



DOWN MEMORY LANE

Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu opens up on how she was in the darkest phase of life, post her failed marriage

LEISURE P2



TROUBLE MOUNTS FOR RAHUL

Former IPL chief Lalit Modi threatens to sue Rahul Gandhi in an UK court over the 'Modi surname' remark

INTERNATIONAL P10



IPL KICKS OFF TODAY

Chennai Super Kings face defending champions Gujarat Titans in the season-opener of the 16th edition of IPL

SPORTS P12

SHORT TAKES

FELLING OF TREES FOR PURI CHARIOTS BEGIN

Berhampur: The ritual of felling trees for construction of the three chariots for Rath Yatra festival in Puri started Thursday in the North Ghumusar forest range in Ganjam district. Two dead 'Phasi' trees identified by the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) were cut in the Central Kalimba forest amid chants of 'Jai Jagannath' and other rituals. A total of 29 trees in the Central Kalimba, Tarasinghi and Mujagada forests have been chosen for felling. According to tradition, the logs will be sliced as per specified numbers of pieces for the commencement of chariot construction from the day of Akshay Tritiya. Traditionally, 865 logs of 'Dhaura', 'Phasi' and 'Asana' trees are used in the construction of the three wooden chariots of the Holy Trinity.

FIRE IN FERRY KILLS 31 IN PHILIPPINES

Manila: A ferry carrying about 250 passengers and crew caught fire in the southern Philippines and 31 people drowned or died in the blaze, the bodies of whom were found later, Governor Jim Hataman of the southern island province of Basilan said Thursday. Many of those rescued had jumped off the 'MV Lady Mary Joy 3' in panic at the height of the fire and were plucked from the sea by the coast guard, navy, another ferry and local fishermen. However, 17 people are still missing, so the toll may go up," the official added. Eighteen of bodies were found inside an air-conditioned cabin of the burnt boat, another official said. The ferry was en route to Jolo town in Sulu province from Zamboanga.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You may have studied in a reputed college, but I got my journalism lessons directly from the PM

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	35.0°C	35.2°C
TEMP MIN	24.7°C	24.5°C
Humidity	85%	88%
Rainfall	0.4mm	Nil
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	



FESTIVE MOOD: Thousands of devotees took part in a rally on Janpath to celebrate the occasion of Ram Navami in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

OP PHOTO

Russia arrests WSJ journo for 'spying'

Kremlin alleges that Evan Gershkovich was using his journalistic credentials to obtain classified information about a military-industrial complex

AGENCIES

Moscow, March 30: Russia's security service has arrested an American reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) on espionage charges, the first time a US correspondent has been detained on spying accusations since the Cold War. The newspaper denied the allegations.

Evan Gershkovich was detained in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg while allegedly trying to obtain classified information, the Federal Security Service, known by the acronym FSB, said Thursday here.

The service, which is the top domestic security agency and main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, alleged that Gershkovich 'was acting on the US orders to collect information about the activities of one of the enterprises of the Russian military-industrial complex that constitutes a state secret'. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Thursday:



■ Last US journalist to be arrested in Russia was Nicholas Daniloff in 1986

■ Gershkovich to be used as 'trump card' for future prisoner exchange

■ If convicted Gershkovich faces 20 years in prison

"It is not about a suspicion, it is about the fact that he (Evan) was caught red-handed."

The media house however, rub-

bished the Russian claims. "The *Wall Street Journal* vehemently denies the allegations from the FSB and seeks the immediate release of our trusted and dedicated reporter, Evan Gershkovich. We stand in solidarity with Evan and his family," the newspaper said. The arrest comes at a moment of bitter tensions between the West and Moscow over the war in Ukraine and as the Kremlin intensifies a crackdown on opposition activists, independent journalists and civil society groups. **Contd...P4**

14 dead as temple well caves in on Ram Navami

It has been alleged that the temple was illegally constructed on the roof of the well and that led to the disaster

AGENCIES

Bhopal/Indore, March 30: Fourteen persons died Thursday after the roof of a 'bawdi' (well) collapsed during 'bhavan', a fire ritual, on the occasion of Ram Navami at a temple in Indore city, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in Bhopal. The tragedy occurred at the Baleshwar Mahadev Jhulelal temple in Indore's Patel Nagar.

However, there is confusion regarding exact toll. Indore Collector Illaiyara T had earlier put the toll at 12 while some local websites and newspapers said 14 people had died in accident. PTI meanwhile said the toll was 11.

Thirteen women and a man died in the accident, Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra told reporters in Bhopal. "Five people are still missing and the chances of their survival is slim," he added.

The CM later said he has ordered a probe into the incident. According to Chouhan, 19 persons were rescued and taken to the hospital and all of them are responding well to treatment. Chouhan also announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 for the injured.

The temple was constructed by



Fire personnel haul up a woman who had fallen into the well at Indore

PTI PHOTO

laying a slab over the 'bawdi' in a covered campus, Mishra said. A probe has been ordered into the matter; particularly to find out how the temple was allowed to be constructed over a 'bawdi', he added. Nearly 30-35 devotees fell into the well after the accident at the temple, said Indore Police Commissioner Makrand Deoskar citing eyewitness accounts. Earlier, a witness had put the number at 25.

An eyewitness said that during the religious programme, there was a huge crowd of devotees on the roof of the 'bawdi'. As the structure could not bear the load of so many people, it caved in, he said. After the accident there was utter chaos as people started looking for their family members who were present on the premises at the time of the tragedy.

BJP, BJD cross swords over law and order

BJD tells Union Minister to understand the difference between crime and lawlessness

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: Ahead of the Jharsuguda bypoll, the BJP and BJD got engaged in a war of words Thursday on Twitter over the prevailing law and order situation in Odisha. Union Minister and senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan along with MLA Suryabanshi Suraj were involved in a battle of words with BJD's Sasmit Patra on the micro-blogging platform.

Pradhan targeted the Odisha government over the alleged kidnap and murder of 15-year-old Samarth Agrawal of Jharsuguda, just two months after the brutal murder of the then Health Minister and local MLA Naba Kishore Das (January 29).

Alleging lawless in Odisha is a reality, Pradhan said it is high-time for the BJD government to recognise their faults. "The murder of young Samarth exactly two months after the broad daylight killing of Minister Nabha Das exposes the Odisha government's tall claims on rule of law," Pradhan said.

"Gruesome incidents like the above mentioned murders have shocked everyone and weakened the trust of people of Odisha. No amount of empathy will bring solace to young Samarth's family. The Odisha government must ensure safety of citizens," Pradhan added.

Senior BJD leader and Rajya Sabha member Sasmit Patra countered Pradhan's statement saying BJP-ruled states like UP, MP and Maharashtra have more murder cases than Odisha in 2021.

"Don't insult the peace-loving people of Odisha by branding them as lawless. Don't insult Odisha for your petty political narrative. It is surprising to see that despite you having been a Minister for so long, you are still unaware about the difference between lawlessness (law and order) and crime," Patra said.

"Please don't try to mislead and do politics on sensitive matters of crime," Patra added. As per the NCRB Report (2021), in BJP-ruled states like UP, MP, Maharashtra, Assam and Haryana more rape cases have been reported than Odisha, the BJD MP said.

Reacting to Patra, BJP legislator Suraj said, "People of Odisha are peace-loving and do understand what lawlessness and crime mean. Safety and security of citizens is one of the most important functions of a government. Odisha government has been a complete failure in this aspect."

Idlis titillate taste buds across India

INITIALLY, IDLIS WERE CONSIDERED A SOUTH INDIAN DELICACY, BUT NOT ANYMORE. A RECENT SURVEY HAS FOUND THAT IDLIS HAVE BECOME THE STAPLE BREAKFAST DIET FOR ALL AND SUNDRY

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: What was a typical South Indian food, a couple of decades back, has now become popular across India irrespective of the taste buds. Idlis have now become the go-to food for all and sundry because it is easily available and very easy to digest. Today idli, a dish composed solely of rice and fermented lentils, is most popular and has replaced many traditional breakfast diets, in various parts of India.

Thursday was celebrated as the 'World Idli Day' and on the occasion a food delivery company said that it has served 33 million plates of idlis in the last 12 months. This is just the figure that is available from one company; so one can imagine what will the total amount be if all the other services are taken into account.

"Forget delivery services; just think about all the roadside vendors



who sell idlis and also the people who go to hotels and order the item, the figure for the last 12 months shall be staggering indeed," a food blogger was quoted as saying on 'NDTV'. Today it can safely be said that idli

has become the staple food for the health freaks and even the not-so-healthy people," she added.

The top three cities in the world where idlis are most frequently ordered are Bangalore, Hyderabad,

and Chennai. However, the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Kochi, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Pune and Vizag are a close second.

The prize of the highest idli buyer in the last 12 months goes to a resident of Hyderabad. The 'Swiggy' user ordered the maximum number of idlis last year, spending a whopping ₹6,00,000 on this delicacy. What's more, this user ordered 8,428 plates of idlis, including orders placed for friends and family while travelling across cities like Bangalore and Chennai.

An analysis of food habits of people across 10 different cities has revealed an interesting fact. The most popular time for ordering idlis is between 8.00am and 10.00am. It means that people love having idlis for breakfasts. However, consumers in Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Coimbatore and Mumbai also love ordering idlis during dinner. **Contd...P4**

RLY MIN ALLOTS ₹300 CRORE FOR CUTTACK STATION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 30: The Cuttack railway station will be modernised as a world-class facility at an expenditure of ₹303 crore, Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said Thursday during a programme here.

"Cuttack railway station will be redeveloped as a world-class station and ₹303 crore has been sanctioned for the work. This year, a record 400km of railway tracks have been laid in Odisha. Earlier, in 2009-14, a mere 50 km was being constructed annually," the Railway Minister pointed out. He said that after work at the Cuttack station is completed it will have all the modern facilities that passengers need.

Vaishnaw gave the information about upgrading the Cuttack railway station while flagging off the Bhadrak-Nayagarh Town-Bhadrak MEMU train. **P3**

2 women trampled to death by tusker

POST NEWS NETWORK

Satamile, March 30: In yet another incident of man-animal conflict, two women were trampled to death Thursday by a tusker while collecting mohua flowers at a jungle near Dudurkote village under Hindol forest range in Dhenkanal. The deceased have been identified as Puti Samal, 84, wife of late Mangulu Samal and Agari Majhi, 73, wife of Naba Majhi both residents of Dudurkote village in the district.

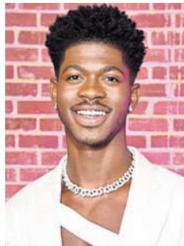
According to reports, the two women had gone to the forest to collect mohua flowers when they were attacked by a tusker which chased them and trampled them to death. Being old, both could not run quickly and died on the spot. Family members and others rushed to the spot to rescue the two, but by then they had succumbed to their injuries.

The incident sparked tension in the area as kin and villagers put up the bodies at Tarini Square and staged a road blockade on Puruna Katak-Sambalpur road. They demanded ₹50 lakh compensation to the families of the deceased and job for one of the family members.

On being informed, forest ranger Lohit Rath, SDPO Deepak Jena reached the spot and tried to placate the protestors. The agitators relented after more than five hours after the ranger and SDPO announced that ₹4 lakh financial assistance will be given to families of both the deceased at one go. Police and Forest department officials have initiated an investigation into the tusker attack and the bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

It should be stated here that in the last 10 years a total of 925 people have lost their lives in Odisha due to elephant attacks as per information shared in the Assembly.

leisure



LIL NAS X DOESN'T LIKE DATING FAMOUS PEOPLE

Montero hitmaker Lil Nas X said that he used to use the exclusive dating app Raya in his quest to find love, but he's now stopped because all the other users were well-known and from his past experience, he doesn't want to go out with another star, reports [femalefirst.co.uk](https://www.femalefirst.co.uk).

I WANT TO QUIT ALCOHOL: KATY

American singer-songwriter Katy Perry revealed that she has made a five-week sobriety pact with her fiancé, Orlando Bloom, at a curated cocktail party. The singer and mother of one, who is planning to quit drinking, says, "I've been sober for five weeks today."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Today you will feel mushy and forlorn. Ganesh says you will make special efforts to strengthen your relationships. You look upon commitment as a security for the future. As a result, you will develop strong, long-term bondings.

TAURUS
You will find comfort, perched on a branch in the family tree, today. Your maturity will help you deal with emotional issues with ease. Energy and exuberance will be an investment you make today, the results of which you will reap in the days to come, hopes Ganesh.

GEMINI
Today, you will toil as if you have to conquer Mt. Everest. And you will, says Ganesh. You may not get a standing ovation or a medal of honour for your hard work and dedication, but you will be lavishly appreciated by your superiors and colleagues. The task will require a lot of character and even a few changes in your disposition, but you will do this with ease.

CANCER
When the going gets tough, it's better to go with the flow. But you belong to a school of thought that believes that in such troubled times, it's better to stay out of water altogether. Since it is not your day today, you are likely to postpone all important decisions and work. Ganesh approves.

LEO
The trader in you comes to the fore today. With an impeccable eye for recognising profitable avenues, you will quickly spot opportunities that arise from buying goods at cheaper prices, and selling them off at a rate that leaves you with a lump sum profit.

VIRGO
There is a strong indication that you will dabble in writing or performing arts, and emerge with excellent results. Since these are your passions, you may cultivate hobbies in these fields, if they are not already your profession. Enjoy the power you have over people today as you grip them with sweet words, swinging to your whims, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Your family is the cornerstone of your success. And today is no different. Your auspicious day starts from your home, and you manage to carry this luck everywhere you go with the same tempo and gusto, predicts Ganesh. Your smile enables you to keep winning people to your side.

SCORPIO
You will spend most of the day in self-introspection and in testing your capabilities. You will take all the needed steps to improve your professional proficiency. Your rare insight and gifted understanding of human nature will prepare you for leadership in the near future, hopes Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
Today, you will most certainly put your heart and soul into your work. But it is rather unlikely that you will get the returns in proportion to the efforts you put in. Yet, at the end of the day, you will be more than satisfied that you have got the chance to display your innate talents, says Ganesh.

CAPRICORN
Often, sentiments take over your mind. Making you impractical, at times, this tendency proves to be harmful for you. Don't show it on your face as others may take advantage of your weakness, advises Ganesh. If you don't control your emotions, it may become an obstacle in your path to success.

AQUARIUS
You plot and plan well today! A lot of your time, energy and money may go into less productive activities. But the quality of your work will near perfection. Keep it up, says Ganesh. It is this creativity which gives you an edge over others.

PISCES
Today your intellectual streak comes to the fore. You will indulge your curiosity and take interest in natural phenomenon. Your faith will help you complete all your pending tasks with ease. You will leave things to destiny.

When Fatima felt like a kid



Mumbai: Actress Fatima Sana Shaikh recently attended the Adishakti workshop in Pondicherry to master her art. Be it exploring new genres or stepping into a new character, the actress is always up and ready for it. This is something well witnessed in her films and series be it, *Dangal*, *Ludo*, *Thar*, *Modern Love: Mumbai*, or any other. Recently, reports were rife that Fatima was in Pondicherry for some time and now she opened up about her experience of attending the acting workshop and what were her thoughts behind the same.

She says, "For me, Adishakti is like a new experience where I feel like a kid who is extremely excited to learn something new and eager to see what happens. The tools that I am learning, I can definitely use them as an actor in the future. It's nice to learn new things about your craft which will help me grow as an artiste!"

On the work front, the release date of Anurag Basu's directorial *Metro In Dino* featuring Fatima was recently announced. While on the other hand, the actress will also be seen in *Sam Bahadur* alongside Vicky Kaushal and Sanya Malhotra.



'Have inherited vision on action from dad'

Mumbai: Actor-turned-director Ajay Devgn has redefined the genre of action films with his unique style of action and his ability to bring depth and complexity to his characters. In fact, his latest release *Bhola* is also a high-octane drama film along with a six-minute bike-truck chase scene. Speaking of the same recently, Devgn said that whenever he designs his action scenes, he ensures that he "doesn't copy a shot from any Hollywood film."

While talking about his vision on the action, he credited his father Veeru Devgan, and said, "I have inherited it from my father. I have learnt most of it from him. He used technology at a time when it wasn't available. He took it to a point where people were amazed at how he did a particular scene at that particular point."

Now that he has the support of technology, he can take it forward and create something where even people who are exposed to technology will turn around and wonder how this was created, said the action star. Coming back to *Bhola*, it is an official remake of Lokesh Kanagaraj's 2019 release *Kaithi*.

Samantha spills beans on her failed marriage

Hyderabad: South star Samantha Ruth Prabhu enjoys a tremendous fan following in Hindi film industry as well. The diva, who donned the role of a rakish antagonist in *The Family Man Season 2*, will soon be seen in the global spy series *Citadel*, opposite Varun Dhawan.

