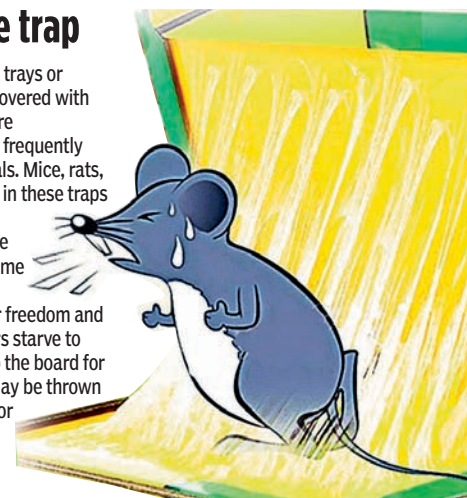
The Animal Welfare Board of Odisha (AWBO) Monday issued an order instructing all chief district veterinary officers-cum-member secretaries of the district societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals to ensure compliance with Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) advisories banning glue traps to catch rodents and to ensure the strict prohibition of the manufacture, sale, and use of glue traps in the state.

The circular cites Section 11 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA), 1960, which prohibits causing unnecessary pain and suffering to animals.

The order came in response to an appeal made by animal welfare non-profit 'People for the

## What is a glue trap

Usually made of plastic trays or sheets of cardboard covered with strong glue, these traps are indiscriminate killers that frequently ensnare non-target animals. Mice, rats, and other animals caught in these traps may suffocate when their noses and mouths become stuck in the glue, while some even chew through their legs in a desperate bid for freedom and die from blood loss. Others starve to death after being stuck to the board for days. Those found alive may be thrown away along with the trap or face an even more traumatic death, such as bludgeoning or drowning.



Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), India' to authorities in the state to take immediate steps to implement the AWBI's directives against glue traps.

Earlier, 20 states and Union Territories had issued directives against these cruel and illegal

sticky traps, a release by PETA said. Meanwhile, PETA India Advocacy Officer Farhat Ul Ain has applauded the Odisha government's response in taking steps to protect animals and preventing them from a hideously slow and painful death.

## Way ahead

According to PETA India, the best way to control rodent populations is to make the area unattractive or inaccessible to them: eliminate food sources by keeping surfaces and floors clean and storing food in chew-proof containers, sealing trash cans, and using ammonia-soaked cotton balls or rags to drive rodents away. After giving them a few days to leave, seal entry points using foam sealant, steel wool, hardware cloth, or metal flashing. Rodents can also be removed using humane cage traps but must be released where they will find adequate food, water, and shelter to help them survive.

"Glue traps are ineffective in the long term, since they don't deal with the root of the problem. More rats move in as they breed as a result of the brief increase in the food supply. The result is a vicious killing cycle in which many animals suffer and die," he said.

# 8/10: Cong says BJD-BJP engaged in mock fight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** A day after ruling BJD president and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik rated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's performance at 8 out of 10, Opposition Congress Monday said they are one and undivided.

While Patnaik praised Modi and his government at the Centre, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingh Mishra said, "The BJD and BJP MLAs are engaged in a mock fight in Odisha Assembly."

The Congress leader said this while referring to BJP members creating ruckus in the Odisha Assembly alleging central negligence towards repair of the National Highway between Cuttack and Sambalpur.

"The chief minister rated Modi government 8 out of 10, but his party Monday raised

NHAI issue in the Assembly and alleged negligence by the Centre. This shows that a mock fight is taking place outside the Assembly to fool people," Mishra told reporters outside the Assembly.

Senior Congress MLA SS Saluja said, "We are in doubt over their agenda. They (BJD & BJP) may contest the upcoming elections jointly. Keeping in view the praise being showered by the CM (to Modi), it appears he is in trouble."

Congress MLA Tarapasra Bahinipati said the BJD openly supported the BJP government at the Centre when a no-confidence motion was moved against the Modi government. The regional party also supported the BJP when Delhi Services Bill was introduced. Both these recent incidents prove that the BJD and BJP are both sides of a coin, he said.



BJP MLA Nauri Nayak said, "The CM is telling the truth. Modi's performance is even praised by leaders of other parties."

However, the BJP MLA rejected the possibility of a pre-poll alliance between the BJP and the BJD in run up to the 2024 general elections.

"There will be no friendly match between the BJD and BJP as alleged. We will face the election with full vigour," he said. BJD leader and Odisha Energy

Minister P K Deb while reacting over Patnaik's marking on Modi's performance said, "The chief minister is a wise politician. He has been elected as the chief minister for five consecutive times. I have no depth to comment on his statement."

During his visit to Odisha in August, BJP stalwart and Union Home Minister Amit Shah had praised BJD president Naveen Patnaik as "popular", and hailed him for becoming the chief minister five times in a row.

"Patnaik has created the record of becoming the chief minister of Odisha for five times in a row. He is a popular chief minister," Amit Shah, who is considered as the number two in the central government as well as in the ruling BJP, said August 5 here.

He also praised the chief minister and the BJD government for the decline in naxal violence and Maoist influence in the state.

# SC bins plea against decision to reduce cut-off percentile

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Sept 25:** The Supreme Court Monday refused to entertain a petition against reduction of cut off qualifying percentile to zero for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test Postgraduate (NEET-PG), 2023 counselling.

The move will enable all those who appeared for the test to go for the counselling.

The decision has drawn criticism as many feel mediocre medical students will secure seats in specialised postgraduate courses jeopardising public health.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare reduced the cut-off percentile to zero across all categories for NEET PG 2023



counselling Wednesday amid the ongoing admission session.

"It is for the information to candidates that the qualifying percentile for PG Courses (Medical/Dental) for NEET PG counselling 2023 has been reduced to 'zero' across all categories by MoHFW," said a no-

tice issued by Medical Counselling Committee (MCC), Directorate of Health Services, Government of India.

The matter was mentioned for urgent listing before a bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud which said the plea will be heard during the day.

When the matter came up for hearing, the counsel appearing for the petitioner said the plea has not been filed for admission alone, and in fact, it was on the issue of qualifying percentile having been reduced.

"You (petitioner) are not at aspirant," the bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, told the lawyer representing the petitioners and refused to entertain the plea.

# Baijayanti seeks anticipatory bail

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** The HR head of EML/Sambad Baijayanti Kar moved the Orissa High Court Monday seeking anticipatory bail to evade arrest in connection with the loan fraud case

which is being investigated by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Odisha Crime Branch.

The case was registered after a former employee of the media house lodged a complaint alleging that he had been coerced to seek loans by the company officials subsequent to his joining as a district correspondent. He had named Kar and other

staffers of the company, including Managing Director Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, as complicit in the crime. Following initial investigation, the EOW had registered a case under various IPC Sections pertaining to fraud, breach of trust, cheating and criminal intimidation, among others.

The EOW had conducted searches on multiple occasions at Sambad office in connection with the investigation and questioned Kar. The EOW had claimed that the accused were not cooperating with the probe. The sleuths had also grailed a few bank officials who are said to have facilitated sanctioning the loans.

# THE NEXT GOLD RUSH IS FAR, FAR AWAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sydney, Sept 25:** As space exploration and colonisation expand, off-Earth resources will create a booming market.

The drive to explore deeper into space and establish colonies on other planets has intensified over the last decade and, with it, the importance of space resources extraction.

Obtaining valuable resources and minerals, even in extreme environments, has long been attractive to humans. We have a history of facing hazards in search of valuable resources. From the gold rush in the 1800s to the recent surge in space resources, hu-



mans have been willing to take risks to find and collect scarce and profitable materials.

With advances in space technology, we're on the edge of the next gold rush — but not on Earth. Based on recent scientific and engineering break-

throughs and commercial interests, off-Earth mining is expected to begin in the next decade.

Potential mining sites include the Moon, Mars and its moons, asteroids and even comets. Market predictions for lunar mining - particularly lunar water - project a multibillion-dollar industry by 2050. Although theoretical, these forecasts signal a worthwhile market, with Australia as a potential leader.

The motivation for off-Earth mining is multifaceted: access to an unlimited wealth of valuable space resources, the spirit of discovering new planets and the development of spin-off technologies to be used back on Earth.

NASA's Artemis programme, which Australia supports via its signing of the Artemis Accords, is aiming for a lunar colony and eventually one on Mars. The only way to reduce the enormous costs of transporting resources from Earth will be through the establishment of self-sustaining infrastructure.

Water is an essential starting point. When converted to oxygen and hydrogen, it can be used as a propellant for rockets for further space missions. Given the vast reserves of lunar ice, it's a sustainable and economical source compared with Earthly transport. The Australian Centre for Space Engineering Research,

based at the University of New South Wales, is at the forefront of this endeavour, merging terrestrial mining engineering expertise with space research. The Off-Earth Mining Forum was founded in Sydney in 2013. Since then, it has run every two years. In August this year, the first non-Sydney-based event took place in Perth, Western Australia.

Its primary objective is to position Australia as a global leader in in-situ resource utilisation by harnessing space resources to reduce potential risks of off-Earth mining. This encompasses using lunar regolith (soil) for construction or mineral extraction, focusing on lunar water.

# Women's Bill a poll gimmick: Congress



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** Demanding implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll, the Congress Monday alleged that the legislation was brought and passed by the Narendra Modi government only to lure women voters ahead of the general election.

AICC spokesperson Ranjeet Ranjan said the Modi government had suddenly called the special session of Parliament and passed the Nari Shakti Vandhan Adhiniyam (the Bill). But the Bill is "post-dated" as it cannot be implemented till the completion of delimitation to redraw parliamentary and assembly constituencies and the census, the Congress Rajya Sabha

MP told a press conference here.

"When there is doubt on its implementation before 2029, why did the Centre call a special session of the Parliament and pass the bill?" she asked and demanded implementation of the legislation as well as the reservation for OBCs, similar to that for SCs and STs in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll.

"The government has brought the Women's Reservation Bill only to lure women voters in view of the coming Lok Sabha poll," the Congress leader alleged. The census, she said, was supposed to be conducted in 2019, but the Modi government did not do so. As it could not be conducted in 2019 in view of COVID-19, the census should have been conducted in 2021 or 2022.

Speaking about the Congress'

moves to provide reservation to women, Ranjan said former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi introduced a law reserving 33 per cent seats in local bodies and panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) for them in 1989.

But the then BJP stalwarts LK Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Yashwant Singh and Ram Jethmalani had opposed the legislation, which was passed in Lok Sabha but failed to clear the hurdle in the Rajya Sabha by just seven votes, she said.

Again in 1992, the then prime minister P V Narasimha Rao passed the bill to reserve 33 per cent of seats for women in PRIs and again in 2010 the UPA government under Manmohan Singh introduced the Women's Reservation Bill. In a reversal of what happened in 1989, the legislation was passed in the Rajya Sabha, but not in Lok Sabha due to lack of consensus among the UPA alliance parties, Ranjan added.

Senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi wrote to Prime Minister Modi for the passage of the Women Reservation Bill in 2018 and 2020 respectively, she added.



**BASIC ISSUES:** Members of All Odisha Ayush Students' Association stage a protest at Lower PMG in Bhubaneswar seeking fulfillment of their 7-point charter of demands, including regularisation of jobs, Monday

OP PHOTO

# State urged again to join AB-PMJAY

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** Health and Family Welfare Minister of State SP Singh Baghel urged the state government to join the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme for the benefit of the state's poor people.

Baghel was speaking at the two-day Arogya Manthan being held to mark five years of AB-PMJAY and two years of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) in New Delhi Monday.

Saying that Ayushman Bharat is the most important government welfare scheme underway in India today, he urged



THE AB-PMJAY IS IMPLEMENTED IN ALL STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES EXCEPT FOR WEST BENGAL, DELHI AND ODISHA

ODISHA HAS ITS OWN SCHEME BIJU SWASTHYA KALYAN YOJANA INSTEAD OF AYUSHMAN BHARAT

HEALTH MINISTER PUJARI INFORMED THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS SPENT RS 35,50,10,94,612 FOR THE TREATMENT OF 16,50,472 PATIENTS UNDER THE BIJU SWASTHYA KALYAN YOJANA SO FAR

Delhi, Odisha and West Bengal governments to join the scheme.

On the occasion, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Bharati Pravin Pawar said that

more than 45 crore Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA)IDs have been created, more than 2.19 lakh health facilities have been registered

under the scheme, and more than 2.28 lakh healthcare professionals have on-boarded under ABDM.

Earlier, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had also urged the Odisha government to implement the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme so that the beneficiaries can avail cashless hospitalisation.

Notably, Odisha has its own scheme in place, Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) instead of Ayushman Bharat and the state government has spent Rs 35,50,10,94,612 for the treatment of 16,50,472 patients under BSKY so far, informed state Health Minister Niranjan Pujari in Assembly, Monday.

## Youths bat for strong anti-tobacco measures

**Bhubaneswar:** People's Cultural Centre (PCCU) with the Coalition for Tobacco Free Odisha (CTFO) Monday organized here a 'mock youth parliament' to spread awareness and improve public health by reducing tobacco use. 80 participants from across the state participated in this Mock Youth Parliament. Rajya Sabha MPs Amar Patnaik, Sulata Deo, MLA Anant Narayana Jena along with other experts and members of the volunteer organisation joined the parliament. Patnaik emphasized the importance of addressing tobacco-related health hazards.

## 'Ghar Ghar Congress' campaign till Oct 15

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Sept 25:** The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) Monday launched 'Ghar Ghar Congress' campaign to reach out to voters ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and state assembly polls. The drive has been launched

to create awareness among voters about the failures of the BJD government in power in the state for 23 years and the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, PCC campaign committee chairman Bijay Patnaik said.

It will continue till October 15, he said.



**SANS ACTIVITY:** Children playing at erstwhile Badambadi bus stand as it remains unutilised following the construction of Netaji Bus Terminal in Cuttack, Monday

OP PHOTO

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Nandita Mondal, aged about 36 years, D/o Nani Gopal Mandal, Residence-MV-79, Lachipeta, P.S-MV-79, Malkangiri-764087 declare by this affidavit No-14AA022969, Date-11.9.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as Nandita Mandal for all future purposes.

I, Sri Nani Gopal Mandal, S/o Nalini Ranjan Mandal, Resident of MV-79, Lachipeta, P.S-MV-79, Dist. Malkangiri, -764087 declare by this affidavit No-14AA022969, Date-11.9.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as Nani Gopal Mandal for all future purposes.

