



MARKETING MANTRA

Actor Yami Gautam firmly believes that popularity depends on good work

LEISURE P2



CHINA'S GROWTH TARGET

China sets modest growth target of around 5% this year as it kicks off the annual session of its National People's Congress

INTERNATIONAL P10



POWER-PACKED SHOW

Shafali Verma's scintillating knock helps Delhi Capitals beat RCB by 60 runs in a WPL match in Mumbai

SPORTS P12



ICON OF LEGEND: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday unveiled the iconic Dakota aircraft of legendary leader Biju Patnaik for public viewing at the Bhubaneswar Airport on the 107th birth anniversary of the former CM of Odisha. The Dakota DC-3 aircraft used by Biju Patnaik, an ace pilot, was brought from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata to the Odisha capital January 18, and remade before it was put for public viewing at the Biju Patnaik International Airport. (Report on P3) OP PHOTO

CM opens Biju Expressway, Economic Corridor

Bhubaneswar, March 5: On the occasion of the 107th birth anniversary of legendary leader Biju Patnaik, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday inaugurated the Biju Expressway and the Biju Economic Corridor during his visit to the western districts of the state, besides attending a slew of programmes in the region. Patnaik also held road shows in Kalahandi and Bargarh districts, the two BJP strongholds. The CM, during his visit to Nuapada district, inaugurated the 174.5-km-long four-lane Biju Expressway - connecting Ghatipada with Ampani - built at a cost of ₹590.84 crore. At Bargarh, he unveiled the Biju Economic Corridor, spanning from Sohela to Ampani, and asserted that the incentives and subsidies provided by his government will attract investments to the region in the days to come.



Patnaik, on the occasion, also inaugurated and laid the foundation of various projects to the tune of ₹3,081 crore in Kalahandi, Nuapada and Bargarh districts. Addressing people, he said that the Biju Expressway is not just a road but the "lifeline of this region."

Now, take a flight from Capital to Berhampur

To increase air connectivity from Bhubaneswar to other cities in the state, the Odisha government has started a fully state-sponsored flight operation in the Bhubaneswar-Rangeliunda (Berhampur) route. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the flight operation between the Silk City to the Temple City on the occasion of the 107th birth anniversary of legendary leader and former CM Biju Patnaik. This will reduce the travel time to one hour. The flight operation on this route will boost industry and tourism sector, Patnaik said. India One Air will operate in the Bhubaneswar-Rangeliunda route using a 9-seater aircraft. P3

STATE GETS HEALTH VARSITY

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday announced the establishment of a health university in the state. All the medical and allied health science colleges and institutions will stand affiliated to the Odisha University of Health Sciences from the 2023-24 academic session, a notification issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department said. All colleges offering undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses in health sciences, including modern medicine, ayurveda, homeopathy, nursing, pharmacy and physiotherapy, will now come under the ambit of the varsity from the 2023-24 academic session, an official said. The Odisha government had earlier decided to set up the health university to streamline the medical education system as many such institutions have been coming up in the state, he said. The Odisha University of Health Sciences Act was passed in the Assembly in October 2021 and notified by the government August 14, 2022. The establishment of the health university will "enhance the quality of medical education, patient care and research in the state," the official added.

Oppn letter to PM flags 'misuse' of agencies

Hyderabad, March 5: Leaders of nine Opposition parties, including Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee, Arvind Kejriwal, K Chandrasekhar Rao, have written a joint letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi alleging 'blatant misuse' of central agencies against members of the Opposition. The other signatories of the letter are Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Tejaswini Yadav (RJD), Sharad Pawar (NCP), Farooq Abdullah (National Conference), Uddhav Thackeray (Shiv Sena, UBT) and Akhilesh Yadav of Samajwadi Party.

"The blatant misuse of central agencies against the members of the Opposition appears to suggest that we have transitioned from being a democracy to an autocracy... the misuse of central agencies and constitutional offices like that of the Governor - to settle scores outside of the electoral battlefield is strongly condemnable as it does not bode well for our democracy," the letter said. Highlighting Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's arrest by the CBI in connection with the irregularities in Delhi Liquor Policy, the leaders said the charges against the AAP leader were "outrightly baseless and smack of a political conspiracy."

His arrest has enraged people across the country. Sisodia is recognised globally for transforming Delhi's school education. His arrest will be cited worldwide as an example of a political witch-hunt and further confirm what the world was only suspecting - that India's democratic values stand threatened under an authoritarian BJP regime, they alleged. Citing Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and former TMC leaders Suwendu Adhikari and Mukul Roy as examples, the leaders claimed that the investigation agencies go slow on cases against Opposition politicians, who join the BJP.



9 lakh unemployed youths in Odisha, but no noise

Bhubaneswar, March 5: The Odisha government is claiming that the unemployment rate in the state is the lowest in the country. Still, the state has nearly 9 lakh young people searching for employment.



Minister Pritiranjan Gharai in the Assembly during the ongoing Budget Session, the state has a total of 8,98,717 unemployed youths who have registered themselves with different employment exchanges in the state, till last December. Of them, 1,96,000 are graduates, 15,335 are post-graduate degree holders and 72,516 are trained teachers, 32,628 are diploma pass and 32,213 are ITI pass. Altogether, 12,532 engineering graduates and 4147 post graduate engineering pass students have registered themselves with employment exchanges. Ironically, 801 medical graduate students and 29 post graduates in medical sciences are also in search of jobs in Odisha. As per the Odisha Economic Survey 2022-23, the employment rate in Odisha remained 5.3% in 2020-21. The rate of unemployment among persons above 15 years of age in rural and urban areas stood at 4.9% and 7.8% respectively as per PLFS 2020-21. Contd...4

Recently, the CMO, in a tweet said, "With effective policy decisions & successful implementation of schemes, Odisha is ranked 1st in unemployment rate in the country with a score of 0.9%, as per the report by CMIE." As per information given by Odisha Skill Development and Technical Education

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
MAX	38.4°C	37.0°C
MIN	19.4°C	20.4°C
Humidity	58%	67%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
Forecast	Dry weather most likely	

Year after slap, Rock's counterpunch

Los Angeles, March 5: A year after Will Smith smacked him on the Academy Awards stage, Chris Rock finally gave his rebuttal in a forceful stand-up special, streamed live on Netflix, in which the comedian bragged that he "took that hit like Pacquiao."



Anybody who says words hurt hasn't been punched in the face
CHRIS ROCK

In March 2022, Smith walked on to the Oscars stage and slapped Rock's face after the comedian made a joke about the appearance of Smith's wife, Jada Pinkett Smith. The 'King Richard' star returned to his seat in the audience and later won best actor. The 58-year-old comedian Saturday night performed his first stand-up special since last year's Oscars in a much-awaited sequel that had all the hype—and more—of a Manny Pacquiao prizefight. "Chris Rock: Selective Outrage," streamed live from the Hippodrome Theatre in Baltimore, marked Netflix's first foray into live streaming. But it was also a long-awaited comedy counterpunch to Academy Awards infamy Rock, performing in all

white and with a Prince medallion around his neck, immediately touched on last year's Oscars while riffing on "wokeness," hypersensitivity and what he called "selective outrage." "You never know who might get triggered," said Rock. "Anybody who says words hurt hasn't been punched in the face." Rock said he had been watching slavery drama 'Emancipation' just to see

Smith "get whooped," cheering "hit him again" and "you missed a spot." But Rock then launched into a series of wide-ranging topics examining contemporary issues, including virtue signaling, high-priced yoga pants, the Duchess of Sussex, the Kardashians, abortion rights, the Capitol riot and what he called America's biggest addition: Attention. "You all know what happened to me, getting smacked by Suge Smith. Everybody knows," Rock said. "It still hurts. I got 'Summertime' ringing in my ears." While Smith has apologised and repeatedly spoken about the incident since last March, Rock has avoided all the usual platforms where celebrities often go to air their feelings. He never sat down with Oprah Winfrey, and turned away the many media outlets that would have loved to land an exclusive in-depth interview. "I'm not a victim, baby," said Rock. "You will never see me on Oprah or Gayle crying. You will never see it. Never going to happen." But Rock did use his encounter with Smith to shape and enliven his second stand-up special for Netflix.

OrissaPOST

BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

18th March, 2023

Bhubaneswar

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leisure



PAMELA RECALLS HER INFAMOUS PLAYBOY SHOOT

Former *Playboy* playmate Pamela Anderson has revealed she used to suffer from 'debilitating' shyness before she posed for her scandalous *Playboy* centrefold. In an interview, the *Baywatch* star called herself 'painfully shy', as she lacked self-confidence and didn't see herself as pretty, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

MIA WASIKOWSKA IS QUITE HAPPY LEAVING HOLLYWOOD

The *Alice in Wonderland* star, Mia Wasikowska, has left the grind of the film industry behind for a pretty content life in her native Australia. The 33-year-old actress, who had been working in the industry since she was 15, opened up about the discomfort of that treadmill lifestyle, reports *People* magazine.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES
You will want to catch up with old friends that you have been neglecting for some time. The stars suggest that you will enjoy yourself. Your excitement will brighten up your activities. Your frankness and honesty are what set you apart from others, says Ganesh.

TAURUS
You will be very sensitive about the image you project socially and professionally. Ganesh sees you treating this very seriously and doing everything you can to make this right impression. Today, you will remain decent, dignified and focused in all that you do. Do not be too eager to please others.

GEMINI
A hectic and busy day awaits you, which will probably leave you feeling bored and listless. Find creative ways to beat the boredom, or take a break and do things which appeal to you today, says Ganesh.

CANCER
You will begin the day with a definite plan for a bright future. You will resolutely implement plans that you have made thoughtfully. Such methodical decisions will save you a lot of time in the future. Ganesh says that you will succeed in every endeavour today.

LEO
Your decisions today will be not only be correct, but also resolute and steadfast. Your health will be fine. At the work-place, things ought to proceed as usual. However, you will concentrate more on work today. In personal relationships, some minor arguments could crop up.

VIRGO
Opening up to your beloved about your whims and fancies as well as your goals shall be the key today. And, why not, urges Ganesh. Your intimate relations should be built on trust and mutual compatibility. Your energy levels will hit the sky.

LIBRA
Ganesh says that you shall soon be able to travel or plan a trip, not for family or business matters, but for getting away from the mundane life. You will pay more importance to your professional matters as opposed to your personal matters. Today you will be able to attain success in every thing you do with the blessings of Ganesh.

SCORPIO
Today, you are like a balloon that may burst any time. You may vent out all the sweet and bitter experiences and feel much lighter. Or it may have adverse effects on your health, says Ganesh. You prefer to stay in your cocoon, in the warmth of your near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
Determined and dedicated, that's what you are when it comes to work. Well, this may even find you amidst heaps of files and loads of work. No wonder you become a workaholic. You are likely to enjoy during the latter half of the day. Have a fun-filled evening!

CAPRICORN
Your interests are guarded by the Almighty, so don't worry about them. Not that you are not ambitious, but you are satisfied with what you have and gained. You have set some realistic goals for yourself and you are making sincere efforts to achieve them. You are a simple person and you like your life to be uncomplicated. People around you will be impressed with your approach towards life, feels Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
You are close to your family, and now is the time to enjoy the company of your loved ones at home. You will take them out for shopping, go with them on picnics and pamper them in every possible way, says Ganesh. Not that you made them feel special with a selfish motive, but your show of affection will work wonders for you.

PISCES
Ganesh feels that you will sympathize with people today. This will help you get people's good wishes. You can prove to be a good boss, co worker, husband or wife and son or daughter. Ganesh advises you to carry on with these virtues.

Your work is your best PR: Yami

Mumbai: Actress Yami Gautam, who was last seen in the movie *Lost*, shared that she believes in giving her best and also asserted that popularity depends on good work, quoting 'work is your best PR'.

Recently, a Twitter user targeted the actress and said that, for growth in her career, she needs a better PR agency. The actress responded, "I see the power of PR-heavy activities that actors are relying on, and I judge no one. But I am a strong believer in 'Your work is your best PR'.

It's a longer route, but it takes you the correct way."

Yami has come a long way in the Hindi film industry. The actress started her acting career with TV serials such as *Chaand Ke Paar Chalo* and *Yeh Pyar Na Hoga Kam* and later made a breakthrough in films with her debut in *Vicky Donor*. The actress has not looked back since and has been continuously delivering quality movies. She received a positive response for her performance in *A Thursday* and *Lost*. She is all set for the next, *OMG 2*, opposite Akshay Kumar.



6TH ASIM UTSAV: DAY 1



Artistes of the Asim Basu Foundation, a drama troupe formed in the memory of eminent film/ theatre personality and painter Asim Basu, presented the Odia play *Nali Frock* at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Sunday. Adapted by Chittaranjan Chiranjit from the Hindi play *Red Frock* of Ashis Pathak, the Odia version was directed by Debadutta Pati.

People used to look down on me: Tamannaah

Mumbai: Tamannaah Bhatia is one of the actresses who has entertained her fans with her solid performances both in Hindi and South films. Recently, the talented actress sat down for a heart-to-heart conversation where she spoke about her journey so far. She also talked about discrimination, facing misogyny, body shaming, and lots more.

While speaking to a media house, Tamannaah recalled her journey as an actor. She revealed how people used to look down upon her as she started her journey. Stressing on the issue, she said, "A lot of people looked down upon me when I said I wanted to become an actor. People question your financial condition, and they ask, 'What are the parents thinking?' So there are so many societal pressures that come, and at least when I started off, these were actually there. But I feel nobody really understands that a person can just have this burning desire to achieve something in their life. Especially with women, we are always put into the definition that there's a certain path that everyone expects you to follow, and I am really fortunate that my parents never put me in that shell."

AGENCIES



It's easy to become arrogant: Aparshakti

Mumbai: Hindi film actor and television host Aparshakti Khurana recalled the worst advice he got from a director in the initial years of his career. He said that the director asked him not to be so easily approachable by everyone.

He shared, "Now I am now getting films in the lead or parallel lead, which I can call my films or my shows. But back then, this wasn't the case. I went to a very famous, very cool, and relevant director to discuss the way to grow in my career; and he told me, 'Apar, you know what the problem is? I think you're very approachable.' And I said, 'I think that generally people compliment me for this, and if you're asking me to cut down on this, then it is very difficult'."

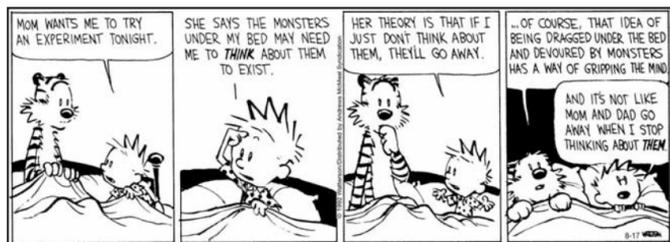
The actor said he found it quite shocking and painful. As for him, it's easy to become arrogant, and bringing out that warmth is difficult. He said that it has been four years since that incident, and he hasn't jumped from the warm side to the arrogant side.

AGENCIES

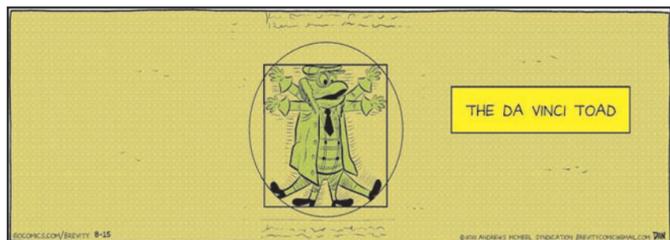
PEANUTS



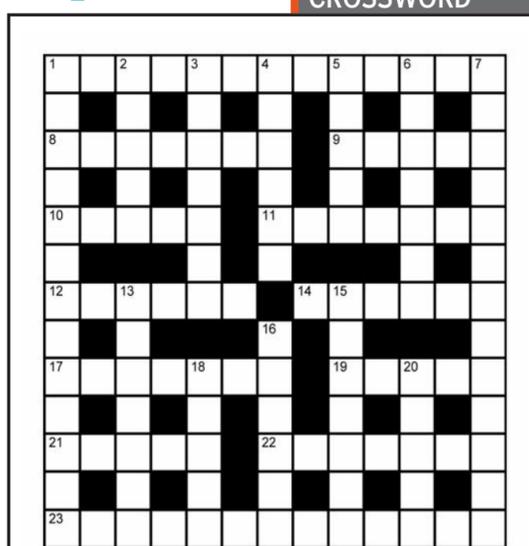
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



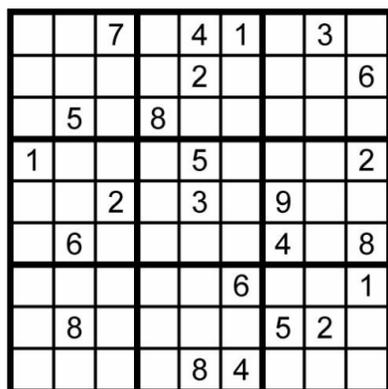
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Copyright © 2023 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 1 Future artist's primer? (9,4)
 - 8 Identification badge (4,3)
 - 9 English race place
 - 10 Thespian
 - 11 Freeze, as an activity
 - 12 Styles
 - 14 Cheered up
 - 17 Ocean feature
 - 19 Alpaca relative
 - 21 Rapid increase
 - 22 Farewell remark
 - 23 Meteors (8,5)
 - Down**
 - 1 Vision adjusters (7,6)
 - 2 Boundary
 - 3 Verbalised
 - 4 Consume
 - 5 Question response
 - 6 Shellfish
 - 7 Indonesian island inhabitants (6,7)
 - 13 Trade stoppage
 - 15 Croquet items
 - 16 Lighthouse, for one
 - 18 Maladroit
 - 20 Large artery

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.

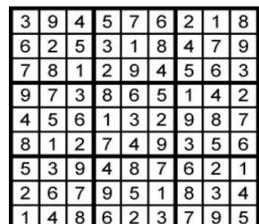


SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



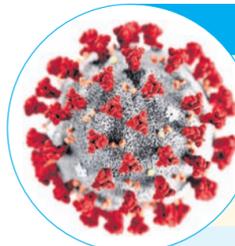
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown



FESTIVAL OF COLOURS

Girls buying colours from a roadside vendor ahead of Holi celebrations in Capital city, Sunday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,06,56,727	65,34,93,870	68,05,186
India	4,46,87,820	4,41,54,254	5,30,775
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Fire breaks out in Chandaka

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Massive fire broke out in Chandaka forest on the outskirts of the City here Sunday. Fire services personnel took around six hours to douse the forest blaze, said sources.

As per the Fire department officials, a burning cigarette butt thrown by some unknown person might have caused the inferno that soon spread to other areas in the jungle near Andharua Dasapur area.

On being informed, Fire Services personnel with a fire tender reached the spot and put out the blaze. "No casualties were reported in the forest fire occurred Sunday" said Abani Kumar Swain, deputy fire officer, Bhubaneswar.