On the personal front, the actor recently went through a divorce with now former husband Naga Chaitanya. In a latest media interaction Samantha opened up on that low phase and how things were never easy. She said, "During the toughest times of this condition, I was in a very dark place, and I had some really dark thoughts. I was not going to let these thoughts destroy me. It means I have to start looking one step forward. I am fortunate that many close people stood by me. I still haven't overcome it, but the number of bad days has reduced a lot."

Earlier, the actor had also admitted that she gave her 100% to her marriage, but things did not go as planned. She further spoke about keeping a brave front and carrying on with her work, since that was the only way she knew to come out of this.



Meera on turning producer

Mumbai: Actress Meera Chopra who came forward to support her cousin Priyanka Chopra's recent confession that she was bullied out of Hindi film industry, has decided to turn producer. Not that she is afraid of being bullied out of the industry. Meera says, "I feel only those who allow it, get bullied. But I've faced the dynamics of power-play in this industry. And why just the entertainment industry, it happens everywhere."

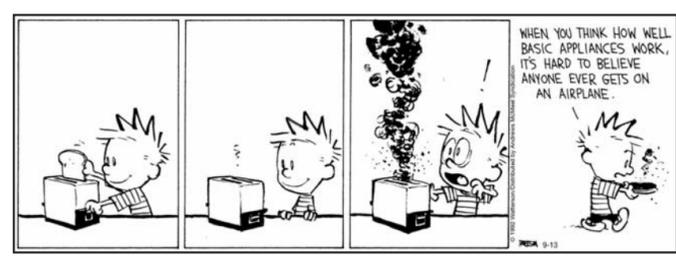
Meera who has worked in Hindi and Tamil films, is tired of waiting for opportunities. It's time for her to create her own opportunities. "That's right," says Meera. "I am producing two films for myself. I will announce them soon. I think I am done with giving producers the power to decide the quality of work I deserve. I feel producing my own films is much easier than depending on casting directors, producers and directors. They are part of such a vicious circle!"



PEANUTS



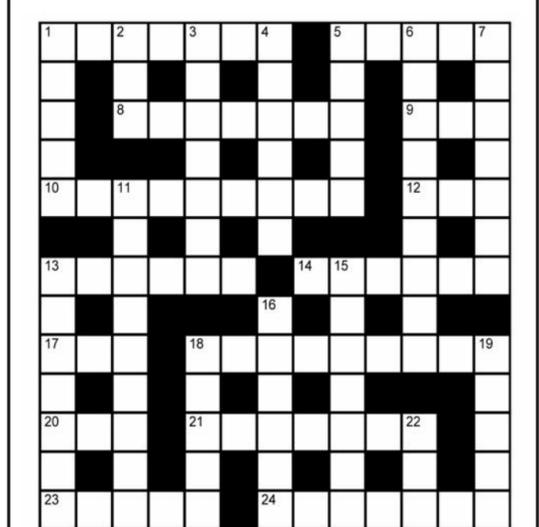
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



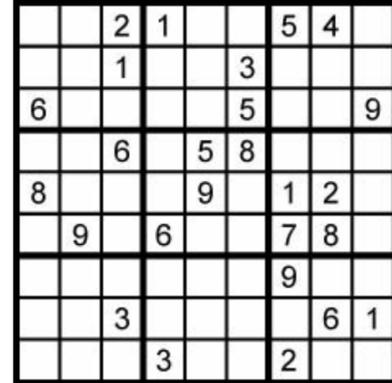
FUN post CROSSWORD



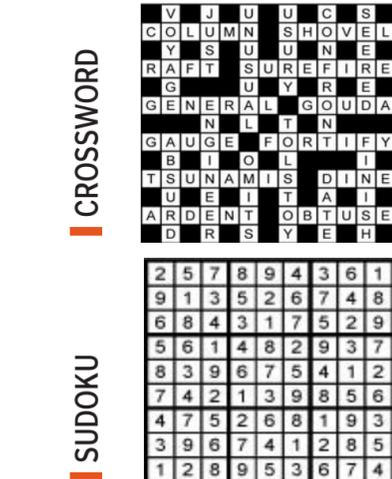
- Across**
- 1 Silverback
 - 5 Implicit
 - 8 Orange liqueur
 - 9 Knight's title
 - 10 Cost-effective
 - 12 Friend in Avignon
 - 13 Baby's bed
 - 14 Look up to
 - 17 Almond, e.g.
 - 18 Cocktail mixer (6,3)
 - 20 Stumble
 - 21 Bed or settee items
 - 23 Cheeky
 - 24 Marathon members
 - 5 Food fish
 - 6 Neighbour of Panama (5,4)
 - 7 Aardvark fare
 - 11 Praise giver
 - 13 Water flask
 - 15 Weaken, as crowd noise (3,4)
 - 16 Fisherman
 - 18 Bohemian itinerant
 - 19 Certain vessels
 - 22 Behold

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

₹1.84cr NGT fine for Bargarh legacy waste

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the state government to pay Rs 1.84 crore for the remediation of huge legacy waste dumped by Bargarh Municipality in Ward No.15 of the town during last 10 to 15 years.

The environment watchdog asked the government to deposit the amount in an Escrow account to be utilised by Bargarh Municipality for treatment of the legacy waste which the civic body could not do "due to financial constraints".

"The amount of Rs 1, 84, 42,800 shall be deposited by the State Government in an ESCROW ac-

count to be utilised for the remediation measures for treatment of the legacy waste as well Bio-mining and all other remedial measures as may be required for Bargarh Municipality," (sic) the tribunal instructed.

The municipality has been directed to complete the treatment of legacy waste through bio-mining/micro composting centres/material recovery facilities by December 31, 2023. It asked the civic body to construct a boundary wall around the dumping sight within two months till the clearing up of legacy waste.

The green panel has also directed the municipal body to install and make operational the proposed five sewerage treatment plants (STPs) of 125 KLD by the stipulated period.

The tribunal said that the legacy waste caused severe damage to environment and people living around

garbage and untreated municipal waste water is being released into Jeera River flowing through the Bargarh town.

Subsequently, the tribunal constituted a committee comprising Bargarh Collector, scientists from Odisha State Pollution Control Board and Central Pollution Control Board, and the executive officer of Bargarh municipality to look into the allegations.

The committee in its report noted that Bargarh Municipality has dumped around 51,476 tonne garbage for over 10-15 years on a land measuring 1.59 acres in Ward No. 15. Bargarh town generates around 35.5 tonne municipal waste every day, it said.

It pointed out that the municipality is liable to pay over Rs 1.54 crore at the rate of Rs 300 per tonne of garbage as environment compensation and Rs 30 lakh for failing to set up STP.

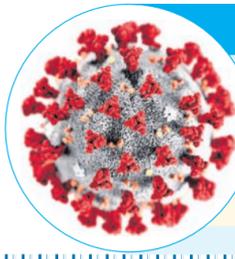


THE NGT ASKED THE CIVIC BODY TO CONSTRUCT A BOUNDARY WALL AROUND THE DUMPING SIGHT WITHIN TWO MONTHS TILL THE LEGACY WASTE IS CLEARED



AT LORD'S ABODE

Veteran actor Jaya Prada poses for a photo after paying obeisance to Srimandir deities in Puri, Thursday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,36,88,663	65,66,53,709	68,29,605
India	4,47,12,692	4,41,68,321	5,30,862
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204



COUNTDOWN BEGINS: Logs for construction of chariots for upcoming Puri Rath Yatra being consecrated at the state-run sawmill in Khapuria area of Cuttack, Thursday

OP PHOTO

₹303cr for world-class Cuttack rly stn

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Cuttack, March 30: Cuttack railway station will be redeveloped as a world-class facility with an expenditure of Rs 303 crore, said Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw who, along with Union Education and Skill Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, flagged off of the inaugural run of Bhadrak-Nayagarh Town-Bhadrak MEMU train in the Silver City Thursday.

On the inaugural day, the train left Cuttack station towards Bhadrak. However, the regular service will commence March 31, 2023, it was learnt.

"Cuttack railway station will be redeveloped as world-class station and Rs 303 crore has been sanctioned for the work. This year,



a record 400km of rail line has been laid in the state. Earlier, in 2009-14, a mere 50km was being constructed annually," the Railway minister said.

Vaishnaw said direct rail link between Bhadrak and Nayagarh districts and connecting five districts of the state through key towns like Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar and

Cuttack will fulfil the aspirations of the public.

He said, "It was a long-pending demand of the people of both Bhadrak and Nayagarh districts. Earlier, it was announced to provide a new train from Bhadrak towards Bhubaneswar during the foundation stone laying for redevelopment of Bhubaneswar rail-

way station."

The Union Education and Skill Development minister said, "It was a commitment of the Ministry of Railways under the leadership of Vaishnaw to fulfil public aspirations of this region, and here is the result showing the fulfilment."

The Union Ministers released postal stamp on legends of the

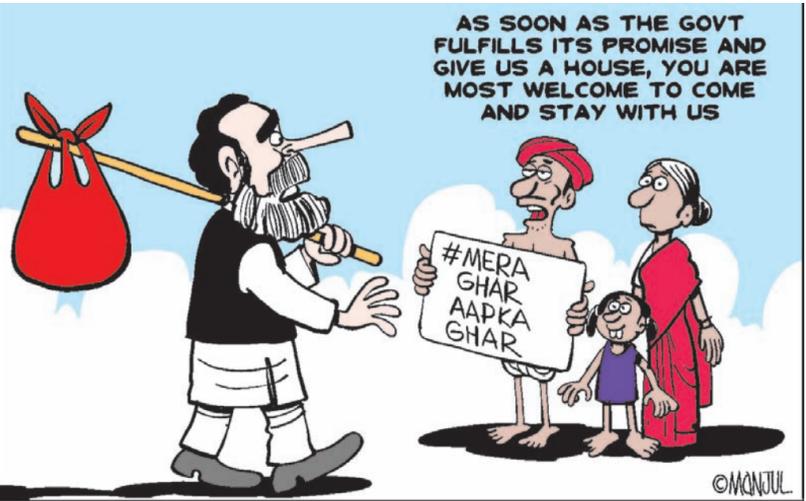
Pradhan to visit CUO

Bhubaneswar: Union Education and Skill Development Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will visit the Central University of Odisha (CUO) April 1, 2023 and address the university community. The minister would lay the foundation stone for the Sports Complex, inaugurate the Work Station and Language Lab of the university. He is also scheduled to review several development projects of the university. Eminent personalities of the region will be felicitated by Pradhan.

state at Ravenshaw University. Among others, Barabati-Cuttack MLA Mohammed Moquim and Dhamnagar MLA Suraj Suryavanshi were present during the event at Cuttack station.

count to be utilised for the remediation measures for treatment of the legacy waste as well Bio-mining and all other remedial measures as may be required for Bargarh Municipality," (sic) the tribunal instructed.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



40-YR-OLD DIES OF ELECTROCUTION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack Sadar, March 30: In a tragic incident, a 40-year-old man died of electrocution while he was connecting a pump set to an electricity point at Mallipur village under Kishannagar police limits, Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Ranjan Bhoi, who got the fatal shock while he was trying to irrigate a farmland near his house, police said. Though he was rushed to Kishannagar primary health centre (PHC) for treatment, the doctors declared him dead on arrival.

On being informed, the police recovered the body and sent it to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack for post-mortem. The police registered a case (3/23) of unnatural death and started an investigation.

Govt waives customs duty on drugs for all rare diseases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The government has exempted basic customs duty on all drugs and food for special medical purposes imported for personal use for treatment of rare diseases.

The import duty waiver will come into effect from April 1. Also, the government has exempted Pembrolizumab (Keytruda), used in treatment of various cancers, from basic customs duty.

Drugs/medicines generally attract basic customs duty of 10 per cent, while some categories of life saving drugs/vaccines attract a concessional rate of 5 per cent or nil, it said. "The Central government

has given full exemption from basic customs duty on all drugs and Food for Special Medical Purposes imported for personal use for treatment of all Rare Diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases 2021," a finance ministry statement said. Food for Special Medical Purposes is a food formulation intended to provide nutritional support to persons who suffer from a specific disease, disorder or a medical condition, as a part of their dietary management.

In order to avail this exemption, the individual importer has to produce a certificate from Central or State Director Health Services or District Medical Officer/Civil Surgeon of the district.

While exemptions have already been provided to specified drugs for treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy or Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, the government has been receiving many representations seeking customs duty relief for drugs and medicines used in treatment of other rare diseases. Drugs or Special Foods required for the treatment of these diseases are expensive and need to be imported.

The ministry said it is estimated that for a child weighing 10 kg, the annual cost of treatment for some rare diseases, may vary from Rs 10 lakh to more than Rs 1 crore per year with treatment being lifelong and drug dose and cost, increasing with age and weight.

Protein key to reprogramming damaged heart cells found

The findings from Sanford Burnham Prebys, US, could help transform treatments for a range of diseases, including cardiovascular, Parkinson's and neuromuscular diseases



The ability of body cells to "turn on" and "turn off" selected genes, changing what they look like and what they do, forms the basis of cellular reprogramming, an emerging approach in regenerative medicine in which scientists transform cells to repair damaged or injured body tissues.

"Even if a person survives a heart attack, there could still be

long-term damage to the heart that increases the risk of heart problems down the line," said lead author Alexandre Colas, assistant professor, Sanford Burnham Prebys.

"Cellular reprogramming could, in theory, allow us to control the activity and appearance of any cell," said Colas.

"This concept has huge implications in terms of helping the

The scientists determined that AJSZ protein could be found in all cell types, suggesting it to be a promising treatment target for a variety of diseases

body regenerate itself, but barriers to reprogramming mechanisms have prevented the science from moving from the lab to the clinic," said Colas.

The researchers identified a group of four proteins, named AJSZ, that help solve this problem. "By blocking the activity of these proteins, we were able to reduce scarring on the heart and induce a 50 per cent improvement in overall heart function in mice that have undergone a heart attack," said Colas.

While being primarily focused on heart cells, the scientists determined that AJSZ could be found

in all cell types, suggesting it to be a promising treatment target for a variety of diseases.

"This breakthrough is a significant step forward on our way to turning these promising biological concepts into real treatments," said Colas.

The next steps in the research involve exploring multiple options to block AJSZ proteins from functioning. "We need to find a way to inhibit these proteins in a way we can control to make sure we are only reprogramming the cells that need it," said Colas.

"We will be screening for drugs that can help us inhibit these proteins in a controlled and selective manner in the coming months," said Colas.

About the study, Colas said, "Helping the heart heal after injury is an important medical need in its own right, but these findings also pave the way for wider applications of cell reprogramming in medicine."

No penalty on contractor sans notice: SC to state

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 30: The Supreme Court has rejected the petition of Odisha government against the Orissa High Court order that junked a penalty slapped by the state 'unilaterally' on a contractor while extending the work period.

A two-judge SC bench of Justices MR Shah and BV Nagarathna observed that the state government cannot levy penalty on the contractor while granting extension of time without putting him to notice.

"The High Court has rightly set aside the penalty levied while granting extension of time. Under the circumstances, the present appeals fail and the same deserve to be dismissed and are accordingly dismissed," the SC said. A contractor was awarded the tender for developing Khariar-Boden-Sinapali Road in Nuaapada district. Although the work was supposed to be completed by September 2009, the contractor

finished it in March 2014. The contractor had applied for extension of time. The time extension was approved by the appropriate authority in 2019. Although the authority allowed the time extension without price escalation for 2009 to 2014, it levied 0.25 per cent penalty on work done during the extended period without even hearing the contractor's version, it was learnt.

The contractor moved HC challenging the "unilateral" penalty. The HC granted relief to the contractor by setting aside the penalty imposed by the state. The state, however, approached the SC challenging the HC order.

The question before the SC was that whether the Odisha government is justified in levying the penalty unilaterally while granting extension of time in favour of the contractor when he failed to complete the work within stipulated time and subsequently, completed it after the period prescribed under the contract.

Free molecular test for cancer treatment



Molecular tests of tumors are advanced tests that can help in understanding tumour biology and planning more personalized treatments. The entire cost of the procedure will be borne by the state government through Nidaan scheme.

Laboratory at Bhubaneswar, and test reports would be sent back to the institutions. The cost of the entire procedure will be borne by the state government through the Nidaan scheme. Notably, molecular tests of tumors are advanced tests that can help in understanding the tumor biology and planning the treatment more precisely for targeted therapies. As they are expensive and require specialized laboratories with expert technicians, this initiative of the government will be of immense help to cancer patients. The laboratory was selected through an open tender by (OSMCL), which has signed agreements with InDNA for SCB, MKCG, VIMSAR, PRMMCH, FMMCH, BBMCH, SLNMCH, Capital Hospital and RGH Rourkela. The facility will be fully functional in these institutions shortly.