I, Smt. Ramarani Mondal, D/o Banamali Ray, Residence- MV-79, Lachipeta, P.S-MV-79, Malkangiri-764087 declare by this affidavit No-14AA022969, Date-11.9.2023 that now onwards I shall be known as Ramarani Mandal for all future purposes.

I, Biswaranjan Mohapatra, S/o Late Bidur Charan Mohapatra, Resident of Shastri Nagar, Cuttack Sadar, Cuttack-753004, Odisha declared the affidavit dated 16.09.2023, that now onwards I shall be known as Biswaranjan Mohapatra for all future purposes.

# Metal-mining pollution impacts 23mn people globally

An estimated 23 million people around the world live on flood-plains contaminated by potentially harmful concentrations of toxic waste from metal-mining activity, according to a study.

The research, published recently in the journal Science, provides new insights into the extensive impact of metal mining contamination on rivers and floodplains across the world.

Using a new georeferenced global database of 185,000 metal mines and employing a combination of process-based modelling and empirical testing, the research assessed the global scale of metal mining contamination in river systems and its repercussions for human populations and livestock.

The study modelled contamination from all known active

and inactive metal mining sites, including tailings storage facilities - used to store mine waste. It looked at potentially harmful contaminants such as lead, zinc, copper, and arsenic, which are transported downstream from mining operations, and often deposited along river channels and floodplains for extended periods.

"Our new method for predicting the dispersal of mine waste in river systems worldwide provides governments, environmental regulators, the mining industry and local communities with a tool that, for the first time, will enable them to assess the offsite and downstream impacts of mining on ecosystem and human health," said Professor Mark Macklin, from the University of Lincoln, UK.

"We expect that this will make it easier to mitigate the environmental effects of historical and present mining and, most importantly, help to minimise the impacts of future mining development on communities, while also protecting food and water security," said Macklin, who led the research.

Released against the backdrop of growing demand for metals and minerals to feed the demands of the green energy transition, the new results highlight the widespread reach of the contamination, affecting approximately 479,200 kilometres of river channels and encompassing 164,000 square kilometres of floodplains on a global scale.

According to the findings, approximately 23.48 million people reside on these affected floodplains, supporting 5.72 million



livestock and encompassing over 65,000 square kilometres of irrigated land.

Due to a lack of available data for several countries, the team behind the study believes these numbers to be a conservative estimate.

Various pathways exist for humans to become exposed to these contaminant metals including from direct exposure through skin contact, accidental ingestion, inhalation of contaminated

dust, and through the consumption of contaminated water and food grown on contaminated soils, the researchers said.

This poses an additional hazard to the health of urban and rural communities in low-income countries and communities dependent on these rivers and floodplains, especially in regions already burdened with water-related diseases, they said.

In industrialised nations in Western Europe, including the

UK, and the US, this contamination constitutes a major and growing constraint to water and food security, compromises vital ecosystem services, and contributes to antimicrobial resistance in the environment.

"Rapid growth in global metal mining is crucial if the world is to make the transition to green energy," said Professor Chris Thomas who led the analysis and modelling.

"Much of the estimated global contamination we have mapped is a legacy from the industrial era - rightly, modern mining is being encouraged to prioritise environmental sustainability," Thomas said.

Professor Deanna Kemp from the University of Queensland in Australia, who was part of the team behind the study, called the results "sobering."

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# Farmers suffer due to defunct LI projects

### CULTIVATORS ALLEGE MONEY BEING SIPHONED BY CORRUPT OFFICIALS



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nayagarh, Sept 25:** Agriculture in Nayagarh district is suffering as many of the deep lift irrigation (LI) projects are lying defunct for a long time. Sources said Monday that most of the LI projects are of no use for cultivation. As per a government report, 428 out of 1,323 deep lift irrigation projects in this district have become useless.

However, sources said that more than 800 LI projects are lying defunct in this district. They pointed out that the government is spending huge amounts for installation of this particular type of irrigation project. What however, surprises them is that no review is being

supply of water, the state government decided to install 400 deep lift irrigation projects in FY 2021-22. So far 272 projects have been completed, out of which 58 failed to produce any water. In essence it means that 214 LI projects have proved successful. Permission to provide electricity to run the LI projects has already been granted by the government and the work order to this effect was issued in June this year. These successful projects will be handed over to farmers soon, sources said.

Local farmers however, pointed out that no one is trying to ascertain whether these LI projects will be useful for them. Farmers Sudam Sahu of Gania, Bibhti Nayak of Daspalla, Pabitra Swain of Nayagarh said the majority of deep LI points do not work. They have lodged repeated complaints on this issue to the concerned authorities. However, they added that no one is addressing their needs. Some even alleged that officials are pocketing government funds by showing inflated figures pertaining to LI points in the district.

Executive engineer Dushasan Jena of Nayagarh Lift Irrigation division said that the defunct projects are being activated while new ones are being set up.

done as to whether the projects are running smoothly or not.

Sources informed that Ranpur block with 580 has the highest number of LI projects. Nuagaon block has 290, Odagaon block 273, Nayagarh 108. The remaining LI projects are scattered over various other blocks. Out of the 1,323 projects, 1,265 run on power while the remaining 58 are solar-powered ones.

The government report states that these LI projects have been set up to provide water to 6,615 hectares of farmland during cultivation. Sadly the report also states that 2,090 hectares of farmland do not get any water through irrigation as 428 LI projects do not function properly.

To help farmers get proper



**STAR PRESENCE:** Actor Govinda performed at the Nuakhai Bhetghat programme organised by Naba Das Foundation at the Sarbahal High School ground in Jharsuguda, Monday

OP PHOTO

# Man hacked to death in Ganjam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, Sept 25:** A 22-year-old man was allegedly hacked to death and his body was dumped in a forest area in Ganjam district, police said here Monday. The body of the deceased, identified as Sunil Nayak, was found in Brundabanpur under Pattapur police station area Sunday, they added. Police arrested Monday two persons in connection with the incident. They were identified as Kuna Dalai (20) of Brundabanpur and S Malesu Patra (25) of Podamari.

Preliminary inquiry revealed an old enmity between Sunil and Kuna led to the murder, said Sabyasachi Malla, the inspector-in-charge of the Pattapur police station. Patra, the other accused person, allegedly helped Kuna in committing the murder, he said.

Police seized a sharp weapon, which was allegedly used to commit the murder, from the accused persons. After committing murder, the accused persons took the body about one kilometre away and dumped it in a forest. A case has been filed and an investigation is underway, police said.

# Braving odds for safety of patients



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, Sept 25:** The Niti Aayog had announced Kalahandi as an 'Aspirational' district way back in 2021. However, lack of development of proper infrastructure continues to plague the district. Essential requirements of life remain inaccessible to majority of residents living in Kalahandi district.

The grim situation can be aptly explained by the scene in which

villagers of Ranipadar village under Talajhapi panchayat of T Rampur block are seen carrying a sick woman on a cot through the swirling waters of the Indravati river. They have been forced to do so as there is no bridge to connect the village to the other side. The villagers are well aware of the risk they are taking while wading through a river in spite. However, for the sake of residents of the village, they are forced to take risks.

Sources said that the woman

**Residents of Ranipadar village have been demanding for the construction of a bridge over the Indravati river to help them travel to the other side, but to no avail**

identified as Sundar Majhi suffered an acute attack of diarrhoea and soon turned critical. Despite the swirling river, family members of the ill woman and other neighbours decided to carry her to the other side where an ambulance was waiting. They succeeded in their mission and the woman was safely taken to the T Rampur Hospital.

This has become a regular affair for the villagers as there is no alternative route to the village which is cut off from the mainland. Scenes of villagers carrying pregnant women and patients wading through over-flooded Indravati river are a regular sight during monsoons. The villagers have been demanding the construction of a bridge and a road to their village. However, their pleas are yet to be addressed.

# Congress demands CBI probe



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, Sept 25:** The controversy surrounding the death of Sushmita Minz, the former assistant collector of Rourkela is growing by the day with political parties and tribal organisations demanding a thorough probe into the matter. Police however, at this point of time are waiting for the post-mortem report. They feel that the report can only guide them in the proper direction.

Opposition parties however, are gunning for the administration stating that the matter is not being probed in a proper manner. Members of the Raghunathpalli Youth Congress submitted Monday a memorandum to the DIG Rourkela, Niti Shekhar demanding a CBI probe into the death of Sushmita.

Unit president Sumit Kansari said that they demanded a 'fair' investigation in the matter. "We have demanded a CBI inquiry so that the actual facts will be re-

vealed. Sushmita's family has alleged that senior officials are responsible for her death. So only a CBI probe will ascertain the real reason behind Sushmita's death," Kansari stated.

"Sushmita was a very efficient officer and yet she was under pressure always. So the real reason behind her death has to come out," added Kansari. He informed that the party will also appeal to Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik if the demand for CBI probe is not heeded to.

Meanwhile Sushmita's family continued to voice their protests at the way the investigations are on. "Where was the policeman on duty with her when she died? He should be interrogated properly," Sushmita's uncle said.

Sushmita was found dead with her body floating in the pond of Sensory Park here September 19. She had gone missing September 16 and was traced to a hotel here the next day.

### SUMMONS FOR SETTLEMENT OF ISSUES

(Order 5, R 1 and 5 C.P.C.) IN THE COURT OF CIVIL JUDGE SENIOR DIVISION, KHARIAR, DIST-NUAPADA Civil Suit No.354/2018

Hemanta Kumar Bisoi..... Plaintiff Vs Jashobanti Bai and Others. ....Defendants

To, Kaladei Satnami, aged about 57 years, W/o- Sonu Satnami, R/O-VIII- Khariar (Ward No.2), P.S.- Khariar, Dist- Nuapada

Whereas the above name plaintiff Hemanta Kumar Bisoi has instituted a suit against you to declare his right, title and interest of the suit land and you valid and confirm title and possession of the plaintiff over the suit land, you are hereby summoned to appear in this court in person or through a pleader duly instructed, able to answer all martial questions relating to the suit or who shall be accompanied by some persons able to answer all short questions on 16th day of Oct.2023 at about 10.30 AM to answer the claim and further you are by directed to file on that day a written statement of your defence and to produce on the said day all document in your possession or power upon which you base your defence.

Take notice that in a default of your appearance on the day in the aforesaid mentioned, the suit will be hard and determines in your absence.

Give under my hand and seal of the court on this day of 16.09.2023

Sd/- CIVIL JUDGE, SENIOR DIVISION, KHARIAR

# Vedanta holds fire safety drill for kids

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jharsuguda, Sept 25:** Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, recently conducted a comprehensive mock drill on fire safety at the DAV School here. The aim of the drill was to enhance the school's fire emergency response capabilities and familiarise community members with fire mitigation methods towards effectively managing fire-related emergencies.

The mock drill drew active participation from over 1,000 students, in addition to teachers and school administrators. The event provided a comprehensive briefing on fire extinguishing equipment and safety protocols. The mock drill commenced with a practical demonstration of fire extinguishers, followed by a simulated fire evacuation procedure and educating students about effective evacuation techniques.



# Habaspuri saree on verge of extinction



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhawanipatna, Sept 25:** Habaspuri saree, a handloom textile of Kalahandi district known for its distinct designs and uniqueness of weaving is on the verge of extinction due to lack of government incentives, shortage of raw materials and absence of marketing facilities.

Handloom sarees are woven at various places of western Odisha. Barpali, Sonepuri, Bandha, Bauda and Sambalpuri sarees have carved a niche for themselves due to their intricate designs and patterns. Habaspuri saree produced in Kalahandi district has also made its mark both in India and abroad showcasing the traditional patterns such as kumbha (temple), fish, flowers and various

art works of the Kondh tribals.

While bandha designs can be seen in only the borders of Sambalpuri sarees, they are woven in both body and borders of Habaspuri saree. It had won appreciation for its intricate designs and artwork from former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during an exhibition held in New Delhi in 1951.

The saree has also received the geographical indication (GI) tag. The famous Tata Tea brand has also printed the picture of Habaspuri saree on its packets. However, the state government and the district administration

AFTER ARRIVAL OF FANCY PRODUCTS, PRODUCTION OF HABASPURI SAREES DECLINED AS WEAVERS FAILED TO EARN THE MONEY THEY INVESTED INTO WEAVING OF SAREES WITH A SHARP RISE IN PRICE OF RAW MATERIALS

THIS FORCED THEM TO GIVE UP THEIR TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION AND SWITCH TO OTHER PROFESSIONS

have shown no interest in promoting the saree in national and international markets. This has affected production and pushed it to the verge of extinction with its weavers losing their livelihood.

Sources said that Kondh tribals first started weaving the Habaspuri saree in the 19th century. Later, the members of Bhulia (weaver) community of Habaspur village under Junagarh block accepted it as their traditional occupation by reviving the production of Habaspuri saree.

With passage of time, the handwoven saree witnessed a decline in demand after various fancy products made their way into the

markets. Many of the weavers also took up other occupations for a living. As a result, Habaspuri sarees vanished from stores in the markets.

The Bhulia weavers living in Habaspur village under Junagarh block revived the saree with their own intricate designs and patterns; thereby the saree got its name. However, it has become almost extinct from Habaspur village due to lack of government sponsorships and unavailability of raw materials. Despite weavers in Habaspur village seeking other jobs for a better life, the unique art is now being carried forward by weavers of other villages under the block. Earlier, over 20 weaver families in Habaspur village were engaged in weaving saree, napkins (gamchha), lungi and door and window curtains that were in high demand both in domestic and foreign markets.

Help however, has arrived from various quarters. The district administration in assistance with Vedanta Aluminium sanctioned ₹10 lakh for revival of the handloom weaving centre in the village in 2022. The house has been renovated, but till now no effort has been made to address the problems of the weavers. Local intelligentsia and residents demanded the state government's active intervention and measures for revival of the famous saree.

### MUTUAL FUND INVESTOR AWARENESS PROGRAM

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**Date and Venue:** Friday, 29th September, 2023; 6:30 pm onwards. at Hotel Radhika Regency, Birsra Chowk, Rourkela - 769 001, Odisha. For registration, please contact: Ranjit Mallik, Mobile: 99370 88035.

Registration is compulsory. The registration time will be from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm. It is mandatory to follow the COVID safety guidelines during the event. No walk-ins will be allowed.