CM UNVEILS BIJU'S DAKOTA FOR PUBLIC VIEWING

A 10-member team of Aerospace Research Development required 12 days to dismantle the aircraft and pack it in proper shape for public viewing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday unveiled the iconic Dakota aircraft of legendary leader Biju Patnaik for public viewing at the Bhubaneswar Airport here on the 107th birth anniversary of the former Chief Minister of Odisha. The Dakota DC-3 aircraft used by Biju Patnaik, an ace pilot, was brought from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata to the state capital January 18, 2023, and remade before it was put for public viewing at the Biju Patnaik International Airport here.

A 10-member team of Aerospace Research Development required 12 days to dismantle the aircraft and pack it in proper shape for public viewing. The team of engineers, technicians and experts under-

took the assembling of the dismantled aircraft, an official said. IT Secretary Manoj Mishra, who was part of the team for renovation and restoration of the Iconic Dakota Aircraft, said, "Today is an emotional day for all of us. We have heard so many stories about the late Biju Patnaik ji, on how he had gone and rescued people from Indonesia, how he had made landing in Leh in Jammu and Kashmir. We didn't have a living symbol of his daredevilry in Odisha."

Mishra said, "When we brought the Dakota from Kolkata Airport, it was really in very bad condition. We have restored it in full glory and it now stands as a testimony to Biju Babu's Daredevilry and it will inspire generation after generation, when people will see and the new generation will read about him." This is perhaps the first air-



CM Naveen Patnaik unveils the iconic Dakota aircraft of legendary leader Biju Patnaik for public viewing at Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar on the 107th birth anniversary of the former CM, Sunday

port in the world where an aircraft is being displayed at the entrance for public viewing, said noted historian Anil Dhir.

Before bringing the Dakota to Odisha, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) had allotted 1.1 acre of land for the aircraft to be

placed in front of the airport named after the legendary leader. A memorial will be built for this purpose.

It is a matter of pride for the Odisha government to unveil the Dakota DC-3 aircraft. Public display of the aircraft will serve as

an embodiment of the former chief minister's courage and adventurism, and inspire people of Odisha to dream big, a release by the Commerce and Transport department said.

The government is also planning to build a mini walk-through

museum at the display site. It will depict the young days of Biju Patnaik when he flew the aircraft, his adventure stories and pictures and tales of his high-risk missions.

Before joining politics, Biju Patnaik was an ace pilot and also established Kalinga Airlines having a fleet of 15 Dakota aircraft. As part of his adventure trip, Biju Patnaik had rescued erstwhile Indonesian Vice President Muhammad Hatta and Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir in 1947.

The Indonesian government had twice decorated Biju Patnaik with 'Bhumiputra', the highest civilian award of the country, for his daredevil mission.

Since, this aircraft is closely associated with Biju Patnaik, it will resemble Odisha's rich aviation history which would be a befitting tribute to one of the most iconic personalities of Odisha. People will see this Dakota Aircraft as a memento of late Biju Patnaik's bravery and heroics, an official statement issued by CMO said.

Conwoman, aide held in ₹25 lakh land fraud

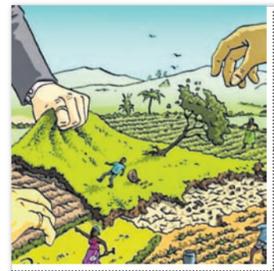
POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police has arrested a woman and her associate who were trying to sell a land impersonating the bona fide owner and using forged documents in the City. The accused were identified as Sabita Das of Rahama in Jagatsinghpur district and Aditya Sahoo of Manjaripada in Athargarh area of Cuttack.

The accused duo was held on the basis of a complaint filed by the victim, Swosti Ranjan Pani, of Sailashree Vihar area here. A case (8/23) has been registered in this regard with the EOW under Sections 419, 420, 467, 468, 471 and 120-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) March 3, 2023.

Pani in his complaint alleged that the duo contacted him in 2021 and persuaded him to buy a piece of land measuring around 4 acres located at Bacchapur in Baranga area of Cuttack. The land which comprises five large plots is owned by one Rangalata Swain, 75-year-old lady of the same village.

They asked Pani to pay Rs 25 lakh as token money for buying the land which was valued at Rs 2 crore. Following the receipt of the money, the accused went incommunicado by switching off their phones.



Victim Swosti Ranjan Pani of Sailashree Vihar area alleged that Sabita Das of Rahama in Jagatsinghpur district and Aditya Sahoo of Manjaripada in Athargarh duped him by impersonating the original land owner in City

The EOW came to know during the course of investigation that the fraudsters had prepared forged Aadhaar, PAN and residential certificate in the name of Rangalata, the land owner

THEY HAD AFFIXED THE PHOTO OF THE ACCUSED SABITA IN PLACE OF RANGALATA TO SELL THE SAID LAND ILLEGALLY

A dejected Pani, when enquired about the said land, found that he was defrauded by the accused impersonating Rangalata.

The EOW came to know during the course of investigation that the fraudsters had prepared forged Aadhaar, PAN and residential certificate in the name of Rangalata. They had affixed the photo of the accused Sabita in place of the septuagenarian to sell the said land illegally.

Accused Sabita also opened an account impersonating Rangalata with a private bank by using the forged documents as KYC. They even tried to avail a loan from the same bank by mortgaging the land with fake patta, but could not succeed.

Later, they executed an agreement with one Sriprati Badajena and took Rs 20 lakh as advance to sell the land to him. Meanwhile, they contacted Pani and duped him of Rs 25 lakh too.

"The imposter Sabita Das with the help of the forged KYC has opened another bank account with PNB in the name of Rangalata Swain and purchased some electronic items like LED TV, fridge and washing machine etc. in the name of Rangalata by using that account," said an EOW official.

The EOW urged the victims defrauded or approached either by Aditya or by Sabita to contact through toll-free number-18003457103.

State's own tax revenue collection up by 15.31%

PNN/ AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Revenue generation from own tax sources in the state has increased by 15.31 per cent with a total collection of around Rs 40,876 crore by the end of February 2023.

This was revealed during all Secretaries meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Pradeep Jena here Saturday.

However, the revenue generation from non-tax sources grew negatively by around 0.69 per cent by end of February 2023 in comparison to the corresponding period of the last year with a total collection of around Rs 78,916 crore.

In real terms, the total revenue has touched Rs 1,29,037 crore by end of this February.

In spite of negative growth in own non-tax revenue and grants from the central government by about 9.5 per cent, total revenue has increased by 0.61 per cent.

Reviewing the fiscal performances of various departments, the Chief Secretary directed all the departments to devise strategies for more budgetary utilisation.

He also emphasised on strengthening the complete digitisation of all government payment and receipt systems.

Bhub-Rangeilunda flight ops kick off



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: In a bid to augment air connectivity from Bhubaneswar to other cities in the state, the state government Sunday started a fully state-sponsored flight operation on Bhubaneswar-Rangeilunda (Berhampur) route.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the flight operation between the Silk City of Berhampur to the Temple City of Bhubaneswar on the occasion of the 107th birth anniversary of legendary leader and former CM Biju Patnaik. This will reduce the travel time to one hour.

The flight operation on this route will boost the industry and tourism sector, Patnaik said.

He said there was a long standing demand for flight operations at

India One Air will operate in the Bhubaneswar-Rangeilunda route using a 9-seater aircraft

Rangeilunda and now, the air connectivity will fulfil all the dreams in every respect.

The presence of tourist destinations like Chilika Lake, Tampara Lake, Gopalpur Beach, Rushikulya river, Tara Tarini temple and others will attract many tourists after air connectivity at Rangeilunda.

Earlier, Rangeilunda airstrip was used only for flight operations during the arrival of dignitaries.

India One Air will operate in the Bhubaneswar-Rangeilunda route using a 9-seater aircraft.

The airport at Rangeilunda to connect the Capital city was a much-needed aspiration of local community to accelerate economic activity in the region. Berhampur is considered a commercial hub of Southern Odisha.

Sources at the government said the Chief Minister has always stressed on transforming and developing each corner of Odisha. An airport at Rangeilunda to connect the Capital city was a much-needed aspiration of local community to accelerate economic activity in the region. Berhampur is considered as a commercial hub of Southern Odisha which has seen rapid growth in its population and industry. The flight operation on this route will boost the industry and tourism sector, said the sources.

SNATCHERS' GANG BUSTED; 3 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, March 5: Puri police Sunday claimed to have busted a notorious gang of snatchers with the arrest of three of its members.

Baliapanda police along with a special cell of Puri police arrested Mithun Mohapatra, Bibhuti Bhushan Swain and Sangram Swain, all residents under Chandanpur police limits in Puri, on charges of snatching chains from commuters in areas under Beach and Baliapanda police limits, said SP KV Singh at a presser.

Singh said they have also arrested Rabi Narayan Sahu, a resident of Medical Square under Kumbharpara police limits, for purchasing the booty from the trio.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Politics heats up over CM's W Odisha visit

BJP leaders claimed that the state govt, despite building the expressway "with allocations made under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund," did not invite any central leaders for the event

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Sunday inaugurated the Biju Expressway and the Biju Economic Corridor during his visit to the western districts of the state, besides attending a slew of programmes in the region.

Patnaik also held road shows in Kalahandi and Bargarh districts, the two BJP strongholds.

The CM's show in the saffron corridor sparked strong reactions from BJP leaders who termed the visit to as a 'political gimmick' ahead of the 2024 elections to Lok Sabha and Odisha Assembly.

The saffron party leaders claimed that the state government, despite building the expressway "with allocations made under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund," did not invite any central leaders for the event.

Kalahandi BJP MP Basant Panda

termed Patnaik's visit to three western Odisha districts as nothing short of a 'show-off'.

"The CM's tour to this region is an attempt to clean his image after the brutal murder of ex-health minister Naba Das. The Biju Expressway was constructed with the help of money allocated under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund. However, not even a single minister from the Centre was invited to the inauguration. People of Kalahandi and western Odisha will rightfully show him his proper place," Panda claimed.

Similarly, Congress Legislature Party leader Narasingha Mishra, who hails from Bolangir district in western Odisha, criticised the Chief Minister "for not fulfilling some of the promises" he made to people.

"What happened to the CM's promise of providing irrigation facilities to 30 per cent of agricultural land? Where is the second agriculture university in western region, as he had assured?" Mishra maintained.

Former MLA and BJP leader Pradip Purohit also slammed Patnaik "for not giving additional Rs 100 subsidy on every quintal of paddy being procured in government marketplaces."

"The CM had made the announcement in 2016, but the farmers are yet to get the additional subsidy as promised by the chief minister," he added.

BJP OBSERVES 'VRASTACHAR DIWAS'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 5: BJP activists across Odisha Sunday observed 'Vrastachar Diwas' (corruption day) protesting "rampant corruption in panchayats" even as the state government celebrated it as Panchayati Raj Day marking the birth anniversary of legendary leader Biju Patnaik after whom the ruling BJD is named.

Holding placards and wearing black badges, the saffron brigade demonstrated in all blocks of the state.

Demonstrators alleged corruption in the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, MGNREGS and other schemes.

BJP state unit president Samir Mohanty claimed, "It is funny to celebrate Panchayati Raj Day where corruption at its zenith."

Because of corruption, many poor people are denied benefits from different schemes.

Ist wave Cov infected were less likely to get Omicron

Adults infected with coronavirus in the first wave (March-September 2020) were 40 per cent less likely to become infected during the first six months of Omicron wave (December 2021 to May 2022), a new study has claimed.

Age was also a factor and older adults were less likely to be infected during the omicron wave

(dominated by BA.1 and BA.2 sub-lineages) compared to younger adults, according to the study led by Dr Allison McGeer, Sinai Health System, University of Toronto, Canada, and colleagues.

In addition, vaccination, as expected, also offered substantial protection on top of natural immunity. "Infection with the original first-wave SARS-CoV-2 virus

during March to September 2020 was associated with a 40 per cent reduction in the risk of infection during the Omicron BA.1/BA.2 period from December 2021-May 2022," said the researchers.

Covid-19 vaccination conferred additional protection, and our study "showed younger individuals to be more at risk of infection by Omicron than older age groups."

Compared with adults aged 18-49 years, those aged 50-64 years were 36 per cent less likely to be infected, and those aged 65 years and older 66 per cent less likely.

Multivariable modelling was used to estimate the risk ratio of infection comparing those with and without early SARS-CoV-2 infections, number of vaccine doses received, and time from most recent dose.

Respite likely as IMD predicts light shower



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Amidst the surging temperature, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday delivered the people of Odisha some refreshing news, that some places of the state are likely to experience light rain for three days from Tuesday.

One or two places in Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Sambalpur and Bargarh are likely to experience light to moderate rain Tuesday

Similarly, other places like Balasore, Chandbali, Cuttack, Angul, Sundargarh, Hirkud, Bolangir, Titlagarh, Malkangiri, Nayagarh, Dhenkanal and Jagatsinghpur recorded maximum temperatures of 37°C or above on the day.

According to the MeT office, one or two places in Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Sambalpur and Bargarh are likely to experience light to moderate rain or thundershower Tuesday. Similarly Wednesday there is likely to be light rain at some places in Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jharsuguda, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Nuapada, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Angul, Subarnapur and Boudh.

Thursday, light to moderate rain or thundershower is likely at one or two places in Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Deogarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Bargarh.

Otherwise, day temperature will continue to remain 2°C-3°C above normal for the next four to five days, the MeT office said. The day temperature (maximum temperature) in Bhubaneswar will hover around 38°C during the next six days.

Continued from P1

9 lakh unemployed...

Unlike states like Gujarat, youths in Odisha prefer to do jobs rather than business after their studies, which is why the demand for jobs in Odisha is much higher than many other states.

According to government job aspirants, the exact unemployment figure will be much more than the 9 lakh youths registered in the employment exchanges.

"Many like me have not registered with employment exchanges but are trying to get a government job. So, the exact unemployment figure must be higher," said Satya Mohapatra, a jobseeker.

Though the private sector is also growing nowadays in Odisha, but due to the government's apathy the local youths are ignored, he said. Unemployment is there in Odisha, but no political party is raising it in a big way either inside or outside the Assembly, said a political observer.

The principal Opposition BJP has not raised the issue because it may boomerang on them as the Central government has failed to fulfil its promise of employment. The Congress has also failed to make it an issue politically, he said.

Use new tech to probe cybercrime: DGP Bansal

Twin city police commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi advises the cops to perform their duty with probity, without any fear and pressure

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: In a first, the Commissionerate Police has organised a two-day conference of officers of twin city police at KIIT Auditorium in City. Director General of Police Sunil Kumar Bansal along with twin city police commissioner Saumendra Priyadarshi joined as chief guest for inauguration of the event Sunday.

In his address, Bansal told the participating officers that cyber-crime has emerged as one of the biggest challenge for policing in the state while advising them to investigate related offences with new advanced technology and scientific tools.

The DGP urged the participants to learn from interactions with the experts of all the fields during this 2-day programme. He also

asked the officers to apprise the experts of problems they have been facing on field while performing duty and take advantage of their suggestions and advices.

"There is no doubt that you are going to benefit from and gain advantage by participating in the conference," Bansal told the gathering.

The participants discussed how the officers can discharge their duty towards the society sans any pressure. Bansal also emphasised the role of sub-inspectors at the police stations advising them to be more people friendly.

The twin city police commissioner advised the cops to do their work with probity, without any fear and pressure.

Additional CP Umashankar Dash and DCP Prateek Singh also addressed the gathering during the 2-day long Commissionerate Officers' Conference-2023.



DGP Sunil Kumar Bansal lighting the inaugural lamp for the conference of twin city police officers

Biju's statue unveiled at KISS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: In a fitting tribute to Biju Patnaik, founder of KIIT and KISS Achyuta Samanta unveiled the statue of the legendary leader at KISS campus to mark his 107th birth anniversary Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, Samanta paid his deepest respect to the towering personality who is widely admired as the architect of modern Odisha and was known for his vision and versatility.

"Today the entire state is celebrating the late leader's birth anniversary. His contribution to the development of Odisha is immense. We are paying our respect to his life



and work with the unveiling of this statue," Samanta said.

He also said that Biju Patnaik cherished the idea of being able to empower women and tribals by offering them education here in Bhubaneswar. "We have fulfilled



Agiculture, Fisheries and Animal Resources Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena, Cuttack Collector Bhabani Shankar Chayani and Cuttack-Barabati MLA Mohammed Moqim among other dignitaries attended the inaugural event of Entrepreneurs' Week 2023 and MSME Exhibition at the collectorate conference hall in Cuttack, Sunday

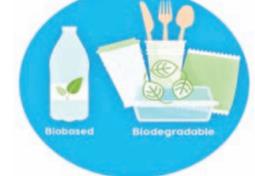
Bioplastics a solution to plastic menace: Experts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Keeping environmental pollution and the demand of plastics in view, it is imperative to accelerate production and use of bioplastics, opined experts at a seminar organised here Sunday by the Orissa Environmental Society (OES) on 'Green Composites - Solution to Plastic Menace'.

Since synthetic plastics are derived from fossil fuels such as crude oil, natural gas or coal, their production and degradation release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane, which contribute to global-warming. Bioplastics have opened up new possibilities as an alternative to synthetic plastics.

These bio-based plastics come from renewable materials, which are primarily plant-based, such as vegetable fats and oils; starches such as corn, wheat and soybean, straw, and wood waste. As these are biodegradable, they will get absorbed in soil after decomposi-



tion by microorganisms.

Joining the programme as the chief speaker, Utkal University department of botany head Chinmay Pradhan highlighted the detrimental impacts of widely used synthetic plastics. He explained how plant-based green composites are being used to manufacture bioplastics while also narrating the manufacturing process based on his research work on cellulose fibers made from dried fruits of Luffa.

Pradhan pointed out that the packaging of several types of goods such as industrial products, agricultural and food products, catering, personal care, pharmaceuticals and medical devices can now be made from bioplastics.

Bio-based plastics, which come from renewable materials are biodegradable, making them suitable for absorption in soil after decomposition by microorganisms

Former principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) Bijay Ketan Patnaik said that more research should be conducted to prepare bioplastics from various natural sources and additional awareness should be created among people to prevent the misuse of plastics.

Delivering the welcome address, OES secretary Jayakrushna Panigrahi expressed that since scientific evidences have revealed the destructive effects of plastic, it is imperative to change our mindset to bring it under control and prioritise the use of bioplastics prepared from plant sources.

Kalinga Biraangana Samman conferred on women activists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 5: Seva Prayas Foundation (SPF) organised its 6th Women's Car Rally and 10th Kalinga Biraangana Samman here Sunday, as a prelude to the International Women's Day.

The event was inaugurated at Aditya Mahindra Motors in the presence of guests, renowned stars and personalities, volunteers of SPF and 100 women participants. The decoration of the cars participating in the rally was based on unique themes like 'Embrace Equity', 'Digital All', 'Stop Acid Violence'.

Speaking to the media, SPF founder Linkan Subudhi said, "We celebrated the role of women's empowerment in technology. The jury judged the theme-based cars on various criteria and following which the rally was flagged off. The journey ended at the Royal Palm Resort at Satasankha in Puri after having covered a distance of 45kms." In the closing ceremony the 10th Kalinga Biraangana Samman was presented to women from different fields in seven categories. The title award was given to Aparna Nayak, a revolutionary activist, who has devoted her entire life to the Liquor free Odisha campaign.