Bhubaneswar, March 30: In a significant step towards universal healthcare, the state government will soon make free molecular tests for cancer available at Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute for Cancer (AHPGIC), SCB Medical College and Hospital (SCBMCH) and other tertiary

healthcare centres of the state on PPP mode in partnership with Bhubaneswar-based InDNA Laboratory. Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited (OSMCL) has signed an agreement with InDNA for several medical colleges and hospitals in the state. According to sources, the samples will be collected from these institutions, tested in the InDNA



UP IN ARMS: Demanding a JPC probe into the allegations of fraud and stock manipulation against the Adani Group and condemning Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from Lok Sabha, members of CPI(M) held a demonstration at Master Canteen in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

CONTINUED FROM P1

Idlis titillate...
There are many variants of idli. Plain idli is the most popular across all cities. Rava idli is more popular in Bangalore than any other city, while ghee/neyi karam podi idli is popular in cities across Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. Thatte idli and mini idli also feature regularly among idli orders across all cities. The analysis also found that most customers who go for idlis, tend to order other dishes like sambar, coconut chutney, karampuri, saagu, ghee, tea and coffee.

charges. Analysts feel that this again a ploy to secure release of a prominent and influential Russian in the US. It had happened when the Russians decided to free basketball player Brittney Griner in exchange of notorious arms dealer Viktor Bout a couple of months back. Griner had been kept in jail for over nine months on charges of carrying cannabis oil in his luggage. At a hearing Thursday, a Moscow court quickly ruled to keep Gershkovich behind bars pending the investigation, according to the official 'Telegram' channel of the capital's courts. Gershkovich, who covers Russia, Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations as a correspondent in 'The Wall Street Journal's' Moscow bureau, could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted of espionage. Usually, investigation in such cases takes 12 to 18 months. The FSB noted that Gershkovich had accreditation from the Russian Foreign Ministry to work as a journalist, but spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Gershkovich was using his journalistic credentials as a cover for 'activities that have nothing to do with journalism'.

Russia arrests...
The sweeping campaign of repression is unprecedented since the Soviet era. Gershkovich is the first American reporter to be arrested on espionage charges in Russia since September 1996, when Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for 'US News and World Report', was arrested by the KGB. Daniloff was released without charge 20 days later in a swap for an employee of the Soviet Union's United Nations mission who was arrested by the FBI, also on spying

Five kidnappers nabbed; CP rescues retired govt officer

Bhubaneswar, March 30: The Commissionerate Police has arrested five persons on the charges of kidnapping a retired government officer for ransom in Laxmisagar area of the City. The accused kidnappers were identified as Kuna Nayak alias Kalia, 36, Rajesh Kumar Das alias Polio, 20, Prasanta Kumar Nayaka alias Kurupa, 31, Ananta Panda alias Banu, 35, of Penthakata area and Nirod Kumar Swain alias Tikina, 40, of Balanga area in Puri district. The accused persons were arrested in connection with a case of kidnapping registered at the Laxmisagar police station on the basis of the complaint lodged by the wife of the victim, Manoj Mohapatra. Mohapatra who is a retired civil supplies officer was staying at Saheed Nagar along with his family. March 24, he had reportedly gone to oversee the construction



work of his new house at lane-8 in Jagannath Nagar area under Laxmisagar police limits. When he did not return home till late evening, the worried family members lodged a missing complaint at the police station. Meanwhile, the complainant received a phone call from the accused that informed her about the abduction of Mohapatra and told her to give ₹1.50 crore for the release of her husband. On being informed, the Commissionerate Police formed a team comprising officers of Laxmisagar police station and special squad of City police. The team swung into action and succeeded in rescuing the victim from a house

in Delang, Puri within 24 hours of the abduction. However, the kidnappers managed to give the police a slip. Police later collected the identity of the accused and launched a manhunt to nab them. Several cases have been registered against the accused Ananta at different police stations in Puri district in connection with charges of murder, armed robbery and NDPS. "We found during the investigation that the victim had employed accused Tikina's brother-in-law, Ugrasen to supervise the construction work for the house at Jagannath Nagar. As Tikina was in regular touch with his Ugrasen, he came to know about Mohapatra. Tikina along with his friends later hatched a plan to abduct the victim for ransom. The criminals have no kidnapping antecedent," revealed DCP Prateek Singh. Police also seized a car and five mobiles used by accused in the case.

Anganwadi centres to turn into pre-schools

Bhubaneswar, March 30: To enhance the quality of early childhood education for children aged between 3 to 6 enrolled in a thousand Anganwadi centres of the state, Sesame Workshop India Trust, a non-profit educational organisation, and LTI Mindtree, an Indian multinational, have joined hands under the initiative "Learn. Play. Grow." The initiative is already being implemented in 100 Anganwadi centres of Kalahandi and Jharsuguda to improve Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The project puts special focus on training of Anganwadi workers, using age-appropriate content and curricula, and tries to increase parental engagement. It aims to turn Anganwadi centres into desirable pre-schools able to address several issues like malnutrition, prenatal and postnatal care, and immunization. Print and digital materials in line with the state's ICDS curriculum have been developed and activity and learning kits with play materials and puzzles are being distributed quarterly benefiting both children and parents. The activity kits cover topics including language, cognition, science, physical and emotional well-being, self-regulation, task persistence, self-esteem, and social interaction. They contain classroom resources such as floor games, storybooks, posters, and charts. Sesame Workshop India Trust's multimedia materials are available in Odia using funny and furry muppet friend - Chamki and Elmo to promote joyful learning. LTI Mindtree Global Sustainability Head Paneesh Rao said, "We are committed to providing quality education to all children in Odisha and this partnership with Sesame Workshop India Trust will help us achieve that goal." Sonali Khan, Managing Trustee of Sesame Workshop India Trust, said, "We are excited to partner with the LTI Mindtree to support early childhood education in Odisha."

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of affidavit before Notary, Berhampur, I have changed my name from Rasmita Kumari Mahanty to Smt. Rasmita Nayak after my marriage with Sri Sangram Keshary Nayak & the same name also mentioned in my Aadhaar Card. So, henceforth I shall be known as Smt. Rasmita Nayak, W/o Sri Sangram Keshary Nayak, At/P.O. Daringbadi, Dist. Kandhamal, Odisha, Pin-762104 for all purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary Public, Bhubaneswar on dated 15.12.2000, I have changed my name from Sadhana Sahoo to Saudamini Dikshit for all purposes. Saudamini Dikshit.

LOST

I, Sushma Sahu, R/o-Ward No. 18, Bharati Nagar, Bargarh - 768028 declare that I have purchased a land of area 0.65 dec. vide Khata No. 2414/14022. That the ROR (Khata No.-2414 / 14022) has been lost somewhere. Inspite of my best efforts, I couldn't trace out the same.



THEATRE FEST: Artistes perform a play 'Sambadik Sarojkant' as part of the Lavanya Natya Mahotsav at Bhanjakala Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Thursday

Ram Navami rallies snarl up traffic

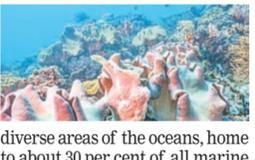
Bhubaneswar, March 30: The Capital city Thursday witnessed severe traffic jam due to rallies organised by the members of various Hindu organisations on the occasion of Ram Navami. The participants in these rallies were also seen brazenly violating the traffic guidelines while police remained a mute spectator. As per witness accounts, workers of several Hindu outfits carried out rallies at important places, road stretches and service roads like Cuttack Road, Jaydev Vihar, Rajpath Thursday afternoon. These workers on speeding motorcycles were chanting 'Jay Shri Ram' slogans. More than 600 members of saffron organisations later gathered at Barmunda play ground for a grand Rama Navami Sobha Yatra.



Meanwhile, DCP Prateek Singh reached the spot and advised the organizers to desist from conducting the proposed Sobha Yatra with such huge numbers of participants to avoid traffic congestion. Nonetheless, the workers carried out Sobha Yatra in different groups across the City. They were not wearing helmets and were riding in triplets in the presence of police officials. Some were also seen sitting dangerously on four-wheelers while chanting slogans. The denizens criticised the police for not taking any action against these violators. DCP Singh said that challans have been issued against the workers caught violating traffic guidelines via the automated smart cameras installed throughout the City.

Detecting coral reef biodiversity in seawater samples

Environmental DNA, or eDNA, extracted from a litre of surface seawater, provides for a more effective and accurate means to measure coral reef biodiversity, according to a new research. EDNA refers to the DNA that living creatures release into the environment, through skin, waste products, and mucus. The research from Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST), Japan, paved the way for large-scale comprehensive surveys of coral reefs to take place, rather than relying on scientific scuba diving or snorkeling for obtaining direct observations. Scientific divers have confirmed the method to work through observations made in the same area of ocean. The method is described in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences. Owing to global warming and other bleaching-causing factors, survival of many coral reefs has been threatened. "Beautiful coral reefs in subtropical and tropical seas account for only 0.2 per cent of the entire ocean," said co-author Nori Satoh, Principal Investigator of OIST's Marine Genomics Unit. "However, they are the most bio-



diverse areas of the oceans, home to about 30 per cent of all marine life," said Satoh. The first step towards the conservation and protection of coral reefs involves understanding the make-up of a coral and how it changes over time. By analysing the eDNA extracted from seawater, without having to enter water, a clear picture of the organisms in-

habiting that part of the ocean can be formed. Previous methods involved scientific scuba diving and snorkeling to record the species and the changes over time, which were time consuming, expensive, and labour intensive. The researchers tested the effectiveness and accuracy of these new tools by conducting a large-scale survey of the ocean surrounding Okinawa using both the eDNA method and scientific divers. Over a four-month period, from early September to late December 2021, 62 sites from around the main Okinawa Island were surveyed

and two to four dominant coral genera at each reef were recorded. "We found that the eDNA analysis matched that of the direct scientific observations with more than 91 per cent accuracy," said OIST Research Scientist, Koki Nishitsuji, first author of the paper. "In fact, 41 out of the 62 sites were identical. The eDNA method indicated the presence of five dominant coral genera at all 62 sites surveyed. What's more the results of the environmental DNA method suggest the presence of corals never before recorded along the coast of Okinawa," said Nishitsuji. PTI

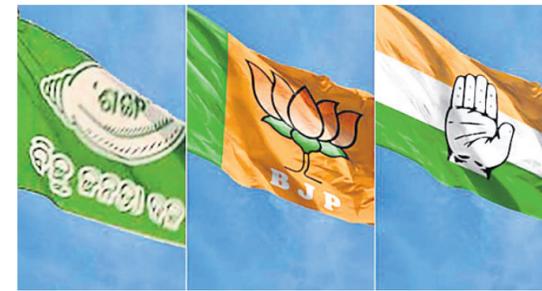
Minor goes missing in Daya river

Bhubaneswar: A 14-year-old minor went missing in Daya river at Lingpur bridge here Thursday afternoon. The victim was identified as Sumitendra Sahoo of Indira colony in Lingpur panchayat on the outskirts of the City. Sumitendra along with three of his friends had allegedly gone fishing to the river where he slipped into the Lingpur gorge and was swept away by the water current, sources said. On being informed, a fire services team reached the spot and started search for the minor. As per the last reports, the fire services officials had stopped the search citing poor visibility in the night and would resume the operation Friday morning.

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JHARSUGUDA BY-ELECTION

BJD banks on Naba's kin, 3 hope for saffron ticket



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 30: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced May 10 as the date for by-election to the Jharsuguda Assembly segment, Wednesday. The date when the announcement was made coincides with that of the assassination of former state health minister Naba Das who was representing the Jharsuguda Assembly segment in the state Assembly.

Das was murdered January 29 and his death has just completed two months when the ECI announced the date of by-election to the constituency. According to data available from 2019 elections, the Jharsuguda Assembly segment has 20,23,225 voters. In this election, BJD candidate Naba Das won by receiving 98,620 votes, BJP's Dinesh Jain got 52,921 votes and Congress candidate Mahendra Nayak received only 18,823 votes.

While the ruling BJD is banking on the family members of the slain minister to win the poll, saffron leader Tankadhar Tripathy is the front runner for the ticket from BJP.

The date of announcement of the bypoll has sent chatters abuzz in the area and warmed up politics in Jharsuguda Assembly segment. The filing of nominations for the election will begin April 20, withdrawal of nominations will be allowed from April 23 and the polls will be held May 10. The counting of votes and declaration of the winner are slated for the same day, May 13.

Das was murdered January 29 and his death has just completed two months when the ECI announced the date of by-election to the constituency

Few other leaders could match the popularity, clout and organisation that late Naba Das had in Jharsuguda

Speculations are rife that those leaders who are in the ruling party because of the fear of Naba Das might now leave the party and support the candidates of other parties

The fight to wrest the seat will be between the three principal political parties - the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD), opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the grand old party Congress. It is said that BJD is certain to give ticket to the slain leader's daughter Deepali Das or his son Vishal Das.

On the other hand, BJP's state secretary Tankadhar Tripathy is the front runner for the ticket. Two other BJP leaders Dinesh Jain and Trinath Goel are also aspiring for the ticket. Trinath is a new entrant in BJP from BJD. Mahendra Nayak is the frontrunner from the Congress ticket.

Dinesh Jain was defeated by Naba Das in the last election. Few other leaders could match the popularity, clout and organisation that late Naba Das had in Jharsuguda. Speculations are rife that those leaders who are in the ruling party

because of the fear of Naba Das might now leave the party and support the candidates of other parties.

Questions are doing the rounds that if the BJD fields any of the family members of Naba Das then how they will be accepted by the voters of Jharsuguda. This will be clear after announcement of results for the elections.

On the other hand, saffron ticket aspirant Tankadhar Tripathy has started attending various programmes in the constituency and canvassing for himself. But, a separate faction in the BJP is learnt to be opposing him. The faction members have also lodged complaints against Tripathy before the state leaders. However, Tripathy is likely to get the ticket as he is a loyalist of a Union minister.

Naba Das's daughter Deepali said that the date when her father died is the day of sorrow for the whole family. Her father died on the same date when the ECI announced the date for the bypoll. Her father's contribution for Jharsuguda was immense and he was always with the residents of Jharsuguda.

She will work with the person who will be announced as the party candidate by the BJD party supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. She said that they are with the people and will work for them. One who will get the party ticket is certain to win in the election. "The love of Jharsuguda residents and the blessings of Chief Minister are with my family," she added.

BJP's state secretary Tankadhar Tripathy said that BJP is a democratic party. The candidate selection is done by the party's Parliamentary board and there is no family-based politics in BJP. All will support the candidate who will be given the ticket by the party. "Our party will not fight the elections to fulfill someone else's dream. Our party will fight the elections to fulfill the dreams and the aspirations of the residents of Jharsuguda and will certainly win," he said.



MATTER OF FAITH: A woman makes offerings to three kids dressed in the attires of Rama, Lakshman and Sita on the occasion of Ram Navami on the premises of a cultural outfit 'Udai' in Sambalpur, Thursday

NEP'20 to help students acquire relevant skills for jobs: Governor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 30: Governor Ganeshi Lal Wednesday said the National Education Policy 2020 will help students acquire knowledge and skills relevant to an evolving job market.

He also said the policy was formulated on the foundation pillars of access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability.

The NEP aims at creating a new system aligned with the global aspirational goals of 21st-century education while remaining consistent with India's tradition and value system," the governor said, while addressing the 24th convocation of Berhampur University here.

The most significant feature of the NEP-2020 is that it aims at promoting both inclusion and excellence, he said.

The Centre is working to make the country a five trillion dollar economy by 2024-25.

The realisation of the goal is incumbent upon the capability of education and training institutes to equip the young men and women with knowledge and skills relevant to an evolving job market. The NEP will help realise the aspirations of the country, he said.



On the occasion, the governor also inaugurated a newly constructed hostel for girl students, a new building allotted to the Post Graduate Department of Journalism and Mass Communication and a new extension of the administrative building on the university campus.

Headmaster arrested for molestation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 30: Police Thursday arrested the headmaster of Dimiria Upper Primary School in this district on charge of molesting the girl students of the school.

The accused teacher was identified as Narayan Senapati, 55, the headmaster of the school. Irked over the development, guardians locked up the headmaster and lodged a complaint at the Telkoi police station. A case was registered in this connection and Senapati produced in the court, Telkoi IIC



Saibraha Rout said. Meanwhile, Senapati has rejected the allegations.

According to the complaint, Senapati used to detain the tribal girl students of Class-VII and Class-VIII under various pretexts at his office and molest them. He also warned them not to disclose the matter before allowing them

to go for home. The matter came to the light after as many as 12 girls informed the guardians, school committee members and the villagers. A meeting was called Wednesday comprising the guardians and school management committee members. However, the headmaster did not turn up at the meeting.

