



Bebo's tales

Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan reflects on her career challenges and the importance of quality scripts in acting

LEISURE | P2



Hostage drama ends

A hostage drama in the Netherlands lasts for several hours and ends without bloodshed as all hostages are freed

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Forex kitty at peak

Forex reserves increase by \$140 million to touch its all-time high of \$642.631 billion during the week ended March 22

BUSINESS | P11



Heartbreaking stalemate

Odisha FC and Bengaluru FC play out a goalless draw which dents the formers' hopes of ISL League Winners Shield

SPORTS | P12

Bharat Ratna conferred on ex-PMs, two others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: President Droupadi Murmu Saturday conferred Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour, on former prime ministers PV Narasimha Rao and Chaudhary Charan Singh, agriculture scientist MS Swaminathan and former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur, posthumously during a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The awards to Rao, Singh, Thakur and Swaminathan were received by their kin.

PV Prabhakar Rao, the son of former prime minister Rao, received the award while Jayant Chaudhary, Singh's grandson and chief of the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), accepted the honour from Murmu.

Similarly, Swaminathan's daughter Nitya Rao and Thakur's son Ram Nath Thakur received the award from the President.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries were present at the ceremony. President Murmu will confer the honour on the fifth recipient LK Advani at his residence Sunday in view of his ill health, according to a report.



RAIN PAIN: A farmer inspects his damaged wheat crop following strong winds and rains, at a village, in Jalandhar, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

JOIN BJP, CASE CLOSED: CONG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Displaying a washing machine on its press conference dais, the Congress Saturday taunted the BJP over the CBI filing a closure report in a 2017 corruption case against NCP leader Praful Patel and said the ruling party's 'fully automatic washing machine' works on the principle - 'join BJP, case closed'.

The Congress raised the issue of leaders, against whom there have been corruption charges, joining or aligning with the BJP only to see 'the cases against them being closed', an allegation often levelled by Opposition parties.

The party warned it will 'go after every single officer' of agencies 'who has willingly become a party to undermining our democracy and our Constitution.'

Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khara's press conference at the AICC headquarters Saturday was all about symbolism, with a 'BJP washing machine' kept on

the table and a demonstration of a 'dirty T-shirt' with 'corruption, fraud, scam' written on it going into the machine and a clean T-shirt with 'BJP Modi wash' written on it coming out of it.

In keeping with the flavour of the press conference, Khara alleged that the "BJP machine costs over ₹8,500 crore" - the money the ruling party got through electoral bonds - and it is effective in cleaning all types of stains of corruption when used with "Modi washing powder."

A leaflet on the 'Modi washing powder' was also distributed at the press conference with the prime minister's picture and a tagline 'saare daag chutkiyon mein dhule' (All stains will be washed away in a jiffy).

Khara said months after Patel joined the BJP alliance in Maharashtra by splitting the NCP, the CBI filed a closure report in a 2017 case of corruption which the BJP had mentioned in its 'charge sheet' released in 2014.

Israel admits killing two on Gaza beach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, March 30: Israeli troops shot dead two Palestinians and wounded a third on Gaza's beach, the military acknowledged Saturday, responding to a video that showed one man falling to the ground after walking in an open area and then a bulldozer pushing two bodies into the garbage-strewn sand.

The military said troops opened fire after the men allegedly ignored warning shots. The video was broadcast earlier this week by the Al Jazeera television network. The origin of the footage remains unknown, as is the date of the incident. Al Jazeera said at least two of the three men seen in the blurry videos were waving white flags before being shot at.

The video followed a number of similar clips that have surfaced in recent months, showing Palestinians in war-stricken Gaza being fired at or killed while seeming to pose little threat to Israeli forces nearby.

Another video broadcast by Al Jazeera last week appeared to show an Israeli strike killing at least four Palestinians walking on a sandy path in southern Gaza.

SC judge takes dim view of Guvs

Disagreements between Governors and elected state governments have drawn the attention of Opposition party members, who claim that these disputes undermine good governance and the cordial relation between the federal government and states. Governors typically follow the policies of the Centre rather than adhering to constitutionalism, they allege. Justice BV Nagarathna, a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, addressed the matter Saturday saying the Governors must act in accordance with the Constitution. She also spoke on demonetisation.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: Supreme Court Judge BV Nagarathna Saturday expressed her disapproval of state Governors engaging in litigation before Constitutional courts.

She was speaking at the introductory session of the Courts and the Constitution Conference organised by NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad. Urging the Governors to follow the Constitution instead of having to be told what to do and what not to do, the apex court judge said, "The recent trend



has been that the Governor of a state is becoming a point of litigation because of either omission in assenting to bills or other actions which they would take. This is not a healthy trend under the Constitution to (have to) bring the actions or omissions of the Governor of a state before consideration before constitutional courts."

She went to add, "Though it is called a gubernatorial post, it is a serious constitutional post, and Governors must act as per the Constitution so this kind of litigation reduces. It is quite embarrassing for Governors to be told to do or not to do a thing. The time has come where they would be now told, I suppose, to do their duties as per the Constitution."

Her remarks assume significance at a time when the Supreme Court has expressed serious concern over the conduct of Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi, and the states of Kerala, Telangana and Punjab moving court in recent times against their respective Governors.

She also opened up on her dissent in the demonetisation case. Nagarathna revealed how she was moved by the plight of the common man post the move to withdraw the currency notes.

"I am happy that I got to be part of that bench. We all know what happened on November 8, 2016. 86% of the currency was 500 and 1,000 notes, which I think the Central government lost sight of. Imagine a labourer who had to get his notes exchanged for daily essentials. 98% of the currency came back, so where are we in black money eradication (goal of demonetisation)?" she asked.

"So I thought (at the time) it was a good way of making black money white money, of unaccounted cash entering the system. What happened with regard to income tax proceedings thereafter, we do not know. So this common man's predicament really stirred me and I had to dissent," explained Nagarathna.

Anubhav, Akash & Priyadarshi quit BJD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 30: In a jolt to the ruling Biju Janata Dal, a sitting MP and two ex-MLAs Saturday resigned from the party ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha and Odisha Assembly elections.

Tendering his resignation from the party, cine star and sitting Kendrapara MP Anubhav Mohanty said he was 'feeling suffocated' in the party for over four years.

Mohanty was the second sitting BJD MP after Bhartruhari Mahtab to quit the regional party ahead of the 2024 general elections. The Kendrapara MP was seen celebrating Holi with Mahtab in Cuttack.

Actor-turned-politician and former MLA Akash Das Nayak also resigned from the BJD. In a video statement, the former Korei MLA announced his resignation from the primary membership of BJD.

"After listening to my inner voice, for self-respect and the respect of Korei residents, I have decided to quit BJD," he said.

Das Nayak said he would take the next course of action after holding discussion with the people of Korei and his supporters.

During the day, former party MLA from Bhubaneswar-North Priyadarshi Mishra also resigned from BJD and joined the

Mahtab among 3 in BJP Odisha LS list

BHUBANESWAR: The BJP Saturday nominated Bhartruhari Mahtab from the Cuttack Lok Sabha seat from where he was elected on a BJD ticket five years ago but joined the saffron camp this month. The saffron party also fielded Rabindra Narayan Behera from Jajpur, a reserved seat for scheduled caste, and Sukant Kumar Panigrahi for the Kandhamal Lok Sabha constituency. "We are expecting a very good result in Odisha. A wave of change is seen in the state in favour of the BJP. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's good work will be instrumental for the victory of our candidates in the state," Mahtab said after getting a BJP ticket. The BJP had earlier announced candidates for 18 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha.

Bharatiya Janata Party in the presence of Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal and Bhubaneswar's Lok Sabha MP Aparajita Sarangi.

BJP's election in-charge for Odisha Vijayal Singh Tomar was also present at the programme here at the party office.

The BJP leaders said that Priyadarshi's entry would further strengthen the saffron party in the state capital and neighbouring areas ahead of the twin elections.

Youth kills mom, dies by suicide



POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, March 30: In a gruesome incident, a youth allegedly killed his mother by slitting her throat and then ended his life by hanging himself inside his house at Balaramprasad village under Nalco police limits in this district, Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Draupadi Sahu, 64, and her son Ranjit Sahu, 31, residents of the village.

According to reports, Draupadi was lying dead on the ground with her throat slit, while Ranjit was found hanging.

On being informed, Nalco police reached the village and seized the bodies.

Police then sent them to the district headquarters hospital for post-mortem.

Later, police registered a case in this connection and launched a probe. A forensic team was pressed into service to investigate the matter.

A preliminary investigation by the police suggests that there was a difference of opinion between the mother-son duo and that could be a reason behind the incident.

Morning classes from April 2 across state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The School and Mass Education department Saturday announced a change in the timing of classes in schools and other educational institutions across the state from April 2. The classes will be held from 7 am to 11:30 am.

A notification issued by the department said that the government, after careful consideration, has taken the measures to reschedule the timing of classes in all educational institutions under the School and Mass Education department.

They include government, government-aided and privately managed schools. The measures have been taken to mitigate heatwave situation in the state this summer. The notification also said that school authorities are directed to ensure the availability of safe drinking water, ORS sachets and other necessary arrangements to keep heatwave at bay.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I'll start your introduction with your party's name. Let's hope you won't switch parties during the show

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	37.0°C	37.6°C
Min Temp	25.3°C	25.0°C
Humidity	91%	89%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST

No large change in maximum temperature

Swiggy user spent ₹7.3 lakh on idlis in a year

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: Idli, a traditional south Indian dish that has been a staple in the region for centuries, is one of the healthiest foods known to mankind.

No wonder, wherever you travel in south India at any time you will get idli as a breakfast or dinner and sometimes at lunch also. For south Indians idli is not only a food, it's an emotion. So, one shouldn't be surprised to find people surviving on idli.

But can you imagine a person devouring idli worth about ₹2,000 a day for over a year?

In a surprising revelation, Swiggy, the online food delivery giant, shared that a Hyderabad resident ordered idlis worth ₹7.3



lakh in the past 12 months. The company disclosed this on the occasion of World Idli Day which was celebrated Saturday.

Shedding more light on the enduring love affair between Indians and their idlis, it stated, "The peak time for ordering idlis

is between 8 am to 10 am, with consumers from various cities including Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Coimbatore and Mumbai also savouring the delicacy during dinner time."

Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai emerged as the top three cities where idlis are ordered the most, followed closely by Mumbai, Pune, Coimbatore, Delhi, Vizag, Kolkata and Vijayawada, the company said in a statement.

The plain idli emerged as the most popular variant across all cities, with a plate of two pieces

being the most common order.

"Rava idli enjoys particular popularity in Bangalore, while ghee/neyi karam podi idli is favoured in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Thatte idli and mini idli also find regular spots among idli orders across cities," said Swiggy.

Idli ranks as the second-most ordered breakfast item on the platform, following closely behind masala dosa.

The top five restaurants famous for their idlis are Asha Tiffins in Bangalore, A2B - Adyar Ananda Bhavan in Bangalore and Chennai, Varalakshmi Tiffins in Hyderabad, Sree Akshayam in Chennai, and Veena Stores in Bangalore, according to the online food delivery platform.



leisure



BEYONCE REWRITES DOLLY PARTON'S SONG

Grammy-winner Beyonce has revamped the lyrics of Dolly Parton's iconic 1973 song *Jolene*, as she covered the track for her album *Cowboy Carter*. Her country-themed album has 27 tracks that not only comprise the song cover with new lyrics but also an interlude from Parton herself.

GWYNETH'S THOUGHTS ON POLYAMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS

Actress Gwyneth Paltrow has opened up about her thoughts on polyamorous relationships. She conducted an Ask Me Anything (AMA) session on her Instagram and was asked by a follower, "Have you ever considered a poly relationship?" Replying to the same, she wrote, "Not for me. I'm a one-man kind of gal."



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com
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ARIES
You are a touchy one. People will rub you the wrong way today. But remember that getting needlessly annoyed will bring nothing but more complications. Contemplate in seclusion about the root cause of the problem.

TAURUS
This day, you will be able to express and communicate your ideas and feelings very convincingly, assures Ganesh. All those to whom you come in contact with you today will be clear, and appreciative about whatever you tell them. At work your superiors are likely to be responsive and helpful.

GEMINI
Your sensitive and emotional nature will prove to be a problem for you. Hence you need to control your emotions. Tread carefully when it comes to personal relationships. You need to wait for a better time before you think of proposing to that special someone, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will be in a joyous mood. You will be de-lighted in whatever task you do. Financial matters will confound you, with even a petty issue causing tension. Ganesh says it will be a colourful day, with happy tidings.

LEO
Talk of being busy! It seems like today, you shall take the cake, and perhaps, be the icing on it as well, says Ganesh. It is likely that the day is going to be very hectic for you in terms of work and business. You may be engaged in official conversations and dealings.

VIRGO
You will spend most of today in the company of family and friends, says Ganesh. Students may focus on upcoming examinations and will learn to balance study and leisure time, in equal measure. It is a good day to buy real estate. Overall, a day to lie low and let your mind run free in its pursuit of pleasure.

LIBRA
Today is the day when you seem to agree with everything that people say, without striking even a note of criticism. It's just one of those days when you are amazed by all things around you. Such an elastic approach will enable you to be reasonable in your views and sensible in your ways. Ganesh wishes you the very best.

SCORPIO
It may have been on the cards for long and finally, you may end up buying a state-of-the-art motor vehicle or a palatial house of your dreams today. In addition, your generous mood may also egg you on to buy an expensive gift for your life partner.

SAGITTARIUS
Round and round they tumble, the wheels of life, smoothly gliding into a routine. You may spend your day in discontent due to the rut of regular activities. Sadly, there is little hope or adventure Ganesh foresees that might make this day worthwhile for you.

CAPRICORN
The day calls for making amends and undoing the damage done to relationships, so you will most likely focus on improving rapport with relatives and peers, says Ganesh. But despite your affable approach, family feud may occur. Keeping obnoxious neighbours at bay will save you some trouble.

AQUARIUS
You may fall in love today! If single, romance colours your day with a rainbow. If married, you may enjoy a quiet but romantic evening with your spouse. Ganesh says that if nothing else, it's a good time to pour over your photo albums and float in nostalgia.

PISCES
You will be treading new ground at work. Exciting as that sounds, it merely means you will have to do a lot of travelling today. You will also find yourself swamped with drafting new business proposals, holding meetings, or otherwise networking over the phone.



SONU COMES DOWN ON CRICKET FANS

Mumbai: Actor Sonu Sood has come out in support of cricketers and urged fans to respect the players, who have made the country proud.

Sonu's comments come after cricketer Hardik Pandya, who took the captaincy baton for the Mumbai Indians from former captain Rohit Sharma, faced a massive backlash from fans.

Since assuming the role of captain, Pandya has faced heavy trolling and even been booed by cricket enthusiasts in the stadium during IPL 2024 matches.

Without naming any player, the *Dabangg* actor took to X (formerly called Twitter), and wrote, "We should respect our players. Players who made us proud, players who made our country proud. One day you cheer for them, next day you boo them."

"It's not they, it's us who fail. I love cricket. I love every cricketer who represents my country. It doesn't matter which franchise he plays for. Doesn't matter whether he plays as a captain or if he's the 15th man on a team. They are our 'heroes,'" he added.

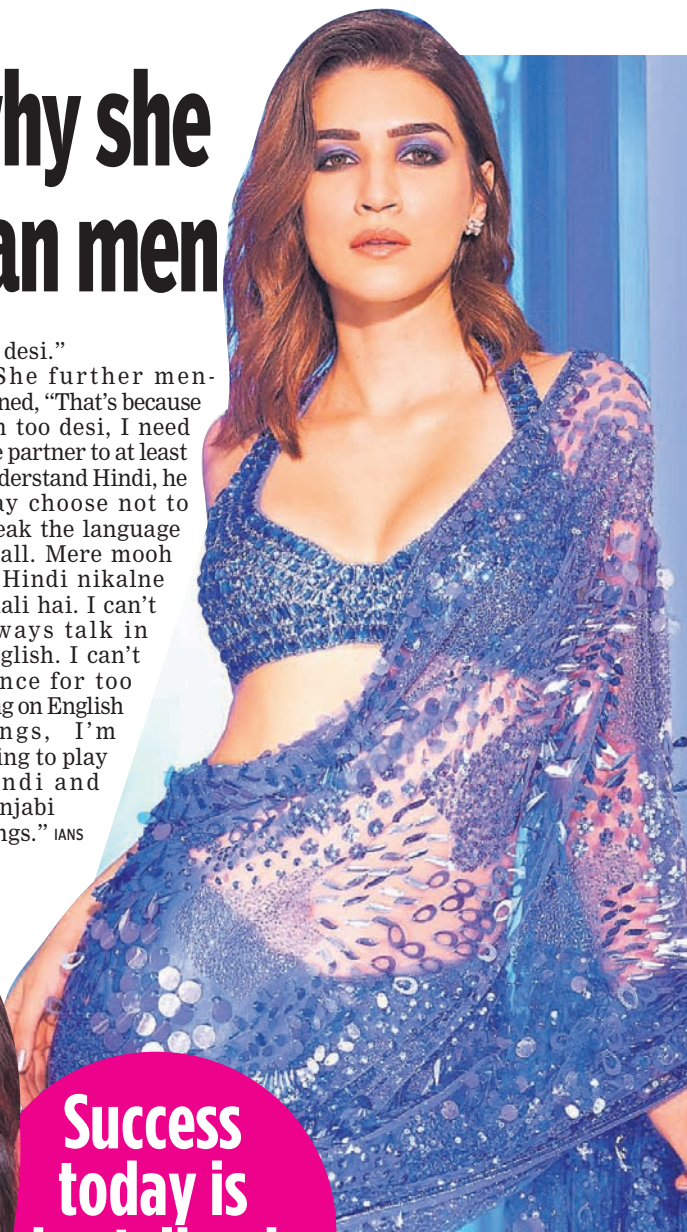
After assuming the captaincy, Mumbai Indians, led by Pandya, who previously played for Gujarat Titans, suffered a defeat in their second match against Sunrisers Hyderabad, which took place at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium. IANS

Kriti on why she likes Indian men

Mumbai: Actress Kriti Sanon, who is receiving a lot of positive response for her recently released theatrical film *Crew*, has shared why she likes Indian men.