Bhubaneswar (Central) MLA Ananta Narayan Jena along with BMC corporators distributed fruits to children at Bhima Bhoi School for the Blind in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

WHAT EXPLAINS THE FOREIGN ACCENT SYNDROME?

An American man developed an Irish accent following treatment for metastatic prostate cancer. The man was in his 50s and had never been to Ireland.

The accent was described as "uncontrolled", meaning the man couldn't stop talking with an Irish brogue, even if he tried. He continued speaking this way until his death.

This is the first time a person has developed "foreign accent syndrome" linked to a prostate cancer diagnosis. And it is only the third case of foreign accent syndrome linked to cancer - the others were breast cancer and brain cancer.

Foreign accent syndrome usually happens as a result of brain damage, such as from a stroke. Stroke can cause different types of speech and language disorders, but foreign accent syndrome is one of the more unusual ones.

Other causes of the syndrome are

changes to the structure of the brain, such as cancer tumours, encephalitis (brain swelling), multiple sclerosis and neurodegenerative disorders such as dementia.

The condition was first described by Pierre Marie, a French neurologist, in 1907.

Marie described the case of a man who originally spoke French with a Parisian accent, but after a stroke, he started speaking with a regional French accent from the area of Strasbourg in France.

To date, around 200 cases of foreign accent syndrome have been reported in clinical studies, making it quite a rare speech disorder.

Perhaps the best-known case is when George Michael briefly spoke with a West Country accent when he came out of a coma following a bout of pneumonia in 2011. The singer is from North London.

The condition can be distressing for patients because they lose an important personality characteris-



tic that is expressed by their accent.

The impact of this illness was reported in 1947 by the Norwegian neurologist Monrad-Krohn: he described a Norwegian lady who had suffered a serious head injury in a bombing raid during the second world war. As a result of this damage, she spoke Norwegian with a German foreign accent, and this was quite problematic in postwar Norway

She was often refused service in shops because people thought she was German. Being identified as a foreigner all the time and being questioned about it can be very distressing.

Apart from damage to the central nervous system, foreign accent syndrome can also be caused by psychological factors such as extreme stress.

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Apart from damage to the central nervous system, foreign accent syndrome can also be caused by psychological factors such as extreme stress

chogenic foreign accent syndrome" as a separate type of foreign accent syndrome. In 2005, researchers were contacted by a native Dutch speaker who had a heavy and persistent French accent after suffering intense stress as a result of almost being hit by a car. Detailed neurological investi-

gations did not reveal any brain abnormalities, but psychological tests identified important psychological issues. She only fully returned to her original Dutch accent after ten years. Another version of this condition is "mixed foreign accent syndrome". These patients first develop a foreign accent because of brain damage and then try to change their word use to create a more convincing "foreign" personality.

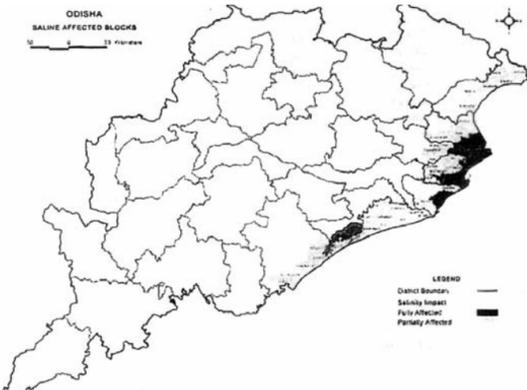
This was noticed by researchers at the University of Central Florida who saw an American patient who developed a British accent following a stroke and who started using British English words like lift (instead of elevator) and mum (instead of mom).

Full recovery from the accent change is difficult and often requires intensive speech therapy for a long time. But there have been cases of fairly quick recovery. (THE CONVERSATION)

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Groundwater in 42 blocks of 7 coastal districts saline

Large tracts of land in the coastal districts of Jajpur, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Ganjam have saline groundwater



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 5: Salinisation of groundwater in seven coastal districts has posed serious health hazards and sparked concern among the residents, a report said Sunday.

The directorate of groundwater development conducted a survey on the salinity in the coastal districts from 1995 to 2001. The survey report was finally published in 2001 and later, a special survey was undertaken in Binjharpur block of Jajpur district.

The final survey report pointed out that groundwater in six coastal blocks is completely saline while in 36 other coastal blocks it is partially saline.

According to the report, Chandbali block in Bhadrak district has the largest area of 62,044 hectare where groundwater is of very low quality. Since then, 22 years have passed already but the state government is yet to resolve the problem. As a result, people in the concerned areas are still struggling

to get safe water for drinking and irrigation needs.

According to a report available from the Water Resources department, groundwater in Bahanaga, Balasore, Baliapal, Basta, Bhograi, and Remuna blocks of Balasore district are partially saline.

Similarly, groundwater in Chandbali, Basudevpur, Dhamnagar, Tihidi blocks in Bhadrak district; Chhatrapur, Chikiti, Ganjam, Khallikote, Rangeilunda blocks in Ganjam district; Erasama, Balikuda, Kujang, Naugaon blocks in Jagatsinghpur district; Bari, Binjharpur, Dasarathpur blocks in Jajpur district; Mahakalapara, Marshaghai, Rajkanika and Rajnagar blocks in Kendrapara district has been identified as fully saline.

Groundwater in Aul, Derabish, Garadpur, Kendrapara and Pattamundai blocks of Kendrapara district has been identified as partially saline. On the other hand, Astaranga, Brahmagiri, Delang, Gop, Kakatpur, Kanas,

Krushnaprasad, Nimapara, Pipli, Puri and Satyabadi blocks of Puri district have partially saline groundwater.

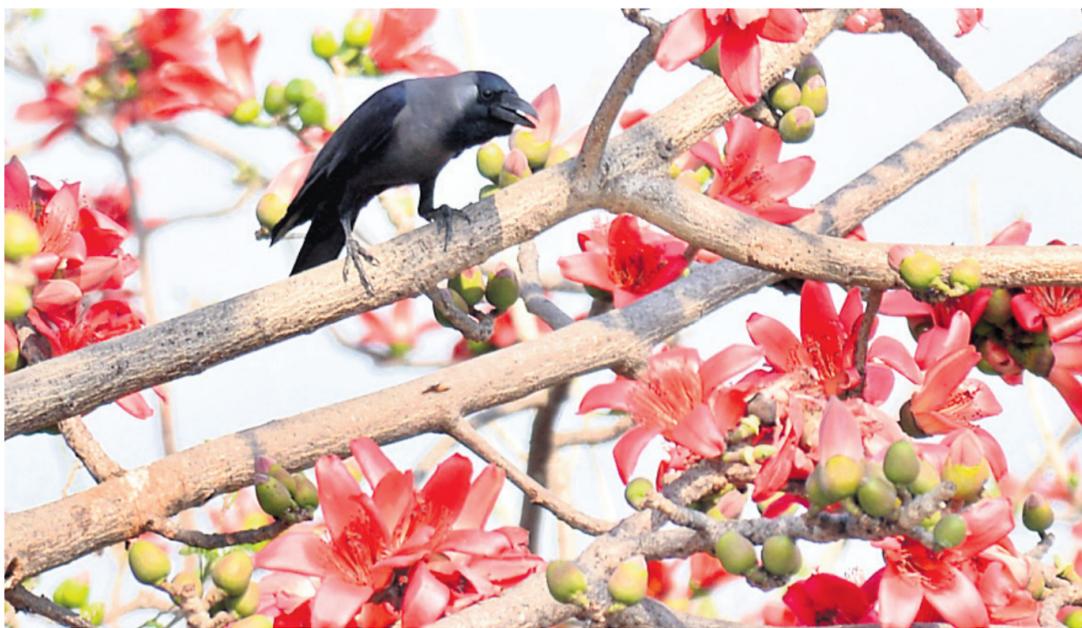
People in Brahmani, Birupa and Genguti delta areas under Bari block of Jajpur district are suffering a lot as the groundwater is saline. Locals said if the ground is dug even a little in these areas, saline water comes out.

In 4,209 hectare of land in Ratnagiri, Mandari and Amathpur and Sherpur panchayats groundwater is fit for neither consumption nor irrigation in the farmlands. As a result, over 40,000 villagers struggle to get even a drop of fresh water.

Similarly, groundwater on 6,458 hectare of land in Binjharpur and 8,700 hectare of land in Dasarathpur blocks has become salinised. The state Water Resources department and rural water supply and sanitation division (RWSS) have made several promises to resolve the problems but to no avail.

Land acquisition has proved to be a hurdle in resolving the saline water problem in Bari block of Jajpur district while a proposal has been mooted to supply water through underground pipelines (UGPL). The Water Resources department and RWSS have claimed to resolve the problem in other areas through scientific methods.

According to a letter by Subrat Kumar Panda, additional secretary, Water Resources department, plans are afoot to reduce the saline level in Choudhiriyagad, Tikiri, Kushabhadra and Baliguali areas through construction of in-stream storage structure while groundwater recharge shafts are being constructed at Baliapal, Bhograi, Dhamnagar, Naugaon, Dasarathpur, Binjharpur, Aul, Garadpur, Kendrapara, Pattamundai and Kakatpur blocks. Moreover, two schemes - 'Chhata' and 'Arua' - have been sanctioned to increase the groundwater level.



IN FULL BLOOM: Gulmohar flowers bloom with the onset of spring as a crow perches on a branch in Sambalpur

OP PHOTO

Ganjam remembers Biju Babu's entry into politics

Biju Patnaik's native village was Nuagaon near Bhanjanagar in Ganjam. His father late Lakshmi Narayan Patnaik was born in this village for which he chose Ganjam district to start his political career

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 5: As Odisha celebrated its legendary former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik's birth anniversary Sunday, Ganjam district, where he first stepped into electoral politics, remembers the multi-hyphenate.

Biju Babu was twice elected as an MLA of Congress party from Ganjam district. In post independence era, he was elected as an MLA from Jagannathprasad Assembly segment in 1951-52 general elections and later from Sorada Assembly segment in 1957 elections as a Congress candidate.

Later, he shifted base and was elected as an MLA from Choudwar Assembly segment as a Congress

candidate in 1961-62 elections and became the Chief Minister of Odisha for the first time.

However, his stint in power was cut short as he left his post after joining the Kamaraj plan of Indian National Congress. Late Biren Mitra became the next Chief Minister of Odisha after Biju Patnaik. Senior citizens in Ganjam district's Sorada and Jagannathprasad areas remembered him on his anniversary.

Biju Patnaik's native village was Nuagaon near Bhanjanagar in Ganjam district. His father late Lakshmi Narayan Patnaik was born in this village for which he chose Ganjam district to start his political career. The Communist Party and the Ganatantra Parishad



were the main opposition parties in Ganjam district with which the Congress had to lock horns with. He won from the Aska Lok Sabha segment on a Janata Dal ticket in 1996 election. He, however, passed away in 1997, a year after winning from Aska.

The Aska Lok Sabha seat be-

came vacant following Biju Patnaik's death. The bypoll to Aska Lok Sabha seat was held in 1997 in which his son Naveen Patnaik contesting from Janata Dal was elected to Lok Sabha on a huge margin of votes and started his political career.

After the by-election, Biju Babu's son Naveen was elected to Lok Sabha in 1998 and 1999 from Biju Janata Dal and twice became a Union minister.

In 2000 Assembly elections, Naveen resigned from his MP post and was elected as an MLA from Hinjilicut Assembly segment. He went on winning from this Assembly segment for the fifth time in a row and became the Chief Minister of Odisha for five times consecutively. As a result, he has become a much talked about personality in national politics scaling newer heights with each passing day taking forward his father's illustrious legacy.

Man hacks elderly mother to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

Binjharpur, March 5: A man hacked his elderly mother to death with a billhook over alleged family dispute at Bindhani Sahi under Binjharpur police station limits of Jajpur district, late Saturday night. The accused was identified as Gopal Ojha, alias Kalia, 40, son of Sukadev Ojha at Bindhani Sahi behind the Central Bank in Binjharpur market. The deceased was identified as Premalata Ojha, 60.

On being informed, police reached the spot and launched an investigation. Police sent the body for post-mortem to the district headquarters hospital in Jajpur and nabbed the accused from Barpada area while he was trying to escape and brought him to police station for interrogation.

Police said Gopal killed his mother over family dispute late Saturday night. His father, who was sleeping in the house, woke up and screamed for help following which he ran away from the scene. Villagers rushed to his house and searched for Gopal but failed to trace him. It is suspected that Gopal might have hacked his mother to death due to extreme anger over family issues for which he could not get married.

Farmers shy away from sunflower cultivation

Lack of patronage, training turns farmers away from sunflower cultivation in Kendrapara

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 5: Despite huge potential and high market demand for sunflower, Kendrapara district is lagging behind in cultivation of the rewarding oilseed crop due to lack of patronage and necessary training by the government.

A women self-help group (SHG) at Charipokharia village under Kollipur panchayat of Rajkanika block has done sunflower cultivation on seven acre of land for the second year in a row.

The experience they gained in the first year prepared them to carry out the cultivation in the subsequent year, while the oil produced by them is in high demand among the consumers.

However, the cultivation of the rabi crop has failed to get a foothold in the district. This is because the district's farmers are not evincing interest to take up the crop due to lack of patronage and necessary training from the state government.

The local intelligentsia said that if the farmers were encouraged to take up sunflower cultivation in a planned manner it might lead to establishment of small industries and strengthen the economy of the district in turn.



FILE PHOTO

A local intelligentsia Ashis Kumar Senapati said that edible oil prices are on the rise in the past few months along with rising fuel prices. He said that India is laying stress on import of palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia after a halt in import of sunflower oil from Ukraine and Russia due to war.

However, palm oil import has its own limitations. While the Malaysia government has increased the price of palm oil, Indonesia has imposed restrictions on its imports.

Sensing the inherent problems in imports, the then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had called for revolution in food crop sector, as a result of which our country is now leading in wheat exports.

Sunflower cultivation needs to be encouraged with state support to tide over the crisis in oil deficit.

The soil and climate of Kendrapara district are conducive for sunflower cultivation but lack of necessary training and government patronage hinders its cultivation.

A farmer Pabitra Kap of Garadpur panchayat said that sunflower cultivation was undertaken on 30 hectare of land in four panchayats of Garadpur block under Rashtriya Krushi Vikash Yojana in 2015. The farmers had then reaped a good harvest but lack of marketing facilities disappointed the farmers a lot.

A farmer leader Rashmiranjan Choudhury said the district ad-

ministration claims to be spending the lion's share of its annual budget for development of agriculture but it is not seen in reality.

The district can become an example in sunflower cultivation if the administration could make proper management of the water flowing in the district's water bodies.

Over 40,000 hectare of land is suitable for sunflower cultivation as oil can be extracted from 55 per cent from the seeds grown here. This will lead to a growth of small and micro industries for extraction of the oil. The Agriculture department, Horticulture department, Krushi Vigyan Kendra, local political representatives, administrators, voluntary outfits, pani panchayat and farmers' club should work in coordination to make sunflower farming a success.

When contacted, Debas Das, deputy director of Horticulture department and KVK chief scientist Suryanarayan Mishra said that the state government has floated various schemes for sunflower cultivation. Plans are afoot to provide training through ATMA and 118 godowns have been constructed for storage of the harvest which will help the farmers reap profit this year.

Berhampur ITI inaugurates Biju Patnaik's scrap-made sculpture

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 5: Students of ITI Berhampur have developed a sculpture of Biju Babu using fan bearings, cycle chain, nuts and bolts to give an innovative tribute to Biju Patnaik on his 107th birth anniversary, Sunday.

In continuation of their efforts on 'Waste to wealth', ITI students have earlier developed sculptures of Netaji Subhas Bose and Mahatma Gandhi. However, this sculpture is the tallest one among those.



It is the largest sculpture of Biju Babu in the country made out of scraps, said the principal of ITI Berhampur Rajat Kumar Panigrahi. 100 students from Fitter, Painter departments worked for 12 days to make this unique sculpture.

Inauguration of the Biju Patnaik statue was done at ITI Berhampur in presence of Berhampur MP and MLA, Aska MP, Labour Minister Srikanta Sahu, CM's political secretary

Gopabandhu Dash, ex-BJD MLA Ramesh Chandra Chyau Patnaik and Subash Maharana.

Ex-higher education director felicitated

Basudevpur: State Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Pramila Mallik inaugurated the block's cultural festival Basudevpur Mahotsav titled 'Basudevayan' here in Bhadrak district, Sunday. Inaugurating the festival, the minister said that Basudevpur is a land of valour, literature and storehouse of culture and heritage. Prof Nihar Ranjan Patnaik former director, Higher Education, Odisha, being the worthy son of the soil of Basudevpur, was felicitated by Mallik in the presence of chief speaker Tushar Kanti Behera, state minister of Home, Sports & Youth Services and guests of honour Bhadrak MP Manjulata Mandal, Rajya Sabha Member Muna Khan; Bishnubrata Routray, MLA of Basudevpur and Nibedita Behera, chairperson of Basudevpur Municipality on the inaugural day of the first Basudevpur Mahotsav. Various dignitaries and celebrities, famous artists, singers, dancers writers and the like participated in the festival.



MAKING ITS WAY: A vendor put up 'Made in China' masks for sale ahead of Holi at Chhend in Rourkela, Sunday despite an increasing call from people to ban Chinese products

OP PHOTO

Over 6.37 lakh Olive Ridley turtles lay eggs on Rushikulya river mouth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 5: The Rushikulya river mouth in Ganjam district has emerged as a major rookery for the endangered Olive Ridley turtles, as a record number of over 6.37 lakh turtles laid eggs on the beach during the eight day duration of mass nesting, official sources said.

Mass nesting of the turtles started on a 3-km long beach from Podampeta to Bateswar area near the river mouth from February 23 and continued till Thursday. During the period as many as 6,37,008 turtles have laid eggs, which is 86,000 more than the previous year, said Sunny Khokkar, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Berhampur.

This time all the previous records in the rookery broke in the nesting, the DFO claimed.



Last year 5,50,317 turtles had laid eggs, while in 2018 over 4.82 lakh had laid eggs in the rookery, sources said.

As this time, the mass nesting took place over a month ahead, the experts expect more hatchlings

to emerge. "We expect the hatchlings will also take place early this time as the mass nesting took place early this time," said the DFO.

Khokkar said they have taken all necessary measures to protect the eggs in the rookery. Adequate num-

ber of personnel, including local people, has been engaged to keep watch on the eggs from predators. As the female turtles go back to the sea after laying eggs, predators like jackals, wild dogs, wild boars and birds will be on the prowl to eat the eggs, he said.

Moreover, as a measure to protect the eggs from the predators, the authorities have set up fencing around the area. Before the emergence of the hatchlings, the forest officials would cover the entire area with mosquito nets to protect them from birds, sources said.