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01	Name of Work	: Revival of 23 No. defunct LIPIs in different Block of Sundargarh Dist. under State Plan 23-24 grant.
02	Estimated Cost	: Rs. 12.65 lakhs to 14.21 lakhs.
03	Period of Completion	: 90 days
04	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 10.00 Hrs. of 30.09.23 to 17.00 Hrs. of 06.10.23
05	Date & Time of opening of bids	: 15.00 Hrs. of 07.10.23
06	Name and Address of the officer inviting bid	: Executive Engineer, L.I.Division, Rourkela

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FOCUS POLITICS

# RACE TO BOTTOM



This is the old language of power and control, a spent force positioning in the world of today. It represents a poor projection of this nation as a harsh and desolate landscape of bitterness

masculine in form, shape and action. This is the old language of power and control, a spent force positioning in the world of today. It represents a poor projection of this nation as a harsh and desolate landscape of bitterness. We are creating a Bharat without its ideas of grace, love and togetherness. In the absence of these, India cannot thrive as a nation, however advanced the infrastructure, the businesses or other tools of modernity.

Some of these ideas will come up during the election campaign to challenge the BJP. "Love" is a language that the Congress has spoken of often in recent times. There is no doubt that the BJP campaign this time will be even more slick, well oiled, properly timed and luxuriously funded. The Opposition will be no match in money power. Yet, there are no guarantees. As the savvy former PM VP Singh once said: "In India, you can lose an election for want of money but you can never win an election just because you have money!"

While we await the formal blowing of campaign bugles, there is an easy way out of the situation created in Parliament. The BJP leadership as a whole can apologise, its senior leaders including the Prime Minister can meet up with Danish Ali and assure him and the nation that this won't happen again, suitably punish the offender in this case and walk away from the ugly and choose to take the high ground. Just how many from those among the BJP ranks and those ranged against the party think that such a path is possible, desirable, even profitable? And thereby hangs the tale of a nation that can break barriers to reach the moon while it builds new barriers in the hearts and minds of the people.

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR. Views are personal.

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The abusive and communal epithets hurled by the BJP MP from South Delhi Ramesh Bidhuri against the BSP MP Kunwar Danish Ali represent a race to the bottom, as language that should be banned on the streets is spoken in Parliament from the treasury benches. At this stage, the BJP is trapped by the disease of competitive communalism and attention-seeking, some of its ambitious members trying to grab the stage in desperate ways with displays one worse than the other. The lack of strong and swift action against Bidhuri legitimises such abuse, and indeed messages others that it is okay to play in this muck and contribute to a rising crescendo of communal hatred as we prepare for the 2024 elections. An immediate example is the claim by another BJP MP that Bidhuri was provoked, but that statement, too, is an attempt to inject more communalism into the picture.

That Bidhuri's unspeakable and violent words came while he appeared to be defending the Prime Minister should ideally and in normal circumstances be seen as an affront to the Prime Minister. There are other ways to respond to the charge, which essentially was on a different topic - that the PM grabbed attention and took credit for the moon mission instead of leaving ISRO to bask in the glory. That the rebuttal to the accusation is abuse actually makes the accusation stick, does a disservice to the PM and the party (never mind the merits or demerits of the accusation) and should shock the leadership. Further, that Bidhuri defiled Parliament in the very first session it met there in the new building marks another hijacking of what will be billed as an important achievement by the BJP. The PM himself has called the new edifice "not just a new building but the symbol of a new beginning." Bidhuri

got to give that "new beginning" a very ominous meaning. And he also ended up diverting attention away from the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, the women reservations bill which the Prime Minister has called "a historic legislation which will further boost women empowerment...". This should be enough to attract stern action. That this action was not forthcoming as of Sunday night beyond the issuance of a show-cause notice raises many questions.

The key of these should be the nature and character of the new BJP as it prepares to fight 2024, overtly confident that it will be returned to power but not exactly unconcerned about the "surprise" that Rahul Gandhi says awaits the party. The coming together of the Opposition, even though decried by some as a patchwork solution rather than a unified presence, has without doubt worried the BJP. There is also a strong anti-incumbency undercurrent at play, not to add the vigour with which the Opposition is taking its story to the people and responding on social media. Under these circumstances, and particularly since there are reports that the INDIA alliance appears to be picking up steam, the easiest

approach would be to fall back on the staple of communalism. If this is considered a sure-shot winner, as many in BJP tend to think, then the nation must brace for a rather horrible campaign as individual candidates race ahead of the sanctioned narrative, and land up in spaces like the one Bidhuri occupied in Parliament. The nature of the rogue speech, the silence of the BJP leadership, the obvious pain displayed by Danish Ali who said he couldn't sleep the night the remarks were made is the exact way the cycle of abuse and violence has played out outside of Parliament. The question that was thought to be outside on the streets for those oppressed: "Where do ordinary people go for justice?" has now reached Parliament, with a Member of the Lok Sabha now asking: "Where do we go for justice?" This is without doubt a terrible slide for the nation.

At the root of this fall is the belief among the BJP that assertion means aggression, that hitting out is the best form of defence, that violence is in our grain and must be met with double the violence, that the "other" must be put down, that the grammar of leadership is



Jagdish Rattanani

WE ARE CREATING A BHARAT WITHOUT ITS IDEAS OF GRACE, LOVE AND TOGETHERNESS

## Road Tragedy

The recent late night road mishap that resulted in the death of a young medical practitioner Dr Amit Bisoi on 23 September at Bomikhal, Bhubaneswar should act as a warning signal for the authorities. There is no doubt that the road and highway infrastructure across Orissa has considerably improved during the past few years. Most single lane roads have been doubled or quadrupled which in turn has prompted drivers to press on the accelerator and speed up. One can also observe that with economic development more modern vehicles of various brands are plying on the roads. While vastly improving the infrastructure, no one seems to be paying attention to the needs of maintenance and upkeep of the roads and streets. Corrupt and inefficient practices during the construction of these roads also make them easily susceptible to the vagaries of nature. One of the prominent examples could be seen during the construction of the Bomikhal flyover stretching from Saheed Nagar to Cuttack-Puri Road over the train track. This over-bridge collapsed twice, first killing a scooter rider on 10 September 2017 and the second incident that occurred on 3 May 2018 killed one of the construction workers. Even today, that flyover is a traffic deathtrap. This is proven by the accident of a motor-bike rider who hit the wrongly designed divider at the T-junction and fell down from the bridge thus meeting with an instant death. All this demonstrates faulty road designs, absolutely zero concern about traffic control and callous road maintenance. This is not limited to the 'smart city' Bhubaneswar alone. From Balasore to Berhampur, from Sambalpur to Malkanagiri, the humungous road infrastructure of Orissa seems to be waiting to kill or maim drivers and pedestrians alike.

Interestingly, names of prominent personalities are generally put up on roads and bridges to mark the inauguration of that stretch. The fatalities in Orissa should alert the authorities that it is more important to prominently display the names of the engineers in charge, the designers and the contractor/executioner of those projects so that those individuals will have accountability for faulty workmanship. Modern vehicles with faster pickup are enticing drivers to speed up. While these vehicles are meant for roads used by traffic regulation conscious citizens, sadly one observes a total lack of traffic awareness amongst the people. Pedestrians too do not have the safety of raised and even sidewalks which forces them to walk on the roads. Many cases have been reported where pedestrians have fallen into open drains and their bodies have been recovered a few kilometers away. All such deadly accidents keep repeating because there is no accountability or responsibility. Added to this, driving licenses are issued to untrained and illiterate individuals incapable of deciphering road signs and written instructions.

It is pertinent to understand that modern communication will depend on improved road connectivity. The near future will usher in an era of AI controlled self driven vehicles that will very soon populate the roads of Bhubaneswar and Orissa too. Large stretches of roads and bridges being built in the 2020s seem to be unfit for the future vehicles. Bringing down road fatalities drastically will imply constant monitoring of new road constructions as well as their upkeep. Blind and lopsided growth is killing people on a daily basis. Immediate corrective action can and must be taken. The starting should be done by strict monitoring of traffic violations and hefty fines imposed on those who deny safety to others. The cops should stop checking people for helmets and instead check drivers under the influence of alcohol, wrong side drives, jumping traffic lights and general mischief and erratic driving on the roads. A sustained drive by traffic police on these few points will greatly help decrease road fatalities and will encourage people to be responsible for their actions.

**Piate**  
Tathagata Satpathy

### WISDOM CORNER

- Whoever wants music instead of noise, joy instead of pleasure, soul instead of gold, creative work instead of business, passion instead of foolery, finds no home in this trivial world of ours. **HERMANN HESSE**
- Money is numbers and numbers never end. If it takes money to be happy, your search for happiness will never end. **BOB MARLEY**
- Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives. **OPRAH WINFREY**

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1580:** Francis Drake completes circumnavigation of the world, sailing into Plymouth aboard the "Golden Hind." Also known as Drake's Raiding Expedition, the circumnavigation was an important historical maritime event that took place between 15 December 1577 and 26 September 1580. The expedition was authorised by Queen Elizabeth I and consisted of five ships led by Francis Drake. Termed a 'voyage of discovery,' it was in effect an ambitious covert raiding voyage and the start of England's challenge to the global domination of Spain and Portugal.
- 1815:** The Holy Alliance of Russia, Austria, and Prussia was formed after the final defeat of Napoleon. The alliance aimed to restrain liberalism and secularism in Europe in the wake of the devastating French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars; it nominally succeeded in this until the Crimean War. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck managed to reunite the Holy Alliance following the unification of Germany in 1871, but the alliance again faltered by the 1880s over Austrian and Russian conflicts of interest over the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.
- 1960:** The first in a series of historic televised debates (seen by some 85 to 120 million viewers) between the United States presidential candidates John F. Kennedy and Vice President Richard M. Nixon was broadcast this day in 1960.
- 1969:** Apple Records releases The Beatles' 11th studio album "Abbey Road," their final recordings as a quartet; tops the charts in 11 countries. It is the last album the group recorded, although "Let It Be" was the last album completed before the band's break-up in April 1970. Critics view "Abbey Road" as one of the Beatles' best and rank it as one of the greatest albums of all time. George Harrison's two songs on the album, "Something" and "Here Comes the Sun," have been regarded as among the best he wrote for the group. The album's cover, featuring the group walking across a zebra crossing outside Abbey Road Studios, has become one of the most famous and imitated in the history of recorded music.

### LOL

#### Burglar & parrot

Late one night a burglar broke into a house and while he was sneaking around he heard a voice say, "Jesus is watching you." He looked around and saw nothing. He kept on creeping and again heard, "Jesus is watching you." In a dark corner, he saw a cage with a parrot inside. The burglar asked the parrot, "Was it you

who said Jesus is watching me?" The parrot replied, "Yes." Relieved, the burglar asked, "What is your name?" The parrot said, "Clarence." The burglar said, "That's a stupid name for a parrot. What idiot named you Clarence?" The parrot answered, "The same idiot that named the Rottweiler Jesus."

### SPECTRUM FINANCE

## Dangerous debt restructuring



Jayati Ghosh & Kanchana N. Ruwanpura

RESTRUCTURING DOMESTIC DEBT IN AN ECONOMY ALREADY IN DECLINE IS BOTH PAINFUL AND UNNECESSARY

More than a year after the mass protest movement known as the Aragalaya ousted Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lankans have once again taken to the streets. The impetus for the resurgence of public discontent is the recent bailout agreement between the IMF and President Ranil Wickremesinghe's government. The deal, which aims to address the country's ongoing balance-of-payments crisis, offers Sri Lanka less than \$3 billion over four years - a tiny fraction of what the country needs to meet its debt-servicing requirements and just one-sixth of its foreign-exchange earnings, which amounted to roughly \$18 billion in 2022.

In exchange for this emergency loan, the IMF imposed a series of conditions that have significantly exacerbated Sri Lanka's wage and cost-of-living crises. The mandated shift to market exchange rates, in particular, immediately led to a sharp currency devaluation, causing imported fuel and food prices to skyrocket and contributing to a 165% increase in electricity tariffs between June 2022 and February 2023.

As fiscal restraints were imposed, the economy continued to spiral down, with GDP shrinking by 7.8% in 2022 and 11.5% in the first quarter of 2023. This has had an adverse impact on employment, livelihoods, and the viability of small and medium-size enterprises. Consequently, real wages fell by 30-50% in 2022 and have remained stagnant.

Despite paying lip service to the importance of combating corruption and curbing illicit financial flows, the IMF plan falls short of tackling these issues effectively. Although it includes a modest increase in corporate income taxes, it neglects the possibility of imposing wealth taxes.

The current wave of protests is partly a reaction to the government's decision to comply with the IMF's demand to restructure both external and domestic debt. Instead of focusing on lowering the external debt to a sustainable level, however, the agreement aims to bring down total debt, thereby reducing the haircut imposed on foreign creditors to just 30%.

This has exacerbated the crisis and is difficult to justify. In countries that do not issue global reserve currencies, there is a clear distinction between domestic and external debt. Governments can and do service

domestic debt using their own currencies, the supply of which is controlled by their central banks. By contrast, foreign currency-denominated debt necessitates either foreign-exchange earnings or new borrowing. Sri Lanka's crisis is largely the result of the country's inability to service its external debt due to insufficient foreign-currency reserves. Since 2016, the government has preferred to take on new international loans, primarily from private lenders, to repay its foreign creditors, including bilateral and multilateral lenders. In early 2022, the government chose to default on its foreign loans rather than explore alternative solutions.

But restructuring domestic debt in an economy already in decline is both painful and unnecessary. Sri Lanka's domestic debt is held by various entities, including the central bank, commercial banks, and pension funds. Given that the country's banking system is already severely weakened, pension funds will almost certainly bear the brunt of the expected adjustment.

Many workers whose life savings are invested in these retirement funds earn wage incomes well below the minimum

taxable rate. This includes workers who face numerous intersecting deprivations stemming from gender and ethnic discrimination, such as women employed in the garment industry and tea-plantation workers, especially those from minority Tamil groups. These groups have already experienced an alarming decline in living standards. Nearly 56% of Sri Lanka's 22.2 million people are now grappling with multidimensional vulnerabilities, with women and girls being the hardest hit.

By targeting the meagre pension funds of Sri Lanka's wage workers, the government's domestic-debt restructuring plan is likely to exacerbate existing class, gender, and ethnic inequalities. A genuine resolution to Sri Lanka's prolonged economic crisis would require a dramatic change in strategy. To bring about a robust economic recovery, the government and the IMF must focus on improving the lives of working people rather than imposing on them the burden of adjustment.