The actress spoke with Raj Shamani on his podcast and said, "Abhi tak, I haven't gotten attracted to an absolute white man except for like you feel that Ryan Gosling is hot and all. You can find people hot but I haven't fallen for someone who is not completely Indian. Never say never, but I would prefer to date a guy who is a little desi."

She further mentioned, "That's because I'm too desi, I need the partner to at least understand Hindi, he may choose not to speak the language at all. Mere mooh se Hindi nikalne waali hai. I can't always talk in English. I can't dance for too long on English songs, I'm going to play Hindi and Punjabi songs." IANS



BADSHAH, NEETI SET THE STAGE ABLAZE

MADHUSMITA SAHU, OP

Bhubaneswar: The pulsating beats of music filled the air at the Baramunda Ground here Saturday evening as the Royal Stag Boom Box concert unfolded, leaving the audience spellbound with electrifying performances.

The event, held under the starry skies, witnessed a massive turnout of music enthusiasts from across the City, making it a night to remember.

The evening kicked off with DJ Ali Merchant setting the stage on fire with his infectious mixes, setting the perfect mood. It was followed by Ikka's reverberating vibe of hip-hop through the crowd. The evening soon took a melodious turn as Neeti arrived on stage and wielded her magic.

The highlight of the evening was the much-awaited performance by the king of rap, Badshah, who took the stage by storm with his chart-topping hits and electrifying stage pres-

ence. From *Mercy* to *Daaku*, he had the crowd singing along and dancing in unison, creating an electric atmosphere that reverberated throughout the venue.



Celebrating the spirit of 'Living it Large', Seagram's Royal Stag hosted rapper Badshah, singer Neeti Mohan, hip-hop superstar Ikka and DJ Ali Merchant for its show Royal Stag Boom Box, a musical experience in Bhubaneswar



Success today is short-lived: Neetu

Mumbai: Veteran actress Neetu Kapoor, who was seen in the grand premiere of *The Great Indian Kapil Show* with Ranbir Kapoor and Riddhima Kapoor Sahani, has talked about how the celebration of an actor's success has changed nowadays.

During the conversation about the success of Ranbir Kapoor's latest film, *Animal*, she shared how the celebration of a movie was celebrated back in her era.

Neetu, who rose to fame with movies like *Amar Akbar Anthony*, *Yaarana*, *Deewaar*, *Do Dooni Char*, and many more, said, "Success is very short-lived nowadays. Back in our day, films used to run for 25 weeks. At that time, we used to go collect trophies at functions and then celebrate the silver and golden jubilees of the films. That high was different."

On the work front, Neetu Kapoor was last seen in *Jug Jug Jeeyo* alongside Varun Dhawan, Anil Kapoor, and Kiara Advani. IANS

Kareena shares her career's dull phase

Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, who has been in the industry for over 23 years and has never really stayed away from the movies and worked ever since she made her debut, re-

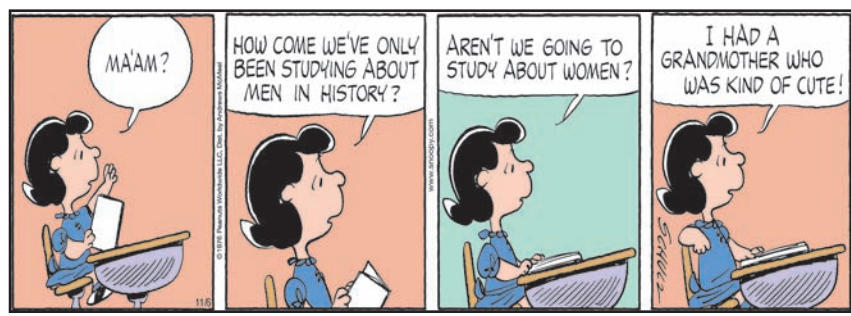
vealed about the dull phase she had in her career.

In a podcast with Ranveer Allahbadia, the *Refugee* actress said, "I would cry myself to sleep for many nights; why are my films not working? What's happening because even people were like, 'she's so good', but for that one film, I just needed that one turn, which was not happening," further adding, "If it happened to anybody honestly, nobody would survive this."

"I had said no to so many films, and I was at home because I was like, so many films are not doing well. I need to take a step back to reassess why the hell this is happening and to wait for that perfect script that will come, which might take a year or two, but I must be prepared to pull back," said Kareena.

She concluded by saying acting is an art and it's all about the craft, but one cannot deny that box office numbers are also important. AGENCIES

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

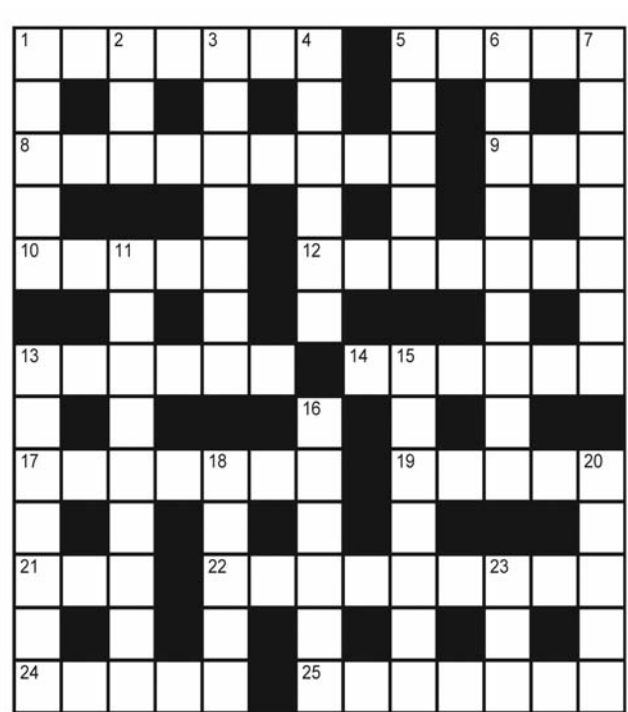


BREVITY



FUN post

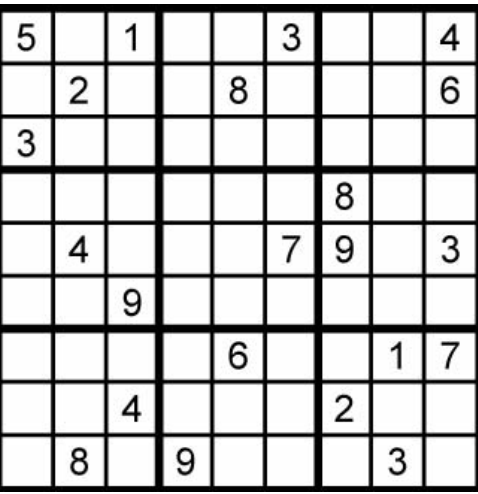
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Tempts
 - 5 Herring
 - 8 Radio type (5,4)
 - 9 Cobbler
 - 10 OPEC land
 - 12 Colonist
 - 13 British family
 - 14 Golf course areas
 - 17 Dizziness
 - 19 Pants
 - 21 Compete
 - 22 Some paperwork
 - 24 Papa
 - 25 Arctic
 - 5 Period of time
 - 6 Newspaper employees
 - 7 Vacuum flask
 - 11 Beau
 - 13 Resurrected
 - 15 Sports meeting
 - 16 Ho-hum
 - 18 Suggest
 - 20 Rope fiber
 - 23 Altdorf's canton
- Down
- 1 Artist's need
 - 2 Chinese ideal
 - 3 Swamp plant
 - 4 Jaunty

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.

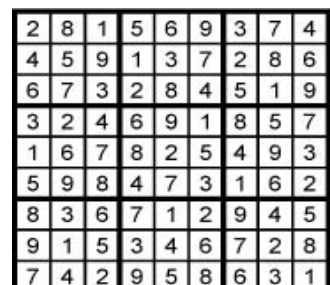


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

IN SYNC

Artistes perform during the concluding day of National Festival of Indian Dance and Music organised by Kala Vikash Kendra in Cuttack, Saturday



6 history-sheeters held for planning robbery

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Stepping up the crackdown against anti-social elements ahead of the upcoming polls, the Commissionerate Police arrested six persons who were allegedly planning to commit robbery, in the wee hours of Saturday. The arrests took place under Saheed Nagar police station limits.



The arrested men were identified as Lingaraj Bhuyian, 29, Bulu Palei, 33, Kartika Mandala, 39, Satyabrata Bhoi, 23, Tatwamas Pradhan 25, and Md Kadir, 34. They are all residents of Saheed Nagar area. They had been arrested in the past by the Commissionerate Police for in-

dulging in criminal activities.

ACP (Zone V) Goutam Kishan said the Saheed Nagar police received a tip-off around 2:50 am from an informant that some miscreants were seen loitering in the Santipalli slum. They were discussing to rob valuables from the drivers of heavy vehicles plying between Kalpana Square and Vani Vihar Square, Kishan said quoting the informant.

The ACP said a patrol team rushed to the spot and swiftly arrested six persons. During questioning, the accused men who had consumed alcohol could not provide satisfactory answers for the purpose of their assembly at late hours. They later revealed about their plans to rob drivers of heavy vehicles, including interstate trucks and buses, he added.

A toy gun, one sharp weapon, three iron rods and three bottles of alcohol were seized from the possession of the accused, said a senior cop at Saheed Nagar police station.



POWER LIFT: A man shows martial art skills during Panchu Dola celebration at Madanpur, on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Saturday

PICT: BIKASH NAYAK

SRC DIRECTS 24X7 POWER, WATER AS ODISHA SIZZLES

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: With Odisha witnessing a sudden rise in temperatures and intense heatwave conditions prevailing in many districts for the past three-four days, the state government asked the authorities to take a host of measures, including uninterrupted power and water supply, to mitigate heat-related risks, Saturday.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) Satyabrata Sahu convened a meeting with secretaries of various departments, asking them to take all necessary measures to prevent any eventuality arising out of the heatwave conditions.

He directed them to ensure uninterrupted supply of drinking water and power during the season.

Sahu asked the authorities to set up drinking water kiosks, especially at marketplaces and bus stands. Urban shelters, community buildings and other public buildings in rural and urban areas should be used as daytime shelters for homeless and the needy, he said.



Availability of sufficient drinking water and ORS in educational institutions must be ensured. Readiness of heat stroke patient room in PHC, CHC and DHH should also be ensured.

In order to combat forest fire and protect wild animals during heatwave, various community awareness activities should be undertaken involving the local communities, Vana Surakhya Samiti, PRI members

and SHG members.

He also asked the authorities to consider rescheduling bus timing. Provision of drinking water and first-aid box should also be made in public transport services.

Earlier, Sahu had asked all district Collectors to prepare contingency plans and initiate precautionary measures to deal with heatwave-like conditions during the polls.

Malkangiri hottest at 41°C

Heatwave conditions gripped several parts of Odisha as day temperature crossed 38 degrees Celsius in as many as 20 locations across the state, with Malkangiri remaining the hottest place in the state, Saturday.

According to the regional centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here, Malkangiri witnessed the highest temperature at 41 degrees Celsius, while the mercury crossed 40 degrees Celsius at Bolangir and Boudh, Titlagarh and Nayagarh, Saturday.

Additionally, 15 more places in the state recorded daytime temperatures rising to over 38 degrees Celsius. The IMD report said dry conditions prevailed over major parts of the state, with high solar insolation likely leading to maximum temperatures ranging between 38 to 40 degrees Celsius in interior districts and between 36 to 38 degrees Celsius in coastal areas over the next four

to five days.

The night temperatures are expected to rise gradually by 2-3 degrees Celsius during this period, it said.

Warm night conditions prevalent in isolated areas of interior Odisha are expected to persist over the next four to five days, with relative humidity ranging from 50 to 70 per cent over coastal Odisha and 30 to 50 per cent over interior districts.

People are advised to take precautionary measures when outdoors during the day, considering the prevailing hot and humid weather conditions.

Meanwhile, the IMD has issued an orange warning for thunderstorms with lightning across several parts of Odisha until March 31.

Additionally, some regions may experience hail accompanied by gusty winds. Light to moderate rain or thunder-showers are likely to occur at a few places in specific districts March 31 and April 1.

Demand for ban on mega infra projects in Himalayas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: More than 60 environmental and social organisations in the country have demanded a complete ban on all mega infrastructure projects, such as those related to the railways, dams, hydro projects and four-lane highways in the Himalayas, and have urged for referendums and public consultations to be made compulsory for all development projects.

The organisations, jointly leading the 'People for Himalaya' campaign, issued a five-point charter of demand for all political parties for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls during an online press conference.

They called for a complete moratorium on all mega infrastructure projects, including those related to the railways, dams, hydro projects, tunneling, transmission lines and four-lane highways, along with a comprehensive multi-disciplinary review of the impacts of the existing projects.

The organisations demanded that democratic decision-making through referendums and public consultations be made compulsory for large infrastructure projects.

They also called for the strengthening of the Environment Impact Assessment Notification-1994, the scrapping of the EIA-2020 amendments and FCA-2023 amendments, and free prior informed consent of gram sabhas for all development projects.

Addressing the press conference, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk said, "While industries exploit the riches of the Himalayas, the local people bear the brunt of disasters. The government uses taxpayers' money for rehabilitation efforts, yet those who reap the benefits are not held accountable."

Wangchuk, who recently went on a 21-day fast to demand that Ladakh be included under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, said, "Bureaucrats from Chandigarh or Lucknow

may not fully understand the fragility of the region. The best of all could also make mistakes and the worst of all would sell it off to industries."

Mohan Saikia from the Northeast Dialogue Forum warned of severe ecological impacts of massive hydropower development proposed on the Brahmaputra river and its basins, without the consent of the local indigenous communities.

"The far-reaching impact of these infrastructure projects is manifested in the form of floods," Saikia said.

Guman Singh from the Himalaya Niti Abhiyan and Atul Sati of the Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti said the Beas floods and the land subsidence in Joshimath are 'man-made, policy-led disasters'.

Vimla Vishwpremi of the Parvatiya Mahila Adhikar Manch, Himachal Pradesh said pastoralists, landless Dalits and women, who contribute the least to these policy disasters and the climate crisis, are the worst hit.

"They remain invisible and lack support when it comes to rebuilding their lives," she said.

Anmol Ohri from the Climate Front Jammu warned that mindless pilgrim tourism, road construction in glacial regions and riverfront development projects will increase the risk of floods in the region.

The organisations also demanded that state laws and regulations, such as the Van Panchayat Rules in Uttarakhand, which protect the private and community resource rights of nature-dependent communities, be strengthened.

They also emphasised that gram sabhas, panchayats and municipal bodies should be involved in disaster governance through regular sharing of information on the latest risk studies and consultations on climate adaptation strategies, disaster risk mitigation and the work carried out under the National Mission on Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem.

UK tourist creates ruckus at Srimandir

AGENCES

Puri, March 30: A tourist from UK reportedly entered the Srimandir in an intoxicated condition and assaulted a servant when caught by him, sources said, Saturday.

The foreign tourist was identified as Thomas Craig Sheldon from Britain.

According to sources, in response to a public complaint, a police patrolling unit picked up Thomas while he was creating a ruckus near Swargadwar beach in the morning.

The police after verifying his passport released him. But later, the foreigner allegedly came to Grand Road and managed to enter the 12th century shrine. On being informed by servants, police reached the shrine and detained the foreign tourist, who was found under the influence of some stupefying narcotics, for questioning.

Later in the evening, the police released him after verifying his travel documents.



The police were scanning the CCTV footage to ascertain how and when the foreigner gained entry into the temple by dodging security. Following the incident, security has been tightened further around the shrine, it is learned.



POLL PREP: CEO Nikunja Bihari Dhal chairs a preparatory meet for the upcoming elections, in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

CALLING SPOUSE 'BHOOT', 'PISHACH' NOT CRUELTY

The remarks came from a single-judge bench of Justice Bibek Chaudhuri, who was hearing a petition filed by Sahdeo Gupta and his son Naresh Kumar Gupta, both residents of Bokaro in adjoining Jharkhand

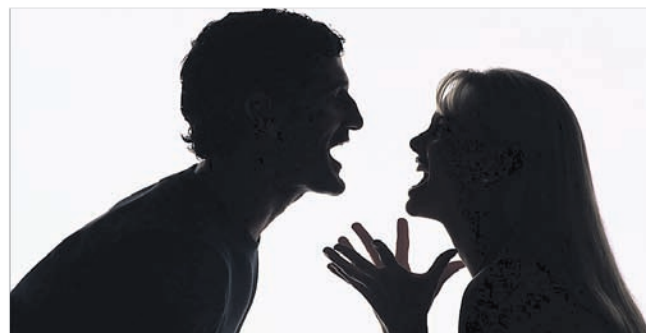
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 30: The Patna High Court has observed that the use of 'filthy language' by an estranged couple, who call each other names like 'bhoot' (ghost) and 'pishach' (vampire), does not tantamount to 'cruelty'.

The remarks came from a single-judge bench of Justice Bibek

Chaudhuri, who was hearing a petition filed by Sahdeo Gupta and his son Naresh Kumar Gupta, both residents of Bokaro in adjoining Jharkhand.

The father-son duo had challenged an order passed by courts in Bihar's Nalanda district, on a complaint filed by Naresh Gupta's divorced wife in Nawada, her native place.



The complainant had filed a case against her husband and father-in-law, way back in 1994, accusing them of physical and material torture to press for the

demand for a car in dowry. The case was later transferred to Nalanda from Nawada by a prayer by the father-son duo, who ended up being slapped with

rigorous imprisonment for a year, by the Chief Judicial Magistrate in 2008, and their appeal before the Additional Sessions Court was rejected 10 years later.

In the meantime, the couple was granted divorce by the Jharkhand High Court.

Opposing the petition filed before the Patna High Court, the divorced woman's advocate pleaded that 'a lady in the 21st century' was called 'bhoot' and 'pishach' by her in-laws, which was 'a form of immense cruelty'.

The court, however, observed that it was 'not in a position to accept such an argument'.

'In matrimonial relations, especially in failed matrimonial relations', there have been instances of 'both the husband and the wife' having 'abused each other' with 'filthy language'.

"However, all such accusations do not come within the veil of cruelty," it said.

The high court also noted that she had been 'harassed' and 'brutally tortured' by 'all the accused persons', but there were 'no specific, distinct allegations against either petitioner'.

The judgements passed by the lower courts were, accordingly, quashed though there was 'no order as to costs'.