As the mother turtles did not wait to see the baby turtles emerging from the sand pits about 45 to 50 days after the nesting, we are taking care of the eggs and baby turtles in the absence of their mothers till they crawl into the sea, said the DFO.

FOCUS DEVELOPMENT

HOW SINGAPORE IMPRESSES



What economists do not always recognise is that economic performance depends on many factors beyond economics, such as cultural norms, social cohesion, and the level of public trust. Unlike other countries that experienced authoritarianism, Singapore's society has high trust and is not divided or polarised

What drove Singapore's economic miracle? Some right-wing groups claim its success proves that authoritarianism works. But correlation, as we know, does not imply causation. The British economist David Hendry once observed that, according to this logic, one could argue that inflation in the United Kingdom was "caused" by an outbreak of E. coli in Scotland. In reality, Singapore's rapid growth has more to do with its high savings and investment rates, first-rate education system, and intelligent policymaking. The intelligent policymaking can come from an authoritarian leader, but there is no causal link there. In fact, more often than not, authoritarianism is a step toward cronyism and a banana republic. What economists do not always recognise is that economic performance depends on many factors

beyond economics, such as cultural norms, social cohesion, and the level of public trust. Unlike other countries that experienced authoritarianism, Singapore's society has high trust and is not divided or polarised. In a speech in 2017, then-Deputy Prime Minister (and current Senior Minister) Tharman Shanmugaratnam argued that Singapore's "identity is our brand of multiculturalism. It has made us a nation-state where citizens of all faiths and cultures accept each other as equals." On a recent short visit to the island, I managed, between talks and meetings with students and professors, to roam different parts of the city and witness its salad-bowl multiculturalism for myself. Walking down Haji Lane or Arab Street, with the beautiful Sultan Mosque glowing in the background, one could easily imagine being in

Istanbul or Saudi Arabia. And Chinatown, with its constant hum of conversation, calls to mind the alleyways of Shanghai or Beijing. Little India was particularly fascinating. I heard Tamil all around, but the prevailing accent was a little different from what one would hear in Tamil Nadu, India. There were women in sarees, with bindis marking their foreheads in a slightly different way from how it is done in India. But when talking to people on the street, shopkeepers, and taxi drivers, it became clear that even though each group has retained its cultural roots, they all consider themselves Singaporeans first and foremost. Singapore's authoritarian system of government may not be the reason for its success, but it is an essential part of the city-state's character. A law-abiding society is one where pedestrians wait for the signal before crossing the street, even when there is no car in sight. While this is better than a society in which it is customary to disregard the law, a system in which people obey the spirit of the law rather than the fine print is more efficient. In New York or London, for example, people often cross the street without waiting for the signal to turn green, using their judgment to avoid obstructing traffic. Singapore, on the other hand, is a fine-print-abiding society. I spent much of my time there at crosswalks, needlessly waiting to be given the right signal.

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

PROJECT SYNDICATE



Kaushik Basu

SINGAPORE'S RAPID GROWTH HAS MORE TO DO WITH ITS HIGH SAVINGS AND INVESTMENT RATES, FIRST-RATE EDUCATION SYSTEM, AND INTELLIGENT POLICYMAKING

For economists, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists, Singapore represents a veritable laboratory of conundrums waiting to be analysed.

In the pre-colonial era, this island of marsh and swamps served as a trading settlement, thanks to its relative proximity to the Malacca Strait. Traders from India and China passed through, with some deciding to stay and put down roots. Later, traders from the Netherlands and Portugal arrived. And then, the British came and brought labourers from India, Sri Lanka, and East Asia.

The mystique of Singapore extends even to its name. When the Buddhist prince Sang Nila Utama arrived in the late thirteenth century and founded a kingdom, he claimed to have seen a lion – he also claimed to be a descendant of Alexander the Great – and he named his domain Singapura, which in Sanskrit means "lion city." Given that lions are not native to the region, the origin of the lion that Utama claimed to have seen remained a mystery until scholars realised that what he had seen was probably a civet, also known as musang, a distant cousin of the fox.

Singapore as we know it today was born on August 9, 1965, when the Malaysian parliament voted to expel the troublesome island, and an independent city-state was established. With a per capita income of barely \$500, it was abysmally poor, similar to other newly independent, underdeveloped countries across Asia and Africa. Twenty years later, however, this tiny island with no natural resources was already one of the richest countries in Asia. Today its GDP per capita, at just under \$85,000, is higher than that of the United States.

SPECTRUM TECHNOLOGY

A digital revolution for healthcare



Sania Nishtar

AN END-TO-END DIGITAL PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SYSTEM COULD MITIGATE OR EVEN SURMOUNT SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS

The year is 2025. A woman with diabetes living in a rural area, where there is a shortage of healthcare workers, must manage her condition. To whom or what does she turn? Her smartphone. In just two years, the delivery of healthcare – and many other services – could look very different than it does today.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things could enable this woman to access healthcare just by pressing a few buttons. A wearable sticker could use sweat to monitor her blood glucose levels. That data would then be sent by a microchip in her phone to her blockchain-secured electronic health record in the cloud. She could then order her insulin through Amazon, to be delivered to her doorstep by a drone, or request that her local pharmacy 3D print her metformin pills and verify their authenticity via text message.

To screen for diabetic retinopathy, which damages the eye and can cause blindness if untreated, she could also use her smartphone to take her own retinal image, selfie-style. An AI algorithm would analyse it and, if the findings were abnormal, book an appointment with a doctor. It could even order an Uber to take her there, deducting the cost from her mobile wallet. Before the woman even arrived at the office, the doctor could test

the laser therapy on her digital twin to determine which treatment works best.

This may sound like science fiction, but each of these solutions exists in isolation today. And given the likelihood of exponential growth in computing power, associated increases in deep learning and neural networks, and breakthroughs in intelligent machines, robotisation, and 3D printing, as well as wearable technology, these systems will become even more prevalent – and powerful – over time.

If it is technically possible to build an end-to-end digital primary healthcare system tailored to the needs of low-resource settings, why has no one stitched together these components? There is no financial incentive for private companies to link standalone technologies, and no appetite within national healthcare systems, which are often under-funded.

Realising the potential of this digital transformation requires looking outside the health sector – specifically to digital-payment systems, which, given their widespread adoption, could usher in a new age of healthcare delivery. Re-engineering health systems to integrate digital data and technology is no longer merely a job for government ministries. It is increasingly being undertaken by financial institutions, organisations experimenting with new tech-

nologies, and online retailers.

During the three years I served as the chairperson of Ehsaas, Pakistan's largest social safety and poverty alleviation programme, I observed the infrastructure required to facilitate digital payments. Gateways and switches form the backbone of these systems, but so do policies, standards, and regulatory frameworks.

Ehsaas itself is currently in the process of developing a one-of-a-kind digital ecosystem that could serve millions of families. It includes the Ehsaas Saving Wallets initiative, implemented under the "One Woman, One Bank Account" policy, and allows beneficiaries of the Ehsaas Kafaalat programme, which gives monthly cash stipends to the country's poorest women, to withdraw or save their money. The new ecosystem also includes the Ehsaas Roshan Riayat programme, a technology-led effort to disburse subsidies. Using the Roshan app, eligible families receive discounts on select food items at registered kiryanas, or small general stores. When coupled with the right fiscal incentives, these initiatives could increase financial inclusion and accelerate the transition from cash to digital payments.

Even in the remotest parts of the world, fast-food chains and taxi companies harness the power of mobile technologies to deliver goods and services. Theoretically, the same

technological capabilities could form the basis of innovative public-sector digital ecosystems that are transparent, accountable, and responsive. The Ehsaas ecosystem represents one step in the right direction.

An end-to-end digital primary healthcare system could mitigate or even surmount systemic problems such as absenteeism, hemorrhaging supply chains, institutionalised theft, low quality of care and responsiveness, rent-seeking behaviour, informal payments, and structural inefficiencies. The use of blockchain alone – a multipurpose technology – can safeguard security, increase transparency, and potentially prevent fraud and minimise losses in health systems.

COVID-19, the inflation crisis, and the climate catastrophe have underscored the need to reshape public institutions and healthcare delivery. Investing heavily in digitalisation, modernising payment systems, and formulating policy and regulatory frameworks are all crucial to realising a future where a woman with diabetes can treat her condition using a constellation of medical technologies. The technology already exists. The task now is to harness it for all.

The writer is former special assistant on poverty alleviation and social protection to the PM of Pakistan.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

Do not look behind, look always in front, at what you want to do - and you are sure of progressing.

THE MOTHER



Not ECI Alone

The Supreme Court of India needs to be appreciated for its decision which it has served for a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on 2 March 2023. The Apex Court has said that the method of appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners for the Election Commission of India (ECI) will henceforth be done by the President of the Union based on recommendations of a committee that will comprise the Prime Minister (PM), the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and the Leader of Opposition (LoP) as its members. It also elaborated that in case there is no single party capable of taking up the post of Leader of Opposition due to lack of requisite strength in the Lok Sabha, the leader of the largest Opposition party shall be inducted as a member.

This, of course, has been perceived by some interested parties as a judgment that demonstrates judicial overreach. Their argument is that the Courts, which are overburdened with a few million cases pending at various levels of the judiciary for long, should first make all out efforts to sort out their own problems and do their own work efficiently rather than interfere in matters of governance. While this allegation of pending cases cannot be brushed aside, the relevance of transparency in the nomination of Election Commissioners also deserves great attention, especially in present times when the world views India as turning away from its avowed path of democracy as the means of forming governments.

On one hand such people blow the trumpet loud that India is all set to become an internationally recognized economic 'Super Power'. They love praises and acknowledgements from across the world. Getting photographed with foreign dignitaries is a wonderfully pleasant pastime for some leaders in India. However, when the same foreigners point fingers and criticize the dwindling freedom within the country, our leaders are indignant and intolerant. At such times, our 'Super Power' dreams are damned and the 'foreign hand' becomes the enemy within and without.

It is sad but true that most Indian voters believe casting their ballot once every five years is their penultimate contribution towards upholding and safeguarding democracy in the country. The interim five years are time to sit back and praise the government for all the wrong reasons or be negative towards the government for all the wrong reasons again. Those who oppose the government today forget what and how they treated the people of this nation when they were occupying the seats of power. Those who support the government today forget how they bitterly criticized the people in power earlier for sins which are now, again, being committed by their favorite politicians today. One can only laugh seeing retired bureaucrats, judges and people with business interests vomit wise words now but were mute spectators when they were holding the reins of power themselves or, like business folks, got their work done post haste at great costs to the nation earlier but not a whimper was heard from them when it mattered most. Similarly most politicians, when not in power, criticize governmental actions vehemently. Yet when they themselves get to form a government, they tumble into the same trap and repeat the exact same follies albeit in different forms.

It is undoubtedly a sign of great incompetence that the Indian judicial system is slow and it meanders at snail's pace when judgments are to be pronounced. However, it is also a matter to be pondered as to why the whole Indian legal system is so bogged down with these millions of cases. One guess could be that the instruments of civil society do not function as they should. For instance, the Police in this country is not only terribly corrupt but also highly inefficient. Refusal of timely and seemingly honest action on the part of the Police results in petty cases going to Courts. Police, it can be said, deals mostly with criminal activities and is rarely, if ever, observed to be offering justice to the negatively impacted parties. Similarly, Revenue department that deals with land holding matters, Tax and other such departments of the government, both of the Union and the States, that deal with civil matters that touch the life of every single citizen, refuse to function transparently and efficiently, resulting in the Courts getting clogged with cases those that could have been easily dealt with by the concerned government agency. Apart from these reasons, every Indian knows that in any judicial matter in this country, no matter at which Court a case is listed, both sides of the litigation invariably instruct their lawyers to postpone the dates of hearing as long as is possible. It can safely be said that the long pending cases in Courts of India are the gifts of the litigants themselves to the system. Very rarely does a Complainant and more so the Defendant desire immediate justice. Prolonging cases is also in the interest of almost all lawyers. Magistrates and Judges make it easier for the advocates as it suits everyone to delay and drag the litigations seemingly endlessly. That apart any judgment passed hastily, with the ground work prepared by inept investigating agencies and untruths abounding, will be very lopsided. So to expect any judge to pass a judgment quickly, under Indian circumstances, will be equal to expecting immediate injustice to be served.

On the other hand, it is extremely dangerous to compartmentalize the Indian governance system. We have all observed how the Indian Legislatures, Judiciary and Bureaucracy function. With no overlapping and if everyone goes in one singular direction, it becomes difficult to obtain justice from the system. India has seen it in the mid 1970s and is seeing it in current times also. Therefore, not only the Election Commission but other constitutional posts also need to be democratically selected. It is important that posts like the Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), Chief of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and even Governors of the states should all be vetted by a committee which could have a similar composition as suggested by the SC in the matter pertaining to the Election Commission of India. Such a move would greatly strengthen the democratic set up of India.

WISDOM CORNER

- Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster. SUN TZU
- Not until we are lost do we begin to understand ourselves. HENRY DAVID THOREAU
- Being entirely honest with oneself is a good exercise. SIGMUND FREUD

WORDSWORTH

Gibbous

Though other planetary bodies can appear gibbous in our skies, the word is for excellent reasons most closely attached to the moon. It's said to be gibbous when it's more than halfway towards full, when the crescent of its early days has filled out to make a convex shape, and also while it wanes but is still more than half full. The link is so close that it comes as a surprise to find that it has other meanings and that, indeed, its application to the moon is a bit of a Johnny-come-lately among its senses. The origin is Latin gibbus, a hump, and its first meaning in English was of something rounded or protuberant. The medieval Italian surgeon Lanfranc of Milan wrote, in modern English translation, "On one side he is gibbous but on the other side he is flatter." Many of us are that shape, especially us older ones. Gibbous has been used in medicine to describe tumours and other deformities and in biology for bones, fruits, leaves, shells or fungi. Wider still it could be anything convex, including rocks, jars or even habitations – Walter Pater wrote of "the range of old gibbous towns ... expanding their gay quays upon the water-side." However, it's now largely restricted to astronomical bodies. This is a pity, as it's a fine word that deserves to be more used.

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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Future of e-learning

Sir, India, with its population of more than 1.3 billion, is recognised as having a huge potential market for online education. The emergence of e-learning in recent years has drastically changed education, putting us on the verge of an educational revolution. E-learning is now more widely available and efficient at giving students a top-notch education thanks to the quick improvements in technology. A wider spectrum of people can now access education thanks to e-learning, including those who reside in remote locations, have mobility or health challenges, or are unable to attend traditional classroom settings. Using tools like closed captioning, screen readers, and alternative text, online courses are made to be handicap accessible. Both organisations and learners can afford e-learning. As there are no additional costs for travel, lodging, or equipment, online courses are often less expensive than traditional classroom courses. Employing trainers, renting out space, and printing materials can all result in cost savings for organisations. E-learning also has the benefit of being adaptable to the specific demands of each learner. E-learning has the potential to completely transform the Indian educational system, but there are certain major obstacles that must be overcome. Infrastructure, device accessibility, material quality, teacher preparation, language barriers, and cost are all major issues that must be resolved if e-learning is to become more efficient and widely available. Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Brace for heatwaves

Sir, The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast above normal temperature in north-east, eastern and central parts of India this summer. Lack of rains is said to be a precipitating factor for the possible heatwaves between March and May. Wheat cultivating farmers are being advised to irrigate or initiate soil treatment to conserve moisture. Earlier, anything around 40 degree Celsius was considered 'hot'. The new norm in India, in the coming years, may well be 34 degree to 35 degree Celsius especially in selected cities along the coastal areas. Otherwise, a heat wave is that in which an average rise of at least 4.5 degree Celsius in normal temperature is seen. Experts have said that unlike in the past, India is going to witness more frequent and severe heatwaves. People need to remain aware of heat exhaustion, heat cramp and heat stroke – the three common heat conditions. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

national

of the day quote

Everyone who wants democracy to survive and thrive should stand firmly with Kapil Sibal in his new initiative

UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) PRESIDENT

It is shameful that due to the dearth of any issue against the state government, these political parties are stooping too low by indulging in cheap tantrums

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

The Andhra Pradesh government will form a monitoring committee consisting of the Chief Secretary to ensure that investment pledges announced at the Global Investors' Summit translate into real action

YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | ANDHRA CM

SHORT TAKES

Three killed

Ujjain: Three persons were killed and as many injured when their car collided with a truck in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain district on Sunday, police said. The accident occurred near Nipania village on Ujjain-Agra Road, under Ghattiya police station limits, in the afternoon, Ghattiya police station in-charge Vikram Singh Chouhan said. Six employees of a private organisation were travelling to Soyat in a car for a function, when a bus hit their vehicle from behind. The impact caused the car to collide with a truck coming from the opposite direction, he said.

Woman dies, 15 injured

Indore: One woman died and 15 persons were injured after a private passenger bus they were travelling in fell off a culvert in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district on Sunday, police said. The incident occurred near Baigram village in the afternoon, an official said. "The bus coming to Indore from Khandwa fell off a culvert after its driver lost control over it," Simrol police station in-charge Mohan Singh said. A woman passenger sitting in the front seat died on the spot while 15 others were injured, he said.

Sheezan walks out of Thane jail

Thane: Television actor Sheezan Khan, in jail since December 25 last year for allegedly abetting the suicide of co-actor Tunisha Sharma, on Sunday walked out of jail after a court in Vasai in Maharashtra's Palghar district gave him bail. Sharma allegedly committed suicide by hanging herself on December 24, 2022, on the sets of a TV serial near Valiv in Palghar. Khan (28) was arrested the next day for abetment of suicide on a complaint lodged by Sharma's mother.

Rape survivor delivers baby

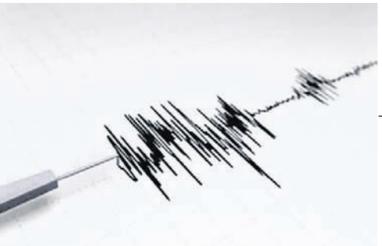
Unnao: A 15-year-old alleged rape survivor has given birth to a baby boy at a government health facility in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district, police said. The hospital confirmed that the mother and the child were both healthy. The girl was admitted to the community health centre on Friday afternoon. The survivor's family members told reporters that a 17-year-old youth living in the vicinity of their locality had raped her about nine months back. "He had threatened her that he will kill her if she revealed about the rape to her family members," they said.



The country should run according to Constitution and not through bulldozers
AKHILESH YADAV | SP CHIEF

QUAKES JOLT UTTARKASHI

A 2.5-magnitude earthquake followed by two consecutive tremors shook Uttarkashi in the early hours of Sunday, a district disaster management official said

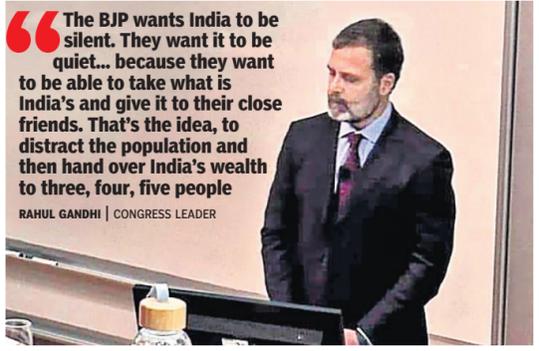


Rahul again targets BJP in UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 5: Stepping up his attack on the BJP government, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has alleged that the structures of Indian democracy are under "brutal attack" and there is a full-scale assault on the institutions of the country. The Opposition leader, who is in London as part of a UK tour, told reporters here that there are conversations ongoing within the Opposition to unite around an alternative vision for the country and act upon an "undercurrent of anger" over pressing issues such as unemployment, price rise, the concentration of wealth and violence against women.