Jayati Ghosh is a Professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Kanchana N. Ruwanpura is a Professor at the University of Gothenburg.

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## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

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

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

### Pak economic crisis

Sir, The World Bank has cautioned Pakistan that nearly 100 million of its population has fallen below the poverty line. The Washington-based lender on Friday urged the cash-stripped country to take urgent steps to achieve financial stability. It also unveiled draft policy notes for Pakistan's next government, Express Tribune newspaper reported. The election commission has announced that the polls would take place during the last week in January. The country is currently led by interim PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. The World Bank noted that poverty in Pakistan rose within one year from 34.2 per cent to 39.4 per cent, with 12.5 million more people falling below the poverty line of the USD 3.65 per day income level. The institution added that about 95 million citizens live in poverty. Tobias Haque, the World Bank's lead country economist for Pakistan, said that the country's "economic model is no longer reducing poverty, and the living standards have fallen behind peer countries." The World Bank further urged Pakistan to tax its "sacred cows" - agriculture and real estate. It further asked the Asian country to chop off wasteful expenditures in an effort to achieve economic stability through steep fiscal adjustment of over 7 per cent of the economy. The World Bank is deeply concerned about the economic situation of today. "This may be Pakistan's moment for significant policy shift," said Najy Benhassine, the country director for Pakistan at World Bank.

Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

### Seat-sharing concerns

Sir, Differences over seat-sharing continue to haunt the Opposition INDIA bloc. Ahead of the crucial 2024 Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh, the alliance talks between the Congress and the Samajwadi Party (SP) hit a roadblock. While the grand old party wanted two dozen seats, SP president Akhilesh Yadav refused to give over five. The SP has a point: the Congress could win only from Raebareilly, where former Congress president Sonia Gandhi was the MP. The Congress' plea to consider 2009 (it won 21 seats then) as the basis for seat-sharing needs to be more credible, considering that its fortunes are at a low ebb.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Women dominate HP's grassroots politics

The women's power has prevailed against the sale of liquor, tobacco, cigarettes and gambling too

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Sept 25: Panchayats in Himachal Pradesh, where women voters outnumber men in every election, have been fair to women much before the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill in the Parliament.

Over a decade-and-a-half now, the state government has reserved 50 per cent seats for women in all Panchayati Raj institutions -- up from the village-level third tier of governance -- except for the post of 'up-pradhan' which is open.

The result: Women, apart from contesting the 50 per cent seats reserved for them, are giving a tough fight to men in panchayats not reserved for them. The women's power has prevailed against the sale of liquor, tobacco, cigarettes and gambling too.

On an average, close to 60 per cent of seats are occupied by the women in grassroots politics, officials told IANS.

The state assembly passed the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill on April 8, 2008, leading to an increase in the reservation limit for women in panchayati raj institutions to 50 percent from 33 percent.

The Bill, introduced by the then BJP government led by Prem Kumar Dhumal, was passed unanimously, but Congress MLA Kuldeep Pathania, who is now the Speaker of the legislative assembly, had to face the ire of women legislators, including Renu Chaddha



and Urmil Thakur, who termed him anti-women.

Adopting a strategically important tool to mobilise women, Mahila Gram Sabhas are being organised twice a year to exclusively discuss issues relating to women, children and issues concerning overall development in panchayats.

The state has 3,195 panchayats, 75 panchayat samitis and 11 zila parishads.

Elections are held for around 27,000 seats and 50 percent reservation means almost half of the seats would be occupied by women only, an election official told IANS.

Each panchayat has one post each of 'pradhan' or president and 'up-pradhan' or vice-president and five to 21 posts of 'panch' or ward members, depending upon the population of the panchayat. Only the post of 'up-pradhan' is not reserved.

As many as 3,195 panchayat

presidents and vice-presidents, 19,159 panch, 1,651 block samiti members and 240 zila parishad members are elected once in five years.

Besides reservation for women, there is also a provision of 15 per cent reservation each for the Other Backward Classes and the Scheduled Castes. In both the cases, there is also a quota within the quota for women.

The women-led panchayat of Bandraul in Kullu district is an example of the 'pink revolution'.

With a population of 2,500, the panchayat is a hub of women weavers of Kullu shawls -- a symbol of feminist empowerment and a source of rural prosperity.

Its head Nirmala Thakur told IANS that they try their best to solve their problems on time.

"We inform the weavers about the sources of their income and benefits," she said.

Apart from 40 women weavers, self-help groups in the panchayat

are making woollen caps, mufflers, socks and gloves, which they are marketing across the country.

Joint Secretary Panchayats Niraj Chandla believes, "As the participation of women is increased in the panchayati raj institutions, their role and responsibility has also increased accordingly and we get to see progressive panchayats because of women participation."

In the 2010 panchayati raj elections, the first with reserved 50 percent seats for women, a remote Kamru village in Kalpa block of Kinnaur district set an example by unanimously electing an all-women panchayat.

At that time the panchayat had 1,100 voters -- mostly tribals.

Interestingly, the Cheuni panchayat in Seraj assembly constituency, the remotest in Mandi district with a population of over 1,600, took the lead in 2017 in passing a resolution banning cigarettes, liquor and playing cards in its jurisdiction.

Taking a cue, at least 15 nearby panchayats have also passed such resolutions.

So is the women's clamour against liquor that also grows louder. Women's brigades across the state, especially in the rural areas, have been demanding the closure or shifting of liquor vendors, mainly from residential localities.

In Shimla, Kullu, Sirmaur, Kangra, Hamirpur and Mandi districts, the protests by the women against the liquor shops have been common.

MORBI BRIDGE COLLAPSE Govt seeks time from HC to submit report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Sept 25: The Gujarat government Monday sought time from the high court to submit before it the final report of the special investigation team (SIT) probing the collapse of a suspension bridge at Morbi town in October last year, in which 135 people were killed.

The division bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Aniruddha Mayee granted the government two weeks while observing that no further adjournment will be given in the suo motu (on its own) PIL admitted last year after the tragedy. The court said that the difficulty arises because everything is prepared at the last moment.

The British-era suspension bridge on the Machchhu river in

Morbi town of Gujarat collapsed on October 30 last year, killing 135 persons, including women and children, and injuring 56 others. The state government had appointed a five-member SIT to probe the collapse and it submitted an interim report in December last year, in which it found several lapses in repairs, maintenance and operation of the structure by the Oreva Group (Ajanta Manufacturing Ltd), whose Managing Director Jaysukh Patel is the main accused in the case and is currently in jail.

During the last hearing on August 31, Advocate General Kamal Trivedi informed the court that the SIT's final report of its probe into the collapse would be out in three weeks and subsequently submitted before the bench. Trivedi had also told

the court that the government has paid Rs 50 lakh each to the kin of the seven children who lost both their parents in the bridge collapse and the government is taking care of their schooling and food under different government schemes.

The kin of each deceased had been given Rs 20 lakh, of which Rs 10 lakh was from the government and an equal sum from the Oreva Group, which was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the more than 100-year-old suspension bridge.

In November last year, the Supreme Court had asked the high court to periodically monitor the probe and other aspects of the tragedy, including rehabilitation and award of compensation to the victims or their families.

HP's natural farming to get global exposure

Shimla/Solan: Low-cost natural farming techniques adopted by Dr. YS Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Naini is expected to get global exposure at a 15-day international conference in France.

The conference being held from September 24 to October 8 is convened by French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment in France. Representatives of eleven countries and fifteen institutes are participating in the conference on 'Natural Farming, Agroecology and Regenerative agriculture' and India is being represented by Horticulture and Forestry University, Naini (Solan).

KULLU DUSSEHRA TO REVIVE TOURISM: CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Sept 25: Despite the worst-ever natural calamity in Kullu this monsoon, the upcoming Dussehra festival in the district will be a gala affair, with troupes from 20 countries participating in it, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said.

Releasing the promo of the 'International Kullu Dussehra Festival', Sukhu said this event would mark the revival of tourism in the region by sending across the right signal that the situation has normalised in Kullu and Manali and these places are all set to welcome tourists.

He also virtually inaugurated several development projects worth Rs 12 crore for the Kullu assembly constituency, including a four-storey multipurpose building of the Deputy Commissioner Office, constructed at a cost of Rs 5.49 crore, a statement issued here said.

Following the inauguration,

the chief minister presided over a meeting of the Kullu Dussehra Committee here, to review the preparation for the festival, the statement said.

During the meeting, the chief minister directed the authorities to undertake the repair and restoration work on the Mandi-Manali National Highway on a war footing to ensure uninterrupted connectivity to the region during the event.

Addressing media persons after the meeting, Suku said this year the Kullu Dussehra festival will be celebrated from October 24 to 30.

The Kullu Dussehra, which commences on Vijay Dashmi and continues for seven days, usually sees a footfall of about 4-5 lakh people every year.

The festival dates back to the 17th century when King Jagat Singh installed an idol of Lord Raghunath on his throne in Kullu as a mark of penance.

Following this, Raghunath was

declared as the ruling deity of the Valley.

Speaking to reporters, the chief minister said that Himachal Pradesh was fully prepared to welcome tourists once again.

Highlighting the grandeur of this year's Kullu Dussehra, Sukhu said cultural groups from different states of India, along with participants from foreign countries including Russia, Israel, Romania, Kazakhstan, Croatia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, Panama, Iran, Maldives, Malaysia, Kenya, South Sudan, Zambia, Ghana, and Ethiopia would take part in the festival.

The festival will feature a cultural parade October 25 and the Kullu Carnival October 30. Additionally, 13 departments of the state will set up exhibitions in Pagoda tents, showcasing the region's rich heritage, the statement said.

The chief minister said fairs and festivals play an important role in preserving and celebrating the rich cultural heritage of the state. He reiterated the government's commitment to conserving these cultural treasures, with Kullu Dussehra being a global symbol of religious beliefs and cultural values.

The Kullu district has suffered losses of about Rs 140 crore so far since the onset of the monsoon June 24 in the hill state, the state emergency operation centre said.

UNESCO recognition to preservation struggles

A 2019 survey revealed that 30 per cent of the heritage properties in Ahmedabad were compromised or vulnerable

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ahmedabad, Sept 25: Ahmedabad, a city where time seems to stand still, boasts of rich history, culture, and architecture. Cross the Sabarmati River, and you find yourself in old Amdavad, a place where every lane whispers tales of the past.

In old Amdavad more than 360 pols (housing clusters) emerge, each a unique blend of religious and caste diversity, showcasing a kaleidoscope of architectural styles. Ahmedabad's journey to UNESCO World Heritage Site status was a carefully curated process. The selection criteria for a World Heritage Site are stringent and demand exceptional cultural or natural significance.

In Ahmedabad's case, it was the city's rich Indo-Islamic heritage, dating back to the 15th-17th centuries that caught the UNESCO's attention. Tombs, temples, gates, and exquisite monuments were among the treasures recognised.

However, Ahmedabad's journey has not been without hurdles. Maintaining its World Heritage City status has been an ongoing challenge. UNESCO experts were initially skeptical, as the city lacked a comprehensive plan to safeguard its ancient citadels, mosques, and tombs. The city received a warn-

ing and now faces a potential review of its World Heritage status.

A 2019 survey revealed that 30 per cent of the heritage properties in Ahmedabad were compromised or vulnerable. The Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC), an independent body overseeing conservation measures, raised concerns. Buildings were demolished, spots lay vacant, modern structures merged with heritage buildings, and many structures were in a poor condition.

The battle to preserve this heritage is real. "Many heritage houses are in dire need of renovation, and homeowners often find themselves struggling to navigate the complexities of heritage conservation. Water leakages, crumbling walls, and sanitation issues are common problems," said a local who has lived in old Amdavad all his life.

Madhish Parikh, founder, Elixir Foundation and a dedicated advocate for Ahmedabad's heritage, expressed, "The local residents lack the necessary financial resources to undertake property restoration. The current process mandates that they initiate restoration, incur the expenses, and subsequently apply for Floor Space Index (FSI) bonds from the AMC for cost reimbursement. Individuals possessing Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) certificates receive a 20 per cent refund initially and the remaining 80 per cent upon completion of the restoration project. This intricate cycle poses a significant challenge to the preservation of Ahmedabad's precious heritage."

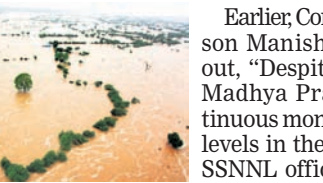
GUJARAT FLOODS

After backlash, govt unveils relief package

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ahmedabad, Sept 25: The Gujarat government has introduced a special relief package for the farmers affected by the recent flooding caused by the overflowing Narmada River in Bharuch, Narmada, and Vadodara districts between September 16 and September 18.

Previously, the ruling BJP had faced criticism from the opposition, including the Congress and AAP, who accused the party of insensitivity toward the flood-affected residents in low-lying areas, and labeled the situation a 'man-made disaster.' Following a report on the estimated damages incurred by standing crops in the three districts due to the river flooding, the government has decided to allocate a special relief package from the state budget, in addition to the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), to assist farmers in recovering their losses.



Earlier, Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi pointed out, "Despite heavy rain in Madhya Pradesh and continuous monitoring of water levels in the Narmada dam, SNNL officials did not release an adequate amount of water September 15 and 16. Instead, they waited for the dam to overflow September 17, causing massive flooding downstream."

The relief package will benefit farmers who have suffered a loss of 33 per cent or more in agricultural and horticultural crops during the kharif season 2023-24 in the affected villages, as declared by the district administration, with a maximum cap of two hectares.

For non-irrigated agricultural crops, affected farmers will receive Rs 8,500 per hectare as per SDRF norms. For irrigated agriculture and rainfed horticulture crops, they will receive Rs 8,000, in addition to Rs 17,000 per hectare as per SDRF norms.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER CENTRAL RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR. NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL. No. O-1094: T.C.N. No. Tender-Online-C.38 of 2023.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS' EMPOWERMENT OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), GANJAM DIVISION, BRAHMAMPUR, RENGEILUNDA. INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB) e-Procurement Notice.