Enraged, the guardians gheraoed the school and locked up the room in which Senapati was living. Later, they called the police. Police and block education officer Subhash Chand Mohanty rushed to the spot and detained the headmaster.

Gujarat man found dead in Bolangir

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, March 30: An elderly man who had taken a house on rent just two days back at Rajivnagarpada in this town was found dead in the house, Thursday.

The matter came to the fore after Town police recovered the body of the man, Thursday afternoon. According to the house owner, the deceased identified him as Raj Bharadwaj, 58, of Nabarangpur while taking the house on rent two days back.

The house owner grew suspicious and informed the Town police after man did not open the door for a long time Thursday morning. Town police recovered the body lying on a cot inside the bedroom in the presence of Puintala tesildar Rohit Bhoi officiating as magistrate. The body was sent for post-mortem to Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) in Bolangir and an investigation was launched.

A police official said that the deceased is originally a native of Gujarat and had come to Bolangir after staying for some years in Nabarangpur. The actual reason behind his death can be ascertained after the post-mortem report is available, a police official added.



WILD BERRY: Women selling 'Char Koli', a seasonal berry found in the jungles, on roadside of Keonjhar town, Thursday

17 black spots identified on Keonjhar highways

Road accidents claimed 349 lives in the district in 2022

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 30: Error in construction and incomplete work on highways and roads have turned out to be the major factors behind the ever increasing rate of road mishaps in Keonjhar district as 17 black spots were identified on National Highway-20 and National Highway-520 passing through the district.

Reports said 95 per cent of the accidents are occurring on the NH-20 and NH-520 that pass through the district.

The two wheeler riders are the major contributors to road mishaps due to driving under the influence of alcohol, rash driving, speeding and overtaking of vehicles on front. Illegal parking of vehicles on the roadside is another reason behind the rise in mishaps. It is alleged that error in road construction and incomplete road works on NH-20 and NH-520 (Panikolli to Rimuli and from Rimuli to Rajamunda) that pass through the district have led to a spurt in mishaps.



Concerned over the development, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has identified 17 black spots contributing to the mishaps. Meanwhile, they have plugged two of the black spots. The identified black spots are Bhadrasahi Square under Barbil police limits, Naradpur Square and Jamudalak Angulia Square under Champua police limits, Bali Jodi Square, Dhenkikote over bridge and Piplia under Ghatagaon police limits, Alughati and Harichandanpur under Harichandanpur police limits, Kuanjharan ghat road under Pandapada police limits, Kusum ghat road and Kanjipani ghat road under Kanjipani police limits, Badapasi, Gopalpur, Padmapur Square, Raisuan over bridge,

Palashpanga Square under Sadar police limits and Barkhola under Ghasipura police limits in the district.

According to a government report, 349 persons lost their lives in 669 road accidents that took place from January to November, 2022. As many as 460 individuals were rendered disabled after losing their limbs or due to serious physical impairment due to accidents.

In 2021, 316 persons lost their lives in 621 roads mishaps in the district while 495 were permanently disabled.

When contacted, regional transport officer (RTO) Gopal Krushna Das said that raids are being conducted in intervals to check road mishaps. Moreover, steps like cancellation of driving licenses and road permits are also being taken. He urged the commuters to be aware and protect themselves by observing the traffic rules and cooperate with the transport department to reduce the road accidents and the related loss of life and property.

Woman beaten to death by hubby

SIMULIA: In a shocking incident, a drunken man allegedly beat up his wife to death over a tiff late Wednesday night at Chhatrapur village under Simulia police limits in Balasore district. The deceased was identified as Kuni Singh, 40, wife of accused Bira Singh, 45, of the village. The matter came to the fore after locals spotted the woman's body on farmland. Police reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. The accused husband was arrested as he confessed to his crime during interrogation. A scientific team was also pressed into service and a case was registered in this connection. Police said that the couple consumed liquor from a liquor shop at Kalasuni Square, Wednesday evening. Later, while returning home, they fought over some issue on the road. Their fight took an ugly turn as Bira lost his cool and beat up his wife with a stick and dumped her on the farmland after tying her limbs with a piece of cloth and returned home.

Millennium-old stepwell discovered in Chanditala

THIS COULD VERY WELL BE THE LARGEST STEPWELL IN THE WHOLE OF ODISHA, SAYS INTACH COORDINATOR ANIL DHIR

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 30: An ancient-era stepwell has been discovered in Chanditala village under Barchana block of Jajpur district by the members of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a culture and heritage research institute. INTACH project coordinator Anil Dhir informed that the well dates almost a millennium back.

Heritage researcher Deepak Kumar Nayak, and history enthusiast Suman Prakash Swain along with INTACH coordinator Dhir have carried out a primary investigation/ review of the stepwell with the help of the locals.

The ancient well is situated on a rectangular area of 120 feet length

and 35 feet breadth at the foot of the Sikharchandi hillock at Chanditala village, researcher Nayak said. It has been built with red laterite stones in the form of a stepwell using ancient architecture.

Notably, stepwells with a long corridor of steps that descend to the water level, are examples of the many types of storage and irrigation tanks that were developed in different parts of India, mainly to cope with seasonal fluctuations in water availability.

In Odisha, other such age-old wells are found at Udayagiri Buddhist corridor, Dalijoda jungle, Nilagiri royal palace, Baideswar temple and Koshaleswar temple premises. But the recently discovered well at Chanditala is the biggest and deepest of them all in



size. One can draw water with ease from the well by descending almost 80 feet deep into the well by the help of the steps. Chanditala villagers are using the water from

this stepwell till date. The well may have been constructed towards the end of the Soma dynasty or the beginning of the Ganga empire in erstwhile

The ancient well is situated on a rectangular area of 120 feet length and 35 feet breadth at the foot of the Sikharchandi hillock at Chanditala village

Odisha as gauged by the historical evidences and archaeological remains found from the Sikharchandi shrine atop the mound. Going by the findings, it is estimated that the well was dug 900 to 1,000 years back, said Nayak.

INTACH coordinator Anil Dhir dubs the discovery as a marvel of

Odisha's ancient architecture. For hundreds of years without any care the architectural wonder has been lying unattended but has overcome the test of time. This could very well be the largest stepwell in the whole of Odisha. But the state Archaeology department is yet to take up any developmental work for the preservation of the well.

The well has found its name as 'Dedhasura-Bhaibohu' well among the villagers. One side of a wall needs a little repair. The state Archaeology department and Tourism department should conduct a detailed research on the ancient well and take steps for its conservation and publicity. INTACH will immediately intimate the state Culture department on the major discovery, Dhir said.

Detachment is the beginning of mastery.
SRI AUROBINDO



Authoritarian Drift

Last week, the International Criminal Court indicted Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, alleging that he is responsible for the forceful removal of Ukrainian children to Russia. This means that the ICC's 123 member states now have an obligation to arrest Putin if given the chance. It is a groundbreaking development. Although diplomatic engagement with Putin has always been difficult, he has now evolved fully into a ruthless and unbridled tyrant.

Worse, Putin's conduct is symptomatic of a broader trend. Around the world, democracy is increasingly under siege. The latest report on "The Global State of Democracy," issued by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, documents an alarming erosion of democratic institutions worldwide. Over half of the 173 countries investigated in 2022 registered significant assaults on democracy. From Afghanistan to Nicaragua, "almost half of all authoritarian regimes have worsened," the authors conclude. In the Asia Pacific region, only 54 per cent of people live in a democracy, and almost 85 per cent of those live in countries where democracy is weak or sliding toward authoritarianism.

This is a worrisome trend. In a globalised world, the task of containing rising authoritarianism cannot be left to individual countries. As we can see from recent global supply-chain disruptions – with Russia's war in Ukraine exacerbating food shortages and inflation in Africa – the fall-out from authoritarianism can be felt far and wide. The question, then, is what international organisations like the ICC can do about it.

So-called strongmen who are actually full of insecurities have a natural propensity to morph into tyrants. From Hugo Chávez in Venezuela to Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, recent history features many leaders who may have come to power with good intentions, but turned worse over time, often ending up with blood on their hands.

I was alerted to this danger firsthand following a meeting with Nicaragua's dictator, Daniel Ortega, in Managua in September 2013. Having admired his overthrow of Anastasio Somoza's corrupt regime during my student years, I had long wanted to meet him. When given the chance, I enjoyed a long discussion about the Sandinista revolution and the challenges facing Nicaragua. Since then, however, sordid revelations about Ortega's tyranny have emerged. I did not realise it at the time, but the man I met was no longer the man who had overthrown Somoza. He had become the very thing he had once opposed.

How did this happen? We know from political science and economics that answers to big macro questions are often embedded in micro factors, and Ortega's case is no exception. If you are a political leader, there comes a time when you must decide whether to try to prolong your time in office. And since politics is a nasty game no matter who you are, there is always a temptation to cross an ethical line – whether by raising money from cronies with the promise of favours, using official agencies to target opponents, or other nefarious means.

The decision depends on the gap between the utility that the leader gets from remaining in office and the utility the leader gets from being out of office. The wider the gap, the greater the leader's effort to stay in office.

As I argue in a recent paper, however, this calculation involves a serious, but common, mistake, which behavioural economists often refer to as "dynamic inconsistency." The problem lies in omitting a longer-term perspective. The more political leaders indulge in intrigue and evil to remain in office, the worse their exit option becomes. Prolonged abuse and intrigue increase the likelihood of law-enforcement investigations of the leader's behaviour (or violent retribution from political opponents) when the leader is out of office. That brings us back to the ICC's arrest warrant. Putin tested the limits of international justice for many years, and now there is an official effort to hold him to account. For that reason, he will now be even more desperate to hold on to power.

In today's interconnected world, such behaviour has global fallout and thus needs to be addressed by the United Nations and organisations like the ICC. Determining precisely what to do will require much deliberation, but the need to expand the scope of international law – or even enshrine it in a global constitution – is obvious, as is the need for a UN that can uphold minimal principles. While there is much to discuss in the future, one immediate imperative is term limits. Whether to institute them should no longer be considered a question to be decided by the country concerned. Given the global dynamics of unchecked power within any given country, we all have an interest in using international law to change the incentives that lead politicians down the road to authoritarianism. There is significant variation in term limits. It is time now to create a uniform standard with which to hold countries accountable.

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. @PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

- The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge. BERTRAND RUSSELL
- Unless one is able to live fully in the present, the future is a hoax. ALAN WATTS
- Work gives you meaning and purpose and life is empty without it. STEPHEN HAWKING

WORDSWORTH

Grub

You might not like to learn that it's the same word as that for a caterpillar or other insect larva, though you will be relieved to hear that it has nothing to do with actually eating them. The source is the old Germanic word meaning to dig (which is also the source of grave). The verb to grub came first in English, around 1300, and meant just what it still does: to break up the surface of the ground or to clear the ground of roots and stumps. Derived from it is our adjective grubby for somebody or something that is dirty and the Australian term grub for a person who is unclean or who has messy habits. The connection with food is the idea of animals foraging for food. In their wild state, for example, pigs grub for edible roots and the like. The larval sense comes from this, because grubs often feed in leaf litter or around roots. The slang sense of human food appears around the middle of the seventeenth century and is also linked to grubbing in the ground for something to eat. Interestingly, in case you should think that slang words must either soon transform themselves into standard English or quickly vanish again, grub has remained slangy – at best informal – in all the years since, as have compounds like grubstake (from the nineteenth-century goldfields practice of investing in a prospector by providing him with money to buy food). Grub has also had several other slang senses that have not survived, such as that for a dwarfish, mean, slovenly sort of person, or someone of small abilities who can survive only by the most menial sort of work.

FOCUS CLIMATE ACTION

IT'S NOW OR NEVER

It is encouraging to hear the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) come out with periodic reports warning of the consequences of global warming. There can be no denying of the disastrous consequences that are already being felt due to climate change but the actions being taken by nations, though to a great extent satisfactory, do not fulfill the requirements that need to be brought in place.



Dhurjati Mukherjee

CONSUMPTION INEQUALITY NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED THROUGH POLICY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

The recently released IPCC Synthesis Report at Interlaken, Switzerland has come forward with a summary of all reports produced since 2015 on the reasons and consequences of global temperature rise due to anthropogenic emissions. Experts are of the opinion that this is the most comprehensive look to date at the causes of global warming, the impacts the rising temperatures are having on people and ecosystems across the world, and strategies that need to be adopted to counter this situation. Leading climate scientists say keeping warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius required deep, rapid and sustained greenhouse gas emissions reduction in all sectors.

Keeping in view the planned fossil fuel infrastructure – coal-fired plants, oil wells, factories, cars and trucks – will already produce enough carbon dioxide to warm the planet roughly 2 degree C, these projects need to be cancelled, retired early or otherwise cleaned up to keep warming below that level. The report underlined that "10% of households with the highest emissions per person contributed 34-45% of all household emissions while the bottom 50% contribute 13 to 16%." India has been emphasising the importance of mindful and deliberate utilisation of natural resources against mindless and wasteful consumption.

Obviously, consumption inequality needs to be addressed through policy, infrastructure and technology access, which is a major message of the report. But to implement such things is an uphill



Biodiversity for the country is crucial not just because of ecosystem services but also because it directly supports the livelihood of large swathes of people

task. The rich would continue to consume more as, not just the Western world, but even countries like India are into unbridled materialism where we need more than we can consume.

It is not just talking of the bottom 25% of people globally, but it is also talking about the top 10% of the households, who have a disproportionate consumption and contribution to growing emissions. It is significant that the report stressed that fossil fuel use is overwhelmingly driving global warming. In 2019, around 79% of global greenhouse gas emissions came from energy, industry, transport and buildings and 22% from agriculture, forestry and other land use. It has rightly been pointed out that at current levels of warming – even after various nations have taken and announced strategic action – food production is starting to come under strain while pollution levels are on the rise. The world is still producing more food each year, thanks to improvements in farming technologies but climate change has slowed the rate of growth, the report pointed out quite rightly. One cannot doubt the fact that in populous countries like India, food security is at risk as the growth of population is on the rise.

The last conference at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt in November brought up the issue of loss and

damage, which incidentally is very crucial. As almost half of the world's population lives in regions that are highly vulnerable to climate change, floods, storms and droughts were 15 times higher in vulnerable regions. Experts said that areas like the Sunderbans fit the "loss and damage" description because of a sea level rise double the global benchmark, exposure to frequent high intensity cyclones and low socio-economic resilience of its residents.

According to Prof. Joyshree Roy, an economist and one of the authors of the present IPCC report: "The loss and damage impact is going to increase sharply with additional warming... coasts and areas like the Sunderbans, already under the climate change hammer, are beyond the coping capacity with an approximate temperature rise of 1.1 degrees over the pre-industrial level." He rightly pointed out that "mainstreaming effective and equitable climate action will not only reduce losses and damage for nature and people, it will provide wide benefits." But all this is possible if warming can be controlled.

However, the actions being suggested may be very difficult to implement in the foreseeable future, specially for countries like India due to resource constraints and also due to the fact that sufficient funding from the West is not being made available to them. This has

put severe financial pressure on the developing world.

In such a situation, the oft-repeated slogan of sustainable development is rather difficult to achieve in view of developmental activities in and around forest areas. Added to this, as far as India is concerned, it is becoming very difficult to tackle natural disasters like floods, cyclones, affecting lakhs of people who reside near coastal areas. For them sustainable development is a myth as they are affected almost every year.

India's efforts in tackling climate change have been carried out to the extent possible, especially in areas like renewable energy but pollution in metros or combating floods remain a big problem. Moreover, if expansion of coal-based plants is stopped, as suggested in the part, it would have a grave impact on the economy. In this connection, it needs to be stated that biodiversity for the country is crucial not just because of ecosystem services but also because it directly supports the livelihood of large swathes of people and this challenge India must take.

Though the Union Environment Minister recently claimed that India has achieved close to 27% of the area under conservation with its protective area network that includes reserved forests, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, mangroves, Ramsar sites and eco-sensitive zones, the path to sustainability is long. Research and innovation need to be explored for more efficient transport and energy policies with an eye on curbing environmental degradation. The Mission LIFE movement, launched by Prime Minister Modi in October last year, aiming towards environmentally conscious lifestyle must become a reality if we are serious about achieving the sustainable path of growth.

The writer is Sr. Consultant & Guest Faculty at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kolkata.

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Unhappiness & 'eudaimonia'

Indians are unhappy as per successive global happiness reports of UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Though India's ranking has improved from 136 in 2022 to 126 out of 146 countries in 2023, in the last 10 years, India's position has declined by 13 slots from 113 in 2013 to 126 in 2023.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

NEUROSCIENCE HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT GIVING IS A POWERFUL PATHWAY FOR CREATING MORE PERSONAL JOY

Why are Indians unhappy though India is considered a spiritual country with a rich cultural heritage? Former President late Pranab Mukherjee once said the lack of a holistic approach and a narrow vision focus on economic development may have given us a better GDP and increase in per capita income but moved our focus from environmental sustainability, social welfare, and emotional and mental well-being of our people.