Cong files complaint against actress Nisha



DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The members of District Mahila Congress Saturday lodged a complaint at Mahila police station against actress Nisha Maharana alleging her of using foul language and engaging in inappropriate behaviour at the party office during Holi celebrations recently.

Subhadra Mishra, member of the Congress party, took out a rally against the alleged misbehaviour, starting from Master Canteen to Mahila police station in Unit I area here.

According to the FIR lodged at Mahila police station, Nisha, accompanied by several youths, arrived at the party office here in an inebriated state to greet the party leaders on Holi.

"She then started behaving inappropriately. A shocked

Subhadra asked Nisha about her identity. In return, Nisha used abusive languages and threatened Subhadra of dire consequences," the complaint added.

Subhadra also alleged that while Nisha was leaving the party office, a youth rushed towards her and shoved a knife around the throat. "The youth threatened me to leave the City within 15 days else Nisha will get me killed," Subhadra added.

Meanwhile, Nisha has also registered an FIR against Subhadra at the same police station, alleging misbehaviour by Subhadra against her, a police official said.

Mahila police station IIC Reena Mishra said, "Investigation has been initiated in both the cases. Further probe would help determine the veracity of the claims and action would be taken accordingly."



CULTURAL VIBRANCY: Students perform at the silver jubilee celebration of Bhagabati Vidya Niketan in Puri, Saturday

OP PHOTO

SUM docs save pregnant woman



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: A team of surgeons at Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS) and SUM Hospital, Phulnakhara campus here have successfully removed a tumour weighing 1.5 kg from a pregnant woman recently.

The surgery conducted by a team led by Smrutishree Sahu saved the life of both the mother and the child while conducting a safe delivery. Both of them are out of any critical condition.

The team of surgeons delivered the baby boy through caesarean section and Myomectomy simultaneously to remove the uterine fibroid.

The patient's family had expressed their gratitude to the medical team for conducting the successful surgery.

The dean of the Phulnakhara campus of IMS and SUM hospital Arakhita Swain and medical superintendent Rajesh Kumar Lenka provided the necessary support to the surgical team which comprised

Siddharth Gautam from Pharmacological department, Paediatrician Soumya Ranja Samal, Pragma Nanda from Anaesthesia department, Kamalini Mallick, deputy nursing superintendent, Lipsa rani Ojha, priyanka swain OT nurse and Subhankar Mohapatra, pharmacist.

The new hospital was dedicated to the citizens of the state by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik January 22.

The 2000-bed hospital located on NH-16 between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack has all the required facilities to extend speciality as well as super speciality medical treatment to patients at affordable cost. It has a 24-hour emergency service along with ICU, ICCU, PICU, NICU besides dedicated ICUs for cardio-thoracic and vascular surgery and hemato oncology patients.

The hospital also accepts and treats patients under the state government sponsored Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) scheme.

Individual rights not mutually exclusive: SC judge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Indian judiciary acknowledges that true economic development is not about immediate gains but involves a sustainable approach. Economic well-being and individual rights are not mutually exclusive, Supreme Court judge Hima Kohli said.

Speaking at the American Bar Association (ABA) India Conference 2024, Justice Kohli said the judiciary has shown an increasing inclination towards endorsing sustainable growth models.

By upholding laws and principles that promote sustain-

ability, the Indian judiciary reinforces the position that long-term economic prosperity cannot be separated from environmental stewardship and social welfare, she stressed.

"The approach of the Indian judiciary is of comprehensive consideration. It acknowledges that true economic development is not about immediate gains but involves a sustainable approach that benefits society at large."

"This approach reflects a judicial consciousness that acknowledges the fact that economic well-being and individual rights are not mutually exclusive but are, in fact, complementary



forces which when balanced correctly, promote a more just, equitable, inclusive and prosperous society," she said. Justice Kohli said the partnership between

India and the US, particularly through judicial collaboration and mutual respect for the rule of law, offers a tremendous opportunity to enhance economic

development.

"By focusing on areas such as providing certainty in law, quick resolution of disputes, protection of property rights, enforcement of contractual obligations and digital transformation, both countries can create a more favourable environment for economic growth and innovation."

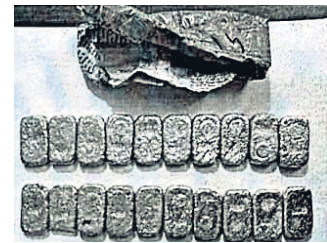
"From India's perspective, learning from the US experience and fostering closer judicial and legal cooperation will not only benefit our economic ties but also strengthen the very foundation of our democratic and legal systems", justice Kohli quoted.

DRI seizes ₹6.44cr worth gold

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Sleuths of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) arrested two persons after recovering 9180 grams of smuggled gold worth over ₹6.44 crore from their possession in Cuttack, official sources said, Saturday.

Acting on a tip-off, DRI sleuths intercepted a four-wheeler at Manguli toll plaza in Cuttack Thursday evening. "While searching the vehicle, 65 pieces of smuggled gold bullion, weighing 9180 grams and valued at ₹6,44,46,164, were recovered. The



smuggled gold was ingeniously concealed in a cavity of the vehicle," they said.

They added, "The recovered gold and the vehicle have been seized. Two persons in possession of the gold were arrested under the provisions of Customs Act, 1962."

Khurda Road-Bolangir Railway Line project in progress

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The much-awaited Khurda Road-Bolangir Railway Line project, designed to enhance connectivity and foster development, is rapidly taking shape. With a total length of 301 kilometers, the project has achieved a significant milestone with 152.805 kilometers of rail line work already commissioned.

Efforts to expedite the project's completion are evident as construction progresses simultaneously from both Khurda Road and Bolangir sides. Notably, 105.8 kilometers from Khurda Road to Daspalla and 47 kilometers from Bolangir to Sonepur have been successfully completed. The recent CRS inspection has completed 8 km stretch from Sonepur to Purunapani station.

Radiation from exploding stars could threaten life on earth

Stars more than eight times more massive than the Sun die violently in an explosion called a supernova. Supernovae happen across the Milky Way only a few times a century, and these violent explosions are usually remote enough that people here on Earth don't notice. For a dying star to have any effect on life on our planet, it would have to go supernova within 100 light years from Earth.

The dying star emits high energy radiation as gamma rays. Gamma rays are a form of electromagnetic radiation with wavelengths much shorter than light waves, meaning they're invisible to the human eye. The dying star also releases a torrent of high-energy particles in the form of cosmic rays: subatomic particles moving at close to the speed of light.

Supernovae in the Milky Way are rare, but a few have been close enough to Earth that historical records discuss them. In 185 AD, a star appeared in a place

where no star had previously been seen. It was probably a supernova.

Observers around the world saw a bright star suddenly appear in 1006 AD. Astronomers later matched it to a supernova, 7,200 light years away. Then, in 1054 AD, Chinese astronomers recorded a star visible in the daytime sky that astronomers subsequently identified as a supernova 6,500 light years away.

Johannes Kepler observed the last supernova in the Milky Way in 1604, so in a statistical sense, the next one is overdue.

Astronomers have found evidence of a supernova 300 light years away that exploded 2.5 million years ago. Radioactive atoms trapped in seafloor sediments are the telltale signs of this event. Radiation from gamma rays eroded the ozone layer, which protects life on Earth from the Sun's harmful radiation. This event would have cooled the climate, leading to the extinction of some ancient species.



IF THE EARTH WERE IN THE LINE OF FIRE OF A GAMMA-RAY BURST WITHIN 10,000 LIGHT YEARS, OR 10 PER CENT OF THE DIAMETER OF THE GALAXY, THE BURST WOULD SEVERELY DAMAGE THE OZONE LAYER

A supernova within 30 light years would be catastrophic, severely depleting the ozone layer, disrupting the marine food chain and likely causing mass extinc-

tion. Some astronomers guess that nearby supernovae triggered a series of mass extinctions 360 to 375 million years ago. But supernovae aren't the

only events that emit gamma rays. Neutron star collisions cause high-energy phenomena ranging from gamma rays to gravitational waves.

Left behind after a supernova explosion, neutron stars are city-size balls of matter with the density of an atomic nucleus, so 300 trillion times denser than the Sun.

A neutron star collision generates an intense burst of gamma rays. If the Earth were in the line of fire of a gamma-ray burst within 10,000 light years, or 10 per cent of the diameter of the galaxy, the burst would severely damage the ozone layer. It would also damage the DNA inside organisms' cells, at a level that would kill many simple life forms like bacteria.

Gamma-ray bursts may not hold an imminent threat to life on Earth, but over very long time scales, bursts will inevitably hit the Earth. The odds of a gamma-ray burst triggering a mass extinction are 50 per cent

in the past 500 million years and 90 per cent in the 4 billion years since there has been life on Earth.

Astronomers have argued that a gamma-ray burst caused the first mass extinction 440 million years ago, when 60 per cent of all marine creatures disappeared.

The most extreme astrophysical events have a long reach. Astronomers were reminded of this in October 2022, when a pulse of radiation swept through the solar system and overloaded all of the gamma-ray telescopes in space.

It was the brightest gamma-ray burst to occur since human civilisation began. The radiation caused a sudden disturbance to the Earth's ionosphere, even though the source was an explosion nearly 2 billion light years away. Life on Earth was unaffected, but the fact that it altered the ionosphere is sobering – a similar burst in the Milky Way would be a million times brighter.

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Andhra's 'power play' to hold elections in Kotia



POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, March 30: The neighbouring Andhra Pradesh has been continuously trespassing into the disputed region of Kotia panchayat under Pottangi block of Koraput district and taking various steps to influence the local residents.

With the general elections being around the corner, Andhra Pradesh officials are now trying to provide power supply to

the residents in Kotia and make voters participate in the Andhra election process. In this process, the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Department has supplied digital meters to the villagers of Tala Ganjeipadar village.

Earlier, Andhra Pradesh had set up infrastructure in the region to provide power services to the villagers. They have also provided digital meters to around 39 beneficiaries after filling the forms. However, after getting in-

formation about the development, the local block officials intervened and asked the AP officials to go back. Left with no option, the AP officials returned.

On the other hand, Odisha government has provided digital meters to only a few households in the villages and the local administration has not taken any serious steps so far to provide the electricity services to the residents. However, Andhra has already set up its infrastructure to provide electricity to the households in the region.

Informing about the development, a villager said that Andhra officials have taken steps to attract voters and influence the people of the area as the general elections are drawing closer.

The first phase of general elections will be held in both Koraput and Andhra Pradesh April 13. The Andhra government is desperately trying to hold elections in the dispute Kotia region. However, no officials of the district administration in Koraput were available for comments.



SOARING TEMPERATURES: Pigeons quench their thirst from an earthen pot at Municipality Square in Sambalpur as mercury soared in the town, Saturday

OP PHOTO

ILLEGAL GEMSTONE MINING

Labourer crushed to death under boulder in Mahanadi



POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, March 30: A labourer was crushed to death under a huge boulder allegedly while illegally mining gemstones from the Mahanadi riverbed in Boudh district, Friday.

The deceased was identified as Susant Jhankar, 30, of Baradakata village under Kiakata police limits in Angul district. He died on the spot after fellow labourers and fire personnel failed to rescue him from under the boulder. The incident has sparked shockwaves in the area.

Boudh police also rushed to the spot and retrieved the body of the deceased with the help of Hitachi excavator after a 24-hour long ordeal. The body has been sent for post-mortem to the district headquarters hospital in Boudh.

It is alleged that some mafia had engaged around 10 to 15

labourers to excavate precious gemstones like diamonds from the area.

The incident occurred when a huge boulder fell on one of the labourers Jhankar during the excavation of the riverbed for diamonds. Other labourers tried to rescue the trapped Jhankar but could not rescue him. Later, the fire personnel from Boudh reached the spot and started a rescue operation but had to abort the operation after evening. Moreover, they also found it hard to move the huge boulder which had fallen over Jhankar.

Police personnel resumed the rescue operation with the help of an excavator and rescued the trapped labourer, Saturday. He, however, had died by then. Locals have demanded strict action against the persons responsible for engaging the labourers in illegal gemstone mining.

9 poachers arrested from Similipal

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 30: Forest department officials and Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) personnel during a joint raid Friday night arrested nine poachers from Jenabil range under south division of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Similipal National Park of Mayurbhanj district.

Nine country-made guns along with 30kg sambar meat (venison) were also seized from their possession. A case was registered under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and all the accused were forwarded to court Saturday, Similipal Tiger Reserve Field Director In-Charge Prakash Chand Gogineni informed reporters.

As per reports, over 40 poachers armed with country-made guns from villages of Upartaidiha

30 KG VENISON AND COUNTRY-MADE GUNS SEIZED



and Jamdiha in Kundabai panchayat, Khalidihi in Patasanipur panchayat under Udala police limits and from other nearby villages entered Jenabil range of

Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) Friday night.

When the poachers were returning after poaching a sambar, the Forest department staff of

Man held for keeping wild boar as pet in Kendrapara

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, March 30: Forest officials in Kendrapara district Saturday rescued a wild boar from a man's home and arrested him on the charge of unlawfully confining the wild animal in his house, an official said Saturday.

The accused Bhajan Raptan (50), a native of Pitapata village under Mahakalapara forest range, had caged and kept it as a pet, the official said.

Raptan, booked under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, was later remanded to judicial custody after a local court dismissed his bail application, the forest range officer of Mahakalapara



forest range, Kartikeswar Khandei, said.

The offence of keeping the wild animal as a pet is punishable with imprisonment for a term ranging between three and seven years or more and a fine ranging between ₹10,000 and

₹25,000, he said.

The offence is also cognizable and non-bailable, the forest official said.

The wild boar was later released in the mangrove forest area, the ideal habitat for such animals, he added.

The Forest department has recently issued a warning and asked people not to click photographs or selfies with wild animals and post them on social media platforms under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

A week ago, Forest officials arrested a couple from the Jajpur district, under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, for clicking pictures with wild animals and posting those on social media platforms.

YOUTH DIES IN ROAD MISHAP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, March 30: In a tragic incident, a youth died and another sustained injury after the bike on which they were travelling was hit by a speeding car from behind near Tangini village under this block in Koraput district late Friday night.

The deceased has been identified as Biswanath Gemel, a resident of Lingamgudi village, and the injured youth as Nabin Pangti, a resident of Telarai village under Ralegada panchayat.

As per reports, the accident took place when the duo was returning home on a bike (Regd No-OD 10-T-2215) after watching an opera at Sunkl panchayat under this block late Friday night. Suddenly, a speeding car hit them from behind following which Gemel died while being rushed to hospital.

Amogh Lila explains the mantra of happiness



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, March 30: "Transcendental mental health: How to overcome fears, worries and stress", and "Password for happiness" (The Bhagavad Gita Way), were the two topics touched upon by Amogh Lila Das at a packed Bhubaneswar Behera Auditorium on NIT Rourkela campus here recently. Das is an Indian monk, motivational speaker, and lifestyle coach popular for his humorous, compelling and enlightening talks.

Das was invited by the Institute Counselling Service (ICS) of NIT Rourkela. Explaining the importance of mental health, Amogh Lila Das said, "One key to unlocking a state of positive mental health is 'stress management'. This can be achieved by letting go of things beyond our control and ceasing to dwell on them."

"We often believe that physical comfort, lack of suffering, and material desires bring happiness, but this is not the case. Once we grasp the concepts of self-actualisation and spiritual fulfilment in our lives, genuine happiness begins to emerge," he further emphasised.

The monk explained to students, faculty and staff members the meaning of spirituality and how it helps bring true happiness. "Embracing spirituality at a young age can assist us in planning our lives more ef-

fectively," he said. "Therefore, I encourage you all to discover your spiritual quotient and train your minds to find happiness through problem-solving abilities," explained Amogh Lila Das. He was of the opinion that "happiness is present inside, not in outside worldly pleasures. We have to search for that and spiritualism is the only way."

Earlier during the event, K Umamaheshwar Rao, Director, NIT Rourkela, said, "Spiritual education enhances our engagement with life's objectives, providing us clearer insight. Happiness comes from within and that's why a few days without any reason we feel extremely happy and some other days we feel sad. Achieving spiritual realisation helps balance these emotions of tranquillity and anxiety."

Pawan Kumar, Head of ICS, provided an overview of the counselling services offered at NITR, emphasising that the primary goal of ICS, founded in the year 2017, is to instill a confident outlook on life among students.

ICS addresses various crucial aspects of a student's life, including academic, financial, mental, and socio-cultural issues. ICS student team coordinator Swapanil Das (Integrated MSc in Mathematics) then presented the annual report of Institute Counselling Service. The event also included a Q/A session with the audience.

Sales struggle leaves marigold growers helpless

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 30: Farmers in Sambalpur district are showing interest in cultivating vegetables and other cash crops while the paddy yield is not as profitable as before. A few years ago in Sanatanpali of Jujumura block, farmers were earning handsomely by cultivating flowers. Seeing this, the farmers of surrounding areas showed interest in floriculture. Many farmers have grown flowers this year in Thakurmal, Baham, Kabrapali, Paikamal, Ghenuipali, Jayantpur as well as Sanatanpali. In particular, marigold cultivation has doubled over the past years. However, the farmers have expressed concern about flower sales and market.

Nirakar Pradhan, who started flower cultivation in Sanatanpali, says, "This year, marigold has been cultivated on about 10 acres of land in the village." In the past years, at this time, marigold flowers were being sold at ₹50 per kg in the market. This year how-



ever, due to more production, the shopkeepers are paying 30 rupees per kg.

He said with frustration that he had to face a lot of trouble while getting back outstanding amounts from the flower retailers. Flower growers of other villages have also complained about the same. While Sambalpur market is the only option for selling flowers, owing to increased

supply, the shopkeepers are exploiting the farmers and buying at lower prices.

However, even after 10 years of the government's announcement, the construction of a state-of-the-art market terminal at Nildunguri could not go ahead. Apart from this, ways to export flowers to other states and abroad could also be opened, said the local flower growers.

On the other hand, Manbodb Barik, director of the Sabuja Sanatanpali Farmers Producer Company Limited which consists of more than a thousand farmers in Sanatanpali, said that the district administration was advised to build a 'model mandi' in the village. But that has not happened yet, which is why the growers are forced to go to distant Sambalpur to sell flowers.

Be grateful for all ordeals they are the shortest way to the Divine.