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, GUNUPUR No. 2941/23 Dt. 22.09.2023. QUOTATION CALL NOTICE.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER ANGUL IRRIGATION CIRCLE, ANGUL, ODISHA. CORRIGENDUM NO.-1.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF PANCHAYAT SAMITI, SADAR, KEONJHAR NOTICE INVITING TENDER (e-Procurement) Online Bid ID No. TCN No. 06-KjrSadar/2023-2024.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Union MoS for Civil Aviation VK Singh, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari and others during the formal induction of C-295 MW transport aircraft into Indian Air Force at the Hindan Air Force Station



President Droupadi Murmu meets a group of IAS officers of 2021 batch, currently posted as assistant secretaries in various union ministries and departments, at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in New Delhi



BJP workers during party's 'Karyakarta Mahakumbh' in Bhopal



Congress workers protest in Kolkata over rising cases of dengue in West Bengal



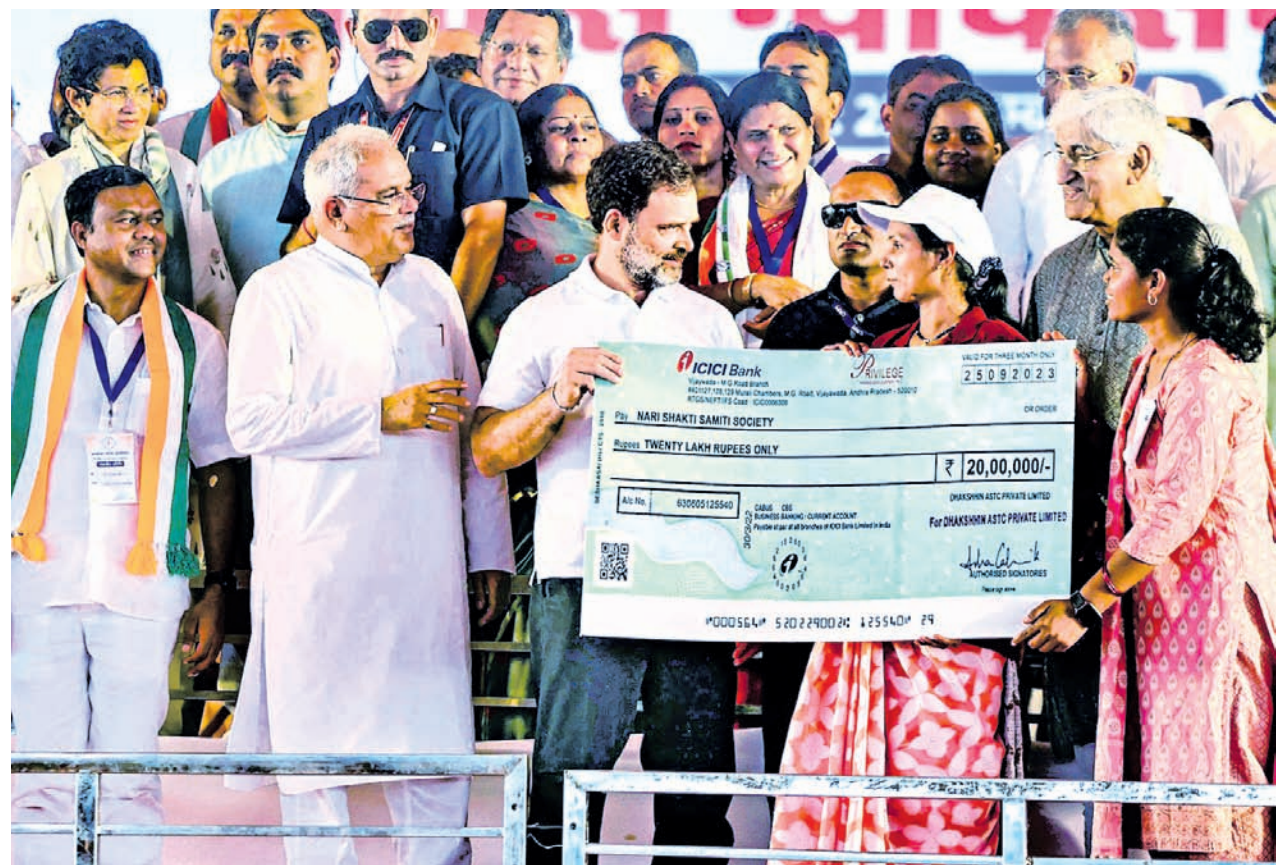
Artists perform during the inaugural day of World Coffee Conference India 2023 at Bangalore Palace, in Bangalore



Activists of Sangrami Joutha Mancha during a protest march towards Governor's residence in Kolkata



An acrobat performs over a car-free road during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur in Tel Aviv, Israel



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi give a 'cheque' to a beneficiary during the launch of the 'Gramin Awas Nyay Yojana', in Jaipur



# national

## of the day quote

While Ramesh Bidhuri was using those cheap words, two senior BJP MPs sitting behind him were laughing. The way different BJP MPs have come out to defend him and are trying to save him makes one thing clear. The entire BJP is standing with him and such words are a part of the BJP's fixed strategy

SAURABH BHARADWAJ | AAP LEADER

Several leaders of the ruling BJP are keen to join the Grand Old Party as they have sensed imminent defeat in the upcoming Madhya Pradesh assembly elections

The Congress could not muster the courage to pass the women's reservation bill during the UPA rule as it was afraid of losing power

ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL | UNION MINISTER

## SHORT TAKES

### Two arrested

**Jaipur:** Two men were arrested and a juvenile apprehended in the alleged rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl whose body was found in a well in Rajasthan's Sikar district Monday, police said. The girl, who hails from Churu district, was missing from Saturday. Her body was found in the Ramgarh area of the district, they added. Based on the missing complaint lodged by the victim's family, an investigation was launched and the body was recovered on Monday, Sikar SP Anil Paris Deshmukh said. "Two men -- Sameer and Gulam -- have been arrested and a juvenile has been detained; all of them are being interrogated," the SP said.

### PM to visit Gujarat

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gujarat from September 26 to 27, during which he will participate in a programme marking the celebration of 20 years of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit and dedicate to the nation as well as lay the foundation stone of projects worth crores of rupees. On September 27, around 10 am, the prime minister will participate in the programme marking the celebration of 20 years of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit. After that, around 12:45 pm, he will reach Bodeli in Chhotaudapur where he will dedicate to the nation and lay the foundation stone of projects worth more than Rs 5,200 crore, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

### 70-year-old killed

**New Delhi:** A 70-year-old pedestrian died and two riders on a scooter were injured on Monday morning after an SUV hit them in the Rohini area here, police said. The accused driver has been arrested, they added. The accident took place near E block in Sector-1 Rohini when the SUV hit the elderly man and two persons riding a scooter, the police said.

### Punjab cops conduct raids

**Ferozepur (Punjab):** The Punjab police conducted raids at 48 places linked to close associates of Canada-based terrorist Lakhbir Singh Landa alias Landa Harike, an official said Monday. The action comes after a trader was attacked by two assailants on September 21. The trader had said that he received a call from someone who claimed to be Landa Harike and demanded Rs 15 lakh. Superintendent of Police Randhir Kumar said separate police teams conducted raids in Makhu, Zira, Gurusarhai and other places. A few people were also arrested.



Due to high inflation and stagnant wages, households do not have sufficient funds to save. The savings rate is at its lowest in many decades. Reduced savings means less capital available for business and government investment. Instead, India will have to depend on volatile foreign capital for financing

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

## NITISH RULES OUT RETURN TO NDA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Monday ruled out returning to the NDA, an alliance he parted with a year ago, to which the BJP retorted he would not be welcome even if he begged for another chance



# Row over Maha BJP chief's 'manage scribes' audio clip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Sept 25:** An audio clip of Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule in which he purportedly asked the party workers to take journalists to dhabas and treat them well to avoid negative publicity ahead of polls has gone viral, inviting allegations that BJP was trying to manage the media.

These "instructions" were purportedly given by Bawankule in Ahmednagar where he was addressing a gathering of BJP workers on the management of poll booths. Under fire from the opposition, Bawankule clarified that he only meant that journalists should be treated with respect and that the party workers should try to understand their opinions about the allocated booths.

In the audio, Bawankule can be heard saying that "small-time video journalists running news portals and residing in your booth areas sometimes present a minor incident as if some blast has taken place". "Prepare a list of such nuisance-creating journalists, including those from the electronic media or print, and invite them for a cup of tea to dhabas so that they would not write anything against us ahead of Maha Vijay 2024. You know what I mean by inviting them for a cup of tea," he added. If there are some shortcomings Sujay Vikhe Patil, local BJP MP, is there, he added. "Take them to dhabas. Treat



them well and ensure no negative news comes out against us. There should be positive news about us. Protect your own booths first," Bawankule said. Reacting sharply, Maharashtra opposition leader Vijay Wadettiwar said, "Not all journalists are sold out. Do you think journalists accept crumbs? I can understand the restlessness of your leaders, both of the top level and local ones, as they could not suppress the voice of dissent. But you directly started making offers to journalists?"

This means, you (BJP) will try to offer some "crumbs" to voters as well ahead of elections, Wadettiwar alleged and said the people will tear apart the BJP for sure. State Congress president Nana Patole said Bawankule's statements are insulting to the media fraternity. "The Congress has given due importance to journalists but the BJP made them look cheap. It is a devaluation of the media

fraternity," he alleged. NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) national spokesperson Clyde Crasto posted on X: "Is BJP Maharashtra state president Chandrashekhar Bawankule asking BJP workers to treat the journalists who speak the truth or is his statement a veiled threat to true journalists?"

NCP MP Supriya Sule said the opposition's voice is a beauty of democracy but the BJP does not accept the dissent. "Newspapers work as the opposition in a democracy, but the BJP state president is giving lessons on how to muzzle the media. It is a serious matter and condemnable action," she said. Sule said the way Bawankule is giving such suggestions, it means he has some experience in the past. "It is the BJP's policy to not let journalists function smoothly. The BJP should either admit that it does not accept democracy or it should apologise to the people and scribes," she said.

## Soldier attacked by six in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kollam (Kerala), Sept 25:** A soldier was allegedly beaten up near his home in this southern Kerala district Sunday night by six persons and PFI was written on his back with green paint, police said Monday.

The alleged incident occurred near his home at Kadakkal here on Sunday night when the soldier was returning home on his bike, police said. It also said that Military Intelligence personnel have reached the spot and would be directing the investigation into the alleged assault on the soldier who is posted in the Indian Army's Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) Corps.

The alleged incident occurred on the last day of the vacation of the soldier hailing from Kerala, police said. An FIR under sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 147 (rioting), 153 (wantonly giving provocation with intent to cause riot), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the IPC was lodged during the day against six identifiable persons, police said.

Police said it is not yet clear whether any outfit has any role in the alleged incident. An officer of Kadakkal police station said that according to the soldier's complaint, he saw some persons standing near his home while he was returning on his bike. On asking them why they were there, they said somebody was obliging drunk in the nearby rubber plantation and asked the soldier whether he knew that person, the complaint said.

## MUSLIM STUDENT SLAPPING CASE

# SC pulls up UP govt for shoddy probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Sept 25:** There cannot be any quality education if a student is sought to be penalised on the ground that he belongs to a particular community, the Supreme Court Monday said, as it pulled up the Uttar Pradesh government for shoddy probe in a case where a Muslim school boy was allegedly slapped by his classmates on the instruction of his teacher in Muzaffarnagar.

Voicing displeasure over the incident, the top court directed the UP government to appoint a senior IPS officer within a week to probe the case. "The teacher asked the students to beat the victim because of his religion. What kind of education is being imparted?" it said.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Pankaj Mishra, while directing that the IPS officer shall file a report in the apex court, asked the state government to conduct counselling of the victim and other students involved in the incident by professional counsellors. "There cannot be any quality education if a student is sought to be penalised on the ground that he belongs to a particular community. There is a prima facie failure on the part of the State to comply with mandatory obligations of RTE Act and relevant rules," the bench said in its order. It was hearing a plea filed by Tushar Gandhi, the great-grand-



## Voicing displeasure over the incident, the top court directed the UP government to appoint a senior IPS officer within a week to probe the case

son of Mahatma Gandhi, seeking speedy investigation in the case. The top court, which perused the status report filed by the Muzaffarnagar Superintendent of Police, said it has "serious objections" to the manner in which the FIR was registered after a long delay. It said the father of the victim has made specific allegation that his son was beaten in school due to his religious faith. "The complaint filed by the student's father related to cognizable offences but no FIR was immediately registered. Only a non-cognizable report was filed initially and the FIR was registered after a long delay on September 6, almost two weeks after the incident. The father's allegations were not mentioned in the FIR... This is about quality education. Quality education includes sensitive education," the bench said.

# Bihar shocker: Woman stripped, urinated on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Patna, Sept 25:** A Dalit woman was allegedly stripped, assaulted and urinated on her mouth by a moneylender and his associates in Bihar's Patna district apparently for complaining to the police about his "unjustified" demand for more money even after full repayment of the debt, an officer said Monday.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said strict action would be taken against those involved in the assault on the woman in Khusrupur area. "I have given standing instruction to police and administration to handle such an incident on a priority basis. Strict action will be taken against those involved in it," Kumar said here.

The key accused, Pramod Singh and his son Anshu Singh are absconding, the police officer said, adding that a manhunt has been launched to arrest them. The injured victim, who is under treatment in a hospital, claimed that she had to bear this torture despite paying off the borrowed money with interest.

"My husband had borrowed Rs 1,500 from Pramod Singh a few months ago and had returned the money with interest. However, he continued to seek more money. We rejected the demand," the woman said.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said strict action would be taken against those involved in the assault on the woman in Khusrupur area

The key accused, Pramod Singh and his son Anshu Singh are absconding, the police officer said, adding that a manhunt has been launched to arrest them

The incident occurred in a village under the jurisdiction of Khusrupur Police Station in Patna on September 23 night.

Pramod Singh allegedly threatened the victim over phone, saying that they would parade her naked in the village if she didn't give him more money. She complained to the police about this on her mobile phone.

A family member of the victim said: "A police team visited the village on Saturday to inquire about the complaint, which apparently angered Pramod and his associates. They went to her residence at 10 pm on Saturday and forcibly took her to Pramod's house."

There, she was allegedly robbed and beaten up with fists and sticks. "Pramod asked his son to urinate on my mouth. He did so. After that, I somehow managed to escape and returned home," the woman said in a statement to the police.