Ambition and aspirations are good but becoming over-ambitious or having unrealistic ambitions are bad. The growing chasm between expectations and achievements has made many susceptible to anxiety and depression. Rampant consumerism, excessive hedonism, growing greed, deceit, and fraud as offshoots of neoliberalism coupled with a lack of spiritual faith, and erosion of human values, are causing unhappiness in society. As society is devaluing sacrifices, honesty, and integrity while giving weightage to power, position, and wealth, many people are trying for power and wealth by hook or by

crook and finally landing in the quagmire of unhappiness. Intellectual pursuits, reading, and writing that create positive vibes have been discouraged today as society has become more materialistic.

Another cause of unhappiness is that people have grown more insensitive, arrogant, intolerant, insolent, vindictive, violent, and exploitative in nature which has spurred inhumane impulses and diminished the importance of altruism. Lack of job security, unfettered working hours, and employers garnering profits at any cost have an adverse impact on the lifestyle of working-class people. People's mindsets have worsened in such a way that whenever you go to any place or to any person for any help or any work, you are likely to be exploited or battered to be subservient if you are not rich or powerful. Growing inequality has made people hopeless, and desolate, especially who are deprived of getting their fair share of economic progress. The demonstration effect – the habit of people imitating the superior consumption pattern of others – makes people more disheartened when they fail in their efforts.

The disintegration of joint families and the escalation of generation gap have made many mirthless. Due to the hustle and bustle of life, children don't get emotional support from parents, while parents get neglected in their twilight years.

Increasing privatisation of essential services, lack of social security schemes with health and education becoming unaffordable for the poor have made many desolate too. Though the average span of life has increased, people are surviving on medicine. After 40 years of age, many lose peace and happiness due to lifestyle diseases.

Today, politics is bereft of ideology, morality, and sacrifice. In order to retain or claim power, politicians trigger violence, hostilities, animosities, and mistrust in society and divide people on political and religious lines. This contributes to a spike in hate crimes.

The pleasure of childhood is snatched under the guise of building a lucrative career. The weight of books is more than the weight of children. Instead of playing with friends, they spend time with smartphones. They are not taught moral values or about the grim reality of life. So, in different stages of life, they fail to cope with the grim reality of life and sometimes commit suicide when things don't move the way they desire.

However, we should not be hopeless. According to Jason Silva, there are sides of us that are quite brutal and selfish, but nature has given us many gifts among them something known as the helper's high: the neurobiology of helping others. According to neuroscientists, altruism – the practice of con-

cern for welfare of others – may be more hardwired in our brains than previously thought. Neuroscience has demonstrated that giving is a powerful pathway for creating more personal joy. Helping others impacts our brain in many positive ways. When we help others, our brains release oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine. These hormones have the effect of boosting our mood.

The first key issue is how to cultivate and promote virtuous character and behaviour. Being virtuous generally makes people feel better. Happier people are more likely to help others. If we compare one society with another, we can see that countries with superior social norms tend to achieve higher levels of well-being.

As identified by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics, a society, where the average citizen exhibits strong virtues and high 'eudaimonia', will also be one where the average citizen experiences high life satisfaction. He defined 'eudaimonia' as "the activity of the soul according to virtue." High average 'eudaimonia' requires a virtuous character, including moderation, fortitude, a sense of justice, an ability to form and maintain friendships, as well as good citizenship in the political community.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

Wind energy boost

Sir, Despite challenges, wind energy presents significant growth prospects in the global market due to declining costs and government policies. India has seen a rapid growth in wind energy and it has become a major source of renewable energy for the country. As of now, India has installed wind power capacity of 39.2 GW, which is the fourth largest in the world and constitutes 10 per cent of the country's total installed power capacity. In order to achieve the target set by the MNRE, an additional 20 GW of wind power capacity needs to be installed in the upcoming years, with the goal of reaching a total installed capacity of 60 GW by 2022. The states of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh play a vital role in wind power generation in India. Tamil Nadu has the highest installed wind power capacity of 9 GW, followed by Gujarat with 6.5 GW. To boost the development of wind energy, the Indian government has implemented various measures such as financial incentives and policies like the National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy and Wind-Solar Hybrid Power Policy, aimed at promoting the development of hybrid projects. While India has made substantial strides in the development of wind energy, there are still obstacles to be addressed. These include the requirement for enhanced grid infrastructure and storage facilities, as well as concerns surrounding land acquisition and transmission infrastructure. However, the growth of the wind energy market offers significant prospects for the renewable energy sector to satisfy future energy requirements, decrease carbon emissions, and combat climate change.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Rhino poaching

Sir, This refers to "One horn Rhino killed in Kaziranga," Orissa POST, March 28. It is said the horn of the animal was missing. The incident is a big setback for the Assam government that had achieved its aim of ensuring zero poaching of the rhinos in 2022 through the special task force. In hindsight, there either appears to be a massive breach in security or a few unscrupulous elements in the park authority were hand-in-glove with the poachers. Rhino horns are smuggled for its water purifying property as well as for its aphrodisiac quality. The entire security apparatus including the functioning of the CCTV cameras should be reviewed and overhauled to protect the endangered animal.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

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

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national

of the day quote

What is today happening in Ukraine, if you follow the two sides, is one would say that they are threatened by the expansion of NATO and the character of the regime in Ukraine

S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER

The data of vaccination is with us. I was told that the report will come in six months. Three to four months have already passed and report should come within the next two months

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION HEALTH MINISTER

Listen to the full speech of Rahul Gandhi, he has not only spoken abusive words for Modi ji. He has spoken abusive words for the entire Modi community and OBC society

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

22 flights diverted due to bad weather

New Delhi: As many as 22 flights were diverted from the Delhi airport Thursday evening due to bad weather in the national capital. These flights were diverted to Lucknow, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh and Dehradun, an airport official said. Thunderstorms with light rains lashed parts of the national capital. The official said 11 flights were diverted to Lucknow, 8 to Jaipur and 1 each to Ahmedabad, Chandigarh and Dehradun.

Clashes in Howrah over Ram Navami procession

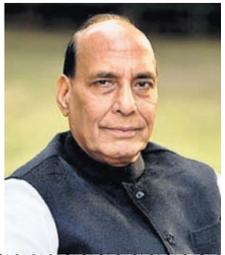
Kolkata: Some areas in West Bengal's Howrah district Thursday turned into mini battlefields after clashes broke out between two groups of people over a Ram Navami procession. An organisation, Anjani Putra Sena, took out a procession at Sandhyabazar area of Shibpur on the occasion of Ram Navami. The organisers alleged that while the procession was passing through the area, a group of people attacked and started throwing glass bottles, stones and bricks at those who had participated in the procession.

2 girls set on fire by father

Hoshiarpur (Punjab): A man allegedly sprinkled petrol on his two minor daughters and set them on fire in Berring village in the district, leaving them seriously injured, police said Thursday. The accused Vidya Ram has been arrested. Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI), Talwara police station, Ranvir Singh said Vidya Ram's wife Poonam Sharma lodged a complaint with the police alleging that her husband hit her with a burning log following which her clothes caught fire. However, she managed to control the blaze. Later, Vidya Ram, sprinkled petrol on his daughters aged 16 and 10, and set them ablaze.

NIA files chargesheet against 2 LeT terrorists

New Delhi: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Thursday filed a chargesheet against two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists in connection with the Udhampur IED blast case, an official said. The chargesheet has been filed against Mohd. Aslam Sheikh a.k.a. Adil and Mohd. Amin Bhat a.k.a. Abu Khubaib under sections 120B, 121A, 122, 307 and 407 of IPC, sections 3, 4 of the Explosives Substances Act and sections 16, 18, 18B, 20, 23, 38 & 39 of the UA (P) Act. They have been accused of trying to revive terrorist activities in Jammu by carrying out recruitment.



Our borders are fully secure. Whether it was the standoff with China or ill intentions from Pakistan, our armed forces have been giving a befitting reply, whenever required

RAJNATH SINGH | DEFENCE MINISTER

Germany 'takes note' of Rahul's disqualification

Rahul's remarks triggered a political row, with the BJP accusing him of maligning India on foreign soil and seeking foreign interventions, and the Congress hitting back at the ruling party by citing instances of Prime Minister Modi raising internal politics abroad



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Amidst an ongoing face-off between the Congress and the BJP over Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from Lok Sabha, Germany has 'taken note' of the issue, triggering a fresh political slugfest here Thursday with the ruling party accusing the opposition party of "inviting foreign powers" to interfere in internal matters.

The BJP attack came after senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh thanked the German foreign ministry and Richard Walker, Chief International Editor of Deutsche Welle, for "taking note of how democracy is being compromised in India through the persecution of Rahul Gandhi".

Singh also tagged a tweet by Walker in which the senior journalist had posted a video of a German foreign ministry spokesperson reacting to Gandhi's disqualification.

At a press briefing, Germany's foreign ministry spokesperson said, "we have taken note of the verdict of first instance against Indian opposition politician Rahul Gandhi as well as the suspension of his parliamentary mandate."

"To our knowledge, Mr Gandhi is in a position to appeal the verdict. It will then become clear whether this verdict will stand and whether the suspension of his mandate has any basis," the spokesperson was quoted as saying by Deutsche Welle.

Germany expects that "standards of judicial independence and fundamental democratic prin-

EARLIER THIS WEEK, A US STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL HAD SAID THE UNITED STATES IS WATCHING THE COURT CASE OF RAHUL GANDHI

RAHUL WAS DISQUALIFIED FROM LOK SABHA MARCH 23 AFTER A COURT IN GUJARAT'S SURAT CONVICTED HIM IN A 2019 DEFAMATION CASE OVER HIS 'MODI SURNAME' REMARK

cles" will equally apply to the proceedings against Rahul Gandhi, the spokesperson added.

A host of BJP leaders attacked the Congress and Singh, accusing the party of "inviting foreign interference" in internal affairs.

Sharing a screenshot of Digvijaya Singh's tweet, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "Thank you Rahul Gandhi for inviting foreign powers for interference into India's internal matters." "Remember, Indian Judiciary can't be influenced by foreign interference. India won't tolerate 'foreign influence' anymore because our Prime Minister is:- Shri @narendramodi Ji," Rijiju said.

Appearing to be in damage control mode, the Congress said it firmly believes that India's democratic processes themselves have to deal with the threats posed to its democracy. It also hit out at the BJP, accusing it of attempting to divert attention from the Adani issue.

Without taking names, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on Twitter, "@INCIndia firmly believes that India's democratic processes themselves have to deal

with the threats posed to our democracy by Mr. Modi's assault on our institutions & his politics of vendetta, intimidation, threats & harassment." The Congress and opposition parties will take him on fearlessly, Ramesh said.

Attacking Rijiju for his comments, Congress' media department head Pawan Khara said, "Mr. Rijiju, why divert from the main issue? The issue is that the Prime Minister cannot answer Rahul Gandhi's questions about Adani."

Instead of "misleading" people, please answer the questions, Khara said. Slamming the Congress over Singh's tweet, Information and Broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur said, "disgrace to nation, @INCIndia & @RahulGandhi don't believe to fight India's democratic, political and legal battle within country, hence, invite foreign powers to interfere in our internal matter. But New India headed by @narendramodi Ji will not tolerate any foreign intervention."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also lambasted the Congress over Singh's tweet.

"Apparent that @INCIndia wants foreign interference in our affairs. Sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Communist Party of China with opaque contents. During interactions abroad, plead for help to change government. Thank them when help forthcoming. Any more proof needed?" she tweeted.

Commerce minister Piyush Goyal retweeted Sitharaman's comments. Tagging Singh's tweet, BJP's foreign affairs department head leader Vijay Chauthaiwale said on Twitter, "look how happy @digvijaya_28 ji with comments from Germany. It only shows how they are desperate to involve external agencies in domestic matters."

BJP's IT department head Amit Malviya also tagged Singh's tweet and said, "Shameful that Congress continues to lean on foreign agencies and seek their intervention in India's internal affairs." "Rahul Gandhi had recently sought Europe and US intervention and now it is Digvijay Singh. But Law is the Law... Unless somebody thinks Law is not the Law for them," he said.

MoD inks deal worth ₹19,600cr for 17 Navy vessels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Defence Ministry Thursday signed contracts with Indian shipyards for acquisition of 11 next generation offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) and six next generation missile vessels at an overall cost of nearly ₹19,600 crore, an official statement said.

The contract for acquisition of 11 OPVs under Buy (Indian-IDD) category was signed with Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata at a total cost of ₹9,781 crore. Of the 11 ships, seven will be indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by GSL and four by GRSE. The delivery of the ships is scheduled to commence from September 2026.

Officials said that the acquisition



of these ships will enable the Indian Navy to maintain its combat capability and meet various operational requirements such as anti-piracy, counter-infiltration, anti-poaching, anti-trafficking, non-combatant evacuation operations, search and rescue (SAR), protection of offshore assets etc. The construction of these ships

will generate an employment of 110 lakh man-days over a period of seven and half years. The contract for acquisition of six next generation missile vessels (NGMVs) was signed with Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) at a cost of ₹9,805 crore. The delivery of ships is scheduled to commence from March 2027.

The NGMVs would be heavily

armed war vessels incorporating stealth, high speed and offensive capability. The primary role of the ships would be to provide offensive capability against enemy warships, merchantmen, and land targets.

These ships will be capable of conducting maritime strike operations, anti-surface warfare operations and would be a potent instrument of sea denial for enemy ships, especially at choke points. In the defensive role, these ships would be employed for local naval defence operations and seaward defence of offshore development areas. The construction of these ships will generate an employment of 45 lakh man-days over a period of nine years. The indigenous manufacturing of these vessels will encourage the active participation of Indian shipbuilding and associated industries, including MSMFES.

CBI arrests Safdarjung Hospital neurosurgeon for extorting patients

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Central Bureau of Investigation Thursday arrested a neurosurgeon of Safdarjung Hospital here and his four accomplices for allegedly forcing patients into buying surgical equipment from a particular store at exorbitant prices for early dates of their surgery.

The agency raided several locations in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh and busted the nefarious nexus, officials said, adding that Manish Rawat, the neurosurgeon, was arrested in the early hours of Thursday. Following a thorough investigation, the CBI sleuths apprehended Rawat and four of his confidants, including Deepak Khattar, the proprietor of Kanishka Surgical in New Delhi, and middlemen Avnesh Patel, Manish Sharma, and Kuldeep. After his arrest, Rawat underwent a medical examination at the same hospital at 7.52 am Thursday.

SEARCH FOR AMRITPAL INTENSIFIES

Drone deployed in Hoshiarpur village

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hoshiarpur, March 30: Police Thursday deployed a drone in a village in Hoshiarpur district where some suspects had abandoned their car following a chase two days ago, as radical preacher Amritpal Singh remained untraceable.

Cops deployed in and around Marnaian village were also checking vehicles in the search of the radical preacher. With police resuming their search in the area, they deployed a drone in the village, sources said. There was, however, no official comment on it from the police department.

Paramilitary personnel have also been deployed in and around the village. Earlier, the Punjab Police had launched a massive search operation in the Hoshiarpur village and many adjoining areas following inputs that the radical preacher and his aides could be in the area.

The Hoshiarpur action began as police chased a car, which some sources said may have carried Amritpal Singh and his aides, Tuesday night. They abandoned the vehicle at the village and disappeared. There were also reports that the suspects could have used another car to escape.

Police have also conducted a door-to-door search operation but no success has been achieved yet. Amritpal Singh remains untraceable since the police crackdown against him and members of his pro-Khalistan 'Waris Punjab De' outfit began March 18, about three weeks after he and his supporters stormed into the Ajnala police station near Amritsar to secure the release of an arrested man.

The preacher escaped the police net in Jalandhar district March 18, switching vehicles and changing appearances. He and his associates



FIRE BREAKS OUT IN ANDHRA TEMPLE

A fire broke out during Ram Navami celebrations at a temple in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district Thursday. The incident occurred at Venugopala Swamy temple at Duvva. A canopy erected in the temple premises for the celebrations was gutted in the fire



RAIN FUN: Youngsters on Kartavya Path during rain in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO



Earlier, the Punjab Police had launched a massive search operation in the Hoshiarpur village and many adjoining areas following inputs that the radical preacher and his aides could be in the area

have been booked under several criminal cases related to spreading disharmony among classes, attempt to murder, attack on police personnel and creating obstructions in the lawful discharge of duty by public servants.

Police have already stepped up security in and around Amritsar and Bathinda amid reports that Amritpal may surrender after entering either the Golden Temple or the Takht Sri Dardama Sahib.

Sun emits powerful solar flare, causes blackouts: NASA

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, March 30: The Sun has emitted a strong solar flare severely affecting radio communications on Earth, according to NASA.