THE MOTHER



New In New India

This is not a free and fair election. The repercussions and ramifications of this rigging and fixing will be felt through Narendra Modi's third time in office. And this election has damaged and will further damage our republic. One does not need to labour to make the point that the election is rigged. Two Chief Ministers are in jail. Why? Not because they are convicted but because they have been jailed by agencies controlled by Modi. The Congress party has no access to its bank accounts. Why? Not because it has been convicted but because it is being manhandled by agencies controlled by Modi. Those who have been previously booked by the same agencies have now been given clean chits after they switched their allegiance to the NDA.

In no real democracy does this happen. We don't even have to go into the electoral bonds scandal. The strange thing is that most people had assumed Modi would return to power in 2024, so why do this? Perhaps it is just who he is. That is the most natural explanation for those who have noted with alarm the sequence of events that led to this pass.

This includes the outside world and especially the institutions that study democracy. They have been telling us for years now that India is not fully free, that its democracy has slid and that it has become authoritarian. V-Dem inside the University of Gothenburg classified India as an 'electoral autocracy' in 2018. In its 2024 report, released in March, it said India was 'one of the worst autocratisers.' In 2020, the Economist Intelligence Unit classified India as a 'flawed democracy,' saying that 'democratic norms have been under pressure since 2015.' In 2021, Freedom House, the think tank in Washington, said India was now not free but only 'partly free.' The rating has remained since. The government's response to the Freedom House finding was to trot out a press release which said: "Many states in India under its federal structure are ruled by parties other than the one at the national level, through an election process which is free and fair and which is conducted by an independent election body. This reflects the working of a vibrant democracy, which gives space to those who hold varying views."

This was dishonest. The Freedom House report had two parts. The first, given 40 per cent weightage, was on political rights. Here India got a score of 34/40 (falling to 33/40 in 2023), including full marks for free and fair elections, election commission impartiality, freedom to start political parties and opportunities for the Opposition to increase their power. In this part, India did not get full marks on whether voting was unhampered by violence and unaffected by communal tension. This is hardly arguable. In fact, the government even got 3/4 on transparency, which was probably overly generous. The government response was therefore merely repeating what Freedom House had anyway said. Where India's rating was hurt was in the other 60 per cent, for civil liberties, which are also a part of freedom. Here it performed poorly (33/60). On the issues of freedom of expression, freedom of religion, academic freedom, freedom of assembly, freedom for NGOs to work (the report named the government's attack on my organisation Amnesty International India specifically), rule of law, independence of judiciary and due process by police, India's rating was poor. But the scores merely reflected the reality.

In fact, as readers may have noted, India should expect that on the side of political rights, the score will now crater. It is not possible to jail your Opposition and pretend you are a democracy with political rights. When the scores began to fall at first the government appeared baffled by the results, because Modi was convinced he was doing a good job. The government sought details from ministries of the parameters used by the Economist Intelligence Unit in its downgrading of India to a 'flawed democracy' though the report itself cites the reasons clearly. It said the 'primary cause was an erosion of civil liberties' and introduction of religion into citizenship. Again, all this was already on view, what is new now in New India is the direct assault on democracy and its processes.

What should we now expect in the elections and after? If Modi is able to get a very large majority and 400 seats, as he is claiming he will, then the election will be seen as those in Russia and North Korea are. There will be no credibility and that will remain through the term. On the other hand if he gets fewer seats than in 2019 and has a simple majority, the Opposition will not be cowed down easily. They know he will misuse authority and abuse office to put them in jail. India has become like Bangladesh is, a democracy where the Opposition is not allowed to function. This same state of affairs happened in Pakistan as well, most famously in 1977.

Modi can coin grand phrases like mother of democracy but it has been apparent for some time now that this is not only untrue but a joke.



Aakar Patel

It is not possible to jail your opposition and pretend you are a democracy with political rights



DK Giri

HYDROPOWER COOPERATION IS THE MAIN PILLAR OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH BHUTAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhutan on 21-22 March was significant for more than one reason. It was to counter China which is aggressively penetrating into India's neighbourhood. Recently, through the border talks, Beijing sent overtures to Bhutan in order to dilute New Delhi's historic ties with Thimphu. Second, despite the pressure of electioneering, Modi dashed to Bhutan underscoring the importance New Delhi attaches to its neighbourhood first policy. Third, conferring the Order of the Druk Gyalpo on Prime Minister Modi is an evidence of reciprocal importance Thimphu places on its ties with India. This honour is the highest award Bhutan gives to anyone including all orders, decorations and medals. The honour is testimony of India's commitment to Bhutan's growth, prosperity and security.

Political observers have wondered how a small country like Bhutan could be friendly for so many years with a much bigger country like India. Bhutan has a geographical area of 38,394 sq km and a population of about 7.7 lakh whereas India's territory consists of 3.28 million sq km and population of 140 crore plus. The asymmetry in size and population is huge. Yet both the countries have remained the closest partners in the region for over last 50 years and more. This is because India treats other countries with respect and as equals as it should be between two sovereign countries irrespective of their size and resources.

The latest in the bilateral relations between Bhutan and India is the development of Gelephu project which is being built as a special economic zone to attract foreign investment and advance prosperity for the Bhutanese kingdom. At the same time, this is being developed as a mindfulness city with environmental security and spiritual well-being as foremost concerns.

The visit of King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel



Without doubt, India is concerned about the ongoing talks between Bhutan and China on boundary agreements. In fact, the possible swap of land at Doklam to Bhutan's west is a threat to India's Siliguri Corridor and could threaten India's border connectivity projects in Arunachal Pradesh

Wangchuck in November 2023 was to highlight the need and significance of such a project. The King spent quite a bit of time both with Prime Minister Modi and President Droupadi Murmu. Also, Bhutan's Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay was in New Delhi just a week before Modi's visit. The back-to-back visits by the heads of governments of both countries signify the attention placed on the relationship which manifests in their evolving closeness.

Hydropower cooperation is the main pillar of India's relations with Bhutan. Several hydropower projects have been commissioned and completed by both the countries that supply clean electricity to India and Bhutan with a regular flow of revenue. The delayed Punatsangchu-II hydropower project is expected to be completed this year. However, some rethinking is called for as several other joint ventures on hydropower generation have not taken off.

India has declared to double its development assistance from ₹5,000 crore in the 12th Five-Year Plan of Bhutan to ₹10,000 crore. This is quite a significant development. Modi inaugurated a women and child hospital built with India's support. Bilateralism

with Bhutan in multiple sectors has grown under the basic framework of India-Bhutan bilateral relations in the form of Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1949 and revised in 2007.

Modi's visit had at least three dividends. First, it gave strong message that India is committed to Bhutan's development particularly in terms of support to the upcoming Gelephu project that would facilitate India's increase in financial support. Second, Bhutan is an integral part of India's massive infrastructure initiative and also for energy exchanges. Both these sectors are pushing sub-regional trade and travel between India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. Third, the message through the visit should be loud and clear that India is wary of Bhutan's increased engagement with China. New Delhi may reconcile to Bhutan signing a boundary agreement with Beijing but will not brook China's incursion into trade and investment in Bhutan. Beijing has done so with India's other close neighbours.

Without doubt, New Delhi is concerned about the ongoing talks between Bhutan and China on boundary agreement. In fact,

the possible swap of land at Doklam to Bhutan's west is a threat to India's Siliguri Corridor and it could threaten India's border connectivity projects in Arunachal Pradesh. Note that, Bhutan-China boundary talks focus only on areas to Bhutan's west and north, but China's new claims to Bhutan's east have raised fears that Beijing is using these claims to put pressure on Bhutan to fast-track the boundary talks or risk broadening the disputed areas.

As Bhutan appeared to be lenient to Beijing, Modi's visit underlined India's perspective on the border talks. Accepting the award, Modi said, "India-Bhutan ties are unbreakable and urged that India and Bhutan should remain vigilant about their ties in the face of challenges within their countries as well as in the neighbourhood." In order to enhance the bilateral relations, in the immediate future, New Delhi could perhaps think of commencing direct flights from Mumbai/Delhi to Gelephu which will increase the tourist traffic to Bhutan. Indians are looking for alternative tourist sites after a bad spat in social media with Maldives. The success of Gelephu project will have economic spillover in West Bengal and Assam.

New Delhi will have to react swiftly whenever China seeks to open an entry point to inch nearer India threatening her security. Remember, China's so-called 'String of Pearls' in the Indian Ocean region to encircle India. Also, India should always remember Mao Zedong's Five Fingers of Tibet. China considers Tibet to be its right hand palm with five fingers in its periphery - Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. Modi has done well to visit Bhutan at this juncture. New Delhi should keep up the momentum even after the elections.

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism.

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SPECTRUM EQUITY MARKET

There may not be froth in valuations

Of late, the NIFTY mid cap and small cap indices have experienced a sharp correction. The small cap index has delivered impressive returns of 83% over the previous 12 months, while the mid cap index has yielded gains of 65% during the same period. Following this stellar rally, stocks in these categories are now witnessing significant corrections.

The categorisation of stocks into large, mid and small cap is based upon market capitalisation. Market capitalisation of a particular stock or company equals to the number of shares outstanding multiplied by the market value of that share. The top hundred stocks are categorised as large cap, 101-250 are categorised as mid cap and subsequent stocks are deemed as small cap stocks.

Recently, the Chairperson of SEBI has issued a statement regarding the creation of 'froth' or 'bubble' in the mid and small cap categories. A 'bubble' is said to have formed when stock valuations far exceed what they realistically should be, based on the underlying fundamentals of those companies. The valuations of these mid and small cap stocks

are said to be excessive and elevated. You cannot have a small cap, with a price-to-earnings ratio (PE Ratio) of 29, where large caps are available at 22.

A price-to-earnings ratio is a metric derived by dividing the stock price by the value of its earnings per share. It is one of the most commonly used measures to gauge whether a company is overvalued or undervalued. As a result of these disclosures, mutual funds may consider reducing their exposure to mid cap and small cap stocks, which have performed exceptionally well over the past year. Consequently, we may witness a sharp correction in certain small cap and mid cap stocks.

Additionally, mutual funds were instructed to conduct stress tests on such schemes to assess their ability to handle redemption pressures in uncertain market conditions. Over the past few months, mid cap and small cap schemes have seen higher inflows of money through mutual funds compared to large cap and other schemes. Mid cap and small cap stocks are often low-liquidity stocks, meaning sudden demand can lead to significant rallies, while sudden supply can

result in sharp corrections. When these stocks experience rapid appreciation, their valuations can become expensive, exceeding their actual earnings growth. The sudden rally that was experienced in the last twelve months in mid cap and small cap stocks stretched their valuations, thereby increasing the risk of correction.

Recent investigations by SEBI have uncovered instances of outsider entities manipulating stocks in the small cap and micro cap space. Such fraudulent activities create a negative sentiment in the markets and can impact the overall health of the capital market's functioning.

Thus, we are seeing sharp corrections in stocks, which have run up more than 100% in the last one year. The Nifty Micro Cap 250, which nearly doubled in a year, has seen a sharp correction of more than 15% in the last one month. SEBI has recently observed manipulation of price on the issuance as well as regular trading in some of the SME stocks.

At a time when the universe is talking about the formation of froth in the Indian equity market, there is a contrarian view as well. It believes that Nifty 50 and

Nifty large cap 100 are currently fairly valued, while there is considerable upside to the Nifty small cap 250. The exceptional performance of mid and small caps over large caps has historical precedence, particularly evident from 2014 to 2017. The remarkable gains in the past 12 months can be attributed to a rebound from the significant underperformance experienced in 2018-19, and once more in 2022, marking the recent surge as a catch-up rather than an anomaly.

Despite a noticeable decrease in risk-free interest rates, which typically warrant higher equity multiples, there may not be a froth in valuations.

In conclusion, for someone who is a novice in the equity market and is dependant upon advisors and influencers, keeping a distance from these categories would be a wise decision. For the experienced players, a staggered investment strategy through SIPs (Systematic Investment Plans) and STPs (Systematic Transfer Plans) would be a mature decision.

The writer is founder and CEO of fintech startup FINCIST.

WISDOM CORNER

It takes considerable knowledge just to realize the extent of your own ignorance.

THOMAS SOWELL

One is loved because one is loved. No reason is needed for loving.

PAULO COELHO

A man can do what he wants, but not want what he wants.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1870: Thomas Peterson-Mundy of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, became the first African American to vote under the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

1889: Eiffel Tower inaugurated. The 984-foot (300-metre) Eiffel Tower, a wrought iron technological masterpiece created by Gustave Eiffel to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution, was officially inaugurated in Paris this day in 1889.

1964: Following a coup d'etat, a military dictatorship takes charge in Brazil. The regime under Humberto Castelo Branco suppressed the left-wing opposition, leading to widespread social unrest and strike action, especially in 1968.

1992: The USS Missouri—site of the Japanese surrender in 1945, formally ending World War II—was decommissioned for a second and final time; it was the last U.S. battleship still in service.

1999: The film The Matrix is released. The science fiction story about the adventures of computer programmer, Neo, was not only a commercial success but also left a lasting impression on action film-making through its creative use of slow-motion and spinning cameras.

Kahneman's legacy

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

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Sir, The lamentable demise of Daniel Kahneman marks the closure of an epoch wherein the realms of psychology and economics intertwined in a tapestry of intellectual enlightenment. The scholarly world mourns the loss of a luminary whose radiance illuminated the darkest recesses of human cognition. Through his magnum opus, "Thinking, Fast and Slow," Kahneman unfurled the enigmatic tendrils of human decision-making, unraveling the intricate dance between intuition and reason that orchestrates the symphony of our choices. As the ethereal wisps of Kahneman's legacy waft through the corridors of academia, they leave behind an indelible imprint upon the annals of intellectual history. His laurels as a Nobel Prize laureate and acclaimed author are but mere ornaments adorning the towering edifice of his scholarly contributions. Yet, it is the resonance of his ideas, echoing through the chambers of thought, that truly immortalises his name among the pantheon of great thinkers. From the hallowed halls of academia to the bustling boulevards of public discourse, Kahneman's influence reverberates, shaping the contours of our understanding and beckoning future generations to tread the path of inquiry with the same tenacity and intellectual fervour. In this epoch of transition, as the torchbearers of knowledge pass from one hand to the next, let us honor Kahneman's legacy not merely with elegies and accolades, but with a steadfast commitment to the pursuit of truth and the relentless interrogation of our assumptions. For in the crucible of skepticism and critical inquiry lies the crucible of progress, wherein the alchemy of ideas transforms the leaden weight of ignorance into the golden glow of enlightenment.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Bounty for info

Sir, The NIA has offered a ₹10 lakh reward for any information leading to the capture of the primary suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe bombing case in Bangalore. On Friday, the agency provided photos and specific information on Mussavir Hussain Shazib (30) and Abdul Matheen Taha (30). The duo used false names and forged documents to hoodwink the authorities. The development comes a day after the NIA raided 18 places in different parts of the country and made its first arrest in the case.

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Thousands attend Mukhtar Ansari's funeral procession

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ghazipur/Lucknow, March 30: Gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari was laid to rest in Ghazipur Saturday amid a blanket of security as a large crowd took part in the funeral procession while a few people tried to forcibly enter the burial ground, giving tough time to police personnel trying to maintain order.



Some people in the procession raised slogans while an argument broke out between Ghazipur District Magistrate Aryaka Akhoury and Mukhtar's brother Afzal Ansari after the administration, in an attempt to manage the crowd, allegedly stopped some from entering the Kali Bagh burial ground to offer soil on the grave as part of rituals.

up to attend the last rites. Despite elaborate security arrangements outside Ansari's residence and the graveyard, police faced a tough time managing the crowd as some people tried to force their way into the burial ground where entry was restricted.

ial rituals. A video purportedly of the incident surfaced on social media platforms in which Afzal Ansari can be heard saying, "You cannot stop anyone from offering soil." To this, the DM replied, "Family members can offer soil. Will the entire town offer soil?"

Ansari, a five-time MLA from Mau Sadar, was interred at his family's ancestral burial ground about half a km from their residence, near his parents' graves. According to family sources, the body was brought to his hometown around midnight Friday and pre-burial rituals took place at their residence.

The funeral procession took longer than expected to reach the burial ground in Mohammadabad because of the large crowd that accompanied the body, said Ravindra Singh, a local.

"Not just from the town, anyone from anywhere who wants to offer soil will do so," retorted Afzal Ansari as seen in the clip. When the Akhoury asked if any permission had been sought for the same and cited the prohibitory orders imposed in the district, Ansari said, "You cannot stop anyone from participating in a burial despite the imposition of CrPC section 144."

The 63-year-old had been behind bars in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab since 2005 and had over 60 criminal cases against him. He died Thursday night at Rani Durgawati Medical College after being taken there from Banda jail when his health deteriorated.

Varanasi Zone Additional Director General of Police (ADG) Piyush Mordia was present in Mohammadabad to supervise the arrangements.

The DM went on to say that videography is being done and legal action will be taken.

Local police said thousands of people from Ghazipur district and nearby areas turned

A battle to save political strongholds

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, March 30: Amid the electoral battle between the ruling BJP and the Congress, some seasoned politicians in Madhya Pradesh will also be fighting to save their own bastions and pocket boroughs.



Prominent among these political stalwarts are Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and two former Chief Ministers, Congress veterans Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath.

the first on the BJP's symbol. Spanning eight Assembly seats of the three districts of Guna, Shivpuri and part of Ashok Nagar, most of the time, this particular seat was represented by the members of the Scindia family.

District. Veteran Rajya Sabha MP, Digvijaya Singh was elected as a Lok Sabha MP twice from Rajgarh, in 1984 and then again in 1991. In 1993, he became the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and remained on the post until 2003.

CM from his home district Rajgarh this time. The Congress had won the last Lok Sabha election from Rajgarh in 2009, while the BJP's Radmal Nagar won two previous elections in 2014 and 2019.

A member of the erstwhile royal Scindia family of Gwalior, Jyotiraditya Scindia contested and won the first Lok Sabha (by-poll) election after his father and Congress leader Madhavrao Scindia, a Lok Sabha MP from Guna, died in a plane crash in 2001.

Local people said the seasoned politician is taking this election as a matter of prestige and is determined to get his pocket borough back.

Digvijaya Singh's younger brother Laxman Singh represented this particular Lok Sabha constituency five times, including one term on the BJP's symbol.

Another Congress veteran Kamal Nath is making all efforts to retain his bastion Chhindwara, the only parliamentary constituency the BJP lost in the previous general election.