BJP workers raise slogans during the 'Vidhan Sabha Gherao' against Himachal Pradesh government, in Shimla, Monday

PTI PHOTO

# PM sounds poll bugle in MP, Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal/Jaipur, Sept 25:** Sounding the poll bugle in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan with back-to-back rallies, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday targeted the Congress over the women's reservation bill, saying the opposition party and its partners in the new "ghamandia" alliance "reluctantly" supported the historic step.

The Prime Minister's attack on the Congress during his massive

rallies in Bhopal and Jaipur came on a day when 21 women leaders of the rival party held news conferences in 21 cities as part of what the party said its strategy to "expose the Modi government" on the women's reservation bill which secured Parliamentary approval last Thursday. The Congress hit back asking why has Modi played a "cruel joke" on the women of the country.

MP and Rajasthan are among the five states where Assembly elections are due later this year.

Addressing a gathering of BJP workers, 'Karyakarta Mahakumbh', in Bhopal, Modi also likened the Congress to "rusted iron" and alleged its functioning has been outsourced to "urban Naxals" and that the party is not run by leaders. According to a top BJP leader, the event was attended by more than five lakh workers.

In Madhya Pradesh, Modi warned people that if given an opportunity, the Congress will backtrack on the bill that seeks

to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in Parliament and state assemblies.

Addressing a BJP rally later in Jaipur, Modi said it was never the Congress' intention to empower women, else it could have passed a women's reservation bill during its rule, adding the party now supported the step under pressure from women. The "Parivartan Sankalp Mahasabha" marked the culmination of four 'Parivartan Yatras' that BJP took out in Rajasthan.

# HC TO TAKE A LOOK AT GUJARAT LIQUOR PROHIBITION LAWS

Gujarat was born liquor 'dry' and remains so till this day. That is for the record. In actual fact, it remains as 'wet' as a watermelon fuelling a multi-crore rupee, wholly illegal, black money spewing industry that oils cop capers and political 'padrones' besides lots others.

But this is not about the shenanigans of the politically muscular and the administratively adroit. It is more about the legality of lots that has gone on unchallenged for long. A division Bench of the Gujarat High Court has scheduled a hearing on October 9, 2023 for the

adjudication of several petitions that contest the constitutional validity of the Gujarat Prohibition Act of 1949.

As published details aver, the petitions filed in 2018 and 2019, are grounded on two principal legal tenets, i.e. the Right to privacy guaranteed under Article 21(Right to life and personal liberty) of the Indian Constitution and the doctrine of manifest arbitrariness which is against the essence of Article 14(Right to equality) of the Indian Constitution.

The first petition challenging the prohibition law was filed in 2018, in which several sec-

tions of the Gujarat prohibition Act, 1949 and several rules of the Bombay Foreign Liquor



Rules, 1953 were challenged. In 2019, five more petitions were filed challenging the law in this regard. The two main grounds for the challenge was the right to privacy which has been

termed as a fundamental right by the Apex court in many judgments since 2017 and the manifest arbitrariness in as much as who gets to drink and who does not. This pertains to health permits and to temporary permits given to out-of-state tourists which is violative of the Right to Equality under Article 14 of the Constitution, it has been made out.

The October 9 hearing is a sequel to the August 2021 decision of the Gujarat High Court Bench comprising the then Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Biren Vaishnav that held the petitions to be main-

tainable and therefore to be heard on merits.

The preliminary objection then raised by the Gujarat government on the petition's maintainability was that the Act had already been upheld by the Supreme Court in its entirety in 1951. The judgement constitutes law declared under Article 141 of the Constitution and is therefore binding on the High Court which could not re-examine the issue. If a reasoned cause for it has come into being, the same can be examined only by the apex court.

After Narendra Modi came to power in Gujarat and began

pursuing global investment to industrialise the state further, there was a move for a modicum of relaxation in liquor laws for industrial/business gatherings through liberal granting of 'permits' for the same. However a major hooch tragedy in Ahmedabad in 2009 that left over a hundred people dead put paid to the efforts.

Soon after, the Modi government made amendments in the prohibition laws introducing capital punishment for hooch criminals. That no one to date has received the death penalty for such a crime is a different matter!

# international

## of the day quote

The situation is extremely difficult. On Kosovo, we see a traditionally biased attitude towards the Serbs... The situation is very, very tense and potentially dangerous, we are monitoring it very closely

DMITRY PESKOV | SPOKESMAN, KREMLIN

Officers risking their lives to keep us safe have my full backing and I will do everything in my power to support them. That's why I have launched a review to ensure they have the confidence to do their jobs while protecting us all

SUELLA BRAVERMAN | HOME SECRETARY, UK

I appeal Scholz (German Chancellor) to respect Poland's sovereignty and refrain from statements that damage our mutual relations

ZBIGNIEW RAU | FOREIGN MINISTER, POLAND

## SHORT TAKES

### France set to pull troops out of Niger

Paris: President Emmanuel Macron announced Sunday that France will end its military presence in Niger and pull its ambassador out of the country after its democratically elected president was deposed in a coup. The announcement is a significant, if predicted, blow to France's policy in Africa, after French troops pulled out of neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso in recent years after coups there. France has maintained some 1,500 troops in Niger since the July coup, and had repeatedly refused an order by the new junta for its ambassador to leave, saying that France didn't recognize the coup leaders as legitimate.

### Khan to be sent to high-security jail

Islamabad: A top Pakistani court Monday ordered authorities to shift former prime minister Imran Khan from the Attock jail in Punjab province to high-security Adiala prison in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, according to media reports. Khan, 70, has been kept in the Attock Jail since August 5 after his conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case. His sentence was suspended by the IHC August 29, but he continues to remain in Attock prison in the cipher (secret diplomatic cable) leakage case.

## Philippines removes Chinese barrier in SCS

The trading of barbs underscores the strained relations between China and the Philippines at a time when Manila is rapidly strengthening military ties with rival US, a move that has riled Beijing

REUTERS

Manila, Sept 25: The Philippines said Monday it executed a "special operation" to remove a floating barrier installed by China at a prime fishing patch in the South China Sea, a move that could stoke tension after a years-long detente in Asia's most disputed waters.

The Philippines expressed outrage Sunday and shared images of Chinese coastguard policing a long, ball-buoy barrier near the Scarborough Shoal, a rocky outcrop 200 km (124 miles) from the Philippines and the site of years of intermittent flare-ups over sovereignty and fishing rights.

## Striking Hollywood writers reach deal with studios

Months of strike revolved around streaming-related pay



REUTERS

Los Angeles, Sept 25: Hollywood's writers union reached a preliminary labor agreement with major studios Sunday, a deal expected to end one of two strikes that have halted most film and television production and cost the California economy billions.

The three-year contract still must be approved by leadership of the Writers Guild of America (WGA), as well as union members, before it can take effect.

The WGA, which represents 11,500 film and television writers, described the deal as "exceptional" with "meaningful gains

and protections for writers."

"This was made possible by the enduring solidarity of WGA members and extraordinary support of our union siblings who joined us on the picket lines for over 146 days," the negotiating committee said in a statement Sunday.

The WGA settlement, while a milestone, will not return Hollywood to business as usual even if it is ratified. While writing may resume, the SAG-AFTRA actors' union remains on strike. Writers walked off the job May 2 after negotiations reached an impasse over compensation, minimum staffing of writers' rooms, the use of artificial intelligence and residuals that reward writers for popular streaming shows, among other issues.

"We stuck it out," WGA liaison Caroline Renard said Sunday. "This is a union industry, and it's about the people that make the actual product that makes these company billions of dollars."

## Nepal, China sign 12 agreements during PM's visit to Beijing



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Sept 25: China and Nepal Monday signed 12 agreements, including seven MoUs, to enhance bilateral cooperation in sectors including trade, road connectivity, and information technology after Premier Li Qiang and Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" held wide-ranging talks in Beijing.

During the meeting, the two leaders comprehensively reviewed the bilateral relations and expressed satisfaction over the close and cordial ties subsisting between the two countries, according to a press release issued by the Nepal embassy in Beijing.

The two sides exchanged views on the ways to further strengthen and consolidate the mutual understanding and cooperation and give a new impetus in the front of economy, trade and people-to-people contacts, it said.

Prachanda, who politically distanced from the pro-China Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) headed by KP Oli after becoming Prime Minister in December last year, made his maiden visit to China after visiting India and the US.

Geneva, Sept 25: Russian occupiers tortured Ukrainians so brutally that some of their victims died, and forced families to listen as they raped women next door, members of a UN-mandated investigative body said Monday, in their latest findings from the field.

Erik Mose, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva his team had "collected further evidence indicating that the use of torture by Russian armed forces in areas under their control has been widespread and systematic."

"In some cases, torture was inflicted with such brutality that it caused the death of the victim," he said.

"Russian soldiers raped and committed sexual violence against women of ages ranging from 19 to 83 years" in occupied parts of Kherson province, he said. Frequently, family were kept next door and forced to hear the violations, he added.

Russia denies committing atrocities or targeting civilians in Ukraine. Mose said the commissions attempts to communicate with Russia had gone unanswered. Moscow was given an opportunity to respond to the allegations at the council hearing



The EU and China face significant political and economic headwinds that could cause them to drift apart. The strongest, yet not the only, headwind is Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and how China positions itself on this issue

VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS | TRADE COMMISSIONER, EU

## HOTLINE FOR SPACE CRISES

The United States Space Force has had internal discussions about setting up a hotline with China to prevent crises in space, US commander General Chance Saltzman said



Israelis take part in a demonstration against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his nationalist coalition government's judicial overhaul in Tel Aviv, Israel

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

# Crimes by both sides: UN

THE UN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON UKRAINE SAID IT FOUND EVIDENCE OF CRIMES COMMITTED BY BOTH SIDES, BUT FAR MORE BY RUSSIANS AS THE WAR ENTERED ITS 20TH MONTH

REUTERS



but no Russian representative attended. Russia's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Asked at a later press briefing about the number of torture cases resulting in death, commission member Pablo de Greiff said it was impossible to know due to restricted access, but that it was

RUSSIA TORTURED SOME UKRAINIAN VICTIMS TO DEATH: UN  
SAYS RUSSIA USED 'WIDESPREAD AND SYSTEMATIC' TORTURE  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE VICTIMS INCLUDE WOMEN AGED 19-83  
INQUIRY HAS ALSO FOUND A FEW CASES OF UKRAINIAN VIOLATIONS

a "fairly large number and it comes from very different regions across the country, close and far from the lines of battle".

In August and September,

Mose's commission visited parts of

Ukraine formerly held by Russian forces such as in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. It found that torture was committed mainly in detention

centres operated by the Russian authorities and chiefly against people accused of being Ukrainian informants.

The commission has previously said that violations committed by Russian forces in Ukraine, including the use of torture, may constitute crimes against humanity.

The UN body also found a "few cases" of violations committed by Ukrainian forces, Mose said, saying they related to instances of indiscriminate attacks and ill treatment of Russian detainees.

Kyiv has previously said it checks all information regarding the treatment of prisoners of war and will investigate any violations and take appropriate legal action.

The commission was mandated by the council in March 2022 to investigate abuses in Ukraine since the war began and has visited multiple times and conducted hundreds of interviews. Sometimes evidence gathered by UN-mandated probes is used for national and international trials, including war crimes cases.

Meanwhile Russian airstrikes Sunday killed two people and wounded eight others in southern Ukraine's Kherson province, the region's governor reported Sunday as the war in Ukraine entered its 20th month.

## Last godfather of Sicilian mafia dies

REUTERS

Italy, Sept 25: Italian Mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro, who was convicted of multiple murders and was arrested in January after spending 30 years on the run, has died of cancer, officials said Monday.

Messina Denaro, 61, was suffering from cancer of the colon at the time of his arrest. As his condition worsened in recent weeks, he was transferred to a hospital from the maximum-security jail in central Italy where he was initially held.

He fell into a coma Friday and never regained consciousness.

"You shouldn't deny prayers to anyone, but I can't say I am sorry," Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said on Instagram.

Messina Denaro was found guilty of numerous crimes, including helping plan the 1992 murders of anti-mafia prosecutors Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino - crimes that shocked Italy and sparked a crackdown on the Sicilian mob.

He was also held responsible for bombings in Rome, Florence and Milan in 1993 that killed 10 people, as well as helping organise the kidnapping of Giuseppe Di Matteo, 12, to dissuade the boy's father from giving evidence against the mafia. The boy was held for two years, then murdered.

Dubbed by the Italian press as "the last Godfather", Messina Denaro is not believed to have given any information to the police after he was seized outside a private clinic in the Sicilian capital, Palermo, January 16.

## Canadian Sikh group urges followers to protest outside Indian embassies

REUTERS

Toronto, Sept 25: A Canadian Sikh group has called on its members to protest outside the Indian diplomatic missions of main Canadian cities Monday, a week after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised the prospect of New Delhi's involvement in the murder of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia.

Trudeau said last week Canada was pursuing "credible allegations" that Indian government agents may be linked to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was shot dead outside a Sikh temple June 18 in Surrey, a Vancouver suburb with a high Sikh population.

India swiftly denied any role in the killing and described the allegations as "absurd". The accusations have sparked tensions between the two countries, with each nation expelling diplomats, and New Delhi suspending visas for Canadians.

Jatinder Singh Grewal, a director for Sikh for Justice in Canada, told Reuters Sunday



that his organization will lead the demonstrations outside the Indian embassies and consulates in Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver to increase public awareness about Nijjar's killing.

"We are asking Canada to expel the India ambassador," Grewal said. Representatives for India's diplomatic missions in Ottawa and Toronto were not immediately available for comment.

The Toronto Police Department said it was aware of the planned demonstrations Monday but declined to disclose details of the security preparations or potential response to any violent situations that may arise during the protest.

Nijjar, who worked as a plumber, left the north Indian state of Punjab a quarter-century

ago and became a Canadian citizen. He has supported the formation of an independent Sikh homeland, called Khalistan, to be created out of Punjab. India designated Nijjar a "terrorist" in July 2020.

The Canadian government has amassed both human and signals intelligence in a months-long investigation into the Sikh separatist leader's murder, CBC News reported last week, citing unidentified sources.

The report said the intelligence included communications of Indian officials present in Canada, adding that some of the information was provided by an unidentified ally in the Five Eyes alliance.

Canada is home to about 770,000 Sikhs - the highest population of Sikhs outside their home state of Punjab - and the country has been the site of many demonstrations that have irked India.