The flare, classified as X1.2, is the seventh solar flare to hit Earth this year, and was captured by NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory, which watches the Sun constantly.

X-class denotes the most intense flares, while the number provides more information about its strength.

The strong solar flare peaked at 10:33 p.m. ET (8:03 a.m. IST) March 28, the observatory said. "A R3 (Strong) HF radio blackout event

occurred due to a X1.2 flare from Region 3256 March 28, at 10:33 p.m. EDT," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Space Weather Prediction Center said in a statement.

The strong solar flare ionised the top layer of Earth's atmosphere, affecting radio communications across southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand for about one hour, Space.com reported.



A SCIENTIST AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON HAS DISCOVERED A GIANT 'HOLE' ON THE SURFACE OF THE SUN

DANIEL VERSCHAREN, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SPACE AND CLIMATE PHYSICS AT UCL SAID THE HOLE IS 20 TIMES LARGER THAN THE EARTH, AND COULD RESULT IN A GEOMAGNETIC STORM, REACHING OUR PLANET AT A SPEED OF ABOUT 1.8 MILLION MILES PER HOUR

Solar flares are powerful bursts of energy Flares and solar eruptions

can impact radio communications, electric power grids, navigation

signals, and pose risks to spacecraft and astronauts.

Meanwhile, a scientist at the University College London (UCL) has discovered a giant 'hole' on the surface of the Sun.

Daniel Verscharen, Associate Professor of space and climate physics at UCL said the hole is 20 times larger than the Earth, and could result in a geomagnetic storm, reaching our planet at a speed of about 1.8 million miles per hour.

It is likely to hit Earth by Friday, he was quoted as saying to Business Insider: Earlier this week, the Earth witnessed a geomagnetic storm of magnitude G4, the strongest in nearly six years, causing auroras

all over the US, NOAA said.

The storm's unexpected ferocity not only made auroras visible as far south as New Mexico in the US, but it also forced spaceflight company Rocket Lab to delay a launch by 90 minutes, Space.com reported. According to scientists, more such solar storms are expected because the Sun is gearing up to a peak of activity, which happens about every 11 years. According to Mathew Owens, a professor of Space Physics at the University of Reading, such holes are more likely to appear, because the Sun is gearing up to a peak of activity, which happens about every 11 years.

TN forest dept ups vigil PROTESTS ERUPT IN IDUKKI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



▶ The court only permitted tranquilising and radio collaring of the tusker if it forayed into inhabited areas despite the best efforts of the forest and wildlife personnel to deter it from doing so

▶ Protesting against the court's decision, people of several panchayats of the district came out onto the roads and blocked traffic in some areas

After news of the verdict spread, local residents of Chinnakanal and nearby places in Idukki district expressed disappointment regarding it and said they would hold protests till the tusker was removed from there.

They told scribes that they would not allow the forest and wildlife officials as well as the Kumki elephants, used for trapping wild pachyderms, to leave the area till Arikomban is removed from there. The people asked those advocating the elephant's interests to come there and stay in the area for a night with their families to understand the plight of the local residents.

The court had last week stayed the state government's order to tranquilise and capture Arikomban till March 29. The court's order had come on a PIL moved by two animal rights groups -- People for Animals (PFA), Trivandrum Chapter and the Walking Eye Foundation for Animal Advocacy.

The petitioner organisations have claimed in their plea that the order to tranquilise and capture the tusker was "illegal and unscientific". The petitioners have urged the court to issue an order directing the state government and its forest department to translocate and rehabilitate Arikomban to an alternative deep forest.

beside Arikomban, there were a couple of other elephants too which were a nuisance and threat to them and sought that those pachyderms be also removed. Meanwhile, Kerala Forests Minister A K Saseendran said the court order "has only served to complicate matters further".

Speaking to media, Saseendran said that the government will place the plight of the people living there before the expert committee and attempt to convince them to visit the area. "We can go in for appeal only after a final decision is taken by the court," he said. On assuaging the concerns and fears of the people affected by the tusker, the minister said that whatever steps have to be taken under the law, the government will take them.

The High Court had said that

the interests of justice would require avoiding "quick-fix knee-jerk actions" and ascertain the views of experts regarding the best steps to balance the conflicting interests of humans and animals in given situations and prevent the same from recurring in future.

Idukki (Kerala), March 30: Protests broke out in several parts of this high range district Thursday with locals taking to the roads and blocking traffic, aggrieved over the Kerala High Court's decision not to permit capture of 'Arikomban', a wild tusker, for the time being.

The High Court had Wednesday constituted a five-member expert committee to take a decision on what action should be taken with regard to Arikomban, so named as it raids ration shops and houses for rice. The panel has to communicate its decision to the court by April 5, till when capture of the elephant has been prohibited.

The court only permitted tranquilizing and radio collaring of the tusker if it forayed into inhabited areas despite the best efforts of the forest and wildlife personnel to deter it from doing so. Protesting against the court's decision, people of several panchayats of the district came out onto the roads and blocked traffic in some areas, according to TV visuals. The protesting public, including women and children, demanded that the elephant be removed from the area.

Children told a TV channel that they were afraid to go to school worried that the elephant might attack their bus. Some also said that

markets.

Sources in the Tamil Nadu forest department said that once the exotic species are smuggled into the country, these species which are priced much higher in grey market, are smuggled into other destinations of South India. In some cases, the species are transported to Northern Indian states like Delhi, Jaipur, and Lucknow.

The existing Wildlife (Protection) Act does not have provisions to punish those who illegally import and own exotic species. Those who smuggle the exotic species into India go scot-free and the consignment is repatriated back to the country of origin on the same flight.

Forest department sources said that those who trade in exotic pets are now using their farmlands to rear these animals instead of smuggling them into the country. This helps them to reduce the cost and risk and the business is flourishing in all South Indian states and some cities like Jaipur, Lucknow, and New Delhi.

THE AMENDED WILDLIFE (PROTECTION) ACT WILL COME INTO EFFECT FROM APRIL 1, 2023, AND UNDER THIS OWNING EXOTIC SPECIES, INCLUDING BIRDS, ANIMALS, AND RODENTS WILL BE A PUNISHABLE OFFENCE

THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL CASES OF SMUGGLED EXOTIC SPECIES BEING CAUGHT AT THE CHENNAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

even foreign destinations.

There have been several cases of smuggled exotic species being caught at the Chennai international airport. However, sources in Chennai airport said that the volume of smuggled exotic species being caught at Chennai and other airports in Tamil Nadu is only meagre in comparison to the huge numbers clearing the gates of these airports and reaching mainstream

using their farmlands to rear these animals instead of smuggling them into the country. This helps them to reduce the cost and risk and the business is flourishing in all South Indian states and some cities like Jaipur, Lucknow, and New Delhi.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 30: With Chennai turning into a hub of exotic species smuggling, the state forest department has increased vigil.

The amended Wildlife (Protection) Act will come into effect from April 1, 2023, and under this owning exotic species, including birds, animals, and rodents will be a punishable offence. The forest department has stepped up vigil on exotic species being smuggled into the state and then transported to other states and

COVID CASES RISE IN TN

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 30: The Tamil Nadu health department is on a high vigil after the number of fresh Covid cases in the state showed an increase. The state on Wednesday reported 112 fresh Covid-19 cases taking the total number of active cases to 689.



Two passengers, one from Singapore and the other from Sri Lanka tested positive on arrival from international destinations. This came following a random Covid test being done at the Chennai International Airport.

A senior officer of the health department said, "Earlier there was one case once in three or four days at the airport. But now daily one to six cases are being reported from the airport."

He said that this was not a welcome development and added that the state health department was well poised to take on any threat.

The officials from the health department also said that at least 18 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals in the state due to Covid-19. The health department said that of the 112 patients who tested positive, Chennai reported 34 fresh cases.

Kerala seeks PM's nod for charter flights

The Kerala CM said the number of seats available for sale to or from a foreign sector was determined through a bilateral agreement with the Indian government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 30: The Kerala government Thursday sought the Centre's nod for additional or charter flights booked by it for travel of low income Kerala emigrants from Gulf nations to the state during the upcoming festive season in April.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to direct the Civil Aviation Ministry to give necessary approvals for additional or charter flights booked by the state from the second week of April.

The Kerala CM also drew Modi's attention to the huge hikes in airfares in the past two months and



requested that the Central government "proactively" intervene and initiate negotiations with airlines operating in the India-Gulf sector to ensure they do not adopt an exorbitant pricing strategy during festivals and school vacations.

Vijayan, in a letter, said that major festivals for Keralites such as Vishu, Easter and Ramzan were falling in the second and third week of April and in view of the exorbitant air fares in the India-Gulf sector, the state government had decided to operate additional or char-

tered flights at reasonable rates for low-income emigrants in Gulf nations.

"I request you to direct the Civil Aviation Ministry to accord the necessary approvals expeditiously for the additional or charter flight operations booked by Government of Kerala from the second week of April 2023," he said.

The Kerala CM said the number of seats available for sale to or from a foreign sector was determined through a bilateral agreement with the Indian government.

"As this permitted number of seats is fully utilised by scheduled carriers currently, unless the Union government grants exemption or relaxation, they will not be able to operate any additional flights.

"Only by obtaining such approval from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the foreign or Indian aircraft operator can operate additional or charter flights to India from the Gulf," he said. Stating that the Centre's intervention was necessary as exorbitant air fares from the Gulf nations to Kerala, especially during peak or festive seasons, "has been a vexing problem", he said these rates are unaffordable to many, particularly migrant workers.

"The airline operators have not responded favourably to various requests from migrant organisations and the Kerala government in the recent past to fix air fares at reasonable levels," Vijayan said. As a result, millions of migrant workers are forced to pay exorbitant airfares, sometimes to the tune of several months of their meagre savings, to travel to their homes, he added.

7 held for forcing woman to remove hijab

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 30: The Tamil Nadu Police arrested seven persons including a juvenile for allegedly forcing a woman to remove her hijab at the Vellore Fort Complex in Tamil Nadu.

S. Rajesh Kannan, Superintendent of Police, Vellore said that the seven people are arrested for intentional insult and wanton vilification." He said that the arrested persons acted against individual freedom. The arrested are, K. Santosh (23), Imran Pasha (24), Mohammed Faisal (21),



Ibrahim Basha (24), Mohammed Faisal (23) and C. Prasanth (23). The arrested juvenile is sent to child care home. Police said that most of those arrested are local

auto-rickshaw drivers.

According to police, the incident happened on March 27 at noon when the woman wearing a hijab reached the fort along with a friend. The arrested men also reached there and asked her to remove the hijab. One of them shot the incident on the phone and uploaded it in social media platforms which went viral.

A case was filed by the North Police of Vellore on a complaint given by the Village Administrative Officer (VAO) on Wednesday. Police constituted five special teams and nabbed the culprits on Thursday.

The seven were arrested on charges of endangering public safety, threat to personal freedom, intention to create enmity between two sections of people and also acting against the modesty of women.

Police have directed people not to share the video clipping on social media platforms. Those indulging in the same would be charged under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Woman Act and Information Technology (IT) Act. Vellore Superintendent of Police said that further investigations are on.

New species of bent-toed gecko discovered in Kerala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 30: Scientists have discovered a new species of ground-dwelling gecko, a species of lizard, from the coastal forests of northern Kerala.

The beautifully-patterned *Cyrtodactylus* (*Geckoella*) *chengodumalaensis* is a small, nocturnal species that is found on the ground among leaf litter and rocks in forests and partially human altered landscapes like orchards and other areas with canopy cover.

The Chengodumala or Coastal Kerala *Geckoella* is endemic to low hills and coastal forest in northern Kerala and is known from scattered localities spanning a maximum of 120 km distance in Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palakkad, and Thrissur districts.

Chengodumala is a midland hillock in Kozhikode district, and also the type locality for *Cnemaspis chengodumalaensis* (Chengodumala dwarf gecko).

The second new species of gecko



to have been described from Chengodumala highlights the fact that biodiversity of these low-elevation hillocks is understudied, with many more species remaining to be discovered.

Chengodumala and other coastal hills in northern Kerala are under immense pressure due to illegal mining and indiscriminate logging and protection of these unique habitats that support endemic biodiversity is imperative. The paper describing the new species was published in *Journal of Herpetology*, an international publication of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, US.

KERALA'S CLIMATE PROJECTIONS ARE SCARY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 30: Thankachan, 54, hailing from Nattassery village in Kerala's Kottayam district, is struggling to squeeze through the household items that are stacked up in a tiny room in his house. The other room and the kitchen of his house were completely damaged in the worst floods that the southern state had witnessed in 2018.

He and his wife have not got a new house as part of the government's flood rehabilitation programme and are struggling in a partially damaged house. "They will have to pull out two dead bodies from this house if something happens again," says Thankachan as his wife Aswathy, who is ill, looks on. He is not in a position to even think of experiencing another flood or any other extreme weather event.

Concerns of people like Thankachan who live in vulnerable areas may grow as a study conducted by the leading scientific institutes predicts floods, flash floods, landslides, and a substantial rise



in temperature in the southern state in the coming years due to climate change effects.

"There is going to be a 16 per cent increase in rainfall—either the total amount of rainfall, or average annual rainfall—by the end of this century," says Prof K P Sudheer, Ex-Officio Principal Secretary and Executive Vice President of Kerala State Council for Science, Technology, and Environment (KSCSTE). Sudheer was quoting the findings of

a study done in 2023 that the KSCSTE has conducted jointly with the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM) and the Institute of Climate Change Studies (ICCS) based on the UN's 6th Assessment Report on Climate Change.

This study is yet to be submitted to the government. An increase in annual rainfall with a reduction in rainy days, increased rainless days leading to drought spells,

increase in both maximum and minimum temperatures that could considerably alter the seasons and crop patterns in the state are some of the scary findings that the study has predicted.

"Increased rainfall is probably positive news. But our findings indicate that this increased volume will be delivered in fewer days compared to our usual rainy season. That means the intensity of the rainfall is going to go up," Sudheer said, indicating that there is an increase in extreme weather events in the state. "It is expected that there will be a 20 per cent increase in extreme events," he added.

"We analysed around 21 ensemble climate projections given by the 6th Assessment Report, then what we did is, we used these projections, did the complete analysis in a scientific way, and ran it through a model to understand what the water availability scenario in Kerala is," Sudheer said.

The study has also predicted a possible increase in the maximum temperature to the tune of 1.7 degrees centigrade and also in the mini-

mum temperature an increase by 1.9 degree centigrade, which indicates that there is a shift in the range of temperature. "While extreme events occur for a few days in a year, what is more, startling to note is that the temperature is going to substantially increase," Sekhar Lukose Kuriakose, Member Secretary of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) and Head Scientist of State Emergency Operations Centre, said.

He said after KSDMA "pushed" the Indian Meteorological Department to establish a denser weather station network in Kerala, post the 2018 and 2019 floods, and got 100 automatic weather stations established in the state, they could now monitor temperature at 100 different locations in the state. "Now we are measuring the temperature at 100 locations, and suddenly, we, the state government, and IMD themselves realised that there are places in Kerala that have higher temperature potential, where temperatures soared up to 39-40 degrees centigrade just in the beginning of March," Kuriakose said.

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, March 30: The Tamil Nadu health department will conduct raids on scanning centres engaged in prenatal sex determination in the state.

The move comes after the police arrested four people in Dharmapuri district on charges of prenatal sex determination. According to police, the four conducted a sex determination tests from a residence using scan machine. A woman named M. Sakkammal alias Pushpavathy (53), considered the kingpin of the racket

was arrested along with her accomplices, S. Kaviarasan, Iyyappan and Manoj Kumar. The health department, according to sources, has constituted a special team in all the districts of the state.

Health department sources said that the quacks were charging Rs 8000-10,000 per sex determination test and in remote areas of the state there are centres that conduct ten such tests a day.

In March 2022, a quack Sukumar and his accomplice Vedyappan were arrested in Tirupattur district for running an illegal scan

centre. The health authorities had conducted a surprise raid in the centre and found that the quack was using a portable scan machine and pregnant women from nearby districts were arriving in his clinic to determine the sex of the fetus.

Dr M. Idaykani, Gynecologist and former Principal of a medical college in Tamil Nadu said, "The society is the cause of this and girl children are not welcomed even these days in some villages of the state. Sex determination is not done for curiosity, it's to make it doubly sure that the fetus is a boy. There are instances of the fetus being aborted if it's a girl and strict action from the government is the need of the hour to curb such cases."

She said that there has to be a mechanism in place wherein the health department and police conduct joint raids in suspected centres. The retired gynecologist said that Primary Health Centres are a major source of information on such centres as being at the micro level, the staff at the PHC can track such centres and report to the higher authorities in health department to curb this menace.