Jyotiraditya Scindia (53) was re-elected as MP from his family's pocket borough Guna for the next three consecutive terms - 2004, 2009 and 2014.

Congress veteran and former Chief Minister, Digvijaya Singh is contesting the Lok Sabha election from his home turf Rajgarh.

As the Congress could win just one Lok Sabha seat in the previous election, and Digvijaya Singh had also lost against BJP's Pragma Singh Thakur from Bhopal in 2019, the grand old party, which is striving hard to find its lost ground in Madhya Pradesh, has fielded the former

Though, ex-CM Kamal Nath is not the candidate from Chhindwara Lok Sabha seat, he is leading the campaign for his son and sitting MP, Nakul Nath.

In fact, Guna was one of the two Lok Sabha seats that the Congress managed to win despite a massive wave in favour of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in 2014.

Interestingly, the Rajgarh constituency covers two Assembly segments - Raghogarh and Chachoura of Guna District and one Assembly seat of Agar-Malwa (Susner) along with five Assembly segments of Rajgarh

Senior leader Kamal Nath had won nine Lok Sabha elections from Chhindwara, and he would be fighting to save his stronghold.



People take part in 'Rangpanchami Ger' celebrations, in Indore, Saturday

Ayodhya gears up for Ram Navami

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ayodhya, March 30: The Ayodhya administration is gearing up for the largest ever crowd management exercise on Ram Navami which falls April 17.



The officials are expecting a congregation of more than 50 lakh pilgrims on the day.

the devotees during Ram Navami. However, it is tough to gauge the actual number of expected devotees and different teams are working on it.

on the open floors are also being arranged to save devotees from heat stroke.

Director General of Police (DGP) Prashant Kumar and Chief Secretary DS Mishra are closely monitoring the preparations being made for Ram Navami and the nine-day long 'Ram Janamotsav' starting from April 9 which will conclude April 17.

Officials are also ensuring availability and regular supply of essentials such as milk, sugar, tea, food grains and vegetables, etc., in dharamshalas, temples, tent cities and hotels where the pilgrims will stay.

Officials are pondering over multiple entries and exits for devotees to avoid any stampede-like situation. Keeping in view the hot weather, water and mats

'Garbage', 'trash bins' now part of political discourse

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, March 30: Amid the exodus of Congress leaders to the BJP in Madhya Pradesh ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, terms like 'garbage' and 'trash bins' have become part of the political discourse as the Opposition party is using them to target the turncoats while the ruling party is seen hitting back in the same style.

Senior Congress leader KK Mishra recently said the BJP has become a dustbin, into which the trash of the Congress is being thrown

valuable workers and leaders who believed in the policies of the party and PM Modi.

After a Congress leader termed his party turncoats as 'garbage', the ruling BJP leaders also hit back at the Opposition party with the 'trash bin' remark.

including those for dry, wet and medical waste. Now medical waste is remaining."

"Those who joined the BJP are being insulted by the Congress. The Congress leaders are saying that those who were useless are leaving the party. The Congress termed such leaders as selfish, cheat, garbage and said they were leaving the party under pressure. Those who joined the BJP are valuable for the party. They are part of our family," Chaturvedi said.

Senior Congress leader KK Mishra, media advisor to state party chief Jitu Patwari, recently said the BJP has become a dustbin, into which the trash of the Congress is being thrown. Another senior Congress leader and party's national secretary Satyanarayan Patel last week equated the turncoats with the garbage thrown into dumping grounds.

Reacting to the minister's comment, KK Mishra told PTI that the BJP has finally accepted the truth. "Finally, the BJP leaders accepted that the selfish turncoats of Congress are garbage. The minister even defined three dustbins for different categories. Now the garbage has to decide which bin they would like to fit in," Mishra said.

Senior BJP leader and former minister Narottam Mishra, who is heading the team entrusted with the work of new entrants to the party, had last week claimed that over 16,000 leaders from other parties, mostly from Congress, joined the BJP in the recent times. Those who joined the BJP include the former ministers, MPs, MLAs and other office-bearers, he had said, adding that Madhya Pradesh is moving towards a 'Congress-Mukt' status. Several Lok Sabha seats, including Sidhi, Shahdol (ST), Jabalpur, Mandla (ST), Balaghat and Chhindwara, will go to polls in Madhya Pradesh in the first phase of voting April 19.

Asked about the dustbin jibe of Congress leaders, state Cabinet Minister Prahlad Patel told reporters Friday, "The Narendra Modi government has put up two-three bins for the garbage,

Meanwhile, BJP leader Gopal Bhargava, the senior most MLA of Madhya Pradesh, described the turncoats as 'berries'. "Those from the Congress joining the BJP are like ripe berries which fall off when the tree is shaken," Bhargava told reporters.

State BJP spokesman Pankaj Chaturvedi, however, said all those joining his party were

Excavation at Bhojshala complex on

HINDUS CONSIDER THE SITE TO BE A TEMPLE DEDICATED TO VAGDEVI (GODDESS SARASWATI), WHILE THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY CALLS IT KAMAL MAULA MOSQUE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Dhar, March 30: Excavation process is currently going on at the Bhojshala/Kamal Maula mosque complex in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh as part of its court-mandated survey being conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

Video-graphy and photography are also being carried out on the premises, he said.

collected during the digging are being preserved by the ASI," he said.

Hindus are allowed to worship inside the Bhojshala complex every Tuesday, while Muslims are allowed to offer namaz at the site Fridays.

Soil and stones collected during the digging process are being preserved by the ASI, a person associated with the survey said Saturday.

"It is an eternal truth that Bhojshala was built by Raja Bhoj. The inscriptions, pillars and each piece of Bhojshala reveal that this is a Hindu structure," Goyal said.

The court has directed the ASI to conduct the survey on a petition from Hindu Front of Justice on an area of 50 metres. Friday, the survey was conducted till 12 noon as it was the day when Muslims are allowed to offer prayers in the structure.

The High Court's Indore Bench had directed the ASI to carry out a scientific survey of the medieval-era Bhojshala complex in Dhar district March 11. The HC has given six weeks' time to the ASI for the survey and directed it to get back to it with an up-to-date report.

This is the ninth day of the survey that began March 22. Ashish Goyal, who represents the Hindus and who is accompanying the ASI team during this process, told PTI that the survey is being conducted without any break using new scientific methods, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Global Positioning System (GPS), carbon dating in addition to ex-

He expressed hope that the idol of Maa Vagdevi (Saraswati) will be placed in Bhojshala soon after being brought from London. "In the survey conducted till yesterday (Friday), three places located on outer parts of Bhojshala were dug up and the process is continuing. Various materials like soil and stones

Both Hindus and Muslims are staking claim to the complex. Hindus consider Bhojshala to be a temple dedicated to Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), while the Muslim community calls it Kamal Maula mosque. As per an ASI order of April 7, 2003,

It is believed that Raja Bhoj, a Hindu king, had installed the statue of Vagdevi in Bhojshala in 1034 AD. Hindu groups say the British took this statue to London in 1875.



Sambalpur set for high-octane LS poll battle

PNN & AGENCIES

Sambalpur, March 30: The Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat in Western Odisha will witness a high-profile contest as ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has put up party general secretary (Organisation) Pranab Prakash Das, who is number two in the party after Naveen Patnaik, against Union Education Minister and BJP's Odisha face Dharmendra Pradhan.

52-year-old Das is a three-time MLA from Jajpur seat in the coastal area of the state, while Pradhan, who was a Rajya Sabha MP has returned to the electoral fray after a gap of 15 years after he was nominated from the Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat.

Das, who is popularly called Bobby, started his election campaign by paying obeisance to Maa Samaleswari, the presiding deity of the western region of the state Friday.

"I have sought blessings of Maa Samaleswari for the well-being of Odisha and also Sambalpur," Das said after offering puja at the temple.

Asked whether he faced an outsider tag in Sambalpur, Das said, "My late father Ashok Das and his sister had 60-year relationship with Sambalpur. My family has a strong link and my father stayed in this town for years. Today, I feel like standing in my home."

Earlier, Sambalpur BJP MLA and Leader of



DHARMENDRA PRADHAN



PRANAB PRAKASH DAS

Opposition Jayanarayan Mishra alleged that Das who hails from Jajpur district in the coastal region of the state is not the son of the soil while BJP candidate Dharmendra Pradhan is a local man.

Replying to reporters on how he sees Pradhan as a rival, Das said, "I have been sent to Sambalpur by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik who means development of the area. I have relations with the people of Sambalpur and not with the candidate of the rival party. I am here to serve the people and take developmental works to the next level."

Das is the son of late Ashok Das, a popular Janata Dal leader

Sambalpur LS seat is significant this time as Das Das, who is considered as the number two in the BJD after Patnaik, has been pitted against Pradhan, the BJP's face in Odisha

Sambalpur LS seat has a unique character as none can claim it as any party's stronghold

of the 1990s. Though Ashok Das remained an MLA for many years, he had all along worked for the party and never accepted any ministerial berth when Biju Patnaik government was formed in 1990.

Like his father, Bobby also remained out of Naveen Patnaik's council of ministers though he served as a minister for a small time. He has great organisational skills and therefore became close to Patnaik and his close aide VK Pandian.

The Sambalpur Lok Sabha

seat is significant this time as Das, who is considered as the number two in the BJD after Naveen Patnaik, has been pitted against Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, the BJP's face in Odisha. Both the contestants are equally important for their parties and therefore a high-profile election is on the card, said political analyst Sandeep Mishra.

The Sambalpur seat will go to polls in the sixth phase May 25. The Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat has a unique character as

Congress asks aspiring candidates to give ₹50K for campaign material

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) has asked candidates aspiring for party tickets in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections to deposit ₹50,000 each for supply of campaign materials.

OPCC president Sarat Pattanayak has written letters to the prospective candidates in this regard.

Pattanayak said the OPCC is open to accept cheques of ₹50,000 from shortlisted candidates on behalf of the party to supply branding and campaign materials of an equivalent value to them.

"The cheque will be in favour of OPCC and not in the name of any individual leader..." he said.

The party had received about 3,000 applications from aspirants for 147 Assembly seats and 21 Lok Sabha constituencies. Pattanayak did not disclose the number of shortlisted candidates who have paid the amount.

Sources, however, said that many aspirants have already deposited cheques for the stated amount.

The Congress state leadership justified the collection of funds from candidates and maintained that it was being demanded so

that there is a smooth flow of election materials during campaigning. It will also help keep away non-serious aspirants, a senior leader said.

A one-to-one meeting with shortlisted candidates in this regard was held at a hotel in Puri recently where the party discussed election strategies.

This apart, the aspirants had drawn attention of the party's national leadership that they were not getting campaign material. The money received from the aspiring candidates will be used for the purpose of supplying campaign materials.

The cheques will be returned to aspirants who do not get tickets after candidates are finalised, Pattanayak said.

Senior Congress leader and MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati justified the decision stating that Congress candidates will have to make certain sacrifices for the party.

The cheques are being accepted officially and there is nothing to hide. As the party does not have enough funds, candidates will have to make some sacrifices, Bahinipati said.

The Congress Friday said it has received fresh notices from the Income-Tax department, asking it to pay around ₹1,823 crore.

Centre's negligence towards Odisha will be poll plank: Majhi

PNN & AGENCIES

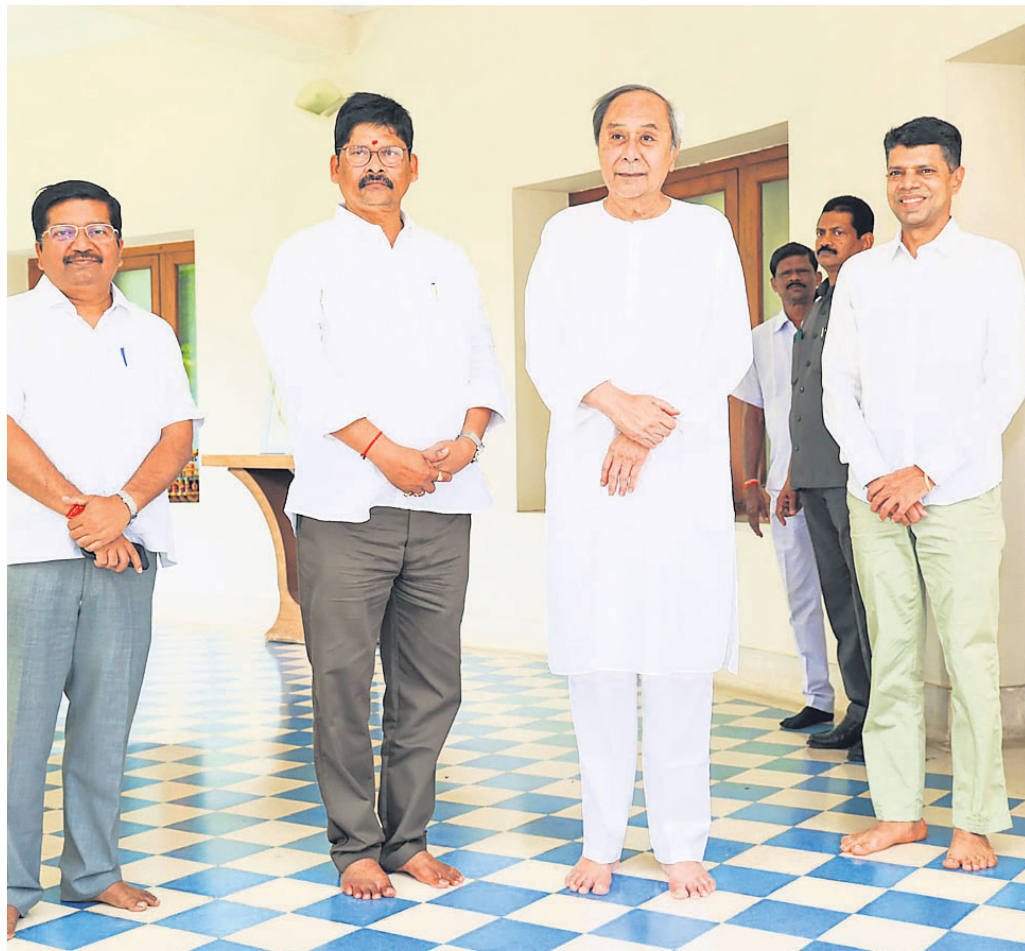
Bhubaneswar, March 30: Senior BJD leader Pradeep Majhi Saturday claimed that the BJP-led central government neglected Odisha for the past 10 years, which is going to be a "major issue" in the upcoming Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in the state.

Majhi, the BJD nominee from the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat, said Odisha is a state rich in natural resources, but it "does not get proper support from the Centre like other BJP-ruled states". To tackle this situation, the Odisha government has taken several measures and become a self-reliant state, he claimed.

"Odisha has been neglected by the BJP government for the past 10 years and this will be a major issue in the polls," he asserted.

Majhi said that the BJD has worked for the development of all sectors, including health, education, road infrastructure, social security and irrigation.

The state government has also undertaken projects for transformation of temples and places of worship, he said.



PARTY HOPPING: Former Congress MLA from Paralakhemundi K Surya Rao meets Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in the presence of 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian and state Food Supplies Minister Atanu Sabyasachi Nayak after joining the BJD in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



MERGER MEETING: Leaders and workers of other parties from Dhamnagar Assembly constituency in Bhadrak district joined BJD at a merger meeting held at the party's state office in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

Congress will usher in Rozgar Kranti: Kharge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Congress will usher in a 'Rozgar Kranti' by taking concrete steps to increase employment opportunities, enable entrepreneurship and realise the aspirations of the youth, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge said Saturday.

He said the Congress guarantees that the future of youth will turn from bleak to bright and reiterated the 'Yuva Nyay' guarantees which the party would implement if voted to power.

In a post on X, he said, "The Congress party will usher in a 'Rozgar Kranti' (employment revolution) through Yuva Nyay guarantee! We will take concrete measures to increase employment opportunities, enable entrepreneurship and realise the dreams and aspirations of our youth."

Kharge listed the guarantees given by his party under its 'Yuva Nyay' pitch.

Under the 'Bharti Bharosa' guarantee, the Congress chief said, his party would provide 30 lakh new Union government jobs, according to a jobs calendar.



dar. As part of 'Pehli Naukri Pakki', the party will provide one year Right to Apprenticeship for all educated youth, at ₹1 lakh per year, Kharge said.

He said that under the 'Paper Leak se Mukti' guarantee, the party will provide a law to completely end all paper leaks. The party has also promised better working conditions and social security for gig workers and a ₹5,000 crore startup fund for the youth, Kharge pointed out.

The Congress has pitched its Lok Sabha polls on 25 guarantees under five Nyays - Nari Nyay, Yuva Nyay, Shramik Nyay, Kisaan Nyay and Hissedari Nyay. It has promised to implement them immediately if it comes to power.

INDIA bloc rally not person-specific: Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Congress Saturday asserted that the INDIA opposition bloc's 'Loktantra Bachao' rally to be held at the Ramlika Maidan here is aimed at saving the Constitution and democracy and not any particular person.

It said a strong message will be sent out from the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance's (INDIA) rally Sunday to Lok Kalyan Marg (where the prime minister's residence is located) that the BJP-led government's time is up.

Addressing a press conference on the rally, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi will address the rally, among other senior leaders.

It is not a person-specific rally. That is why it is called Loktantra Bachao Rally. This is not one party's rally, about 27-28 parties are involved in it. All constituents of the INDIA 'janbandhan' will be taking part in the rally, Ramesh said.

His remarks assume significance in view of Aam Aadmi

Party (AAP) leaders pitching the rally as being specific to protesting against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate.

Ramesh said the INDIA bloc sounded its Lok Sabha poll bugle in Mumbai March 17 and the rally would be its second poll bugle. He said it will also send out a message of solidarity and unity among the bloc.

Ramesh said the issues of rising prices, the highest unemployment rate in 45 years, economic disparities, social polarisation and injustice against farmers will be raised by opposition leaders at the rally.

He said another key issue that would be raised is the targeting of the opposition through the misuse of central agencies.

Two chief ministers and several ministers have been arrested in a bid to target opposition parties politically, Ramesh alleged. This shows the mindset that the prime minister wants to cripple opposition parties politically and financially, he said.

The former Union minister said the issues of extortion through electoral bonds and the Congress being targeted with



tax terrorism will also be raised at the rally.