Sikhs make up just 2% of India's 1.4 billion population but they are a majority in Punjab, a state of 30 million where their religion was born 500 years ago.

# business

## of the day quote

There's no shortage of wheat in the country and all options are open for the government to control prices



**SANJEEV CHOPRA** | FOOD SECRETARY

While the aquaculture sector has been relatively untouched thus far, I firmly believe that it holds immense potential to propel India toward its 10 trillion-dollar economic goal



**NK PREMACHANDRAN** | LOK SABHA MP, KERALA

India's weak GVC integration can be attributed to poor trade infrastructure, causing delays at ports and customs, which are detrimental to the timely flow of goods in these intricate value chains



**AJAY SRIVASTAVA** | CO-FOUNDER, GTRI

## SHORT TAKES

### Demat accounts grow 26% in Aug

**New Delhi:** The number of demat accounts rose to 12.7 crore in August 2023, a surge of 26 per cent on a yearly basis, primarily due to attractive returns from equity markets, and ease of account opening process. Also, the incremental additions of such accounts were higher in August in comparison to the preceding month. Further, this was way higher than the average 21 lakh monthly additions in fiscal year FY23, according to an analysis by Motilal Oswal Financial Services. The new account additions rose 4.1 per cent month-on-month to 31 lakh in August compared to 30 lakh additions in July.

### Reliance hits oversold level

**Mumbai:** Reliance Industries Ltd fell for a fifth day, pushing India's largest company by market valuation into oversold territory for the first time since March. Some investors may see that as a potential for a rebound, as has been the case when shares hit that technical level previously. The stock dropped 0.7% to 2,339.50 rupees in provisional close Monday, poised to breach its 200-day moving average. The company's shares have been trailing the country's benchmark gauges this year, gaining only 0.9% year-to-date. A slide since late July was further accelerated amid a consolidation in local shares after the Sensex index hit its all-time high earlier this month.

### JSW Infra IPO sees 43% subscription

**New Delhi:** The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of JSW Infrastructure, a part of the JSW Group, was subscribed 43 per cent on the first day of subscription Monday. The initial share sale received bids for 5,82,62,148 shares against 13,62,83,186 shares on offer, according to NSE data. The category for retail individual investors was subscribed 1.38 times while the quota for non-institutional investors received 60 per cent subscription. JSW Infrastructure on Friday collected Rs 1,260 crore from anchor investors.

### Air India, AIX enter into codeshare pact

**New Delhi:** Tata Group-owned Air India has entered into a codeshare pact with its subsidiary AIX Connect and initially, the pact will cover over 100 flights a day on 21 routes. AIX Connect is also in the process of being merged with Air India Express to create a single low-cost carrier within the Tata's airline business.



**We will achieve 500 GW of renewable energy (RE) well before 2030. India's energy transition programme is at the top in the world. The RE capacity addition is the fastest in the world**

**RK SINGH** | UNION POWER AND NEW & RENEWABLE ENERGY MINISTER

## TN FRONTRUNNER IN EV SALES

Tamil Nadu is inching towards realising its goal of becoming an electric vehicle (EV) hub in the country as the state accounted for sale of four lakh automobiles out of the total 10 lakh EVs sold pan India between January and September this year, the government said on Monday



## EMITS JUST WATER

IOC will undertake operational trials of 15 fuel cell buses powered by green hydrogen on the identified routes in Delhi, Haryana, and UP. Under this programme, the first set of 2 fuel cell buses was launched Monday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Sept 25:** India's top oil firm IOC Monday unveiled the nation's first green hydrogen-powered bus that emits just water as it takes the lead in bringing out unrivaled tools to replace fossil fuels.

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) will produce close to 75 kg of hydrogen by splitting water using electricity from renewable sources. This hydrogen will be used to power two buses which will ply across the national capital region for trial runs.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, flagging off the buses, said hydrogen will be India's transition fuel for moving away from fossil fuels.

IOC's R&D Centre at Faridabad is producing green hydrogen for the pilot run. Four cylinders with a capacity of 30 kg can run the buses for 350 km.

It takes 10-12 minutes for the four tanks to fill.

Hydrogen when burnt emits only water vapour as a by-product. With three times the energy density and the absence of harmful emissions, hydrogen shines



as a cleaner, more efficient choice to meet the energy requirement.

As much as 50 units of renewable electricity and 9 kg of deionized water are needed for the production of one kilo of green hydrogen.

Hydrogen can be used as a fuel for fuel cells.

"Our government has ambitious plans on clean and green

energy. India has taken many steps towards low carbon development through emerging fuels like hydrogen and bio-fuels and shall account for 25 per cent of global incremental energy demand growth over the next two decades," Puri said.

Upon the launch of the two buses, a cumulative mileage of more than 3 lakh kilometers will

The success of this project can catapult India from being a net importer of fossil energy to becoming a net exporter of clean hydrogen energy

**HARDEEP SINGH PURI** | OIL MINISTER

be covered for long-term assessment of performance and durability of the new technology.

India has one of the largest synchronous grids in the world, capable of handling intermittent renewable energy and it has achieved 'One Nation-One Grid-One Frequency'.

"With the low cost solar, synchronous grid, large demand and engineering, India will be a global champion in production and exports of hydrogen and is

set to emerge as the hub for green hydrogen," he said.

Puri said recently the world's first BS 6 (Stage II) Electrified Flex Fuel vehicle prototype was launched that encompasses both the flex fuel engine as well as an electric powertrain that offers higher use of ethanol combined with better fuel efficiencies.

Hydrogen is deemed as the fuel for the future with immense potential to help India meet its decarbonization targets. The global demand for hydrogen is expected to increase by four to seven times to 500-800 tonne by 2050.

Domestic demand is expected to increase by four times, from the current 6 tonne at present to 25-28 tonne by 2050. Oil and gas PSUs shall produce around 1 million tonne per annum of green hydrogen by 2030.

## TOPSY-TURVY TRADE

# Sensex, Nifty end 4-day losing streak



Indices edge up on gains in financials shares amid weak global trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Sept 25:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed marginally up in highly volatile trade Monday, snapping their four-day losing streak even as weak global trends and foreign fund outflows dented the investor sentiment.

After gyrating 461.6 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex eked out a marginal gain of 14.54 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 66,023.69. During the day, it hit a high of 66,225.63 and a low of 65,764.03.

Snapping its four-day losing streak, the broader Nifty settled marginally up 0.30 points at 22,023.69. Its components advanced while 26 declined. Gains in financials, consumer durables, realty and banking shares were offset by losses in IT, oil & gas and pharma shares.

Analysts said a fresh uptick in US treasury yields is making investors jittery amid rising concerns over inflation and high in-

terest rates while FIIs continue to offload shares in local equities. Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance jumped the most by 4.64 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank, NTPC, JSW Steel and Tata Steel were among the major gainers.

The rupee declined by 19 paise to settle at 83.13 against the US dollar Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.39 per cent to \$93.63 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market Monday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,333.03 crore. FIIs have pulled out over Rs 10,000 crore from Indian equities in the first three weeks of September.

In the four sessions to Friday, the 50-issue barometer declined 3.37% or 518 points while Sensex plunged 1,829 points or 3% following a record 11-day rally

# RBI flags concerns over NPAs by UCBs

Central bank 'not comfortable' with non-performing assets of 8.7% in urban co-op banks while scheduled commercial banks' GNPA's stood at a decadal best level of 3.9%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Sept 25:** RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das Monday said the central bank is "not comfortable" with the gross non-performing assets ratio of 8.7 per cent in urban cooperative banks (UCBs) and asked them to work towards improving the same.

Addressing directors of UCBs in the financial capital at an RBI-organised conference, Das urged that such lenders should improve the governance standards, avoid related-party transactions and focus on credit risks, among others.

It can be noted that the UCB sector has been fraught with multiple challenges and also witnessed difficult times in the recent past, like the implosion of the city-headquartered Punjab and Maharashtra Bank.

Das reminded the directors of the UCBs that banks run on depositors and added that protection of the hard-earned money pooled in from the middle class, poor and retirees is far more sacred than going to a temple or a gurdwara.

While the overall picture at an aggregate level looks nice, the situation on GNPA's and capital adequacy is "not at all satisfactory", Das said.

He said the overall GNPA's have improved to 8.7 per cent, which is "not a good number. It is not a comfortable number even



Das exhorted the UCBs to focus on the quality of governance by paying attention to compliance, risk management and internal audit

at an aggregate level". Scheduled commercial banks' GNPA's stood at a decadal best level of 3.9 per cent in March 2023 and are widely estimated to improve further.

To manage the scourge of NPAs better, Das suggested that there should be a focus on credit risk management with better underwriting.

Similarly, there have been instances of many of the top defaulters being individuals or businesses having the ability to pay, Das said.

The top 20 defaulters account for over 60 per cent of the loan overdue, and focusing on this segment can help improve the overall NPAs, he added.

On the capital adequacy front, he noted that there has been an improvement in the ratios to 16.6 per cent at the end of FY23 from 15.5 per cent a year ago.

He said the RBI has come across instances where there is only "paper compliance" and no compliance is observed when an

Going ahead, the UCB segment will be facing competition from tech-savvy entities like digital lenders, fintechs, non-bank lenders and micro-lenders, and hence, need to focus more on technology

**SHAKTIKANTA DAS** | GOVERNOR, RBI

on-field inspection takes place, Das said, adding that the internal audit function also requires focus. The governor asked bank management to present a risk analysis report to the board on a quarterly basis, rather than making it into an annual effort.

It is also necessary for the directors - who are elected and not appointed based on their skill sets, unlike the SCBs - to understand the financial sector, credit risk, banking, information technology and risk management, Das said.

The Reserve Bank of India has prescribed a board of management to help the elected board members with professional help in running a bank, and the same should not be seen as an impediment, he added.

Stressing that the board discussions should be free and fair, Das said it is important to have any dominance of one or two persons in the decision-making.

"There should be free, frank and democratic discussions. Board members should be encouraged to ask whatever questions they have on their mind," he said.

The governor said the UCB sector - built to serve as the neighbourhood bank - is "doing well" from an overall perspective, and also made it clear that the RBI is fine with some of the entities in the sector growing big,

# Indian agri-tech startups facing tough times

INVESTMENTS IN INDIAN AGRI-TECH STARTUPS FELL 45% BETWEEN FY22 AND FY23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Sept 25:** Investments in Indian agri-tech startups fell by 45 per cent between 2021-22 and 2022-23 fiscal years, primarily due to a hike in global interest rates and heightened investor caution amid rising uncertainty, reveals consulting firm FSG's new report.

Meanwhile, global agri-tech investments declined by 10 per cent between calendar years 2022 and 2023, it said.

Going forward, FSG expects the funding slump to continue into FY24 before springing back in FY25. It expects that startups will continue focusing on profitability to tide over the next financial year. "Investors are likely to continue being cautious and direct their limited funding towards established business models, such as follow-on funding for companies in the mid-stream agri-tech category," it said.

According to the report 'India's Unfolding Agri-Tech Story: Updates and Emerging Themes in India's Agricultural



The shift in investment dynamics highlights the Indian agri-tech sector's sensitivity to global economic trends. Startups must use periods of slower investment to refine their business models and drive towards profitability

**RISHI AGARWAL** | MD (HEAD-ASIA), FSG

Technology Sector', India's agri-tech sector witnessed its most successful year in terms of venture capital funding in 2021-22 financial year, followed by a significant decline in FY23 amid a global funding slowdown.

While FY22 witnessed a boom in agri-tech startup investments, which drove startup valuations to unprecedented heights, the correction in FY23 has led to a more prudent investment climate, it added.

While the number of investment deals rose from 121 in FY22 to 140 in FY23, the total funding raised by agri-tech startups in India fell from \$1,279 million in FY22 to \$706 million in FY23

The report highlights that mid-stream agri-tech startups have begun to mature, with investments primarily in growth and late-stage funding rounds.

For example, 56 per cent of investments in startups focusing on output linkages and quality management were in their growth and late stages. The corresponding figure for other mid-stream startups, such as those offering agri-carbon or agri-fintech solutions, was as high as 91 per cent.

Many midstream tech startups have also ventured into inorganic expansion through strategic acquisitions, it added.

# S&P RETAINS INDIA'S FY24 GROWTH FORECAST AT 6%

Indian economy grew 7.2% in 2022-23 fiscal year which ended March 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Sept 25:** S&P Global Ratings Monday retained India's growth forecast for current fiscal at 6 per cent citing slowing world economy, rising risk of subnormal monsoons and delayed effect of rate hike.

The US-based agency sees the recent spike in vegetable price inflation as being temporary, but revised up the full fiscal retail inflation forecast to 5.5 per cent, from 5 per cent earlier, on higher global oil prices.

"Growth this year will be weaker than in 2022, but our outlook remains broadly favourable. Notwithstanding the strong expansion in India in the June quarter, we maintain our forecast for fiscal 2024 (ending March 2024), given the slowing world economy, the delayed effect of rate hikes, and the rising risk of



subnormal monsoons," S&P said in its Economic Outlook for Asia Pacific Q4 2023 report.

While retaining its growth forecast for the current fiscal at 6 per cent, S&P also maintained that India's economy will grow 6.9 per cent in both 2024-25 and 2025-26 fiscal years.

S&P said India's consumption growth as well as capital expenditure remained "strong" in the June quarter.

With regard to growth in the Asia Pacific region, S&P said it remains a "multi-speed region" and slightly raised its forecast for 2023 to 3.9 per cent amid domestic resilience.

INDIAN 10M AIR RIFLE TEAM CLAIM YELLOW METAL WITH WORLD RECORD SCORE, AISHWARY BAGS INDIVIDUAL BRONZE

# INDIA SHOOT GOLD, WR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hangzhou, Sept 25: Indian shooters made a telling statement at the Asian Games, winning three medals, including a team gold, as the country's marksmen asserted their class by grabbing five podium finishes in just two days of competition here.

A confident Indian 10m air rifle team led by teenage World Champion Rudranksh Patil gave the country its first gold medal at the Games, securing the top place on the podium with a world record score here Monday.

Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar then earned the country an individual bronze - India's fourth in shooting so far - in the event after a third-place shoot-off with compatriot Rudranksh, who finished fourth.