The 52-year-old former Congress president referred to the income tax department's recent survey action against the BBC offices in New Delhi and Mumbai as an example of the "suppression of voice across the country", a motivating factor behind his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' - which he described as an expression of voice against the ruling BJP's attempt to silence the country. "The reason the yatra became necessary is because the structures of our democracy are under



The BJP wants India to be silent. They want it to be quiet... because they want to be able to take what is India's and give it to their close friends. That's the idea, to distract the population and then hand over India's wealth to three, four, five people

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

brutal attack," Rahul told reporters at an India Insights event organised by the Indian Journalists' Association (IJA) on Saturday evening.

"The media, the institutional frameworks, judiciary, Parliament is all under attack and we were finding it very difficult to put the voice of the people through the normal channels," he alleged. "The BBC has found out about it now, but it has been going on in India for the last nine years non-stop. Everybody knows that, journalists are intimidated; they are attacked, and threat-

ened. The journalists who toe the line of the government are rewarded. So, it's part of a pattern and I wouldn't expect anything different. If the BBC stops writing against the government, everything will go back to normal. All the cases will disappear," he noted.

Rahul Gandhi expressed regret that democratic parts of the world, including the US and Europe, have failed to notice that a "large chunk of democracy has come undone". "The BJP wants India to be silent. They want it to be quiet... because they want to be able to take what

is India's and give it to their close friends. That's the idea, to distract the population and then hand over India's wealth to three, four, five people," he said.

Rahul Gandhi's earlier comments at Cambridge University that Indian democracy is under attack and several politicians, including himself, are under surveillance, invited sharp reactions from the BJP that accused him of maligning the country's image on foreign soil after facing successive electoral setbacks.

"We can understand his hatred towards the Prime Minister, but the conspiracy to malign the country on foreign soil with the help of foreign friends raises questions on the agenda of the Congress," Anurag Thakur, the Information and Broadcasting minister, said in Delhi Friday.

Thakur said Gandhi was aware of the electoral rout the Congress was facing in the assembly elections and had resorted to levelling allegations from foreign soil. "Once again, the Congress lost in the elections but their bankruptcy was evident when they lost no opportunity to malign India from foreign soil," Thakur said.

Cops conduct 'search' of Asianet News office



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kozhikode (Kerala), March 5: Days after a group of SFI activists allegedly barged into the Kochi office of Malayalam news channel Asianet News, Kerala police on Sunday carried out a "search" at the Kozhikode office of the media house of police in connection with a case. A senior police officer, who was leading the team that arrived at the Kozhikode office, later said here that the "search" was carried out as part of the investigation in the case. "No documents have been taken," the officer said.

According to news reports, the case registered by police is based on a complaint lodged by a politician alleging that an interview done by the channel of a schoolgirl who was allegedly forced to work as a drug courier was fake news. On March 3, Students' Federation of India (SFI) activists trespassed into the Kochi office of the news channel and intimidated the staff there.

A case was later registered against 30 SFI activists, the students' wing of the ruling CPI(M) in Kerala, on the basis of a complaint lodged by the channel.

Following the police action, Asianet News tweeted: "Days after SFI hooliganism, Kerala Police conducts 'search' at Asianet News Kozhikode office. Regardless, Asianet News continues to report, true to its motto: Straight. Bold. Relentless."

The search was condemned by the Congress and BJP in Kerala which termed it as "a sign of intolerance" and a "fascist approach", respectively. Congress leader V D Satheesan said the police action was "a sign of intolerance against protests, criticism or questioning of those in power" and it has been on a rise in the state. The Leader of Opposition said such actions indicate that there is no difference between the Narendra Modi government at the Centre and the Pinarayi Vijayan regime in Kerala.

Sangma alleges threat; security beefed up



NDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shillong, March 5: Trinamool Congress leader and former Meghalaya Chief Minister claimed that some National People's Party (NPP) supporters have threatened him.

In a letter to Chief Secretary D.P. Wahlang, Sangma said that certain NPP backers had allegedly threatened to set his home on fire as punishment for the ongoing events surrounding the creation of the state's government. "Deliberate incitement to spread hatred and do personal harm upon me being aggressively done. People engaged in the criminal conspiracy are inciting to create communal riots and personal harm to me. Just reported to the CS to take action as per law," he said.

The state government has beefed security outside his home as a result. Sangma received the threats as he held talks with Congress and other regional parties barring the NPP to form the next government in Meghalaya.

According to sources, one social media user on Facebook encouraged people to visit Sangma's home and throw stones while also burning effigies. A few others also wrote in favour of violence. In the 60-member house, the National People's Party (NPP) won 26 seats, while the BJP got two. The United Democratic Party (UDP) got 11 seats, while the Congress and Trinamool Congress each won five, while the rest were won by regional parties and independents.

Swiss envoy summoned over anti-India posters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: India Sunday summoned the Swiss ambassador and lodged a protest over the issue of putting up "unfounded and malicious anti-India" posters in front of the UN building in Geneva, official sources said.

Swiss ambassador to New Delhi Ralf Heckner conveyed to the MEA that he would convey India's concerns to Berne with all the seriousness it deserves, he said.

Several posters alleging harassment of minorities and women were put up at a square outside the UN building in Geneva coinciding with a session of the UN Human Rights Council.

"The embassy has conveyed India's concerns to Berne with all the seriousness it deserves," Heckner said in a brief statement. A purported video of the posters in front of the UN building was also circulating on social media. "The secretary (West), MEA,

today called in the Swiss ambassador and raised the issue of unfounded and malicious anti-India posters in front of the UN building in Geneva," said a source.

"The Swiss Ambassador said that he would convey India's concerns to Berne with all the seriousness it deserves," it said. The envoy said the posters in Geneva are part of the space provided to all, but in no way endorse the claims, nor reflect the position of the Swiss government, the sources added.

Bihar team satisfied with steps for workers

AGENCIES

Coimbatore, March 5: A day after holding talks with Tamil Nadu government authorities over the brewing migrant workers issue in Chennai, the official delegation from Bihar visited knitwear hub Tirupur on Sunday to check on the safety of workers from the northern state after fake videos claiming attacks on the workforce had led to panic among them.

Led by Bihar Rural Development Secretary D Balamurugan, the

TN BJP chief booked

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Police Sunday booked state BJP president K. Annamalai for allegedly inciting violence and promoting enmity between two groups after rumours emanated about the attack on migrant workers from North India in the state. K. Annamalai in a tweet dared the Tamil Nadu Police to touch him within the next 24 hours. The BJP leader said, "You think that you can suppress democracy by filing false cases. I give you 24 hours and dare you touch me."

If a few people behave badly in Bihar, it must not be held out against the entire state. We must apply the same yardstick to Tamil Nadu as well

TEJASHWI YADAV | BIHAR DEPUTY CM

four-member team expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by Tamil Nadu government and the Tirupur district administration to ensure safety and protection of the workers.

They discussed the issue with the officials including District Collector S Vineeth and Police Commissioner Praveen Kumar, representatives of textile industry and contractors who bring in workers from other states, Balamurugan said.

The delegation also interacted with the workers and told them not to believe in rumours and fake videos, after which they regained their confidence, as many of them considered the information coming from them to be true, the senior officer said.

"We are satisfied by the steps taken by Tamil Nadu government and the district administration in ensuring safety of the workers to allay the fears from their minds," he said.



India and Uzbekistan army personnel during a joint military exercise in Pithoragarh

PTI PHOTO

Solar fence along border mitigates human-elephant conflict

A forest official said shrinking elephant habitats was the major cause for the pachyderms straying into outlying human settlements for food, leading to their conflict with humans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagrjuli (Assam), March 5: An 18-km-long solar fence erected along the India-Bhutan border helps mitigate human-elephant conflict, protecting over 10,000 people residing in 11 villages in Assam's Baksa district by keeping away wild pachyderms coming from the Himalayan kingdom.

The barrier, erected on the Indian bank of River Bornadi, which marks the international border, has led to a dip in incidents of wild pachyderms straying into villages and a reduction in deaths due to man-elephant conflict.

"The elephants earlier caused large-scale devastation, destroying our farmlands and food stocks. Around six to seven people used to be trampled to death on average annually by these pachyderms coming from Bhutan in search of food. "We led our lives in fear and spent sleepless nights when these giants visited the villages. People used to stay indoors after dusk fearing an encounter with the pachyderms," Bhim Bahadur Chetri, a resident of Pub Guabari village, said.

It became a matter of grave concern and conservationists, wildlife



experts and administration, after considerable deliberation, decided to install a solar fence that released weak electric shocks upon

contact not leading to the deaths of elephants.

The solar fence was erected by bio-diversity organisation 'Aranyak'

with funding from the Elephant Foundation of India in February 2021. Besides the forest department, which facilitated the entire process, villagers are also stakeholders in the project.

A forest official said shrinking elephant habitats was the major cause for the pachyderms straying into outlying human settlements for food, leading to their conflict with humans.

Senior office-bearer of Aranyak, Anjan Barua, said that villagers earlier used to erect electrical fences to keep away elephants but these posed a grave threat to the lives of not only the pachyderms but also humans and their livestock in the area.

A scientific study was carried out on the movement of elephants before the commencement of the

fencing process, eminent conservation scientist Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar said. A highly intelligent and gentle creature, elephants need a huge area to migrate for food and water, he said.

"After considerable research and study of the area and the problems, we evolved a strategy to mitigate the issue so that both animals and humans could co-exist," he said.

"It was decided that local villagers will be involved. Their participation was overwhelming. They also made financial contributions by constructing concrete posts to ensure the longevity of the fence," Barua pointed out. Solar lights were installed at various vantage locations across the conflict-affected villages to facilitate elephant sighting from a safe distance at night, he added.

Villagers near LoC ecstatic as ceasefire enters 3rd year



India and Pakistan announced implementation of renewed ceasefire along the borders in Jammu and Kashmir February 25, 2021

A ceasefire agreement was initially signed in 2003, but Pakistan frequently violated the agreement with over 5,000 violations reported in 2020 – the highest in a single year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rajouri/Jammu, March 5: Mohammad Yousuf Kohli is constructing a new house for his family of six in a forward village near the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, a dream which he says is fulfilled only because of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan that entered its third year last month.

The border villagers are enjoying peace along the borders by going for normal activities like tending their land and grazing their cattle without the fear of cross-border shelling.

The villagers said they are praying for continuation of the agreement so that the schooling of their children is not affected and benefits of developmental activities reach the last village on the border.

On February 25, 2021, India and Pakistan announced implementation of renewed ceasefire along the borders in Jammu and Kashmir, which came as a major relief to the people living along the LoC and the International Border India and Pakistan had initially signed a

ceasefire agreement in 2003, but Pakistan frequently violated the agreement with over 5,000 violations reported in 2020 – the highest in a single year.

"For the last four years, my family was thinking of constructing a new house but we were not able to do this as ceasefire violation was a regular scene in our village," Kohli's elder son Ibrar Ahmad, a college student, told PTI at the construction site in his Niaka village which is close to the LoC.

He said even repairing houses damaged due to shelling was a distant dream as venturing out of the house was like going into the death trap.

"No mason or labourer used to come for work in our village. But things have changed now and we are living our lives in a calm atmosphere with everyone busy in their normal routine," he said.

Niaka is the last village on the Indian side in Tarkundi sector of Manjakote tehsil and was witness of intense shelling before February 2021. Two women of the village died when a mortar shell from Pakistan hit their houses in the

village in 2017.

Mohammad Nazir (41), another villager, said it was their dream to live a dignified life, where there is no threat of shelling and firing, children attend their school and farmers work in their fields without any threat to their lives.

"In those times, we were not even able to sleep inside our homes," he said.

Nazir said the government needs to focus more on the border villages to undertake developmental activities to ensure basic facilities, including potable water, good roads and electricity.

"The residents of Ratti Mitti, Chiti Bakri, Niaka, Chamba, Panjgrian, Peryali and others are economically weaker and are facing a lack of basic amenities, including good schools and health centres, which are just for the namesake," he said.

Farooq Ahmad, a farmer, said silence of guns on the LoC came as a big relief for them and they are moving around, tending their fields and grazing cattle without any tension.

"The ceasefire should last forever. There is nothing like a peaceful atmosphere," he said.

Mohammad Yousif, a social activist, said things have improved to a major extent due to the ceasefire in the last two years and everyone in the area wants this peace pact to continue.

"Only we know the hardships of cross-border shelling. No outsider can even imagine the life in those nightmare days," he said, recounting the horror when people were forced to spend several days inside their houses due to heavy shelling.

"We have struggled to live and are fortunate enough that no bullet or mortar shell brought our death despite dozens of shells falling very close to our houses," he said, pointing that there are no houses in the village without a splinter mark.



CHAOS OF COLOURS: Devotees play Holi at Sri Dwarkadheesh temple in Mathura, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

UP to get new Vidhan Sabha

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 5: Uttar Pradesh Assembly speaker Satish Mahana has announced that Uttar Pradesh will have a new Vidhan Sabha building in the state capital.

He said he was optimistic that the 18th Assembly, whose term ends in 2027, will be able to have a few sittings in the new building.

The Speaker said funds have been set aside for this project and work will begin soon.

The UP government is likely to hire a consultant to design the new Vidhan Sabha, which should be strong and well equipped keeping in mind the technological advances.



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

The Uttar Pradesh government has made a token budgetary provision of ₹50 crore for the purpose. Sources said that the token amount will take care of the design and other basic needs of the project.

A proper budget for the construction of the new Vidhan Sabha would be announced later.

Sources said that though the land where the new building would be constructed is yet to be identified, it is most likely that a land chunk of around 160 acres, once identified during the Akhilesh Yadav government near Chak Gajaria Farms on the Sultanpur road, for the purpose could be finalised.

The new building was likely to have gymnasium and recreational facilities too.

Declare cow a protected national animal: Allahabad HC tells Centre



ANYONE WHO KILLS COWS OR ALLOWS OTHERS TO KILL THEM IS DEEMED TO ROT IN HELL, THE COURT SAID

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 5: The Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court has said that the Centre should take an appropriate decision to ban cow slaughter and declare it as a 'protected national animal'.

"We live in a secular country and must have respect for all religions. In Hinduism, the belief is that the cow is the representative of divine and natural beneficence. Therefore, it should be protected and venerated," Justice Shamim Ahmad said while dismissing a plea seeking the quashing of criminal proceedings against a person under the Uttar Pradesh Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, 1955.

The petitioner, Mohammad Abdul Khaliq, had pleaded that the police booked him without any

evidence and hence the proceedings pending against him in the court of additional chief judicial magistrate should be quashed.

Dismissing the plea, the bench held that from the facts on record, prima facie case was made out against the petitioner.

While passing the order, the judge observed, "The cow has also been associated with various deities, notably Lord Shiva (whose steed is Nandi, a bull) Lord Indra (closely associated with Kamadhenu), Lord Krishna (a shepherd in his youth), and goddesses in general."

He said, "According to legend, she emerged from the ocean of milk at the time of Samudramanathan (the great churning of the ocean by the gods and demons). She was presented to the seven sages and with time came into the custody of sage Vasishtha."

The judge further said that a cow's legs symbolise the four Vedas and her milk is four 'puruushartha' (or human objectives - 'dharma' or righteousness, 'artha' or material wealth, 'kama' or desire and 'moksha' or salvation. Her horns symbolise the gods, her face the sun and moon, and her

shoulders 'Agni' (the god of fire). The cow has also been described in other forms Nanda, Sunanda, Surabhi, Susheela and Sumana, Justice Ahmad said. He said that the origin of the veneration of the cow can be traced to the Vedic period.

The Indo-European peoples, who entered India in the second millennium BCE, were pastoralists. Cattle had a major economic significance that was reflected in their religion. The slaughter of milk-producing cows was increasingly prohibited. It is forbidden in the Mahabharata, and in the 'Manusmriti'. A cow which produces milk was said to be 'unslayable' in the Rigveda, the court said.

According to the high court bench, legends also state that Brahma gave life to priests and cows at the same time so that the priests could recite religious scriptures while cows could afford ghee as an offering in rituals.

Anyone who kills cows or allows others to kill them is deemed to rot in hell for as many years as there are hairs upon his body, the judge said.

First-ever otter sighted in Gomti river on Lucknow-Sitapur border

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 5: For the first time, a smooth-coated otter (SCO) has been spotted in 929-km-long Gomti river on the Lucknow-Sitapur border by a team of Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

In Uttar Pradesh, otters are generally found in Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Katerniyaghat, Haiderpur wetland and Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary.

According to WII expert Vipul Maurya, the team spotted the otter while they were carrying out an ecological assessment that is part of the project funded by the National Mission for Clean Ganga of the Union Jal Shakti Ministry.

Maurya, who is leading the team, said, "There are no records of SCO ever being spotted in Gomti and we are excited to find one under Sitapur district border. The presence of



otter in Gomti is of great significance, as it indicates that some patch of the river is still habitable."

Government records suggest that 865 MLD of sewage discharge is directly pumped into the river daily from 68 drains and 30 industries from more than 150 villages.

The 30 industries include seven sugar, two slaughterhouses, three textile or yarn dyeing industries, five engineering industries, three distillery units, and 10 industries of dairy, fertiliser, paper, food and beverages.

SCO preys on fishes, shrimps, crayfish, crab, insects and verte-

brates like frogs, mudskippers, birds and rats. They like rocky sections along rivers, as it offers places to build dens and relax.

The marshes and bank-side vegetation along the river are utilised for foraging or moving.

Maurya said, "The Maurya community near the Gomti river in Sitapur must be made aware of the value of aquatic ecosystems for both the preservation of species and their own survival, especially farmers and fishermen. Better educational possibilities should be made available to the local population."

Maurya along with his team member Sumit Nautiyal is working on Gomti river under the planning and management for aquatic species conservation and maintenance of ecosystem services in the Ganga river basin for the Clean Ganga project.

Japanese Cherry Blossom Theme Garden coming soon in Srinagar

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, March 5: J&K's summer capital Srinagar would soon have a splendid Cherry Blossom Theme Garden on the pattern of Japanese Sakura.

This was revealed during a virtual meeting of officials of the UT Floriculture Department, Japanese government, and the Ministry of External Affairs, chaired by MEA's East Asia Division's Advisor (Japan), Professor AK Chawla.

The meeting had elaborate deliberation on various issues regarding the project like procurement of planting material from Japan and technical guidance.