"We got two more Income-Tax department notices Friday," he said, without divulging the details. Ramesh said the most important objective of the rally is to protect the Constitution, which he claimed is in danger with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

leaders saying they want to rewrite it.

He said, if the Constitution is changed, secularism, socialism and social justice enshrined in it, will be in danger.

The rally is not to protect one person but to protect the Constitution, he said.

Ramesh said the likes of

Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, NCP (SP) chief Shreshth Pawar, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI general secretary D Raja, National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav, DMK's Tiruchi Siva, TMC's Derek O'Brien, among others, will participate in the rally.

The rally, Ramesh said, will also focus on the biggest scam of the last 75 years, the Electoral Bonds scheme, through which he claimed the BJP collected ₹8,200 crore.

He pointed out, these bonds were held illegal and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of India.

Speaking at the presser, AICC in-charge of Delhi Deepak Babaria said that the rally will have maximum participation and convey a message for saving the democracy and Constitution.

Delhi Congress chief Arvinder Singh Lovely, who also addressed the press conference, said the rally will mark the beginning of the decisive and final political assault on the BJP from the people of the country.



“The manner in which the judicial system is being pressured by getting letters written after seeing the layers of scams being exposed by a decision of the Supreme Court on electoral bonds (which the public is calling ‘extortion racket’), and then the prime minister himself entering the arena and making negative comments on the judiciary, shows that there is something fishy”
PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

SOREN'S WIFE MEETS SUNITA KEJRIWAL

Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren met jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal Saturday and expressed a mutual resolve to take far their fight. She met Sunita Kejriwal at Delhi Chief Minister's residence on 6 Flagstaff Road



of the day quote

Narendra Modi wants to strangle democracy and take away the option from the people to choose a government of their choice

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi freed Jammu and Kashmir from the clutches of Article 370, terrorism and separatism which is the biggest achievement of the BJP-led government

ANURAG THAKUR | UNION MINISTER

Whether I contest the elections or not, or from where do I contest, this is not my personal choice, this will be a decision of the NC. Whether the party wants to give me the mandate or not, and from which seat, I leave it up to the party and I cannot say anything on that

OMAR ABDULLAH | NC VICE PRESIDENT

EXCISE POLICY CASE

ED grills Kailash Gahlot for 5 hrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Enforcement Directorate questioned Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot for about five hours Saturday and recorded his statement in connection with a money-laundering investigation linked to the AAP government's now-scrapped excise policy, officials said.

Gahlot (49), an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA from Najafgarh, is the minister for transport, home and law in the Delhi government led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has been arrested in the case by the federal agency.

The minister, who entered the ED office in central Delhi around 11:30 am and left after 4:30 pm, said he answered all the questions from the agency and will continue to cooperate in the probe.

Sources said Gahlot was questioned with regard to the formulation of the excise policy for 2021-22 as he was part of the Group of Ministers (GoM), along with former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and former urban development minister Satyendra Jain.

Gahlot said he was called by the ED for questioning in the case as "probably I was part of the GoM... It (questioning) was about all aspects of the policy and I answered to the best of my knowledge and memory."

He said this was the second summons sent to him as he could



The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in formulating and executing the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22 that was later scrapped

The minister, who entered the ED office in central Delhi around 11:30 am and left after 4:30 pm, said he answered all the questions from the agency and will continue to cooperate in the probe

not depose for the first time about a month back as the Budget session of the Delhi assembly was on. The agency has mentioned Gahlot's name in its chargesheet and in the context of Vijay Nair, the AAP communications in-charge arrested earlier in the case, saying Nair lived in the government bungalow allotted to Gahlot.

Describing the practice of allowing the use of a government residence to someone else by a public servant as a "criminal breach of trust", the ED had said it had asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take action in the matter.

Gahlot said that he told the agency he had no information that Nair used to live in a bungalow allotted to him. "I have never lived in my official bungalow at Civil Lines. Vijay Nair was living there or not I have no information," he said adding that there was no cross-questioning or confrontation with any other person or statement. "I never shifted to that bungalow and live with my family at my own house in Vasant Kunj that is in front of the school of my children," he said. The minister also said that he was not involved in Assembly polls in Goa. It is alleged that the money from

the alleged Delhi excise policy scam was spent by AAP in the Assembly polls in the coastal state.

"I have no idea about Goa and I had never been part of campaigning and had no knowledge who was in charge there or what activities were taking place," he said. Gahlot asserted that there was no "scam" and it will become clearer with time.

"There is no scam here... As the time goes by, everyone will be convinced about this," he said while exiting the ED office. The ED has alleged that the excise policy was leaked to the "South Group" liquor lobby that included Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha. This group is alleged to have given Rs 100 crore kickbacks to the AAP and its leaders, according to the agency.

Asked about Kejriwal skipping nine summonses of ED in the same case before his arrest, he said, "I would not like to say anything regarding this."

The ED has also alleged in its charge sheet that Gahlot handled a single SIM number but his IMEI (international mobile equipment identity) was changed thrice.

"I cannot tell you what questions were asked from me today as these are confidential proceedings," the minister said.

The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in formulating and executing the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22 that was later scrapped.

Rajnath to head BJP manifesto committee

With PM Modi often asserting that his third term will be marked by big decisions, the buzz around its manifesto has been gaining traction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The BJP Saturday announced a 27-member committee, which included several Union ministers and Chief Ministers, headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh to prepare its manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will be its convener and Union Minister Piyush Goyal co-convenor. Several other Union ministers, the Chief Ministers of states such as Gujarat, Assam and Madhya Pradesh, and seasoned hands like Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Vasundhara Raje are among the members of the committee.

Rajnath Singh, a former party president, was the head of the BJP's manifesto committee for the 2019 polls as well.

Many members have been repeated in the current panel as well.

Union ministers Dharmendra Pradhan, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Bhupender Yadav, Kiren Rijiju, Arjun Munda, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Smriti Irani and Rajeev Chandrasekhar are



among its members.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh's Vishnu Deo Sai and Madhya Pradesh's Mohan Yadav are also in the committee. However, not all Chief Ministers, including Yogi Adityanath of Uttar Pradesh, are its members, with party sources saying that senior leaders of the party who are not in the committee may be made part of other organisational exercises related to the elections.

Bihar leaders Sushil Kumar Modi and Ravi Shankar Prasad, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, former Union minister Jial Oram, party's organisational leaders like Vinod Tawde, Radha Mohan Das Agrawal, Manjinder Singh Sirsa, Tariq Mansoor and Anil Antony have been included in the committee too.

Antony and Mansoor are among the party's Christian and Muslim faces respectively. Former Haryana BJP president OP Dhankar is also a member.

SHORT TAKES

250 Indians rescued: MEA

New Delhi: Amid reports of several Indian nationals stuck in Cambodia who were lured with employment opportunities there but were allegedly forced to undertake illegal cyber work, the MEA Saturday said the Union government is collaborating closely with the Cambodian authorities and about 250 Indians have been "rescued and repatriated". Of these 250, 75 of them in just the last three months, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

Tejaswini Gowda joins Congress

New Delhi: Days after resigning as an MLC in Karnataka, the BJP's Tejaswini Gowda joined the Congress Saturday and alleged that the saffron party does not believe in constitutional and democratic values. Gowda, who was a Congress MP between 2004 and 2009, and crossed over to the BJP in 2014, called her return to the grand old party her "homecoming".

NewsClick case: Chargesheet filed

New Delhi: Delhi Police Saturday filed its first chargesheet, spread across about 8,000 pages, in the UAPA case against NewsClick and its founder Prabir Purkayastha for allegedly running Chinese propaganda, naming him and the firm owning the portal as accused.

Nine pirates to face legal action: Navy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: A day after rescuing a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel and its 23-member Pakistani crew under an anti-piracy operation at sea, the Indian Navy Saturday said the nine surrendered pirates are being brought to India for further legal action.

Action will be taken against them under the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, 2022. The Indian Navy's specialist teams have completed sanitisation and seaworthiness checks of fishing vessel Al-Kambar, according to a statement shared by the Navy's spokesperson.

"The crew, comprising 23 Pakistani nationals, were given a thorough medical checkup prior to clearing the boat to continue with her fishing activities," it said.

The Indian Navy Friday had rescued the hijacked Iranian fishing vessel and its crew, after more than 12 hours of "intense coercive tactical measures" as part of the anti-piracy operation.

The hijacked vessel was intercepted Thursday, the Navy said Friday. "INS Sumedha intercepted 'FV Al Kambar' during early hours of Friday and was joined subsequently by the guided missile frigate INS Trishul," it

said. "After more than 12 hours of intense coercive tactical measures as per the SOPs, the pirates on board the hijacked fishing vessel were forced to surrender. The crew, comprising 23 Pakistani nationals, have been safely rescued," the Indian Navy has added.

The Indian Navy Saturday said these "nine pirates are being brought to India to face legal action", in accordance with the Maritime Anti-Piracy Act, 2022. The fishing vessel at the time of incident was approximately 90 nm southwest of Socotra and was "reported to have been boarded by nine armed pirates," it said.

The Indian Navy said it remains committed to ensuring maritime security in the region and safety of seafarers, "irrespective of the nationalities". Socotra Archipelago is in the northwest Indian Ocean near the Gulf of Aden.

The fresh anti-piracy action by the Indian Navy further cements its role as the first responder that the naval force seeks to play in the Indian Ocean Region.

The action comes two weeks after it had rescued another vessel 'Ruen' and 17 hostages, and captured 35 armed pirates in a nearly 40-hour dramatic mid-sea operation.



Fishing boats are anchored at Shanghumugham beach ahead of Easter festival in Thiruvananthapuram

PTI PHOTO

Cong holds protests over I-T notices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Congress Saturday held protests in many states against fresh notices from the income tax department for payment of Rs 1,823 crore and said it would not be intimidated by the Centre's "tax terrorism", but the BJP accused the opposition party of misleading the country after committing "tax fraud" and asserted that no one is above law.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said he was shocked after he received

an income tax notice Friday night though the case against him was a "settled matter" and alleged that the department was turning a blind eye to tax violations involving BJP leaders.

The I-T department, "which aggressively targets opposition parties, mysteriously turns a blind eye to the BJP's tax violations. The public is not so ignorant as to not question who is blindfolding" the I-T department", Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said in a statement.

In the national capital, Indian Youth Congress (IYC) members

led by its president Srinivas BV were stopped from marching to Rajendra Prasad Road by police and detained. The Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee organised a protest in front of the Income Tax department office in Thiruvananthapuram.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal had asked all Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) to hold demonstrations at the state and district headquarters in their respective states Saturday and the following day, involving senior leaders and party functionaries.

Shivraj Patil's daughter-in-law joins BJP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 30: Archana Patil, the daughter-in-law of senior Congress leader and former Union home minister Shivraj Patil joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Saturday ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

She joined the BJP in the presence of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and the BJP's state unit president Chandrashekar Bawankule in Mumbai. Shivraj Patil, who hails from Latur in Marathwada region of Maharashtra, was Union home minister during the UPA-I government, but stepped down in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

Prior to that, he had also served as the Lok Sabha Speaker. Speaking on the occasion, Fadnis said Archana Patil has been associated with social work and her joining the BJP will help the party in Latur and the Marathwada region.

The move is also being viewed as the BJP's efforts to bolster its prospects in the Marathwada region. Last month, former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, a heavyweight hailing from Nanded region of Marathwada, also joined the BJP. Archana Patil said she has been associated with social work for the last two decades and decided to choose the BJP for politics.

Assam Rifles recalls association with Dalai Lama

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 30: As the escape of the 14th Dalai Lama to India from his homeland Tibet completes 65 years Saturday, the Assam Rifles, which was entrusted with his safe evacuation, recalled its continued association with the spiritual leader.

The 5th battalion of the force was given the task of bringing in the Dalai Lama and his entourage safely through the North East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh, to Assam as they entered Indian territory March 31, 1959.

"The legacy of the 5th Assam Rifles' escort of the Dalai Lama in 1959 remains a poignant chapter in the shared history of India and Tibet, symbolising the enduring spirit of friendship, support and humanitarianism," the paramilitary force said in a statement.



Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama with soldiers of 5 Assam Rifles who had escorted him from the India-Tibet border in 1959

It added that the bond with the Dalai Lama has continued over the years, with a body of the troop, often called the 'the Dalai Lama battalion', visiting the

leader every year in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh to seek his blessings.

The spiritual leader has also kept his memories of the 5th

Assam Rifles during his evacuation, which he recalled during his visit to Guwahati in April 2017, the Assam Rifles said. He also met havildar Naren Chandra Das (retired) during that visit, who was part of the group that had escorted him till Tezpur in Assam.

As a token of appreciation, the Dalai Lama presented his personal weapons to the 5th Assam Rifles, which are now displayed at the Assam Rifles Museum in Shillong. The 5th Assam Rifle was deployed in Kameng Frontier Division of Arunachal Pradesh in 1958 and its posts span over a large area including Chuthangmu, Bumla and Chuna in Kameng Frontier and Longju and Taksing in Subansiri Frontier.

The 14th Dalai Lama had escaped from Lhasa March 17, 1959, and March 26, his caravan reached Lhuntse Dzong - a few

days march from the McMahon Line, the border between India and Tibet.

As news of the Dalai Lama's escape spread, the Indian government responded by dispatching a contingent of 5th Assam Rifles to ensure his safe passage into the country. March 31, the spiritual leader was received by the party of the 5th Assam Rifles and the people of Monyul at the Frontier Post of Chuthangmu in Kameng Division.

He was escorted by the paramilitary force through Tawang, Bomdila and then to Tezpur, from where he proceeded further into the country. Following the Dalai Lama's forced exile to India, the frontier posts of Chuthangmu, Bumla and Chuna saw a mass ingress of armed Tibetan refugees called 'Khampas', and the 5th Assam Rifles thereafter escorted ap-

proximately 12,000 refugees through the Kameng Frontier Division.

The force also recalled that the Dalai Lama's escape marked a crucial moment not just in Tibetan history but also in the evolution of the Indo-Chinese relationship.

"The Chinese Government considers the Dalai Lama a separatist threat due to his advocacy for Tibetan autonomy. The entire episode of the Dalai Lama fleeing through the Indo-Tibet border to India, irked China to the extent that it moved its troops to the India-China border and claimed vast areas of Indian Territory in Kameng and Subansiri Frontier Division," the statement said. The border outpost of 5 Assam Rifles at Longju in Subansiri Division was later evacuated following an armed clash with the Chinese forces in August 1959, it added.

international



The living conditions of more than two million people in Gaza is deteriorating and Gaza is becoming an impossible place for dignified living
PHILIPPE LAZZARINI | COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF UNRWA

NEW VISA CURBS

The United States said it will impose new visa restrictions on a number of Hong Kong officials over the crackdown on rights and freedoms in the Chinese-ruled territory



of the day quote

Trump says if he loses again — again in November, there will be a “bloodbath.” What the hell is with this guy? No, I’m not — no, I’m really serious. It concerns me the most
JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

We will not support any other sanction which will hurt more Slovakia than Russia
JURAJ BLANAR | SLOVAK FOREIGN MINISTER

For the South China Sea and the seas and oceans of the Indo-Pacific to be unifying domains of peace, stability and prosperity, we need to gather more strongly around the collective responsibility as well as a shared sense of stewardship
ENRIQUE MANALO | PHILIPPINE FOREIGN MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

17 hurt in Austria

Vienna: Seventeen passengers were hurt when a Bulgarian river cruise ship lost steering and hit the sides of a lock on the Danube in Austria, the apa news agency reported Saturday. Eleven of the injured were taken to hospitals. The ship with 142 passengers aboard, most of them from Germany, temporarily lost power to its electronics system and became unsteerable as it passed through narrow locks at 9:45 pm Friday, apa reported. The ship’s power was restored but not before the bow and stern struck the concrete sides of the lock passage near the town of Aschach, a few miles upriver from Linz.

5 killed; 1 missing

Kathmandu: At least five people, including two women and a minor boy, were killed when a taxi carrying six passengers fell into a gorge in Nepal’s Chitwan district Saturday morning, police said. The accident occurred around 7 am when the taxi, which was heading towards Gorkha district from Kathmandu, fell into a 100-metre gorge into the Trishuli River at Ichchhakamana rural municipality along Prithvi highway, according to police.

Zelensky fires more aides

Kyiv: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed a longtime aide and several advisers Saturday in a continuing reshuffle while Russia unleashed fresh attacks overnight. Zelensky dismissed top aide Serhiy Shefir from his post of first assistant, where he had served since 2019. The Ukrainian President also let go three advisers, and two presidential representatives overseeing volunteer activities and soldiers’ rights.

Nepal Deputy PM visits Tibet

Kathmandu: Nepal has urged China to reopen the 14 traditional border points with the Tibetan Autonomous Region not just for bilateral trade and commerce but for the movement of people too. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha also underscored the importance of exporting products from Nepal during a meeting with Wang Junzheng, secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of China. Shrestha, who is on his first visit to China after taking over office earlier in the month, was in Lhasa on Friday as part of his trip from March 25 to April 1 when he also urged the Chinese side for its cooperation to address issues facing the residents along the Nepal-China borders.

Hostage drama ends

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The Hague, Netherlands, March 30: A hostage drama in the Netherlands that lasted several hours Saturday ended without bloodshed as all hostages were freed and police took the suspect into custody.

Authorities have said there was no reason to suspect a “terrorist motive” for the ordeal, which took place at a night spot popular with young people in the town of Ede. The last hostage has just been released. One person has been arrested. We cannot share more information at this time,” announced police on X, formerly Twitter.

Several local media reported that a “confused” man had burst into the cafe in the early hours of Saturday morning and made threats, holding four people hostage. The incident sparked a major deployment including riot police and explosives experts.

Police cleared the centre of the town and evacuated the residents of some 150 buildings near the cafe. An initial group of three people were released, with



pictures from public broadcaster NOS showing them exiting the building with their hands in the air.

The fourth hostage was freed shortly afterwards, with the suspected hostage-taker then arrested. NOS images showed a man kneeling on the ground with his hands behind his back, as officers restrained him with handcuffs.

“A terrible situation for all these people. My concern and

thoughts go out to them and their loved ones. I hope that the situation is now resolved quickly and safely,” said Ede mayor Rene Verhulst.

Last year, a 27-year-old man armed with two guns held several people hostage at an Apple store in Amsterdam, sparking a tense five-hour ordeal. That stand-off ended when the suspect was hit by a police car as he chased his last hostage who made a desperate break for freedom and

May 9 violence: 51 Imran supporters convicted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, March 30: A Pakistani court Saturday convicted 51 supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan for five years of rigorous imprisonment on two counts for their involvement in attacking key military installations last year.