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However, despite having a '56-inch chest' and a huge majority of 303 MPs, Modi is afraid of a JPC on the contrary, the BJP makes false and ridiculous allegations against Rahul Gandhi
PAWAN KHERA | CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON

INDIA UNVEILS SPACE DESIGN LAB

India has unveiled a state-of-the-art design lab in Ahmedabad to enable space sector start-ups to transform their innovative ideas into implementable models at a faster pace. The Space Systems Design Lab of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACE) was inaugurated by ISRO Chairman S Somanath at Bopal in Ahmedabad earlier this week



of the day quote

Rahul Gandhi had numerous opportunities to recant and apologise during the court proceeding. The court decided against him because he refused to apologise
HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

Idle hands (mind) are devil's workshop. So we are trying our best to ensure that maximum youth get jobs so that they do not fall prey to the social menaces
BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER

When asked about assembly elections in J&K, the chief election commissioner acknowledged a vacuum that needs to be filled. Yet surprisingly the @ECISVEEP seems to be in no hurry to conduct elections, on the contrary they manage to find new excuses to delay polls
OMAR ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE VICE PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

High intensity blast in Kathua

Hiranagar/Jammu: A suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast rocked a border hamlet in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, creating a huge crater in the ground, officials said Thursday. Security forces have been put on high alert in the border belts and along the Jammu-Pathankot highway following the blast that took place Wednesday night. A live grenade was recovered following a search of the area Thursday morning. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Kathua, Shivdeep Singh Jamwal told PTI.

10 cops injured as mob hurls stones

Aurangabad: At least 12 persons, including 10 policemen, were injured after a mob of around 500 people went berserk and hurled stones and petrol-filled bottles when the cops tried to control the situation following a clash between two groups near a Ram temple in Maharashtra's Aurangabad city, officials said Thursday. The incident, in which 13 vehicles were torched by the miscreants, occurred during the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday in the city's Kiradpura locality that houses the famous Ram temple, they said.

3 killed, 20 hurt in road mishap

Balodabazar: Three women were killed and 20 others injured when the tractor-trolley in which they were travelling overturned in Chhattisgarh's Balodabazar district, police said. The accident took place on late Wednesday night near Thakurdiya village, said Kailash Chandra Das, Station House Officer (SHO), Kasdol police station. The victims were returning to Khainda village in the district after attending a wedding at Turturiya village, he said. While two women died on the spot, another succumbed to injuries at a nearby hospital, the official said.

PM's surprise visit to new Parl building

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a surprise visit to the new parliament building here Thursday evening and inspected various works as well as interacted with construction workers, sources said. Prime Minister Modi spent more than an hour inside the building.

FSSAI allows labelling curd in regional names

The controversy erupted after the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation -- which sells dairy products in brand name Aavin -- declined to use the Hindi term 'Dahi' in its printed sachets as directed by FSSAI and said that it would only stick to the Tamil word 'thayir'



The Food Business Operators (FBOs) are now allowed to use the term 'curd' along with any other prevalent regional common name in brackets on the label

For example, 'Curd (Dahi)' in Hindi or 'Curd (mosaru)' in Kannada, 'Curd (thayir)' in Tamil, 'Curd (perugu)' in Telugu, 'Curd (zaamutdaud)' can be used, the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said

the Standards of Fermented Milk Products, it has been decided that FBOs may use the term curd along with any other designation (prevailing regional common name) in brackets on the label," the FSSAI said. In its directive dated March 10 issued to milk cooperatives and private dairy located in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the FSSAI had asked them to use the term 'Dahi' with prevalent regional names in brackets.

They were told to use regional nomenclature used in different states for 'dahi' while labelling the product, like Dahi (curd), Dahi

(mosaru), Dahi (zaamutdaud), Dahi (thayir), Dahi (perugu). The directive was issued to Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers Federation (KMF), Bengaluru Rural and Ramanagara District Cooperative Milk Producers Societies Union Ltd, Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers Federation and Hatsun Agro Products Ltd. On Wednesday, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin decried the move as an attempt to "impose Hindi". Dairy Development Minister SM Nasar said the government had received a letter asking it to implement the directive be-

DAHI VS CURD

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 30: Food safety regulator FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) Thursday revised its order and allowed the use of regional names in printed labels of curd packets amid political controversy in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The order has been revised following various representations received recently on the omission of the term 'curd' from the Standards of Fermented Milk Products and only the word 'Dahi' was mentioned. "As many representations were received recently on the omission of the term 'curd' from

AP CM meets Shah, Sitharaman in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amaravati, March 30: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on his second visit to Delhi within a fortnight, and took up several pending demands, including one to raise the State's credit limit.

The Chief Minister requested both Shah and Sitharaman in separate meetings to raise the credit limit from ₹17,923 crore to the earlier limit of ₹42,472 crore, which he said was slashed for no fault of the southern State in 2021-22, a statement on Thursday said. This is his second visit to Delhi in a month. On March 17, Reddy had met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.



Observing that the pending issues had pushed AP backwards in terms of development and revenue, the CM asked Shah and Sitharaman in separate meetings to immediately release ₹10,000 crore on an ad-hoc basis to expedite the Polavaram multi-purpose irrigation project.

During the meeting with Shah, Reddy sought the reimbursement of ₹2,601 crore expenditure incurred on Polavaram project and urged that the technical advisory committee's revised estimates of ₹55,548 crore, including treating the drinking water supply component as a part of it, be accepted.



PURE DEVOTION: Girls during 'Kanya Pujan' on the occasion of 'Ram Navami' during 'Chaitra Navratni' festival in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

MALEGAON BLAST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: The Supreme Court has junked a plea filed by Lieutenant Colonel Prasad Shrikant Purohit seeking discharge in the 2008 Malegaon blast case.

A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and Manoj Misra refused to interfere with the high court order. "The challenge here is to the order of the High Court whereby it was observed that sanction is not needed under Section 197(2) of the CrPC for the prosecution of the petitioner as his impugned conduct does not pertain to any of his official duties. "Having noted the basis of the impugned judgment, we see no reason to interfere with the same and accordingly, the Special Leave Petition is not entertained," the bench said. The top court, however, clarified that the trial court

SC junks Purohit's plea for discharge from case



PUROHIT HAD MOVED THE TOP COURT CHALLENGING THE JANUARY 2 ORDER OF THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT REJECTING HIS APPEAL

PUROHIT AND SIX OTHERS, INCLUDING BJP MP PRAGYA SINGH THAKUR, ARE FACING TRIAL IN THE CASE. ALL THE ACCUSED ARE CURRENTLY OUT ON BAIL

should not be influenced by observations in the high court's order. "The observation made in the impugned order for the purpose of examining the issue of sanction should not prejudice either the prosecution or the defence, in the proceedings before the trial court, the bench said.

In July 2021, Purohit had told

the Bombay High Court that he was "an unsung" hero of the Indian Army who had suffered much during nearly nine years he spent in prison as an undertrial before being released on bail.

The top court in 2018 had turned Purohit's plea seeking a court-monitored probe by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) into his

Mamata to take Central dues agitation to Delhi



All of us have to unite, fight against the BJP and defeat it. If needed, we will march to Delhi to protest against the Centre's attempts to destroy the country's federal structure and keep states ruled by non-BJP parties bereft of funds
MAMATA BANERJEE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 30: Taking forward her sharp attack against arch-rival BJP, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, who has been on an overnight 'sit-in protest' here against the Centre's alleged discrimination against West Bengal, called for an "aur ek dafa Delhi chalo" (another march to Delhi) to oust the right-wing party from power.

A day before, the West Bengal Chief Minister and stormy petrel of Indian politics had in a change of stance urged all parties in the country to unitedly fight the BJP in next year's Lok Sabha election, a departure from an earlier decision to remain equidistant from both the Congress and the saffron party.

The "aur ek bar Delhi Chalo" call made from the feet of the Dr B R Ambedkar's statue on Kolkata's Red Road, an obvious take on Netaji Subhas Bose's more famous "Delhi Chalo" clarion call delivered in Singapore 80 years ago, resounded well with her supporters, who had thronged the venue of the sit-in, in large numbers. Banerjee had started the two-day demonstration Wednesday noon against the Centre's "stoppage" of funds to the state for MGN-REGA and other schemes of the housing and public works departments.

Stating that the 2024 Parliamentary polls will be a fight between the citizens of the country and the BJP, Banerjee had Wednesday said people across religions must unite to defeat the

AAP launches poster campaign

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) launched a poster campaign with the slogan "Modi Hatao, Desh Bachao" Thursday and banners in several languages have been put up across 22 states, the party's national convener Gopal Rai said. Rai said the campaign was aimed at sending a message across the nation that promises made by the BJP to citizens "have not been fulfilled yet". The senior AAP leader alleged that the Centre has been attempting to "curtail the independence" of investigative agencies and "shattering faith" in the judicial processes.

saffron party and save the poor of the country.

She described the BJP as 'Dushasana' and 'Duryodhana' - the two antagonists from the epic 'Mahabharata'. "I urge every political party in India to unite to oust this 'Dushasana' BJP government. "This Duryodhana' BJP should be removed from power to save the country's common man as well as Indian democracy," Banerjee said.

The Trinamool Congress chief also hit out at a section of state government employees, who have been demanding enhanced Dearness Allowance (DA) on par with that of the Centre, alleging that those who had got jobs on recommendations of CPI (M) leaders during the Left regime, are trying to malign the state.

DMK CONVENES OPPN MEET IN CHENNAI MONDAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has called a meeting of opposition parties in Chennai Monday to discuss issues relating to social justice in the country.

Leaders of around 20 parties, including the Congress, are slated to attend the meeting either in person or virtually, opposition leaders said. The meeting will discuss the topic: "Taking social justice in India forward - Social Justice, the Way Forward".

Among the speakers who have confirmed their participation include Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav, National Conference patron Farooq Abdullah, BRS leader K Keshav Rao, CPI(M)'s Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja, AAP leader Sanjay Singh and TMC's Derek O'Brien. The BJD's Sasmit Patra and YSRCP's A Suresh are also among the likely attendees. If they do, then their parties would be attending such a meeting for the first time, sources said. However, the two parties are yet to confirm their presence to the DMK. However, opposition leaders said BJD and YSRCP are likely to attend the meeting as it is not an out and out opposition "political" meeting but a discussion on a social issue. The BJD's decision to participate would come close on the heels of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's meeting with Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. Opposition leaders also said that while the parties have confirmed presence, the names of their representatives is tentative and will depend on availability. The NCP and Shiv Sena (UBT) are yet to confirm their participation.

Supermassive black hole discovered for the 1st time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Astronomers have discovered one of the biggest black holes inside a galaxy hundreds of millions of light years from Earth, through gravitational lensing for the first time, throwing the field open for detecting more black holes and investigating their origins.

Gravitational lensing is where a foreground galaxy bends the light coming from a more distant object and magnifies it.

The researchers, led by Durham University, UK, by closely examining how light is bent by the black hole, found an ultramassive black hole with a mass of over 30 billion times the mass of our Sun in the foreground galaxy - a scale rarely seen by as-

The researchers found an ultramassive black hole with a mass of over 30 billion times the mass of our Sun in the foreground galaxy

tronomers, they said in a study. The findings are published in the journal Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. This is the first black hole found using the technique, whereby the team simulated light travelling through the universe hundreds of thousands of times, they said.

They also said that each simulation included a different mass black hole, which changed light's journey to Earth.



A representational image of a black hole

NASA/FILE

When the researchers included an ultramassive black hole in one of their simulations, the path taken by the light from the faraway galaxy to reach Earth matched the path seen in real images cap-

tured by the Hubble Space Telescope, they said.

A gravitational lens occurs when the gravitational field of a foreground galaxy appears to bend the light of a background galaxy, mean-

ing that we observe the background galaxy more than once. The lens also magnifies it, allowing scientists to study it in enhanced detail. "Most of the biggest black holes that we know about are in an active state, where matter pulled in close to the black hole heats up and releases energy in the form of light, X-rays, and other radiation."

"However, gravitational lensing makes it possible to study inactive black holes, something not currently possible in distant galaxies."

"This approach could let us detect many more black holes beyond our local universe and reveal how these exotic objects evolved further back in cosmic time," said lead author James Nightingale, Department of Physics, Durham University.

international



The European Union must be prepared to develop measures to protect trade and investment that China might exploit for its own security and military purposes
URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

POPE IMPROVING

Pope Francis rested well overnight and was "progressively improving" Thursday after being hospitalised with a respiratory infection, the Vatican said



of the day quote

Efforts to strengthen democracies around the globe are working and the world is turning the tide towards greater freedom



JOE BIDEN | US PRESIDENT

The NATO applications of Sweden and Finland should be ratified quickly



CATHERINE COLONNA | FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER

China firmly opposes any form of official interaction between the US and Taiwan



MAO NING | CHINA FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON

SHORT TAKES

Tahawwur Rana moves US court

Washington: Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, sought for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, has approached a US court for a status conference after waiting for an order on his extradition to India for more than 20 months. Rana, 62, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley, was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack in which 166 people, including six Americans, were killed. He is a declared fugitive in India.

Pak passes bill to curb powers

Islamabad: Pakistan's Parliament Thursday passed a bill to curb the powers of the chief justice of the Supreme Court regarding suo motu cases and the constitution of benches, in a significant move to rein in the top judiciary amid criticism by the Opposition. Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tatar introduced "The Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023" on Thursday in the Senate, a day after it was passed by the National Assembly - the lower house of the parliament. There were 60 votes in favour of the bill and 19 against it. The bill will now be presented to President Arif Alvi for his assent. If the president does not give his approval within 10 days, it will be deemed to have been given.

4 dead, 6 injured

Peshawar: Taliban terrorists opened fire at a vehicle ferrying security forces in northwest Pakistan Thursday, killing four policemen and wounding six others. The terrorists attacked the police mobile van in Lakki Marwat district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.



People fly kites in Bangkok, Thailand

Nine dead after helicopters crash

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fort Campbell (US), March 30: Nine people were killed in a crash involving two Army Black Hawk helicopters in Kentucky, a military spokesperson said.

Nondice Thurman, a spokesperson for Fort Campbell, said Thursday morning that the deaths happened the previous night in southwestern Kentucky during a routine training mission.

A statement from Fort Campbell says the two HH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, part of the 101st Airborne Division, crashed around 10 p.m. Wednesday in Trigg County, Kentucky.

The 101st Airborne confirmed the crash about 30 miles (48 kilometres) northwest of Fort Campbell. The crash is under investigation. "Right now our focus is on the Soldiers and their families who were involved," the statement added.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear had said earlier that fatalities were expected, adding that police and emergency officials were responding. "The crash occurred in a field, some wooded area," Kentucky State Police Trooper Sarah Burgess said at a news briefing. "At this time, there are no reports of residence damage."

Fort Campbell is located near the Tennessee border, about 60 miles (97 kilometres) northwest of Nashville, and the crash occurred in the Trigg County, Kentucky, community of Cadiz. Nick Tomaszewski, who lives about a mile from where the crash occurred, said he saw two helicopters flying over his house moments before the crash.

"For whatever reason last night my wife and I were sitting there looking out on the back deck and I said 'Wow, those two helicopters look low and they look kind of close to one another tonight,'" he said. "The helicopters flew over and looped back around and moments later 'we saw what looked like a firework went off in the sky.'"

Taiwan's President calls for unity, thanks US for support

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 30: Taiwan's president addressed members of New York's Taiwanese community in a US stopover on her way to Central America, seeking to rally allies of the self-ruled island in the US and elsewhere as tensions rise with China.

Pro-China demonstrators waving the Chinese flag were out on the streets for President Tsai Ing-wen's first hours in New York on Wednesday. "Tsai Ing-wen big traitor of China," the slogan on a sign held by one protester declared.

In a speech Wednesday night to fellow Taiwanese in New York, Tsai thanked the United States for its security assistance and urged Taiwanese unity. "The safer Taiwan is, the safer the world will be," she said. She pledged Taiwan would work with its democratic partners to remain on the path of democracy.

Tsai arrived in New York on Wednesday and was expected to spend Thursday in closed events in the city. Taiwan is carefully calibrating Tsai's stops in the United States and forgoing official meetings with senior US leaders in Washington in an effort to limit the scale of China's response.

China is focusing on an expected meeting next week between Tsai and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. It would be one of the highest-level in-person sessions for a Taiwanese leader on what that government calls "transits" through the United States.

Officials did make not public advance details of Tsai's schedule for her stops in the United States, underscoring the sensitivity of her travel here. On Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning restated China's furious objections to any interactions between Tsai and US officials.

A senior Chinese diplomat in Washington, embassy charge d'affaires Xu Xueyuan, pointed to the anticipated meeting between Tsai and the US House speaker as one that would have significant repercussions overall and a "serious, serious, serious" impact on US-China relations.