'Cherry Blossom Theme Garden' is a ₹10 crore project of an extension plan for Tulip Garden, Srinagar to make it more attractive and magnificent for the visitors.

The project is being facilitated by the Ministry of External Affairs,

officials said.

While highlighting broad contours of the project, Commissioner Secretary Floriculture, Skeikh Fayaz Ahmad, said that there will be requirement of about 2,500 cherry blossom trees in the first instance and certain varieties have been identified that will suit the place. He said that the department will be preferably importing plants in a phased manner to ascertain the behaviour of the plants and later go for expansion.

He also informed that a 3-member team of officers will visit Japan to get a firsthand experience of the plants and will make sure the best plant material is exported for the Cherry Theme Garden in Srinagar.

The Commissioner Secretary added that Jammu and Kashmir has huge potential for floriculture activities with modern farming technologies as game changer for J&K's economy.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prayagraj (UP), March 5: After virtually disappearing from dinner tables of Prayagraj and other cities in Uttar Pradesh following the construction of the Farakka Barrage in West Bengal, fish connoisseurs may finally be able to savour fresh Hilsa once again.

The authorities recently released in the Ganga's upstream about 30,000 of the elusive Hilsa fish brought from the barrage's lower portion. A few days ago, shoals of the prized fish were spotted in the river in Mirzapur.

Sandeep Behera, an advisor to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry's National Mission for Clean Ganga, told PTI, "The fact that the Hilsa has reached Mirzapur is an indication that the Ganga is gradually getting cleaned."

Oxygen levels have also risen because the Hilsa moves very fast and it requires a lot of oxygen.



Behera, who was here to attend a seminar by Nehru Gram Bharati (Deemed) University and ICAR-Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Barrackpore, said a fish ladder on the barrage allowed the Hilsa to move upstream earlier.

However, the ladder gate has been non-functional for years. Now, the gate is being changed so that the fish can swim upstream in the Hooghly river, Behera said.

A fish ladder is a pass along the divider wall of a barrage to enable

migration of fishes. Often described as the 'queen of fish', Hilsa is liked for its taste and smell. It can be savoured when fried or cooked in mustard sauce.

Although it is a tropical saltwater fish, it thrives in rivers and estuaries.

Behera said that while Hilsa is a marine fish, it lays eggs in freshwater. However, following the barrage's construction in 1971-72, it could not move upstream to lay eggs.

The tender for the fish ladder has been floated and it will be finalised in six to seven months. It is possible that the ladder will be replaced by the end of this year, he said.

A very popular variety of fish in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Odisha, Hilsa prices range from ₹1,200 to ₹3,000 per kg.

Hilsa, considered a nonpareil delicacy when fried, smoked or cooked in mustard sauce, typically travels up the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Irrawaddy from the Bay of Bengal during the rainy season to spawn.

The fish is also found in the Arabian Sea from where it swims upstream through rivers in Gujarat and Pakistan's Sindh, as well as in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Vietnam and China seas.

The peak upstream migration of the fish coincides with the advent of monsoon in July and August and continues up to October and November, according to a 2017 report by the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute.

The fact that the Hilsa has reached Mirzapur is an indication that the Ganga is gradually getting cleaned

SANDEEP BEHERA | ADVISOR, NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA

of the day quote

The Centre is working with the Kerala government to benefit citizens through several initiatives

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

You should not live your life just for yourself, for your career and for your family. Let us commit ourselves to the growth of this country, for the making of this country

ANURAG THAKUR | UNION MINISTER

The issues raised by the Tipra Motha need to be addressed by the Centre and the new government in Tripura

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

SHORT TAKES

Kanpur girl raped

Kanpur: Minor daughter of a doctor couple was raped in a Hookah Bar under Barra police station circle in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur.

Cyber stalker held

New Delhi: A cyber stalker was arrested by Delhi Police for allegedly harassing his former female friend by creating a fake account of her father on Instagram and sending obscene messages to her relatives.

Gold seized

New Delhi: The Customs Officials on Sunday said that they seized around four kg gold bars worth Rs 1,95,72,400 after searching an aircraft at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) following a tip-off.

Man arrested

Panaji: A man has been arrested for allegedly making sexually coloured remarks and stalking girl students of Goa university, police said.

Navy successfully test-fires BrahMos

New Delhi: The Indian Navy Sunday successfully test-fired in the Arabian Sea the ship-launched version of the BrahMos supersonic missile.

Sisodia being tortured by CBI, alleges AAP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: AAP national spokesperson Saurabh Bhardwaj Sunday claimed the CBI was "torturing" senior party leader Manish Sisodia and pressuring him to sign papers containing false charges.

The federal probe agency arrested Sisodia February 26 for allegedly not cooperating in the investigation into the Delhi excise policy case and being evasive on questions from investigators.

According to officials, the agency wants to utilise Sisodia's custody to locate the crucial missing file containing legal opinions on the expert committee recommendations on the excise policy, which remains untraceable even now.

"Manish Sisodia is being tortured by the CBI and being pressured to sign the documents containing false charges framed against him. CBI has no evidence against Sisodia. They never mentioned

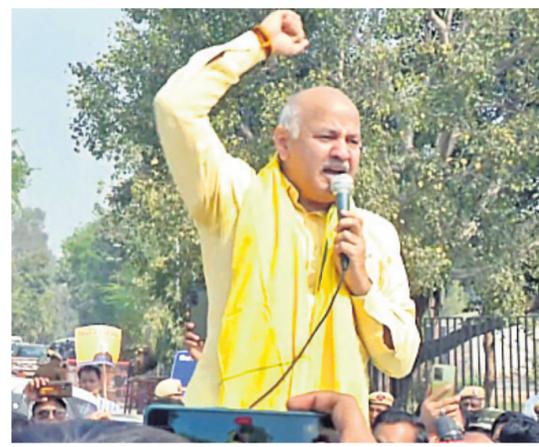
The federal probe agency arrested Sisodia February 26 for allegedly not cooperating in the investigation into the Delhi excise policy case and being evasive on questions from investigators

A special CBI court Saturday extended the custody of Sisodia till March 6

any evidence is missing. They raided his residence but found nothing," Bhardwaj told reporters here on Sunday.

Sisodia, who was produced before the court on Saturday on the expiry of his five-day CBI custody, claimed that he was "sitting for eight to nine hours and answering the same questions again and again" and termed it "mental harassment".

To this, the judge, who had in the last hearing directed the CBI not to use the third degree on the accused, told the probe agency not to ask the "same questions again and again". "If you have something new, ask him," the judge said.



Court acquits man accused of threatening to kill PM Modi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: A Delhi court has acquitted a man accused of threatening to kill Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a phone call to the police helpline 100, saying the prosecution had "miserably failed" to show any evidence to prove any threats to kill anyone was ever made by him.

Anand Parbat police had filed a chargesheet under section 506 (II) of the IPC against Mohd Mukhtar Ali for calling the helpline and using abusive language and death threats against the prime minister in January 2019.

Section 506 deals with criminal intimidation and its second part is slapped against those who make a threat to cause death or grievous hurt. Metropolitan Magistrate Shubham Devadiya said in an order passed last month that the crucial evidence to substantiate the charge against Ali was a handwritten general diary entry and the PCR form (a form about the contents or details of the call made to the police control room).

Drunk flyer pees on fellow passenger

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: An inebriated Indian student aboard an American Airlines flight from New York to Delhi allegedly urinated while asleep in his seat and soiled a male co-passenger Saturday, with Delhi Police registering a case based on a complaint from the airline.

The airline has submitted a report about the incident to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The airline seems to have handled the situation professionally and have taken all appropriate action, a senior official at the aviation regulator said.

The incident happened on flight AA292, which landed at the Delhi airport at 9.50 pm on Saturday.

When contacted, American Airlines in a statement Sunday said the flight was "met by local enforcement upon arrival in Delhi due to a disruptive customer" but did not provide specific details about the incident.

Delhi airport DCP Devesh Kumar Mahla on Sunday said a complaint of urination on a co-passenger has

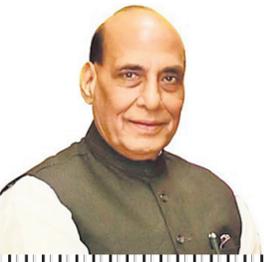
Today we are more dependent on institutional means for water supply than traditional means. But along with using modern techniques for sustainable water supply, revival of the traditional methods of water management and water harvesting is the need of the hour

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT



RAJNATH TO ADDRESS NAVY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and top commanders of the Indian Navy will Monday carry out a comprehensive review of India's maritime security challenges at a key conclave onboard indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on the high seas



Artists paint the wall outside Dehradun Municipal Corporation as part of Swachh Survekshan-2023 in Dehradun

PTI PHOTO

Oppn leaders extend support to Sibal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: Several opposition leaders, including Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal, have expressed support for Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal's newly-announced platform 'Insaaf' to fight for justice.

Sibal Saturday said he was floating the new platform against the "injustice prevailing in the country" and called on everyone, including chief ministers and leaders of opposition parties, to support him in his endeavour.

AAP chief Kejriwal, senior Congress leader Baghel, Bihar deputy chief minister and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and former Maharashtra chief minister



Uddhav Thackeray have expressed support for the platform. The initiative by Sibal, a Congress veteran who quit the party in May last year and is considered an important voice of the Opposition, and his talk of bringing parties and leaders together come amid cracks in the opposition ranks,

with the Congress and TMC trading barbs repeatedly.

Kejriwal Sunday appealed to people, including lawyers, to join Sibal's newly launched platform 'Insaaf'. "This is a very important initiative of Kapil Sibal sahib. I appeal to everyone to join this and we will fight injustice together,"

Sibal said he would hold a public meeting of the new platform at Jantar Mantar March 11 and put forward a new vision of India there

Kejriwal said in a tweet. "I appeal to the lawyers and people of the country to join this initiative and make every possible effort to help aggrieved persons get justice, wherever there is injustice with anybody," Kejriwal said. In a tweet in Hindi, Baghel said, "What can be better than everyone uniting against injustice! This was also the basis of the Bharat Jodo Yatra. We all welcome this initiative."

KARNATAKA SHOCKER Couple fined ₹6 lakh for inter-caste marriage

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chamarajanagar, (Karnataka) March 5: In a shocking development in Karnataka's Chamarajanagar district, a couple was fined and faced a boycott in their village for their inter-caste marriage.

The incident had taken place at Kunagalli village in Kollegal taluk in the district. According to police, the couple got married five years ago but the villagers came to know about their different castes only recently. The villagers had fined the couple Rs 6 lakh and boycotted them in the village. The couple were not able to take the humiliation and filed a complaint with police in Kollegal on March 1.

Govindaraju, belonging to the Uppara Setty community, had fallen in love with Shwetha, from Mandya, belonging to the Scheduled Castes. When they decided to get married, the families of the boy and the girl agreed without opposition and their marriage was solemnised in the sub-registrar's office.



Beware!

As the number of those Indians who are giving up their Indian citizenship touching an all-time high in 2022, the Modi government has asked concerned ministries to look deeper into the issue. If 1.20 lakh Indians gave up citizenship to settle abroad in 2011, the number almost doubled to 2.25 lakhs in 2022. What is worrying the government is that rich Indians are buying citizenship and settling abroad rather than investing in their own country. It is not just high-skilled

individuals and students giving up their Indian citizenship but a large number of rich Indians are 'buying' nationalities elsewhere. If reports emanating from the Finance Ministry are any indication, a list of 100-odd individuals has been prepared who opted to settle in Dubai and Mauritius among other tax haven countries along with their suspected ill-gotten wealth. Since these two countries are extremely friendly to Modi, the government will soon initiate a process to seek their presence back in India without many legal hurdles. These 100-odd persons may be brought back to face prosecution in 2023-24. This will send a strong signal before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls to the electorate that the Modi government has not abandoned its action against black money.

EC goes by the wind!

The Election Commission moved with great alacrity in the Shiv Sena symbol dispute and pronounced its judgement in less than a year. The Election Commission froze the symbol (Bow & Arrow) and allotted two different

symbols to both the factions temporarily. The EC moved rather fast and by February it declared Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena as the real party and allotted him the original symbol. The decision came within 8 months of the split which is a record of sorts in recent history.

Political observers wonder as to why the EC is sitting pretty in the case of the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) headed by late Ram Vilas Paswan. After his death, his brother Pashupati Paras Kumar walked away with 5 out of six Lok Sabha MPs and claimed that he is the real LJP in June 2021. However, Chirag Paswan, the son of late Ram Vilas Paswan and Lok Sabha MP, claimed that he is the real inheritor of the Paswan's legacy and staked his claim on the symbol. The EC froze its symbol and allotted two different symbols to the two factions. Strangely enough, both the factions owe their allegiance to the NDA and praise PM Modi for his leadership. Pashupati Paras Kumar is a Cabinet Minister while Chirag Paswan is waiting to reap the harvest whenever the next reshuffle takes place. But there are no answers as to why the EC is not deciding

the case even as two years have gone by after the split in 2021.

Tejashwi's mission impossible

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has the burning ambition to become the Prime Ministerial candidate of all Opposition parties. This was perhaps the only reason he decided to part company with the BJP and tie the knot with RJD and Congress again. But he has been repeatedly denying that he has any desire to be the joint candidate for the PM's post of the Opposition parties in 2024 to dislodge authoritarian forces. In order to woo the Congress he has been on record that there can be unity worth a salt without the principal Opposition party coming on board. Insiders in Nitish Kumar's cotrie say that he has deputed Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav to talk to all Opposition parties and persuade them to evolve a consensus around his name for the PM's post. Yadav has been travelling state capitals in his mission

impossible as no one is willing to trust Nitish after his 360 degree turn, not once but twice. Tejashwi met Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi, K Chandrashekhhar Ramarao in Hyderabad and others. But none have committed support to Nitish's mission.

Priyanka from Raebareli!

Decks seem to have been cleared for Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to enter into an electoral fray from Raebareli in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Sonia Gandhi signalled during the AICC session at Raipur that she may not be part of electoral politics expressing her satisfaction of the outcome of Bharat Jodo Yatra. Insiders in the Congress say that she may not enter the electoral fray in 2024 polls. But she may have the option to enter the Rajya Sabha if she wants to retain her 10 Janpath bungalow. She has to be a Member of Parliament if she wants to retain this bungalow. Sonia's statement at Raipur was well-crafted and did not indicate in any way that she will bid adieu to politics.

international

of the day quote

Is it permissible for Iran, which openly calls for our destruction, to organise the tools of slaughter for our destruction? Are we forbidden from defending ourselves? We are obviously permitted to do this

So I think 2 fathers of QUAD are Shinzo Abe and Modi and the world should be immensely grateful to both of them

We are working hard for the smooth implementation and further extension of the Black Sea grain deal

SHORT TAKES

Indonesia fuel depot fire kills 19

Jakarta: Indonesian rescuers and firefighters Sunday searched for three people who were still missing under the rubble of charred houses and buildings, after a large fire spread from a fuel storage depot in the capital and killed at least 19 people. The Plumpang fuel storage station, operated by state-run oil and gas company Pertamina, is near a densely populated area in the Tanah Merah neighbourhood in North Jakarta. It supplies 25 per cent of Indonesia's fuel needs. At least 260 firefighters and 52 fire engines extinguished the blaze just before midnight Friday after it tore through the neighbourhood for more than two hours, fire officials said.

Greek PM apologises

Athens: The Greek prime minister on Sunday asked for forgiveness from the families of the 57 dead in the nation's worst rail disaster ahead of a major rally by students and rail workers in Athens. "As prime minister, I owe it to everyone, but especially to the victims' relatives, (to ask for) forgiveness," Kyriakos Mitsotakis wrote in a message addressed to the nation. The crash between passenger and freight trains has sparked widespread outrage across Greece. Relatives and loved ones of those killed in Tuesday's devastating train crash were also expected to gather Sunday for a memorial outside Larissa station, central Greece, near the site of the accident. The demonstrations and vigils across Greece have expressed a combination of grief and anger at the disaster, which happened when a passenger train and a freight train collided.

Protests over girls' poisoning

Dubai: A crisis over suspected poisonings targeting Iranian schoolgirls escalated Sunday as authorities acknowledged over 50 schools were struck in a wave of possible cases. The poisonings have spread further fear among parents as Tehran has faced months of unrest. It remains unclear who or what is responsible since the alleged poisonings began in November in the Shiite holy city of Qom. Reports now suggest schools across 21 of Iran's 30 provinces have seen suspected cases, with girls' schools the site of nearly all the incidents. The attacks have raised fears that other girls could be poisoned apparently just for going to school. Education for girls has never been challenged in the over 40 years since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran has been calling on the Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan to have girls and women return to school.

SHRINKING ECONOMY

China sets growth target at 5%

A NEW ERA FOR XI JINPING'S PRESIDENCY AS HE BEGAN AN UNPRECEDENTED THIRD FIVE-YEAR TERM

REUTERS

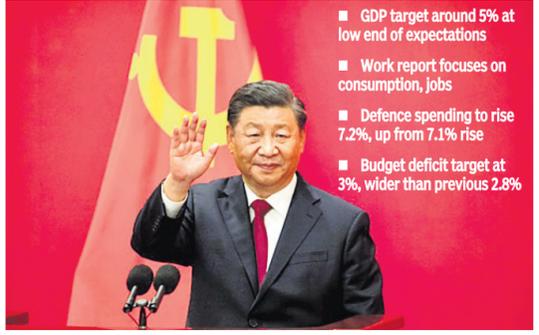
Beijing, March 5: China set a modest target for economic growth this year of around 5% on Sunday as it kicked off the annual session of its National People's Congress (NPC), which is poised to implement the biggest government shake-up in a decade.

The economy gave one of its weakest performances in decades last year, when gross domestic product (GDP) grew by just 3%, squeezed by three years of Covid controls, a crisis in the vast property sector and a crackdown on private enterprise.

In his work report, outgoing Premier Li Keqiang stressed the need for economic stability and expanding consumption, setting a goal to create around 12 million urban jobs this year, up from last year's target of at least 11 million, and warned that risks remain in the real estate sector.

Li set a budget deficit target at 3.0% of GDP, widening from a goal of around 2.8% last year.

"Global inflation remains high, global economic and trade growth is losing steam, and external attempts to suppress and contain China are escalating," Li said during his speech to open the



- GDP target around 5% at low end of expectations
- Work report focuses on consumption, jobs
- Defence spending to rise 7.2%, up from 7.1% rise
- Budget deficit target at 3%, wider than previous 2.8%

parliament, which will run through March 13.

"At home, the foundation for stable growth needs to be consolidated, insufficient demand remains a pronounced problem, and the expectations of private investors and businesses are unstable," he said.

This year's growth target is at the low end of expectations, as policy sources had recently told Reuters a range as high as 6% could be set. It is also below last year's target of around 5.5%.

To bolster growth, the government plans to stick with its playbook of spending on infrastructure, increasing funding for big-ticket projects with 3.8 trillion yuan (\$550 billion) in special local government bonds, up from last year's 3.65 trillion yuan.