In May last year, Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters had allegedly attacked several military installations, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, to vent their anger against the arrest of their party founder in a corruption case.

This is the first conviction in the cases registered against the PTI leaders, workers and supporters in connection with the

May 9 riots in the country, mostly in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

The convicts include PTI lawmaker Kaleemullah Khan. The anti-terrorism court (ATC), Gujranwala handed down a year jail term to 51 supporters of PTI on two counts for attacking the Gujranwala Cantonment (some 80 km from Lahore), law enforcement agencies personnel and torching police vehicles.

According to a court official, the court also imposed a fine of PKR 10,000 on each of them. ATC Judge Natasha Naseem held the proceedings in the Central Jail, Gujranwala amid high security outside the jail and announced the verdict. The proceedings of the cases against the convict remained in-camera.



A group of ambassadors of foreign diplomatic missions attend a laying ceremony at a makeshift memorial in front of the Crocus City Hall on the western outskirts of Moscow, Russia, Saturday

Huge crane to clear Baltimore bridge debris

Divers have recovered two bodies of the missing construction workers, who were repairing the bridge at the time of the collision

REUTERS

Washington, March 30: The biggest operational crane on the US Eastern Seaboard towered over Baltimore’s port Friday, ready to begin clearing the wreckage of the Francis Scott Key Bridge days after a cargo ship crashed into it, sending the span crashing into the harbour.

Crews were still surveying the damage as of midday Friday. The crane, which can lift up to 1,000 tons, arrived late Thursday night and will probably start hauling debris out of the water soon, according to US Coast Guard



spokesperson Carmen Carver.

A second crane is en route and expected to arrive soon to assist the effort, she said. State and federal authorities are focused on clearing the busy port and rebuilding the bridge after the Dali, a massive container ship that had lost power, plowed into a support column early Tuesday, toppling the struc-

ture and leaving six workers presumed dead.

Divers have recovered two bodies of the missing construction workers, who were repairing the bridge at the time of the collision. The remaining four are believed to be trapped beneath the water. All were immigrants from Mexico and Central America. Finding the remaining bodies is the top

priority, Maryland Governor Wes Moore told a press conference on Thursday. Crews must also assess how to remove the stuck vessel, loaded with thousands of containers and trapped by bridge debris.

“The Dali is almost as long as the Eiffel Tower and the Dali has the Key Bridge on top of it. We’re talking 3,000 or 4,000 tons of steel that’s sitting on top of that ship, so we’ve got work to do,” Moore said at Thursday’s press conference.

Within hours of Moore’s request for emergency funds, the US government Thursday had awarded Maryland \$60 million to clear debris and begin rebuilding the bridge, a reflection of how critical the infrastructure is to shipping and transportation industries along the Eastern Seaboard.

Three days after the tragedy,

the jobs of some 15,000 people whose work revolves around daily port operation are on hold. Maryland lawmakers are looking to pass emergency legislation to provide income replacement for those affected, the state senate president said this week.

The situation poses a temporary risk to the area’s economy, since the port receives the greatest share of US auto imports and is one of just four on the U.S. east coast with the 50-foot channel needed for larger cargo boats, bond rating agency Moody’s Investors Service said.

Replacing the 47-year-old bridge will likely require “years of work,” but the port, whose operations recently surpassed pre-pandemic levels, could reopen within weeks, “if debris is rapidly removed,” according to a Moody’s report.

Indian-origin teen first to get UK’s life-changing cancer treatment

According to NHS England, 16-year-old Thakkar from Watford near London was the first child in the UK to benefit from a pioneering CAR T therapy called tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah) thanks to its Cancer Drugs Fund

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 30: Yuwan Thakkar, an Indian-origin teenager diagnosed with cancer, says he is now able to enjoy the things he loves after life-changing treatment thanks to a fund set up by the UK’s state-funded National Health Service to make innovative therapies accessible to thousands of patients.

According to NHS England, 16-year-old Thakkar from Watford near London was the first child in the UK to benefit from a pio-

neering CAR T therapy called tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah) thanks to its Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF).

It comes as the National Health Service (NHS) marks a milestone this weekend of 100,000 patients benefitting from early access to the latest and most innovative treatments with the help of CDF. The undisclosed cost of such treatments is covered by the fund.

“My life has changed so much since I received the CAR T therapy,” said Thakkar, who thanked Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) in London for the “in-



credible” care he received. “I remember I had to take so many trips to hospital and had long periods out of school... They have helped me recover to a state where I am able to enjoy so many things I love doing, such as playing snooker or pool, meeting friends and family, and going on

wonderful holidays. It’s hard to imagine how things would have been if the treatment wasn’t available,” he said.

Thakkar, diagnosed with a form of leukaemia aged six, received a treatment which modifies a person’s immune cells to recognise and attack cancer cells.

His treatment began in 2019, when he was 11 years old after he relapsed following other treatments such as chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant. His mother Sapna said the family had received a “second chance” at life since the success of the treatment. Without the fast-track access available through the CDF, the 45-year-old said there may have been no other way for her son to receive the life-saving treatment.

“It felt like our prayers were finally answered. We still feel so grateful for this chance that’s been given to us and not a single day passes by when we haven’t felt thankful for all the doctors and nurses that have helped us through this long and difficult journey,” said Sapna Thakkar. The CDF, which opened in its

unanswered. Radio station RPP said Boluarte was not at her home, in the Lima district of Surquillo, at the time of the raid.

Officials at Boluarte’s office were not immediately available to comment. Two weeks ago prosecutors began preliminary inquiries to check a media report that the president possessed several Rolex watches. The inquiry intended to establish whether there were grounds for a formal investigation against the President.

Boluarte, in office since December 2022, has acknowledged that she owns Rolex watches, which she said she had bought with money she earned since she was young. She said earlier this month in relation to the news report that she entered the president’s office with her hands clean and would leave with her hands clean.

The prosecutor’s office had tried unsuccessfully last Wednesday to conduct a check of the watches at Boluarte’s office, but her lawyers said there was a clash of diary appointments and sought to reschedule the appointment. The inquiry into Boluarte is the latest in a long line of probes into Peruvian Presidents and senior officials.

Peru President home raided



POLICE BROKE DOWN THE DOOR OF THE RESIDENCE, TELEVISION IMAGES SHOWED, APPARENTLY AFTER CALLS BY OFFICIALS TO OPEN UP WENT UNANSWERED

REUTERS

Lima, March 30: Peruvian prosecutors raided the home of President Dina Boluarte late Friday as part of inquiries into possible illicit enrichment and failure to declare ownership of luxury watches.

Police broke down the door of the residence, television images showed, apparently after calls by officials to open up went

Four UN military observers injured

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beirut, March 30: Four United Nations military observers were wounded Saturday while patrolling the southern Lebanese border after a shell exploded near them, the U.N. Peacekeeping mission in Lebanon said.

The military observers are part of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, which supports the U.N. Peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon, UNIFIL.

Local Lebanese media, citing security officials, said an Israeli drone strike targeted the observers in the southern village of Wadi Katmoun near the border town of Rmeich. Hezbollah-run television station Al-Manar said the drone strike wounded three officers from Australia, Chile, and Norway, as well as a Lebanese interpreter.

The Israeli military on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, said: “Contrary to the reports, the IDF did not strike a @UNIFIL — vehicle in the area of Rmeish this morning.” UNIFIL spokesperson Andrea Tenenti said they are “investigating the origin of the explosion.”

“The targeting of peacekeepers is unacceptable,” Tenenti told The Associated Press. “We repeat our call for all actors to cease the current heavy exchanges of fire before more people are unnecessarily hurt.”

This came as clashes between the Israeli military and Hezbollah militants escalated in recent weeks. Both sides have been exchanging fire since the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza broke out, propelling concerns that the near-daily clashes along the border could escalate into a full-scale war as tens of thousands of people have been displaced by the violence. The fighting has killed nine civilians and 11 soldiers in Israel, while over 240 Hezbollah fighters and about 50 civilians were killed in Lebanon.

of the day quote

The collaboration between two of the largest groups (Adani and Ambani) in the country is bound to provide a fillip to not only such cooperations, but also to other collaborative efforts, leading to even higher heights of success

RV SHAHI | FORMER POWER SECRETARY

The Indian office market is experiencing a robust momentum. We haven't witnessed 20 million square feet of gross leasing being recorded for two consecutive quarters in recent history

ANSHUL JAIN | CEO, C&W

The resilience of the Indian stock market and the improving macros of the Indian economy forced the foreign portfolio investors to turn buyers in India

VK VIJAYAKUMAR | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

SHORT TAKES

Wheat hoarding under govt lens

New Delhi: With stock limit on wheat expiring Sunday, the government on Friday directed wholesalers, retailers, and processors to declare their stock position of wheat as part of its efforts to prevent hoarding and keep prices under check. The stock limits on wheat were imposed June 12 last year and was applicable till March 31, 2024 to manage the overall food security and to prevent hoarding and unscrupulous speculation. With effect from April 1, traders/wholesalers, retailers, including big chain retailers, and processors in all states and Union Territories (UTs), will have to declare their stocks on a portal. Thereafter, they have to declare every Friday. Traders have already been told to declare rice stocks on the portal.

Zee sacks 50% of staff at tech centre

New Delhi: Zee Entertainment Friday said it has "pruned" its Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC) by about 50 per cent following the guidance of a special committee, which had conducted a critical assessment of its several business verticals. The MD & CEO has pruned TIC staff strength by 50 per cent to achieve a cost-effective structure, a Bangalore-based business vertical of the company that offers technology solutions, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) said in an official statement. Though the company has not shared the exact number of employees impacted by the move, ZEEL in its latest annual report said, "The centre has over 650 engineers who give us an unparalleled edge in the race to win the digital ecosystem".

JSW commissions hot strip mill

New Delhi: JSW Steel Saturday announced commissioning of a hot strip mill at its integrated steel plant in Vijayanagar, Karnataka. The company has also made first despatch of steel products from the mill having an annual capacity of 5 million tonne (MT), JSW Steel said in an exchange filing. "JSW Vijayanagar Metalics Ltd (JVML), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the company, today successfully commissioned its hot strip mill (HSM) at Vijayanagar plant with a capacity of 5 MTPA and has made its first despatch," the company said.



Hopefully the fourth quarter will also have (growth) of 8% or above 8% resulting in 2023/24 having an average growth in GDP of 8% or over 8%

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

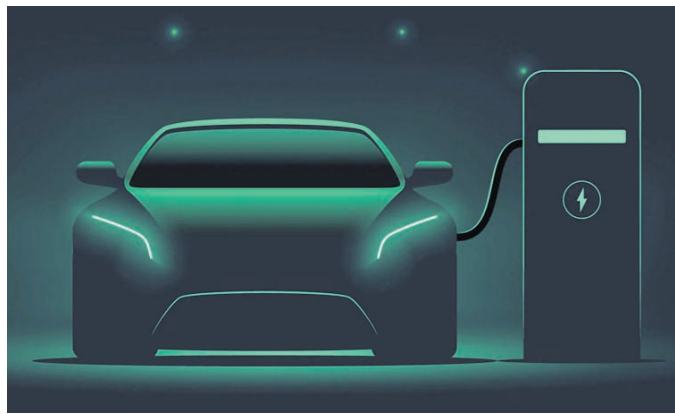
INDIA TO CUB SOLAR MODULE IMPORTS

The government said restrictions on import of solar modules will be reimposed from April 1, a measure aimed at fostering local capacity. It had earlier exempted solar projects commissioned by March 31, 2024, from the mandatory requirement of procuring solar modules from the approved list of models and manufacturers (ALMM) for 2023-24



Global EV sales' pace slowing

Sales of hybrids and plug in hybrids have been accelerating amid slowdown in EVs due to high prices, charging infra hurdles



AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 29: Electric vehicle sales' momentum is slowing globally, marquee global brokerage Goldman Sachs said. Europe, which has driven EV growth up to now, has shown signs of stagnation since the beginning of 2024. Goldman Sachs cited concerns about three factors - EV capital costs due to lower prices for used EVs, poor visibility on government policy, and a shortage of rapid-charging stations. Despite the current slowdown in EVs, the base-case scenario still calls for EV sales volume to rise 21 per cent y-o-y in 2024. "On the other hand, we think our bear-case scenario has become more realistic given the three negative factors outlined. Under our bear-case scenario, we see EV sales volume declining 2 per cent y-o-y in 2024, and negative growth would likely result in oversupply across the EV supply chain," Goldman Sachs said in a research note. Sales of hybrids and plug in hybrids have been accelerating amid the slowdown in EVs. In the US, growth has out-

India's EV future: India's share of the global electric passenger vehicle market might be a minuscule 1 per cent in 2024 but it is projected to go up to 7.1 per cent by 2040, according to the latest estimate by Goldman Sachs. In 2024, Sachs estimates that electric passenger car sales will remain at more or less the same levels as 2023, namely, around 0.1 million. But in 2030 they will cross the million mark for the first time, hitting 1.3 million in 2030 and then 5.5 million by 2040.

paced EVs over the past several months. Global hybrid sales could exceed the outlook by 1-2 million vehicles. EVs are nearing a turning point in terms of economic vi-

PRICE RISE FEAR

March may see E-2W rally swelling to record in India

MUMBAI: Electric two-wheeler registrations in India are set for a record high in March, topping 100,000 units for the second time in less than a year, as the rush to buy before a possible price increases. Vehicle registration count is a proxy for retail sales. It touched 111,964 units for electric two-wheelers March 29 - the highest for any month - according to data from Vahan, the government's repository of all vehicle registrations in India. The previous monthly high was 105,389 units in May 2023, when consumers had brought forward their purchase plans to avoid paying more due to a reduction in government subsidy from June. As per Vahan data, the March registration volume is set to be up by 36% on a month-on-month basis and 30% year-on-year. In the previous six months, two-wheeler EV registrations averaged 78,353 units. The majority of electric two-wheeler makers

RECORD REGISTRATIONS

The top five electric two-wheeler makers account for 86% of the total registrations for the industry

- TVS:** Motor is on course for its highest monthly registration of electric two-wheelers, having touched 22,125 units as of March 29, show Vahan data, taking its market share to 19.7%
- Bajaj:** Auto will have the highest monthly registration of 13,809 units, compared with the monthly average of 10,177 units in the last six months
- Hero MotoCorp:** had a registration figure of 3,086 till March 29 - the highest ever for the company
- Ola:** Electric, which has the largest market share of 39% in the electric two-wheeler space, had a total registration of 44,154 units - the highest monthly reading for the company. For the fourth month in a row, the Bangalore-based company has been clocking more than 30,000 units per month in registration

in the country are set to increase prices from April 1, the start of the new financial year. "We are considering a price increase of ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 next month," said an executive of a leading electric two-wheeler maker. "However, this will take care of the hit on account of lowering of the subsidy only partially." The price increase comes on the back of the halving of the

subsidy announced by the government as part of a new incentive called the Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS). It will be in place till July 31 this year after the existing FAME-II (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid & Electric Vehicles) Scheme ends March 31. The EMPS is expected to pave the way for a broader EV scheme after the FY25 budget. Capital costs upon sale are emerging as a new concern, as has been shown by the decline in EV used car prices in the UK, the global brokerage said.

Global smartphone shipments to reach 1.2bn units this year

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: Global smartphone shipments in 2024 are likely to see a modest rebound of 3 per cent (year-on-year) to reach 1.2 billion units, a report showed Thursday. The budget segment (\$150-\$249), which shrank in 2023 due to macroeconomic headwinds, especially in emerging markets, and the premium segment (\$600-\$799) are expected to drive this rebound, according to Counterpoint Research. Unlike 2023, emerging markets such as India and the Middle East and Africa (MEA) are expected to drive the global smartphone market's growth in 2024, supported by the budget-economy segment. "The budget-economy segment, which experienced a noticeable decline in 2023, is expected to rebound 11 per cent YoY in 2024, primarily driven by India, MEA and CALA (Caribbean And Latin American) markets," the report noted. The premium segment (\$600-\$799) is expected to maintain steady growth in 2024, rising 17 per cent YoY.

TIDBITS

Foreigners net purchased record \$11.7bn shares in SKorea in Q1

Seoul: Foreigners net purchased over 15 trillion won (\$11.7 billion) worth of local shares in the first three months of the year in South Korea, breaching the 15 trillion-won mark for the first time in history, data showed Saturday. Foreign investors scooped up a net 15.77 trillion won worth of shares in the first quarter, the highest quarterly figure since the country's main stock exchange KRX began compiling such data in 1998. The previous record was 14.79 trillion won tallied in the third quarter of 2009, according to the KRX, reports Yonhap news agency. Foreigners scooped up 5.5 trillion won worth of shares of Samsung Electronics, the world's largest supplier of memory chips, followed by 2.14 trillion won worth of leading carmaker Hyundai Motor and 1.75 trillion won worth of shares in No 2 chipmaker SK Hynix.



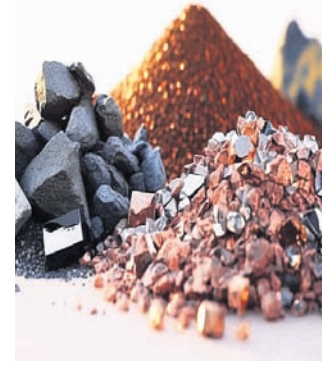
Jaiprakash Associates plans to restructure bonds worth \$120mn

New Delhi: Crisis-hit Jaiprakash Associates, which is into cement and construction businesses, Saturday said around 92 per cent of bondholders have given consent for restructuring of foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs) worth \$120 million, which were issued by the company and due for payments in 2020 and 2021. In February, the debt-ridden company had announced plans to restructure these bonds. The agreements contain the primary terms of the proposed restructuring of such bonds. In a regulatory filing Saturday, the company apprised that more bondholders have accorded their consent to the bond restructuring by signing an accession agreement with the company.