The triumvirate of Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu and Adarsh Singh totalled 1718 to win bronze in men's 25m rapid-fire pistol event. In the individual section, Sidhu settled for the fourth position.

The trio of Rudranksh, Olympian Divyansh Singh Panwar and Aishwary aggregated 1893.7 in the qualification round to beat back the challenge of the shooting powerhouse China and South Korea on way to the team gold.

In one of the most dominating displays seen by Indian air rifle shooters in multi-discipline events, the 19-year-old Rudranksh shot a superb 632.5, Tomar 631.6 and Panwar 629.6 to aggregate the world record score as South Korea was pushed to



Rudranksh Patil (R), Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar (C) and Divyansh Singh Panwar pose after winning gold in the Men's 10m Air Rifle team event, Monday

second spot (1890.1), while the Chinese team was a distant third with an aggregate score of 1888.2.

India would be slightly disappointed at missing a gold, or a silver, in the individual category following the red-hot form shown by both Tomar and Rudranksh in the qualification round.

However, both the Indians could

not recreate the magic of the qualification round in the eight-shooter finals with Tomar, after a dogged battle with Rudranksh, edging out the teenage shooter to win bronze in shoot-off for third place, scoring 228.8.

Tomar was in contention for silver with Park Hajun after that but a rank bad final shot of 9.8 eliminated him, even as the

South Korean went on to take the second spot behind China's Sheng Lihao, who won gold with a world record score of 253.3. Tomar, however, said he was consistent throughout save for the 9.8 shot.

Rudranksh and Tomar had made it to the eight-shooter finals following their superb display in the qualification round, while Divyansh missed out

thanks to an Asian Games rule that allows only two marksmen from a country to enter the finals.

Rudranksh entered the finals placed third, while Aishwary was fifth after the qualification round. Divyansh was placed eighth and, had it been a World Cup or a World Championship, or any other continental shooting competition, all three Indians would have been in the eight-shooter final.

The Indian trio was just unbeatable on way to team gold with Rudranksh, true to his form, shooting superb series of 104.8, 106.1, 103.8, 105.5, 106.7 and 105.6. Aishwary had a series of 104.1, 105.5, 105.3, 105.7, 105.7 and 105.3 in qualification.

Divyansh, who represented the country at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, shot a series of 104.8, 104.3, 104.6, 104.7, 106.3 and 104.9.

Rudranksh was not included in the ISSF World Championship-bound squad to Baku by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) as the federation wanted to maximise the country's chances of bagging more Paris Olympic quota places for the country by sending other marksmen.

Rudranksh has already clinched an Olympic quota place for the country by virtue of winning the World Championships gold in Cairo last year.

In fact, while the World Championships were on in Baku last month, he shot way better than the gold-medal winner in the Azerbaijan capital in simulated conditions created for him at the Karni Singh Ranges in Delhi.

## AFGHANS TO CHALLENGE CRICKET POWERHOUSES

Afghanistan will feature in their third 50-over World Cup after kicking off their international journey as an Affiliate Member to ICC in 2001 before elevating their status to Associate Member in 2013 and later became a full member status in 2017. Currently they feature in the top 10 in the ICC rankings in all formats.

Their mission is a simple one, to bring joy to the people of their country and to live up to their expectations following their qualification through the Super League. Afghanistan are looking to get off to a strong start in their tournament opener against Bangladesh in Dharamsala, October 7.

Afghanistan started the year with a 1-1 draw in Bangladesh before thrashing Zimbabwe 3-0 in the ODI series. However, they lost 2-3 to Ireland.

They dominated Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in the first round of the recently concluded Asia Cup, but lost all three Super 4 stage matches, including a close match against Pakistan. So far this year, Afghanistan has won 8 matches and lost 7.

With a strong squad consisting of experienced players and some promising youngsters, they look like a balanced side.



The team's consistent performances in recent seasons and their impressive showing in previous tournaments only add to their credentials.

So, it will be exciting to see how they perform in the 2023 edition, and whether they can finally reach the knockout stage, that has eluded them so far.

**HOLDING THE KEYS TO SUCCESS**  
Hashmatullah Shahidi,  
Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan,  
Rahmanullah Gurbaz &  
Fazalhaq Farooqi



It's a dream for every player to play at the World Cup, especially in India where we hope we can get a lot of support. People back home are expecting a lot from us, they want us to win. This time, Inshallah, we will try our best to perform well and to give happiness to people back home

**HASHMATULLAH SHAHIDI**

## ASIAN GAMES ROUND-UP



Bronze medal winners India's Sukhmeet Singh, Parminder Singh, Jakar Khan and Satnam Singh pose after the men's quadruple sculls event of rowing

### Rowers end campaign with five medals

Hangzhou: Indian rowers staged twin comebacks to bag two bronze and sign off their Asian Games campaign in the watersport with five medals here Monday. India bettered their medal count from the last edition when they had three podium finishes. However, they failed to win a gold medal this time, something the rowing squad could boast of five years ago. Overall, India finished fifth here, an improvement of one place from their 2018 outing in Indonesia, where they had grabbed one gold and two bronze medals. Hosts China topped the tally with 11 gold, two silver, while Uzbekistan finished second with two gold, four silver and one bronze. The day began with the quartet of Jaswinder Singh, Bheem Singh, Punit Kumar and Ashish Goliyan narrowly missing a silver in men's fours event. Then the men's quadruple sculls team of Satnam Singh, Parminder Singh, Jakar Khan and Sukhmeet Singh finished third on the podium with a timing of 6:08.61 seconds, behind Uzbekistan (6:04.64) and gold medalists China (6:02.65). The quadruple sculls quartet improved from fourth place to finish third in the final 500-metre of the 2000-metre race. In the men's four event too, after lying fourth in the final 500-metre of the 2000m race, the quartet showed superb coordination to finish third with 6:10.81s, and was pipped by China (6:10.04) by a fraction of seconds.

serve and strokes in the latter part of the match while the Uzbek players raised their game against their superior opponents to walk away with a 2-6, 6-3, 10-6 win in the second round. The defeat will rattle the Indian pair all the more as Bopanna is a top 10 player in the doubles and Bhambri too is ranked among the top-100. The Uzbeks are not even in the top 300. The other Indian men's doubles pair of Ramkumar Ramanathan and Saketh Myneni progressed to the quarterfinals after beating Indonesian pair of Ignatius Anthony Susanto and David Agung Susanto 6-3, 6-2. Top singles player Ankita Raina was off to a flying start while Bhosale struggled past lower-ranked Aruzhan Sagandikova to move into the women's singles pre-quarterfinals with a 7-6(7-2), 6-2 win. Raina sent packing 17-year-old Sabrina Olimjonova from Uzbekistan 6-0, 6-0.

### Disappointing finish

Hangzhou: Indian women's rugby had a woeful Asian Games outing, losing all their four matches to finish eighth overall, here Monday. First, the Indian women's rugby team were blanked 0-15 by Singapore to endure a third defeat on the trot. In their last group stage match, the Indian team failed to score a single point against the World No.35 as they lost their chance to qualify for the classification playoff for fifth-sixth places. Then in the seventh-eighth place classification India were beaten by Kazakhstan 7-24. Sunday, India had lost to Hong Kong and Japan.

### India outplayed

Hangzhou: The Indian women's handball team began their Asian Games campaign on a losing note, losing to Japan 13-41 in their group B clash here Monday. Menika, who netted four goals,

was the sole bright spot for India giving them a fourth minute lead. India will face Hong Kong, while Japan will play Nepal in their next group match Wednesday. Hosts China are the other team in the group. Top two teams will make the semifinals slated to be held October 3.

### Contrasting fortunes

Hangzhou: Indian teams had a mixed day on basketball court with men's team winning their match against Malaysia while women lost their encounter against Uzbekistan here Monday. In the men's event, India's Sahaj Pratap Singh Sekhon caged 10 points and helped his side win by 20-16 against Malaysia in a Pool C match. The men will now face Macao in their next group stage match Wednesday. In the women's category, India lost to Uzbekistan by 14-19 in a Pool A match. India's Vaishnavi logged home nine points. The women's team will face World No.1 China in their next group stage match.

### Judoka Garima ousted

Hangzhou: Indian judoka Garima Choudhary bowed out of the Asian Games after losing in the women's 70kg pre-quarterfinal by Ippon to Ryoko Salinas of Philippines at the Asian Games here Monday. The 23-year-old Salinas knocked down Garima 10-0s1 in just two minutes and two seconds in elimination round. This was Garima's third appearance in the event. She had lost in the repechage round in 2010 while in 2018 (Jakarta) she went down in the pre-quarter finals.

### Srihari finishes sixth

New Delhi: Ace Indian swimmer Srihari Nataraj finished sixth in the men's 50m backstroke final at the Asian Games here Monday.

Nataraj, competing in his second successive final in as many days, clocked 25.39s. Had he matched his personal best of 24.40s, he would have won the bronze medal. He had finished sixth in the men's 100m backstroke final Sunday as well. Likith Selvaraj finished seventh in the men's 100m breaststroke competition after he touched the pad at 1:01.62s. It was a seventh place finish for the Indian team in the men's 4x200m freestyle event as well. The quartet of Aryan Nehra, Aneesh Gowda, Kushagra Rawat and Tanish George Mathew clocked 7:29.23s.

### Indian boxers through

Hangzhou: Indian boxers Deepak Bhoria and Nishant Dev recorded emphatic wins in their respective categories Monday. Deepak out-punched Malaysia's Muhammad Abdul Qaiyum Bin Ariffin 5-0 to advance to round of 16 in the men's 51kg event. Nishant notched up a win over Nepal's Dipesh Lama by a similar margin in the men's 71kg opening round. However, Arundhati Choudhary bowed out in the opening round of the women's 66kg event after losing to World Champion Yang Liu of China 0-5.

### Wushu medal assured

Hangzhou: Naorem Roshibina Devi qualified for the semifinals in the women's 60kg wushu (Sanda) to assure India of another medal Monday. She outplayed her opening opponent in the quarterfinal, Aiman Karshyga of Kazakhstan, convincingly through points difference. Roshibina Devi had won the bronze medal at the last Asian Games in the same category. In the men's section, Surya Bhanu Partap Singh reached quarterfinals after winning his pre-quarters bout against Islombek Khaydarov of Uzbekistan in the 60kg category in Sanda.

## Pakistan players issued Indian visa for WC: ICC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Sept 25: Members of the Pakistan cricket team were Monday issued Indian visas for the ODI World Cup, the International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed, hours after the PCB raised serious concerns with the global body over the delay in the national team's travel to Hyderabad.

The visa clearance came less than 48 hours before Pakistan's scheduled travel to India in the wee hours of September 27. They play their first warm-up game against New Zealand in Hyderabad September 29. "Visas have been issued to Pakistan," an ICC spokesperson told PTI.

However, confusion remained in the Pakistan camp over the grant of visa. "We have not got the call from Indian High Commission yet over visa clearance. Member of our team is stationed there," PCB spokesperson Umar Farooq told PTI.

The confirmation from the ICC came after the PCB wrote to ICC CEO Geoff Allardice Monday over the visa delay besides claiming the anxious wait has adversely impacted the team's preparation for the 50-over showpiece.

Pakistan were supposed to have a two-day team bonding session in Dubai before their scheduled arrival in Hyderabad September 27 but was cancelled due to the uncertainty over Indian visa.

The Babar Azam-led side plays two warm-up games and as many World Cup matches in Hyderabad starting with the practice fixture against New Zealand.

In the letter addressed to Allardice, the PCB also claimed that its concerns over visa being granted to players, team officials, fans and journalists for the World Cup in India have not been addressed for more than three years. It also added that such inequitable treatment to Pakistan will not be acceptable.

Pakistan last visited India for the T20 World Cup in 2016. The arch-rivals only play each other in the Asia Cup and ICC tournaments due to the tense relations between the two countries.

PCB sources informed that flight tickets of around 35 members have been re-booked now that the Dubai trip is off. The team will now leave for Hyderabad from Lahore in the wee hours of September 27 and reach Hyderabad via Dubai in the night.

## India top group, storm into SAFF U-19 semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kathmandu, Sept 25: India qualified for the SAFF U-19 Championship semifinals with a 2-1 victory over Bhutan at the Dasharath Stadium here, Monday. India will cross swords with the hosts Nepal Wednesday for a place in the final.

Both the teams were locked 1-1 at halftime. Jigme Namgyel gave Bhutan the lead in the 20th minute but India bounced back through goals from Gwngmsar Goyary and Ricky Meetei.

Against the run of play, it was Bhutan who took the lead through Namgyel, whose cross from the right flank fooled everyone and crept into the top corner.

India had their equaliser, when an aerial through ball was fed into the box where it bounced over the keeper, before Goyary hustled his way in and nodded it into an empty net.

India took the lead in the 64th minute with a corner that was clearly worked out in training. Yash Chikro, instead of looping the corner into the box, sent a grounded drive to the top of the box, where an unmarked Meetei pounced on the opportunity and side-footed it into the bottom corner with an accurate shot.

## Atletico end Real's perfect start



Alvaro Morata (L) and Antoine Griezmann wheel away in celebration after the latter's goal against Real Madrid, Sunday

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Madrid, Sept 25: Atletico Madrid happily made sure Real Madrid weren't perfect anymore. Atletico ended their rival's perfect start Sunday with a 3-1 win in their first Spanish league derby of the season. Alvaro Morata scored twice

and Antoine Griezmann once to hand Madrid their first loss after six straight victories in all competitions this season. Toni Kroos scored the lone goal for the visitors.

The result left Catalan clubs Barcelona and Girona at the top of the standings with 16 points each from six matches. Defending

champions Barcelona rallied late to defeat Celta Vigo 3-2 Saturday, while Girona beat Mallorca 5-3.

Madrid stayed one point behind in third place. They had won five consecutive league games, and Wednesday beat Union Berlin in the group stage of the Champions League. Madrid were the only team with a perfect league record so far.

Atletico, sitting fifth with 10 points, was coming off a 3-0 loss at Valencia for its first defeat of the season. Diego Simeone's team had two wins and a draw in its other previous matches. Its league game against Sevilla earlier this month was postponed because of bad weather.

All three goals by Atletico Sunday at Metropolitan stadium came from headers. Morata scored in the fourth and 46th minutes, while Griezmann got on the board in the 18th. Madrid's goal came in the 35th after Kroos cleared a defender before finding the net from outside the area. Madrid had a goal disallowed for offside in the 44th.