The 67-year-old Li and a slate of more reform-oriented policy officials are set to retire during the congress, making way for loyalists to President Xi Jinping, who further tightened his grip on power when he secured a precedent-breaking

third leadership term at October's Communist Party Congress.

During the NPC, former Shanghai party chief Li Qiang, 63, a longtime Xi ally, is expected to be confirmed as premier; tasked with reinvigorating the world's second-largest economy. The rubber-stamp parliament will also discuss Xi's plans for an "intensive" and "wide-ranging" reorganisation of state and Communist Party entities, state media reported Tuesday, with analysts expecting a further deepening of Communist Party penetration of state bodies.

MILITARY BUDGET RISE

Li said China's armed forces should devote greater energy to training under combat conditions and boost combat preparedness, and the budget included a 7.2% increase in defence spending this year, a slightly bigger increase than last year's budgeted 7.1% rise and again exceeding expected GDP growth.

On Taiwan, Li struck a moderate tone, saying China should promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations and advance the process of China's "peaceful reunification", but also take resolute steps to oppose Taiwan independence.

Beijing faces multiple challenges including increasingly fraught relations with the United States, which is trying to block its access to cutting edge technology, and a worsening demographic outlook, with plunging birth rates and a population drop last year for the first time since the famine year of 1961.

China plans to lower the costs of childbirth, childcare and education and will actively respond to an ageing population and a decrease in fertility, the nation's state planner said in a work report released Sunday.

The NPC opened on a smoggy day amid tight security in the Chinese capital, with 2,948 delegates gathered in the cavernous Great Hall of the People on the west side of Tiananmen Square.

During the session, China's legislature will vote on a plan to reform institutions under the State Council, or cabinet, and decide on a new cabinet line-up for the next five years, according to a meeting agenda.

It is the first NPC meeting since China abruptly dropped its zero-Covid policy in December, following rare nationwide protests. Excluding the pandemic-shortened meetings of the previous three years, this year's session will be the shortest in at least 40 years, according to NPC Observer, a blog.



I renew my appeal to prevent such tragedies from happening again. May traffickers of human beings be stopped
POPE FRANCIS | CATHOLIC CHURCH LEADER

KHAN DODGES ARREST

A team of Islamabad police Sunday reached Lahore residence of ousted prime minister Imran Khan to arrest him in the Toshakhana case, but returned after assurance from his legal team that he will appear before the court March 7



Nikki slams Bush and Trump over nat'l debt

The Republican presidential aspirant has slammed two previous presidents from her party for adding \$10 trillion to national debt adding that President Biden will add \$20 trillion to it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



The only thing Joe Biden should be allowed to spend is more time in retirement. Every dollar we take out of the economy makes our people poorer
NIKKI HALEY | PRESIDENT ASPIRANT, REPUBLICAN PARTY

Washington, March 5: Republican presidential aspirant Nikki Haley took a dig Saturday at two former presidents of her party, George W Bush and Donald Trump, for massive spending and adding \$10 trillion to America's national debt as she slammed President Joe Biden for his record-breaking spending, which she said would add \$20 trillion in the national debt in 10 years.

Haley said when she was elected governor of North Carolina in 2010, the national debt stood at \$13 trillion. "Thirteen years later, we are at more than \$31 trillion. And because of Joe Biden, we will add \$20 trillion more to the national debt in the next 10 years," said the former governor, who February 14 declared her decision to enter the race to the White House.

Addressing the Club for Growth, a conservative group, retreat in Miami, Florida, Haley alleged that Biden's platform for 2024 can basically be summed up as "spend even more, tax even more and let the children figure out how to deal with it".

Haley went on to criticise the two previous Republican presidents - Bush and Trump - without naming them. "Lots of Republican

politicians love spending and wasting taxpayer money almost as much as Democrats," she said.

"The last two Republican presidents added more than \$10 trillion to the national debt. Think about that. A third of our debt happened under just two Republicans," she said.

The Congress is not far behind, she noted. "Republicans got the ball rolling on the trillion-dollar pandemic blowouts, with all the bailouts and fraud and abuse that followed. In one bill alone, they spent \$2.2 trillion, and the vote was 419-6 in the House and 96-0 in the Senate," she said.

"Do not let the media tell you Republicans and Democrats cannot work together. They always seem to work just fine when they are spending your money. And then there are earmarks. Do not even get me started on earmarks," she said.

UK PM plans tough law to bar illegal migrants from staying



REUTERS

London, March 5: Anyone arriving illegally in Britain will be prevented from staying, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said in an interview published on Sunday, ahead of new legislation which is expected to be set out next week.

Under pressure from his own lawmakers to find a solution to the flow of migrants arriving in Britain across the channel from Europe, Sunak has made stopping small boats one of his five key priorities.

Under current practice, asylum seekers who reach Britain are often able to remain in the country to have their case heard.

A new law to tackle the issue is due to be set out Tuesday, the newspaper reported, after more than 45,000 people made the perilous crossing last year. Asylum applications to the United Kingdom are below the European Union average, official data shows.

Last year, former Prime Minister Boris Johnson agreed a deal to send tens of thousands of migrants, many having made the journey from Afghanistan, Syria or other countries suffering war, more than 4,000 miles away (6,400 kms) to Rwanda.

The policy has faced a legal battle after the first planned deportation flight was blocked by a last-minute injunction granted

Make no mistake, if you come here illegally, you will not be able to stay
RISHI SUNAK | PM, UK

by the European Court of Human Rights. It was ruled lawful by London's High Court in December, but opponents are seeking to appeal that verdict.

Asked on Sky News whether those arriving in Britain illegally would be banned from claiming asylum, government minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "I believe so, yes. Should people come to this country illegally then they will be returned or sent to somewhere like Rwanda."

The Mail Sunday reported that under the new law asylum claims from those who arrive on small boats would be ruled inadmissible and they would be removed and permanently banned from returning. "Our laws will be simple in their intention and practice - the only route to the UK will be a safe and legal route," interior minister Suella Braverman told the Sun Sunday newspaper.

Heaton-Harris said he believed more safe and legal routes would be made available as part of the plan.



MASSIVE MARCH: An aerial view shows Israeli demonstrators as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's nationalist coalition government presses on with its contentious judicial overhaul, in Tel Aviv, Israel
REUTERS

In a first, Iran discovers lithium

AGENCIES

Tehran, March 5: Iran has announced the discovery of a large deposit of lithium, a key component of batteries for electric vehicles and electronic devices, state media reported Saturday.

"For the first time in Iran, a lithium reserve has been discovered in Hamedan, in the west of the country, state television quoted



Mohammad Hadi Ahmadi, an official with the ministry of industry, mines and trade. This reserve is believed to hold "8.5 million tonnes" of lithium, according to

the director-general of the ministry's operating department.

Dubbed the "oil of the 21st century", lithium is essential for the manufacture of batteries for electric vehicles, which should allow cars to wean themselves off CO2-emitting oil.

This white metal is also an essential component of rechargeable batteries used in cell phones and other electronic devices.

Nations reach accord to protect marine life on high seas

VERY LITTLE OF THE HIGH SEAS ARE SUBJECT TO ANY PROTECTION, WITH POLLUTION, ACIDIFICATION AND OVERFISHING POSING A GROWING THREAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 5: For the first time, United Nations members have agreed on a unified treaty to protect biodiversity in the high seas — nearly half the planet's surface — concluding two weeks of talks in New York.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea came into force in 1994, before marine biodiversity was a

well-established concept.

An updated framework to protect marine life in the regions outside national boundary waters, known as the high seas, had been in discussions for more than 20 years, but previous efforts to reach an agreement had repeatedly stalled. The unified agreement treaty was reached late Saturday.

"We only really have two major global commons — the atmosphere and the oceans," said Georgetown marine biologist Rebecca Helm. While the oceans may draw less attention, "protecting this half of earth's surface is absolutely critical to the health of our planet."

The treaty will create a new body to manage conservation of ocean life and establish marine protected areas in the high seas. And Helm's said that's critical to achieve the UN Biodiversity Conference's recent pledge to pro-



tect 30% of the planet's waters, as well as its land, for conservation. The treaty also establishes ground rules for conducting environmental impact assessments for commercial activities in the oceans. "It means all activities planned

for the high seas need to be looked at, though not all will go through a full assessment," said Jessica Battle, an oceans governance expert at the Worldwide Fund for Nature. Many marine species — in-

cluding dolphins, whales, sea turtles and many fish — make long annual migrations, crossing national borders and the high seas. Efforts to protect them — and human communities that rely on fishing or tourism related to marine life — have previously been hampered by a confusing patchwork of laws.

"This treaty will help to knit together the different regional treaties to be able to address threats and concerns across species' ranges," said Battle. That protection also helps coastal biodiversity and economies, said Gladys Martínez de Lemos, executive di-

rector of the nonprofit Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense focusing on environmental issues across Latin America.

"Governments have taken an important step that strengthens the legal protection of two-thirds of the ocean and with it marine biodiversity and the livelihoods of coastal communities," she said.

The question now is how well the ambitious treaty will be implemented.

The high seas have long suffered exploitation due to commercial fishing and mining, as well as pollution from chemicals and plastics. The new agreement is about "acknowledging that the ocean is not a limitless resource, and it requires global cooperation to use the ocean sustainably," said Malin Pinsky, a biologist at Rutgers University.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to protect the oceans — a major win for biodiversity
NICOLA CLARK | OCEANS EXPERT, PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS



The semiconductor shortage still continues. Last quarter we lost 46,000 units due to this issue and this quarter also the problem continues for a few models
SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER (MARKETING AND SALES), MARUTI SUZUKI

BILLIONAIRE INVESTOR MOBIUS IN A SPOT

Billionaire investor Mark Mobius said he cannot take his money out of China due to the country's capital controls, cautioning investors to be "very, very careful" about investing in an economy under a tight government grip. "I have an account with HSBC in Shanghai. I can't take my money out. The government is restricting flow of money out of the country," Mobius, founder of Mobius Capital Partners, said



of the day quote

The company is optimistic that its portfolio of beverage brands will be able to meet consumer demand and to help them beat the heat
GEORGE KOVOOR | SENIOR VP (BEVERAGES), PEPSICO

One of the focus sectors for HCL Technologies, especially in engineering services is semi chip. Our plan is to double our business. There is an internal plan to do it in a period of three to four years
AMEER SAITHU | EXECUTIVE VP, HCL TECHNOLOGIES

Indian stock markets may remain volatile amid fear that the US FED will keep raising interest rates to control inflation
PRAVESH GOUR | SENIOR TECHNICAL ANALYST, SWASTIKA INVESTMART LTD

Gas prices burning a hole in pockets

DOMESTIC GAS CYLINDER PRICES UP BY 56% IN 4 YEARS; HEFTY DROP IN SUBSIDY

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 5: While a recent hike of ₹50 in the price of the 14.2 kg domestic liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinder led to the cost of the cylinder touching ₹1,103, data has disclosed that the price has registered a rise of nearly 56 per cent in the last four years. The retail selling price (RSP) of a domestic LPG cylinder (14.2 Kg) April 1, 2019 was ₹706.50 which increased to ₹744 in 2020, ₹809 in 2021 and ₹949.50 in 2022. The price increased to ₹1,103 from ₹1,053 March 1 this year.

While the price of the domestic LPG cylinder has recorded a substantial rise over the last few years, government data disclosed that the total subsidy on LPG has come down significantly over the last few years.

Details of the subsidy on LPG given by the government during each of the last four years showed that it was ₹37,209 crore in 2018-19



and came down to ₹24,172 crore in 2019-20, ₹11,896 crore in 2020-21 and ₹1,811 crore in 2021-22.

As per the information from the Ministry of Petroleum, the prices of petroleum products including LPG in the country are linked to the price of respective products in the international market. "The average Saudi CP prices

on which the domestic LPG prices are based, increased from US\$ 454/MT to US\$ 693/MT during 2019-20 to 2021-22."

"During 2022-23 the average Saudi CP has further risen to US\$ 710 /MT till February 2023. However, the government continues to modulate the effective price of domestic LPG. Public sec-

PRICES RISING	SUBSIDIES FALLING
2023 - ₹1,103	2018-19 - ₹37,209cr
2022 - ₹949.50	2019-20 - ₹24,172cr
2021 - ₹809	2020-21 - ₹11,896cr
2020 - ₹744	2021-22 - ₹1,811cr
2019 - ₹706.50	

tor oil marketing companies have suffered huge losses on sale of domestic LPG," said the Ministry in a recent Parliament reply.

The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) was launched in 2016 to provide deposit free LPG connections to women members of poor households under which 8 crore connections were given. Under Ujjwala 2.0, all PMUY beneficiaries are provided a free first refill and stove as well, in addition to deposit free LPG connections. As February 1, 2023, 1.6 crore connections have been given under Ujjwala 2.0.

During the Covid-19 pandemic,

as a pro-poor initiative, the government announced a scheme for providing upto three free of cost LPG refills to Ujjwala beneficiaries from April 1, 2020 under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP).

Oil marketing companies (OMCs) transferred ₹9,670.41 crore to the bank accounts of PMUY beneficiaries for buying LPG refills and PMUY beneficiaries availed 14.17 crore refills under the scheme. To further encourage LPG usage by PMUY beneficiaries, from May 2022, the government has started an additional targeted subsidy of ₹200 per 14.2 kg refill to PMUY consumers upto 12 refills in a year for FY 2022-23.

The Ministry has also informed that Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies have suffered huge losses on the sale of domestic LPG. To compensate these losses, the government has recently approved a one-time compensation of ₹22,000 crores to OMCs.

Mcap of five of top 10 valued cos climbs ₹88,605cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: Five of the top 10 valued firms together added ₹88,604.99 crore to their market valuation last week, with State Bank of India and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers.

While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, HDFC and Bharti Airtel witnessed gains in their market valuation, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the laggards.

Last week, the BSE benchmark climbed 345.04 points or 0.58 per cent.

The valuation of State Bank of India jumped ₹35,832.32 crore to ₹5,00,759.98 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank rallied ₹20,360.13 crore to ₹6,06,514.71 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation climbed ₹15,236.59 crore to ₹9,01,307.58 crore and that of Reliance Industries dipped ₹507.03 crore to ₹16,13,602.63 crore. ITC's valuation went lower by ₹24.72 crore to ₹4,77,886.13 crore.

In the top-10 ranking, Reliance Industries retained the tag of the most-valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India, HDFC, ITC and Bharti Airtel.

FIVE MONTHS IN A ROW

Russian oil imports hit record high in Feb



India, the world's third-largest crude importer after China and the United States, has been snapping Russian oil that was available at a discount after some in the West shunned it as a means of punishing Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine

been at the expense of Saudi Arabia and United States. Oil import from Saudi fell 16 per cent month-on-month and that from the US declined 38 per cent.

According to Vortexa, Russia now accounts for more than the combined oil bought from Iraq and Saudi Arabia - India's mainstay oil suppliers for decades.

Iraq, whom Russia has toppled to become the largest oil source for India, supplied 9,39,921 barrels per day (bpd) oil in February while Saudi supplied 6,47,813 bpd oil.

UAE overtook US to become the fourth largest supplier at 4,04,570 bpd. The US supplied 2,48,430 bpd, down from 3,99,914 bpd in January. Iraq and Saudi supplies are the lowest in 16 months.

Russia is selling record amounts of crude oil to India to plug the gap in its energy exports after the European Union banned imports in December.

In December, the EU banned Russian seaborne oil and imposed a \$60-per-barrel price cap, which prevents other countries from using EU shipping and insurance services, unless oil is sold below the cap.

Industry officials said Indian refiners are using UAE's dirham to pay for oil that is imported at a price lower than \$60. "Almost a quarter of the Russian imports are now paid in dirham," an official said.

From a market share of just 0.2 per cent in India's import basket before the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Russia's share in India's imports rose to 35 per cent in February 2023.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: India's imports of crude oil from Russia soared to a record 1.6 million barrels per day in February and is now higher than combined imports from traditional suppliers Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Russia continued to be the single largest supplier of crude oil, which is converted into petrol and diesel at refineries, for a fifth straight month by supplying more than one-third of all oil India imported, according to energy cargo tracker Vortexa.

Refiners continue to snap up plentiful Russian cargoes available at a discount to other grades.

From a market share of less than 1 per cent in India's import basket before the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022, Russia's share of India's imports rose to 1.62 million barrels per day in February, taking a 35 per cent share.

The rise in Russian imports have

Adani's \$2bn bonds due for repayment in 2024

ADANI GROUP'S GROSS DEBT HAS GROWN FROM ₹1.11 LAKH CRORE IN 2019 TO ₹2.21 LAKH CRORE IN 2023. AFTER INCLUDING CASH, THE NET DEBT WAS ₹1.89 LAKH CRORE IN 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: The Adani group, whose mostly debt-fueled breakneck expansion saw gross debt doubling in four years, has almost \$2 billion worth of foreign-currency bonds coming up for repayment in 2024, according to a presentation the conglomerate made to investors.

The apples-to-airport conglomerate borrowed over \$10 billion in foreign currency bonds between July 2015 and 2022 across group companies. Of this, \$1.15 billion of bonds matured in 2020 and 2022.

There are no maturities in 2023 but three issuances - \$650 million by the ports arm APSEZ and two of renewable energy unit Adani Green Energy Ltd (\$750 million and \$500 million - are due for payment in 2024.

Adani group management, including group chief financial officer Jughesinder Singh, last month held roadshows in Singapore and Hong Kong to reassure investors that the company's finances are under control. These are to be extended to Dubai, London and the US from March 7 to 15.

Executives told investors they will address upcoming debt maturities including by potentially offering private placement notes and using cash from operations.

There are no foreign currency bond maturities in 2025 but have \$1 billion of repayments due in 2026.

A month after a damning report by a US short seller lopped off \$135



billion in market value from Adani group's listed companies, the conglomerate is hoping to claw back the narrative now by choosing slow and steady growth over the breakneck, mostly debt-fueled, expansion spree of recent years.

It has already scrapped a ₹7,000 crore coal plan purchase, decided not to bid for a stake in state-backed energy trading firm PTC, reined in expenses, repaid some debt and promised to repay more.

Hindenburg Research in a January 24 report accused the Adani group of "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud" and using a number of offshore shell companies to inflate stock prices. The group has denied all allegations, calling them "malicious", "baseless" and a "calculated attack on India".

The report triggered a ₹12.06 lakh crore sell off in Adani group's 10 listed firms. This was nearly equivalent to the market capital-

isation of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) - India's second most valuable company.

The group's founder chairman Gautam Adani, 60, a first-generation entrepreneur, lost \$80.6 billion in wealth, which was primarily based on the valuation of his holding in group companies. He was worth \$120 billion before Hindenburg and the world's third richest and Asia's most wealthy businessman. But his ranking slipped to No 34 after the Hindenburg report.

An uptick in all group stock in the last three trading sessions, however, has led him to come back at No 24 with a net worth of close to \$50 billion. He however continues to trail rival Mukesh Ambani, whom he had overtaken last year to become Asia's richest and the world's third-most wealthy businessman. Ambani is ranked at No 11 with \$82.6 billion in wealth.