Govt sets ball rolling for e-auction of seven critical mineral blocks

The future global economy will be underpinned by technologies that depend on these critical minerals, and India has committed to achieve 50% of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030



New Delhi, March 30: The Ministry of Mines has fixed May 16 as the last date for the sale of tender documents to bid in the e-auction for seven critical mineral blocks under the tranche III round. The deadline for the submission of the documents is May 21. The Ministry has clarified that the seven blocks form part of the 11 blocks the auction for which was earlier annulled as there were less than three Technically Qualified Bidders (TQB) for them. In addition, the e-auction

process under tranche II for 18 blocks is also ongoing. The last date for the sale of the Tender Document is May 10, 2024, and the last date for submission of the bid is May 15. The ministry also said that the second round of e-auctions for six blocks has been completed as per schedule, and the decision on the Kundul Nickel and Chromium Block of Gujarat, will be taken by the designated officer in due course of time. Critical minerals such as lithium, chromium, nickel, graphite, cobalt, titanium and

rare earth elements (REE) are essential for India's economic development and national security. Currently, the extraction of these minerals is dominated by a few countries such as China which makes the supply chain vulnerable to geopolitical uncertainties. Critical minerals cater to the needs of sectors like electronics, electric vehicles, renewable energy, defence, high-tech telecommunications, agriculture, pharmaceutical and the creation of gigafactories. These minerals are in high demand which is met mainly by imports. The future global economy will be underpinned by technologies that depend on these critical minerals, and India has committed to achieve 50 per cent of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030. The ambitious plans for energy transition are set to drive the demand for electric cars, wind and solar energy projects and battery storage systems thereby increasing the demand for these critical minerals. Norway, and Switzerland. The ongoing Red Sea crisis, which has disrupted traditional shipping routes, is a new challenge to trade. But, India has cleverly turned this adversity into an opportunity. By embracing longer routes via the Cape of Good Hope, new markets in Africa and the Americas are being unlocked. Sahai said, "While the Red Sea crisis has affected the bottom line of exporters, our top line has not been affected much. However, some commodities and low-value, high-volume products have taken a hit. Most contracts are not coming for renewal and we have to see if existing buyers are willing to factor in high freight prices. The trend so far suggests that in most of the cases, both sides are mutually settling and agreeing to absorb a part of the high freight." With a shrinking trade gap, rising exports, and a growing global presence, India's export story transcends mere economic figures. It embodies resilience, strategic foresight, and the potential to reshape the global trade landscape in the years to come.

'FTAs, new markets may boost exports to \$1tn by '30'

INDIA'S EXPORT TRAJECTORY IS IN A POSITIVE ZONE. THE PROACTIVE MARKET DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY, COUPLED WITH A FOCUS ON INNOVATION AND ADAPTABILITY, POSITIONS THE NATION AS A STRONG CONTENDER IN THE GLOBAL TRADE ARENA

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: Despite global trade uncertainties, India's exports are charting a new course, bilateral agreements, free trade agreement (FTA) and venturing into uncharted territories like Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia have led to all time high export of goods. With these new initiatives, India has seen a surprising surge in exports of precious metals, minerals, automobiles, electronics, pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, textiles, spices and defence equipment. Exports from India soared 11.9 per cent year-on-year to \$41.4 billion in February 2024, the highest level since March 2023, boosted by sales of drugs and pharmaceuticals, engineering and elec-

trical goods. Exports to new markets like Africa, Latin America and Central Asia, have witnessed a significant influx of \$234 million worth of goods, including cars, two- and three-wheelers, and precious metals, during the April-December 2023 period. This translates to a 5 per cent growth in exports for key sectors. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) DG Ajay Sahai said, "The medium- to long-term prospects of Indian exports are very encouraging. We are on course to reach the target of \$1 trillion each in goods and services exports by 2030. However, in the first quarter of the next financial year, some challenges may be faced due to high inflation and geopolitical un-



Exports from India soared 11.9% YoY to \$41.4bn in Feb 2024, the highest level since March 2023

certainties. We expect the US Fed to start reducing the key rates in its next review, which will signal other countries central banks, thus pushing demands." The focus on new markets, bilateral trade pacts, and FTAs's extends beyond value; it will reduce dependence on the

traditional export items and foster stronger trade partnerships and economic cooperation across continents. He added, "While we require a minimum 3-5 year time frame to assess any FTA, in a very short period we are seeing growth in the bilateral trade with partner countries of UAE and Australia and exports growth to such countries growing much faster than overall exports. We expect to sign FTA with UK, Oman and Eurasian countries by the next financial year." India's main export partners are: United States with 15 per cent

The strategy to push FTAs with complimentary economies is showing good results. It is win-win situation as while domestic manufacturing gets a boost with duty free imports of raw materials and intermediates while our exports get better market access

AJAY SAHAI | DG, FEDERATION OF INDIAN EXPORT ORGANISATIONS

of the total exports, United Arab Emirates, 11 percent, Hong Kong 5 percent, China and Singapore 4 percent each and United Kingdom 3 percent. Trade with UAE has surged post free trade agreement between the two countries. FTA talks with the UK are at an advanced stage and a trade pact is likely to be signed after the formation of the new government. India has signed 14 FTAs in 2024, including a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) March 10, 2024. The EFTA consists of Iceland, Liechtenstein,

Mayank show lifts LSG

DC need Prithvi boost against formidable CSK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, March 30: India unearthed a new fast-bowling star in Mayank Yadav (3/27) who stole the limelight with his searing pace amid the usual flurry of monstrous hits as Lucknow Super Giants humbled Punjab Kings by 21 runs in the IPL here Saturday.

Asked to bat first, floater Krunal Pandya's late blitz (43 n o, 22b, 4x4, 2x6) powered LSG to a competitive 199/8. Opener Quinton de Kock (54, 38b, 5x4, 2x6) top-scored for LSG but it was stand-in skipper Nicholas Pooran's 21-ball 42 (3x4, 3x6), which infused life into his team's innings in the middle overs.

The total proved to be enough for LSG, who registered their first win of this IPL thanks to Mayank's exploits. Punjab ended at 178/5.

In the 12th over of Punjab's innings, Mayank bowled the tournament's fastest ball at 155.8 kmph. It was Mayank's extra pace that rattled Jonny Bairstow (42, 29b, 3x4, 3x6), Prabhsimran Singh and Jitesh Sharma and led to their downfall. He consistently clocked 150 and above on the speedometer during his four-over spell.

This was after the dashing opening combo of Shikhar Dhawan (70, 50b, 7x4, 3x6) and Bairstow quickly got the measure of what looked like a very good surface for batting.

Thanks to their attacking approach, PBKS raced to 61/0 in the powerplay and continued in the same vein with Dhawan bringing up his fifty with a maximum off Ravi Bishnoi. Bairstow was equally marauding as the visitors crossed 100 in the 11th over.

Bishnoi put the brakes on PBKS' scoring with a tight 11th over, giving away just three runs, and that forced Bairstow to go after Mayank but the batter mis-cued and ended up throwing away his wicket. It was the fast bowler's maiden IPL wicket.

Prabhsimran blazed away to a seven-ball 19 before becoming Mayank's second victim. Dhawan tried hard to keep his team in the



MAYANK YADAV

game, but PBKS could not keep up with the asking rate and soon, the Punjab captain too succumbed to the pressure and Jitesh failed to tackle Mayank's extra pace.

Earlier, De Kock got the LSG innings underway with a splendid drive through mid-off for a boundary. Playing the game as 'impact player' having handed over the leadership responsibility to Pooran, KL Rahul didn't look convincing.

Arshdeep had Rahul caught by

Bairstow at backward point for a nine-ball 15. Devdutt Padikkal got himself two boundaries before being dismissed by Sam Curran (3/28). Marcus Stoinis (19) hit two sixes before being bowled by Rahul Chahar.

That brought Pooran into the middle and the West Indian quickly got into the groove, hitting Chahar for two sixes and a four for a 20-run over, which gave LSG's run rate a much-needed impetus.

Meanwhile, De Kock brought

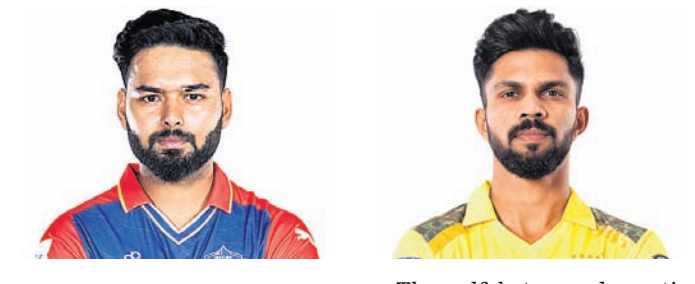
up his half century in 34 balls but a strategic timeout broke LSG's momentum as the left-handed South African batter top-edged a short Arshdeep delivery for wicketkeeper Jitesh Sharma to complete an easy catch.

Pooran kept the scoreboard moving at a good rate until he dragged a Rabada delivery onto the stumps, a big blow for LSG at a crucial juncture. New man Krunal Pandya did not waste any time to settle down, brilliantly dispatching a short

Rabada delivery over midwicket for a maximum. Curran bowled a tight 17th over to halt LSG's charge, but Krunal got a flurry of boundaries to prop up LSG.

BRIEF SCORES

LSG 199/8 (Quinton de Kock 54, Krunal Pandya 43 n o, Nicholas Pooran 42; Sam Curran 3/28, Arshdeep Singh 2/30) beat PBKS 178/5 (Shikhar Dhawan 70, Jonny Bairstow 42, Liam Livingstone 28 n o; Mayank Yadav 3/27, Mohsin Khan 2/34) by 21 runs.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Visakhapatnam, March 30: Delhi Capitals will be aiming to rejig their out-of-depth batting order by bringing the flamboyant Prithvi Shaw in the mix against the defending champions Chennai Super Kings in what could be safely termed as a 'battle of unequals' Sunday's Indian Premier League encounter.

In T20 format, reputations do go for a toss but DC in their last four meetings haven't been able to get past CSK and the margins of defeat - 91, 27 and 77 runs respectively paints a sorry picture. One also needs to take into account that in those three heavy losses, the core of the Delhi team has been more or less same save their last meeting when Rishabh Pant wasn't available.

Hence a win against CSK would be considered as a big upset in the tournament. If CSK once again look like a team to beat with all their bases nicely covered, it has been quite the opposite for the Ricky Ponting coached Capitals, who have been outplayed in both departments of the game.

DC's co-owners GMR and JSW have been completely messing up the team composition at the auction table itself for some years and there is hardly anything that Ponting or Director of Cricket Sourav Ganguly could do with domestic talent that lacks quality.

CSK got an uncapped Sameer Rizvi for 8.40 crore and the two sixes in his first IPL innings against Punjab Kings showed why the franchise was desperate to get him on board. Among all franchisees, DC probably has had the weakest talent scout program and it is paying a huge price for poor recruitments.

The gulf between domestic cricket and IPL once again became evident with Ricky Bhui, the highest scorer in Ranji Trophy with 902 runs in the just concluded season.

That Bhui is out-of-depth at this level was cruelly exposed by young South African pacer Nandre Burger of Rajasthan Royals. Shaw might not exactly conform to the fitness standards set by Ponting and his support staff but even the biggest 'punter' in the DC change room knows where to put his money if the choice is between Shaw and Bhui.

There is too much on the plate of David Warner and skipper Rishabh Pant, who will take some time to find his groove. Mitchell Marsh's time with DC can't exactly be termed consistent and the presence of Shaw will indeed add some muscle to DC's batting against an attack comprising Mustafizur Rahman, Deepak Chahar, Matheesha Pathirana and Ravindra Jadeja.

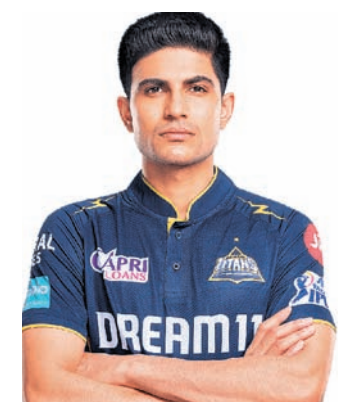
Add to it, Daryl Mitchell's seam-up stuff and Rachin Ravindra, whose bowling potential hasn't yet been unlocked by CSK's 'spiritual captain' MS Dhoni.

The problem with DC is lack of quality power hitters among domestic talents in case Pant fails to fire. Similarly DC's death bowling is one of concern and save Axar Patel, none of the other bowlers have gone for anything less than 7.50 per over.

MATCHDAY

Indian Premier League
GT vs SRH
Time: 03:30 pm
DC vs CSK
Time: 07:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: Jio Cinema

SRH challenge awaits depleted Gujarat Titans



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, March 30: A depleted Gujarat Titans bowling attack will have to raise its game by quite a few notches if it intends to stop a marauding Sunrisers Hyderabad team fresh from its record total against Mumbai Indians, in the upcoming afternoon IPL match here Sunday.

Sunrisers are coming here on the back of breaking the ceiling for all time IPL total when they plundered 277 against Mumbai Indians to secure their first win of the season.

First time skipper Shubman Gill's Titans, who started off with a win at home against Mumbai Indians, on the other hand slipped in Chennai in their previous game. The profligate Umesh Yadav is no match for injured Mohammed Shami and that is proving to be a big factor for Titans.

The resounding 63-run defeat affected their net run rate as it plummeted to -1.425, worst among the league's 10 teams, which could cause some problems towards the business end of the tournament. It can't be denied that losing Hardik Pandya, who lends necessary balance with his all-round skills has also been a big factor.

Winners and runners-up in the last two seasons, GT's success under Pandya has centred around one of their batters ability to come up trumps and play a match winning role.

Whether it's Wriddhiman

Saha, David Miller, Pandya, or Rahul Tewatia, one of them has typically ignited the batting lineup. However, in the absence of the inspirational India all-rounder, their batting display appears drab and lacking its usual spark.

GT had a one-day style batting approach chasing Chennai Super Kings' imposing 207, and barring Sai Sudharsan none could reach 30s. The likes of Sudharsan, Vijay Shankar look unidimensional, while Gill's T20 batting will again come for scrutiny.

That their finisher Miller is also struggling underscored their slow approach in the middle overs (11-15) where they managed just 34 runs. They would hope that Miller is able to get his mojo back as they would have to bat out of their skin to match SRH's batting might.

Tournament dark horses SRH have lit up the IPL with a record-breaking performance at home in their last match. Australia World Cup winner Travis Head (62; 24b) made a stunning debut for SRH, smashing the fastest fifty for the franchise, taking 18 balls for the milestone. The feat was then bettered by uncapped Indian Abhishek Sharma (16 balls).

The South African duo of Aiden Markram and Heinrich Klaasen too has been in imperious form lower down the order. Being an afternoon match, the dry surface may also prove handy for the spinners as Rashid and Sai Kishore will be crucial for either sides.

BFC dent OFC's League Shield hopes

AGENCIES

Bangalore, March 30: Bengaluru FC and Odisha FC played out a goalless draw in their Indian Super League (ISL) 2023-24 encounter at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium Saturday.

The result handed a big jolt to the Juggernauts and their hopes of clinching the League Winners Shield as they now have 36 points from 19 games, five behind what the top-placed Mumbai City FC (41) has accumulated from the same number of matches. On the other hand, BFC are back in the top-six courtesy of the outcome of this match.

It was a day where backlines of both the teams were the saving graces, helping them keep a clean sheet each. Goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu was solid between the posts for the home side, making multiple decisive stops that denied Odisha FC the breakthrough until the end.

Ahmed Jahouh delivered a curling ball that called for Jerry Lalrinzuala inside the box on the left flank of the final third. Gurpreet used his big frame to good effect to ensure that Jerry didn't have too much space to attempt a testing shot, thus keeping the visitors at bay in the 31st minute.

Fijian forward Roy Krishna had breached past the BFC defence to storm into their defen-



Sunil Chhetri keeps the ball away from Odisha FC players' challenge

sive half with a solo effort in the added time of the first half. His trickery with the ball and fleet footedness ensured that he got past Gurpreet, but his attempt into an open net was thwarted by a late clearance by Shankar Sampingiraj.

Eleven minutes into the second half, Isak Vanlalruatfela and Aamey Ranawade, who have taken giant leaps under the watch of Sergio Lobera at Odisha FC this season, joined hands to create troubles for BFC.

Isak overcame a challenge by Nikhil Poojary to lay a pass up for Aamey on the right flank. Gurpreet was alert to rush ahead of his line and deny the fullback an angle that could have put the

ball past him.

It wasn't as if BFC didn't assert their gameplay moving forward. Their Spanish talisman Javi Hernandez produced two close efforts in the second half that could have really broken the back of the Odisha FC defence if not for the duo of Mourtada Fall and Amrinder Singh.

In the 65th minute, he and Oliver Drost played a nice little one-two passing sequence before Javi hammered the ball past a crowded Odisha FC box. Amrinder got his palm to the ball before Ranawade lobbed the ball out of the danger area to ensure that the scores remained level at the full-time whistle.

Sinner, Dimitrov to face off for Miami Open title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami Gardens (US), March 30: Jannik Sinner is starting to dominate. Sinner overwhelmed third-seeded Daniil Medvedev 6-1, 6-2 Friday in the semifinals of the Miami Open to improve to 21-1 this year.

The second-seeded Sinner, rock-solid with his firecracker forehand, became the first man to reach back-to-back Miami Open finals since John Isner did it in 2019. In last year's Miami final, Medvedev prevailed over Sinner at Hard Rock Stadium, home of the Miami Dolphins. This time, Medvedev's three



games tied his career low for wins in a match. He committed 22 unforced errors.



Sinner, 22, will play in the final Sunday against 11th-seeded Grigor Dimitrov, who beat No.4

seed Alexander Zverev in the other semifinal after knocking out top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinals.

Sinner began his revenge against Medvedev for last year's Miami final by beating him in the Australian Open final in January — rallying from two sets down — and setting the stage for a wonderful 2024 campaign. Sinner posted his fifth straight win over Medvedev, all in the past 12 months.

This match was a lot easier than Australia in the 80-degree South Florida heat as the Italian jumped to a 5-0 lead at the outset in posting two straight breaks

of the Russian's serve. It was over in 69 minutes.

Sinner's opponent in the final, the surging Bulgarian Dimitrov, backed up his upset of Alcaraz by pulling off a win over the German Zverev in a three-setter; 6-4, 6-7(4-7), 6-4.

With fans chanting "Gri-gor, Gri-gor" and several Bulgarian flags waving, the match went on for two hours, 36 minutes. The victory gave the veteran Dimitrov back-to-back wins over top-5 opponents for the second time in his career. As such, Dimitrov should surge into the top 10 for the first time since 2018.