Rupee trade policy gathers traction; special vostro accounts at 50-mark

Following the Russia-Ukraine war and the sanctions imposed by the West, India has been trying to promote rupee trade to limit country's dependency on US dollars

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: India's policy of facilitating trade in rupee is gaining momentum with the total number of Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) touching half a century mark in about six months.

As many as 49 accounts have been opened so far and some are awaiting regulatory approval, sources said. These accounts would facilitate overseas trade in rupee with eight countries - Russia, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Israel and Germany.

The RBI issued detailed guidelines on cross-border trade transactions in the domestic currency in July, 2022.

Since July, Sberbank and VTB Bank - the largest and second-

largest banks of Russia, respectively - are the first foreign lenders to receive approval after the RBI announced the guidelines.

Another Russian bank Gazprombank, which does not have its branch in India, has also opened this account with Kolkata-based UCO Bank.

Others like SBI Mauritius Ltd and People's Bank of Sri Lanka opened an SRVA with State Bank of India (SBI). In addition, Bank of Ceylon opened an account in its Indian subsidiary in Chennai.

Union Bank of India has opened a special rupee account of Ros Bank Russia while Chennai-based Indian Bank has opened such accounts of three Sri Lankan banks, including Colombo-based NDB Bank and Seylan Bank.

The RBI, as per the guidelines,



decided to put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports/imports in the rupee.

The RBI has allowed the special vostro accounts to invest the surplus balance in Indian government securities to help popularise the new arrangement.

"Indian importers undertaking

imports through this mechanism shall make payment in INR (Indian Rupee), which shall be credited into the special vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country, against the invoices for the supply of goods or services from the overseas seller/supplier," the RBI had said.

Overseas trade in rupee not only reduces dependence on foreign exchanges, especially US dollar, it also saves the country from external shocks and helps domestic banks to gain wider access to foreign financial markets and serve international clients without having to be physically present abroad.

Vostro accounts are not restricted to banks, they can be used by other entities such as insurance companies and business entities to keep funds with another entity.

FY'23 FISCAL DEFICIT FinMin monitoring daily receipts, expenses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 5: The finance ministry has started daily monitoring of the revenue receipts, including tax collections, as well as expenditure beginning March 1, with an aim to keep fiscal deficit in check during the current fiscal.

Although the government is expected to meet the revised tax revenue estimates, meeting the ₹50,000 crore target from disinvestment receipts could be a challenge.

According to officials, the daily monitoring of tax and non-tax revenue collections will help the gov-

ernment in taking timely corrective actions, wherever needed.

The Ministry has also asked the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) to report flash figures. Besides, other non-tax and disinvestment receipts too would have to be reported on a daily basis, as per the memorandum.

CBDT and CBIC are the apex bodies responsible for collecting direct and indirect taxes, respectively. Non-civil ministries like Railways, Defence and Posts would also be required to upload their

accounting data on a daily basis on the e-Lekha portal, it added.

The Centre has set a target of 6.4 per cent for fiscal deficit, which is the difference between government revenues and spending, in the current financial year ending March 31.

Till January, the fiscal deficit has touched 68 per cent of the Budget estimates at ₹11.91 lakh crore. Net tax receipts rose to ₹16.89 lakh crore while total expenditure was ₹31.68 lakh crore.

Mop up from disinvestment stood at ₹31,106 crore so far this fiscal, as against the full year estimates of ₹ 50,000 crore.

Shafali, Lanning sink RCB

DELHI CAPITALS START THEIR WPL CAMPAIGN ON WINNING NOTE WITH COMMANDING DISPLAY

AGENCIES

Mumbai, March 5: Shafali Verma (84, 45b, 10x4, 4x6) and Meg Lanning (72, 43b, 14x4) slammed attacking half centuries, while left-arm pace bowler Tara Norris (5/29) grabbed a five-wicket haul as Delhi Capitals (DC) thrashed Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) by 60 runs in their Women's Premier League (WPL) opener, here Sunday. After being put in, Delhi Capitals put up an imposing 223 for two at the Brabourne Stadium and then restricted the Smriti Mandhana-led side to 163 for eight in 20 overs.

Earlier, thanks to openers Shafali and Australian skipper Lanning's fine knocks respectively, DC posted WPL's second successive 200-plus score. Mumbai Indians had notched 207 for five before bowling Gujarat Giants out for 64 in the inaugural WPL fixture played Saturday.

While the young India opener played some breathtaking power-packed strokes, Lanning was more clinical in her shots. The two completely decimated RCB's bowling attack. The duo's 162-run opening partnership ended in an equally dramatic manner, with both getting dismissed in the 15th over. England off-spinner Heather Knight (2/40) dismissed the two off the third and fifth deliveries of her second over.

Shafali got to her half century in 31 balls while Lanning took a ball less to reach the same milestone. The RCB bowlers did not have any answer to the onslaught the two launched.

However, their departure though



TWO TO TANGO: Shafali Verma (right) and Meg Lanning have a lot to smile about during the exhilarating opening stand Sunday against RCB in a match of the WPL; (Inset) Tara Norris

did not slow the scoring rate, with Marizanne Kapp (39 n o, 17b, 3x4, 3x6) and young India player Jemimah Rodrigues (22 n o, 15b, 3x4) helping the side cross the 220-run mark.

RCB were never in the hunt during the chase they lost wickets at regular intervals. RCB were banking on Smriti Mandhana's hitting prowess. But the Indian opener fell for 35 (23b, 5x4, 1x6) and with her dismissal RCB's

hopes vanished into thin air. Ellyse Perry (31) and Knight (34) also got thirties, but by then the writing was clear on the wall with the required run rate more than 12 per over. RCB also suffered a mid-innings slump as they lost five wickets while the score progressed from 66 to 96.

American Norris did the maximum damage as she made the ball jump and move off the pitch for the batters and in the process became

the first bowler to achieve a five-wicket haul in WPL. Overall it was a clinical display by DC who were better in all the departments of the game.

Brief scores

Delhi Capitals 223/2 (Meg Lanning 72, Shafali Verma 84, Marizanne Kapp 39 n o; Heather Knight 2/40) beat **RCB 163** for 8 (Smriti Mandhana 35, Heather Knight 34; Tara Norris 5/29) by 60 runs.

Belligerent Harris conjures thrilling victory for Warriorz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 5: A blinder of a knock from Grace Harris (59 n o, 25b, 7x4, 3x6) and her unbeaten 70-run partnership for the eighth wicket with Sophie Ecclestone (22 n o, 12b, 1x4, 1x6) enabled UP Warriorz (UPW) pip Gujarat Giants (GG) by three wickets in a match of the Women's Premier League played at the DY Patil Stadium here.

Batting first Gujarat Giants had scored a competitive 169 for the loss of six wickets. They seemed to have the pitch in their pocket when they reduce UPW to 105 for seven in the 16th over. However, Harris changed all equations with a belligerent attacking display that the Giants had no answer to and they suffered their second successive loss of the tournament.

Harris was simply unstoppable as she hit the Gujarat bowlers to all parts of the park scoring at will. She was well-supported by Ecclestone who also took her chances and hit a huge six. The winning hit however, came from the willow of Harris who hit Annabel Sutherland for a huge six to finish off the game in style.

However, the platform of UP's win was laid by Kiran Nagvire (53, 43b, 5x4, 2x6). She held the innings together after UP had a bad start losing both the openers for only 19 runs on board. It soon became three for 20 with Australian Tahira McGrath falling for a first ball duck. However, Nagvire took some calculated risks to keep the scoreboard ticking and then enabled Harris to launch the murderous assault on the Gujarat bowlers later on.

Earlier India batter Harleen Deol (46, 32b, 7x4) stood tall with a



VICTORY DANCE: Grace Harris breaks into a jig after leading UP Warriorz to victory against Gujarat Giants Sunday, as Sophie Ecclestone watches. PTI PHOTO

counter-attacking innings for the Giants, but the UP Warriorz spin duo of Ecclestone (2/25) and Deepti Sharma (2/27) bowled tidy spells to restrict the opposition.

Returning to the same venue a day after they folded up for 64 to endure a 143-run defeat against Mumbai Indians in the WPL opener, Gujarat Giants got off to an explosive start after opting to bat. However, their innings lost momentum mid-way against the UPW spin attack. It was only Deol's effort that took the Giants past the

160-run mark. However, in the end that did not prove to be enough.

Deol and Ashleigh Gardner (25) revived the Gujarat innings by putting on 45 runs for the fifth wicket. Dayalan Hemlatha (21) also played her part. However, the Warriorz had the better punch.

Brief scores

Gujarat Giants 169 for 6 (Harleen Deol 46, Sophie Ecclestone 2/25, Deepti Sharma 2/27) lost to **UP Warriorz 175** for 17 in 19.5 overs (Grace Harris 59 n o, Kiran Nagvire 53) by three wickets.

SHORT TAKES

Bhagat bags silver

Madrid: Ace shuttler Pramod Bhagat settled for a silver medal in singles and a bronze in the mixed doubles at the Spanish Para-Badminton International tournament, here Sunday. The 34-year-old, competing in singles SL3 category, went down to England's Daniel Bethell 6-21, 18-21 in 58 minutes. In the mixed doubles semifinal, Bhagat and Manisha Ramdass, who competed in XD SL3-SU5, went down fighting to France's Lucas Mazur and Faustine Noel in the semifinal 17-21, 13-21 and had to settle for bronze. In men's doubles Bhagat and Sukant Kadam, who competed in MD SU5 category went down to the Indian pair of Deep Ranjan Bisoyee and Manoj Sarkar in the quarter-finals 20-22, 21-12, 20-22.

Barca on track

Madrid: Barcelona kept their title-chasing momentum beating Valencia 1-0 Sunday and increasing their lead over Real Madrid in the La Liga. Raphinha scored a first half winner for Barcelona. They also missed the chance to double their lead when Ferran Torres missed a penalty early in the second half. The win at the Camp Nou stadium came three days after Barcelona defeated Madrid 1-0 at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals. With the victory, the Catalan club took their league lead over Madrid to 10 points. Barcelona had lost two in a row - against Manchester United in the Europa League and Almeria in La Liga - before coming up with the big Copa victory against Madrid.

Title for De Minaur

Acapulco (Mexico): Alex de Minaur rallied from one set down to claim his first ATP 500 title, capping a brilliant run with a come-from-behind 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 victory against American Tommy Paul in the final of the Mexican Open tennis tournament, here Saturday. The eighth-seeded Australian produced his best under pressure, saving six of the eight breakpoints he faced in the two-hour and 27-minute championship match. His effort against Paul earned him the seventh and biggest title of his career. This was De Minaur's second three-set battle in as many days. "It feels great, it feels amazing. I know the hard work that's put in to be here and it's good to see the results," De Minaur said after the match. AGENCIES

Mbappe becomes top goal-scorer for PSG

Striker enters record books with late goal against Nantes

AGENCIES

Paris, March 5: Kylian Mbappe became Paris Saint-Germain's (PSG) all-time top scorer with his 201st goal for the club in their 4-2 win over Nantes in a Ligue 1 game played Saturday. The France superstar had equalled Edinson Cavani's previous record mark of 200 goals with a brace in last week's win at Marseille and went one better by netting in added-on time at the Parc des Princes here.

PSG had earlier squandered a two-goal lead as they prepare for their crunch trip to Bayern Munich, with Lionel Messi putting them ahead and a Jaouen Hadjam own goal making it 2-0 inside 17 minutes before Nantes fought back to draw level prior to half time.

Ludovic Blas pulled one back for the visitors and Ignatius Ganago equalised, but Mbappe set up Danilo Pereira to put PSG back in front on the hour-mark and then claimed his record-breaking goal late on. The win helped PSG open up a lead of 11 points at the top of the table.

Mbappe reached the record in just 247 appearances since signing from Monaco aged 18 in 2017. Uruguay star Cavani needed 298 games, and seven years, to establish the previous record in 2020. The 24-year-old Mbappe was handed a trophy by the club after the game



Kylian Mbappe is over the moon after scoring against Nantes to become the record goal-scorer for PSG

to mark his record in an on-field presentation.

Injured Moroccan star Achraf Hakimi watched from the stands at the Parc des Princes a day after he was charged with rape following accusations made by a 24-year-old woman.

Neymar was also a spectator and will not be back for the match against Bayern, while centre-back Presnel Kimpembe is set to miss the remainder of the season with an achilles injury.

Gunners maintain 5-point lead

Added-on time goal helps Arsenal subdue Bournemouth resistance

AGENCIES

London, March 5: Arsenal recovered from conceding the second fastest goal in Premier League history as Reiss Nelson's added-on time strike gave the Premier League leaders a thrilling 3-2 win over Bournemouth after title rivals Manchester City beat Newcastle 2-0 Saturday. Mikel Arteta's side were trailing by two goals with just over half-an-hour left. But the Gunners showed they can cope with the pressure of the title race with a remarkable comeback that help them maintain their five-point lead ahead of second-placed City.

"I'm incredibly happy. It was just mad. It was a really special win and it took until the last second to earn it," Arteta said. "They never gave up. We want to stay there (at the top) for as long as possible," Arteta added.

Arsenal hadn't even touched the ball when Philip Billing gave second-bottom Bournemouth the lead after just 9.11 seconds with a clinical finish from inside the Gunners area. The quickest goal in Premier League history was scored by Shane Long after 7.69 seconds for Southampton against Watford in 2019.

Arsenal fell further behind in



FEELING ECSTATIC: Reiss Nelson (No 24), who scored the winning goal for Arsenal celebrates with a teammate after the game

the 57th minute as Marcos Senesi escaped Thomas Partey to glance a header past Aaron Ramsdale from a corner. However, Partey made amends for his slack marking five minutes later when he reduced the deficit with a close-range finish from Emile Smith-Rowe's header.

Underlining their desire to win a first title since 2004, Arsenal seized the momentum and equalised through Ben White's

powerful finish from Nelson's cross in the 70th minute.

Nelson completed Arsenal's incredible revival in the seventh minute of stoppage time when the substitute produced a superb finish from 20 yards to spark scenes of wild celebration all around the Emirates Stadium.

Fourth-placed Tottenham's hopes of qualifying for the Champions League were rocked by a 1-0 defeat at Wolves.

Rol crush MP to retain Irani Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gwalior, March 5: Rest of India's (RoI) bowling unit performed like a well-oiled machine as they thrashed Madhya Pradesh by 238 runs to retain the prestigious Irani Cup here Sunday. Chasing a near-impossible 437 for victory, MP were bowled out for 198 in 58.4 overs as the match ended during the opening session of the fifth day.

With the so-called result-oriented and under-prepared pitches for the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy receiving a lot of flak, the Gwalior track was a throwback to the days when there used to be help for every department of the game. There were four tons scored in the match, 40 wickets fell and pacers and spinners had equal say during the course of the game.

A case in point is the MP second innings where the RoI pacers and spinners shared five wickets apiece. Seamers Mukesh Kumar (2/34), Atit Sheth (2/37) and Navdeep Saini (1/34) blew away the MP top-order while off-spinner Pulkit Narang (2/27) and left-arm spinner Saurabh Kumar (3/60) took advantage of the deteriorating surface to mop up the lower middle-order and tail.

Except for MP skipper Himanshu Mantri (51), none of the other batters showed the inclination to fight it out in the middle.

Brief scores: Rol 484 and 246 beat MP 294 and 198 (Himanshu Mantri 51, Saurabh Kumar 3/60, Mukesh Kumar 2/34) by 238 runs.

Sania bids adieu with 'happy tears'

TENNIS LEGEND HOPES THAT INDIA WILL PRODUCE 'MANY MANY' SANIAS IN FUTURE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 5: With 'happy tears', Indian tennis legend Sania Mirza ended Sunday her path-breaking journey as a player at the place where it all began. By playing in exhibition matches featuring Rohan Bopanna, Yuvraj Singh and her 'best friend' Bethanie Mattek Sands, Sania finally said goodbye to her illustrious career at the Lal Bahadur Tennis Stadium here. It is the same venue where she signalled her arrival on the big stage with a historic WTA singles title triumph nearly two decades ago.

The exhibition games were watched by eminent personalities, including Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju and former India cricket team captain Mohammed Azharuddin.

Sania, who turned emotional while giving her farewell speech, said the greatest honour for her has been to play for the country for 20 years. On the occasion, the six-time Grand Slam winner (three in women's doubles and an identical



MEMORABLE FAREWELL: Sania Mirza poses Sunday with other players including Rohan Bopanna (extreme right) at the Lal Bahadur Tennis Stadium in Hyderabad

number in mixed doubles) played two mixed doubles exhibition matches and won both of them.

The venue, where she had won some memorable titles, wore a festive look with banners like 'Celebrating

the Legacy of Sania Mirza' put up. Some fans held placards that read 'thank you for the memories' and 'we will miss you, Sania'.

"I am so excited to play my last match in front of you all," Sania said

ahead of the matches.

Rijiju paid rich tributes to Sania. "I have come to Hyderabad for Sania Mirza's send-off, her farewell match. I am delighted to see so many people turning up for this. Sania Mirza is an inspiration not just for Indian tennis but for Indian sports too," said Rijiju. "When I was the Sports Minister I used to be in touch with Sania. I wish her all the very best for her future endeavours," the minister added.

After the matches, Sania was felicitated by Telangana ministers KT Rama Rao and V Srinivas Goud. "The greatest honour for me has been to play for my country for 20 years. It is every athlete's dream to represent their country at the highest level. I was able to do that," Sania said.

As fans cheered her, Sania turned emotional. "These are very, very happy tears. I could not have asked for a better send-off," she said. I hope that many, many Sanias would emerge in India," added the Indian tennis legend.

F1 DRIVERS UNHAPPY WITH CHANGE IN RULES

AGENCIES

Manama, March 5: Formula One (F1) will experiment with qualifying at two races this season, the first likely to be Imola in May, but double World Champion Max Verstappen and other drivers see no need for change.

The plan is to restrict tyre choice for the Saturday session so the first phase of qualifying will be 'hard' compound tyres only, the second 'mediums' and the final top 10 shootout on the quickest 'softs'. Drivers currently have a free choice of tyre throughout qualifying. The move would reduce each driver's allocation to 11 sets of tyres from 13 for the weekend, reducing the number Pirelli make and transport.

The experiment has been confirmed by the governing FIA but the races have yet to be confirmed by Pirelli, although teams have flagged up Italy's Imola as the start of the European season.

"I hope it's not going to be cold in Imola, otherwise it's going to

I don't think that rules regarding tyres should change. There are other ways to increase the level of competition

MAX VERSTAPPEN

be quite tricky," Red Bull's pole-sitter Verstappen told reporters at the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix. "It's the same for everyone but I don't think we need to actually do these kinds of things in qualifying. I don't really see the benefit of it. It's better if we make sure that all the cars are close to each other and more competitive instead of spicing things up in that way," Verstappen added.

Teammate Sergio Perez, second in qualifying Saturday, agreed with the Dutch driver. "We do not really need to change anything," he said. "We'll see once we try it but I don't think there's a need to change something that is working well," Perez added.