Neither Taiwan nor McCarthy, R-Calif., has publicly confirmed any in-person get-together during Tsai's travel. Analysts have framed a session between the two outside Washington as possibly less provocative than a trip by McCarthy to Taiwan, which he has said he also intends to do.

Beijing responded to a visit by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., last August by launching missiles, deploying warships across the median line of the Taiwan Strait and simulating a blockade of the island. China also temporarily suspended dialogue with the US on climate and other major issues and restricted military-to-military communication with the Pentagon.

The United States broke off official ties with Taiwan in 1979, when it formally established diplomatic relations with China. The United States nonetheless remains the island's chief source of military hardware and cooperation. US law requires Washington to treat all threats to the island as matters of "grave concern" but does not explicitly say whether the US would commit troops.

Sen. Robert Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he hopes any US officials meeting unofficially with the Taiwanese president convey that American support for Taiwan is "strong and unequivocal."

Tsai has made six previous trips through the US during her presidency, meeting with members of Congress and members of the Taiwanese diaspora. Administration officials are underscoring that her trip is in line with what she and her predecessors have done in the past.



PRO-CHINA DEMONSTRATORS WAVING THE CHINESE FLAG WERE OUT ON THE STREETS FOR PRESIDENT TSAI ING-WEN'S FIRST HOURS IN NEW YORK WEDNESDAY. "TSAI ING-WEN BIG TRAITOR OF CHINA," THE SLOGAN ON A SIGN HELD BY ONE PROTESTER DECLARED

CHINA IS FOCUSING ON AN EXPECTED MEETING NEXT WEEK BETWEEN TSAI AND HOUSE SPEAKER KEVIN MCCARTHY

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Spouses of H-1B visa holders can work in US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, March 30: A judge in the US has ruled that spouses of H-1B visa holders, a significantly large number of whom are Indians, can work in the country, in a big relief to foreign workers in the American tech sector which has seen massive retrenchments.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

US District Judge Tanya Chutkan dismissed a lawsuit filed by Save

BOLSONARO RETURNS TO BRAZIL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brasilia, March 30: Former President Jair Bolsonaro arrived back in Brazil Thursday after a three-month stay in Florida, seeking a new role on the political scene as authorities in the capital braced for the far-right populist's return.

Bolsonaro left Brazil just before the end of his presidential term. In so doing, he broke with tradition by declining to hand the presidential sash to his successor, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who won the October election with the narrowest finish since Brazil's return to democracy over three decades earlier.

While in the US, Bolsonaro mostly kept a low profile, although he delivered several speeches to Brazilian expats and conservatives, including at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Maryland. For the first time in 30 years, the lawmaker-turned-president does not hold elected office. "I'm without a mandate, but I'm not retired," Bolsonaro told television network Jovem Pan Monday

Jobs USA which had approached the court to dismiss the Obama-era regulation that gave employment authorisation cards to spouses of certain categories of H-1B visa holders. Save Jobs USA is an organisation comprising IT workers who claim they lost their jobs to H-1B workers. Tech companies such as Amazon, Apple, Google, and Microsoft had opposed the lawsuit. The US has so far issued nearly 1, 00,000 work authorisations to spouses of H-1B workers.

The H-1B visa programme is designed to allow skilled foreign workers to come to the US and work for American companies

The US has so far issued nearly 1, 00,000 work authorisations to spouses of H-1B workers

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AGE JUST A NUMBER

This surfer nears 90 and talks of catching waves at 100

Seiichi Sano paddles out and waits for a wave to approach. He catches it and stands, tries to do a few tricks on the board, and often tumbles over into the shallow water at the beach's edge

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fujisawa, March 30: A busy company owner for the early part of his life, Seiichi Sano began anew at 80 by climbing Mt. Fuji. Apparently not challenged enough by Japan's highest peak, he almost immediately took up surfing.

Sano turns 90 later this year, and after being recognised by Guinness World Records as the oldest male to surf, he's ready for other tests. "Maybe I'll try bouldering," he said, suggesting he

hosted sailing for the recent Tokyo Olympics, and was the harbour for the 1964 Games.

He said he was inspired by an employee at his local bank, who was always tan and didn't look like a typical banker. His secret, he said, was surfing. So Sano followed up and found a teacher. "I don't consider myself an old man," he said in his wet suit, board standing alongside. "I have never thought of myself as an old person. I always feel that I can still move forward. I can still do it. I can still enjoy it."

Enoshima is an area of small waves, which suits Sano. He joined hundreds of other surfers on Thursday, waiting for the larger waves to come. All the surfers were younger, of course. Several were elementary school or junior high age who also work with Sano's surf



instructor, 46-year-old Kazuto Shimizu.

They couldn't wait to brag about their, so to speak, "great grandfa-

ther." "I think age doesn't matter in surfing," 12-year-old Iroha Shimabukuro said. Added her twin sister, Fuka: "He's more like a fam-

ily member regardless of age." "I think he's amazing," said their younger brother, Shua. Rokka Saito, the other young surfer in the pack of four, summed it up. "I respect him," she said.

Sano paddles out and waits for a wave to approach. He catches it and stands, tries to do a few tricks on the board, and often tumbles over into the shallow water at the beach's edge. "I can only say that I just enjoy myself and do what I want without stressing out," he said. "So if you try to be too good at it, or think that you have to do it this way or that way, I think you lose the fun. "I enjoy being swept up in the wave," he added. "I am not a good surfer. So I call myself a small-wave surfer" — out of respect for those who surf well."



The Federal District's security secretariat mobilised hundreds of police officers and the Esplanade of Ministries was closed to prevent gatherings of Bolsonaro's supporters. A horde of his supporters stormed and ransacked the capital's most important government buildings on January 8, one week after Lula took office, seeking to oust the new president from power.

business

of the day quote

I can assure you that talks (Free Trade Agreement) are going on very well with the UK, Canada, with the EU countries, we are also in dialogue with Israel

PIYUSH GOYAL | UNION COMMERCE MINISTER

India has been seen as a market that holds tremendous potential for direct selling, reflected in the consistent and sustained growth of a CAGR of 13 per cent over the past half a decade

RAJAT BANERJI | CHAIRMAN, IDSA

This is possible only if individuals, businesses and organizations realize the need for reducing their carbon footprint, get the right guidance and consultancy to start their climate journey and contribute significantly towards global climate action

MANISH DAKARA | CMD, EKI ENERGY SERVICES

SHORT TAKES

Banga poised to become WB chief

Washington: Indian-American business leader Ajay Banga is poised to become the next President of the World Bank after the nomination period closed and no country proposed an alternate candidate for the prestigious post. In February, President Joe Biden announced that the US would be nominating Banga to lead the World Bank because he is "well equipped" to lead the global institution at "this critical moment in history." The World Bank Wednesday closed a month-long window for nominations for its next president, with no alternatives announced to 63-year-old Banga. The former Mastercard Inc. Chief, Banga currently serves as Vice Chairman at General Atlantic. The bank's board is expected to announce the next steps in its selection process Thursday, with a view to confirming a new leader by early May.

SpiceJet CMD new Assocham Prez

New Delhi: SpiceJet's Chairman & Managing Director Ajay Singh has assumed charge as the President Assocham, replacing Renew Power MD Sumant Sinha after the completion of his tenure. Sanjay Nayar, founder and Chairman of Sorin Investment Fund is the new Senior Vice-President of Assocham, the industry body said in a release Wednesday. "I am taking over at times which are both exciting and challenging. As an economy, India stands out as a robust economy in the midst of global headwinds. Even when major economies of the world are facing the threat of recession, the Indian economy is growing between 6.5-7 per cent," Singh said.

HDFC Bank unveils 500th branch in TN

Chennai: HDFC Bank Thursday announced the launch of its 500th branch in Tamil Nadu in Madurai district. The branch at Arasaradi was inaugurated virtually by the state Finance Minister Palaniivel Thiaga Rajan from the Secretariat in Chennai, a bank release said. Senior executives from HDFC Bank including Sanjeev Kumar, Branch Banking Head, South were present on the occasion. The bank will continue to expand its network in the state with a greater focus on semi-urban and rural locations, the release added. HDFC Bank opened its first branch in the state in 1995, at Anna Salai here.



In the last 1 year, the cost of construction has risen rapidly due to the gradual increase in repo rates by the RBI. Another repo rate hike would not only make certain projects financially unfeasible, but it would also deter homebuyers as home loan rates will be at an all-time high

HARSH VARDHAN PATODIA | NATIONAL PRESIDENT, CREDAI

MEESHO HITS 11L SELLERS MILESTONE

Softbank-backed e-commerce firm Meesho has crossed the 11-lakh sellers milestone on its platform, with more than 6 lakh small businesses signing up in the last one year, the company said Thursday. The company has achieved this feat in eight years of its inception and claims that half of the total sellers registered belong to tier 2 and smaller towns



DEBT DISTRESS

Adani Group pins hopes on 20% earnings rise every year

Adani Group is hoping to claw back the narrative set by Hindenburg by choosing slow and steady growth over the breakneck, mostly debt-fuelled, expansion spree of recent years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: Embattled Adani Group is looking at a 20 per cent growth in earnings across businesses spanning from sea ports to airports, edible oil and commodities, energy, cement and data centres, to repay about \$23 billion of debt over the next 3-4 years in a comeback strategy, sources said.

Adani group executives have met bankers, bond holders, analysts and investors from Singapore to the US in the last three weeks to address stakeholders' concerns in the aftermath of a damning US short seller report that ripped off \$135 billion in market value of listed companies of the conglomerate.

Sources aware of the development said Adani at these roadshows presented the growth story of the sprawling conglomerate that is refocusing its energies on higher efficiency in business and bringing down debt rather than breakneck speed expansion.

The group saw a 20 per cent growth in EBITDA or earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization, helping it pare debt. Between 2013 and 2022, earnings grew by 22 per cent year-on-



Adani group's current EBITDA stands at ₹61,200cr while its net debt stood at ₹1,891-cr (about \$23bn)

Since then, it has repaid \$500mn of debt and will repay most of the remaining debt in the next 3-4 years using earnings growth

About 37% of current debt is in bonds, 31% is owed to public sector banks and another 8% to private Indian banks

year. And a 20 per cent growth will help bring down the debt-to-EBITDA ratio from 7.6 per cent to 3 per cent by 2025, they said.

Debt/EBITDA is a ratio measuring the amount of income generated and fund available to pay down debt before covering interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization expenses. Debt/EBITDA measures a company's ability to pay off its incurred debt. A high ratio

result could indicate a company has a too-heavy debt load.

Sources said the company management told investors that once the revenue increases, the debt ratio will come down.

In the January 24 report, Hindenburg Research had flagged "substantial" debt levels at the group while alleging accounting fraud and the use of offshore shell companies to inflate stock prices.

'India needs \$540bn to meet renewable goals'

In its report 'Asia-Pacific's Different Pathways To Energy Transition', S&P Global Ratings said the addition of renewables capacity in India is outpacing coal, but demand growth and intermittency issues are leading to greater coal usage and new coal plants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: India needs \$540 billion of investment between 2020 and 2029 to meet its ambitious targets for electricity generation from renewable sources, S&P Global Ratings said Thursday as it saw private-sector-led energy transition entering a new phase.

India is targeting to cut its emissions to net zero by 2070. In the transition to that, it is targeting 500 gigawatts (GW) of non-fossil electricity capacity, half of the energy from renewables, a reduction of emissions by one billion tonne and an emissions intensity of the GDP by 45 per cent by 2030.

"Meeting India's renewables target of 500 GW by 2030 requires more than 40 GW of new capacity additions annually (compared to 10-15 GW actual)," it said.

"Policies are creating an enabling environment while private sector investments will lead the energy transition," it said, adding investments of \$540 billion are required from 2020 to 2029 to meet India's renewables target. Half of these investments will be in renewables and batteries, and another third in strengthening the grid.

"Private sector will lead gener-



Policies are still evolving and some key countries such as China and India have no specific timeline to phase out coal. Access and affordability will trump long-term energy-transition goals while energy security considerations may delay transition for some

ABHISHEK DANGRA | CREDIT ANALYST, S&P GLOBAL RATINGS

Target to cut emissions to net zero by 2070

India needs \$540bn investment between 2020-29 to meet targets

It is the world's fourth biggest emitter of carbon dioxide after China, US, EU

ation capex while public sector utilities will likely lead grid investments," it said. "Domestic long-term bank funding is available against projects and cash flows."

There is, however, limited appetite for unsecured holding company funding.

India is the world's fourth biggest emitter of carbon dioxide after China, the US and the EU. But its emissions per capita are much lower than other major world economies. India emitted 1.9 tonnes of CO2 per head of population in 2019, compared to 15.5 tonne for the US and 12.5 tonne for Russia that year.

Net zero, or becoming carbon neutral, means not adding to the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Energy transition refers to the shift from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption - including oil, natural gas and coal - to renewable energy sources like wind and solar, as well as lithium-ion batteries.

S&P said renewables face increasing intermittency issues, necessitating grid flexibility/energy storage solutions.

As much as 12.1 GW of energy storage is likely to be added from now till 2030 against a target of 27 GW of battery and 10 GW of pumped storage by 2030, it said, adding 20 per cent tariff on Chinese batteries and subsidies for domestic production aim to develop the ecosystem.

In the report, S&P said the countries of Asia-Pacific still have a long way to go before they can meet their ambitious energy targets.

"India is entering into the next stage - Renewables 3.0 - with industry diversification into hybrid, pumped storage, round-the-clock projects, etc. It is moving away from feed-in-tariff (1.0) and highly competitive bidding (2.0). Execution risks and return profiles can significantly diverge," S&P Global Ratings credit analyst Abhishek Dangra said.

Unacademy sacks 12% of workforce; CEO apologises

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 30: There is no stopping layoffs in the Indian edtech space and Gaurav Munjal, Co-Founder and CEO of Unacademy, has announced to reduce the size of team by 12 per cent or more than 350 employees to "meet the goals we are chasing in the current realities we face".

Apologising for the fresh round of job cuts, Munjal said in an internal memo seen by IANS that today's reality is a contrast from two years ago "where we saw unprecedented growth because of the accelerated adoption of online learning".

"The global economy is enduring a recession, funding is scarce and running a profitable business is key. We have to adapt to these changes, build and operate in a much leaner manner so we can truly create value for our users and shareholders," Munjal wrote.

In November last year, the edtech major laid off 10 per cent of its workforce or nearly 350 employees, as funding winter deepened.

Munjal said that for impacted employees, the severance pay will be equivalent to the notice period with an additional one month's pay.

Edtech startups in India have laid off thousands of employees in the past year and have been unable to raise funding as a slow-down gripped the market.

Faster execution of reforms to boost India's growth: WB

The global economy's 'speed limit' -- the maximum rate of long-term growth without causing inflation -- is set to decline to its lowest point in three decades by 2030

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: India's potential growth could benefit from accelerated implementation of an already ambitious reform agenda, the World Bank said in a new report that warns that the global economy faces the prospect of a "lost decade" on account of nearly all drivers of economic progress in recent history fading.

"In the decade before Covid-19, a global slowdown in productivity -- which is essential for income growth and higher wages -- was already adding to concerns about long-term economic prospects," the report titled 'Falling Long-Term Growth Prospects: Trends, Expectations, and Policies' said.

The report further said, adding that investment growth is weakening, global labour force is growing sluggishly, human capital reversals have been triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, and growth in international trade is barely matching GDP growth.



"The result could be a lost decade in the making -- not just for some countries or regions as has occurred in the past -- but for the whole world. Without a big and broad policy push to rejuvenate it, the global average potential GDP growth rate... is expected to fall to a three-decade low of 2.2 per cent a year between now and 2030, down from 2.6 per cent in 2011-21," it said.

The analysis shows that global potential GDP growth can be boosted by as much as 0.7 percentage points -- to an annual average rate of 2.9 per cent -- if countries adopt sustainable, growth-oriented policies that would convert an expected slowdown into an acceleration of global potential GDP growth.

While India has been growing at a faster pace than peers, its "growth could benefit from accelerated implementation of an already ambitious reform agenda," it said.

Union Bank opens branch in Banki

Cuttack: Union Bank of India opened its 53rd Branch of Cuttack Region at Banki March 29. The branch was inaugurated in the presence of Devi Ranjan Tripathy, MLA Banki, Sarvesh Ranjan, FGM, FGMO Bhubaneswar and Tushar Kanta Kar, Regional Head, Cuttack region. The opening ceremony witnessed a gathering of customers including senior citizens and opinion makers of the catchment. The new branch reaffirms the commitment of the bank towards offering best customer service across the length and breadth of the Banki and surrounding areas. Union Bank of India is the second largest bank in Odisha.



India to unveil new Foreign Trade Policy 2023-28 today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: India will unveil its much-awaited new Foreign Trade Policy 2023-28 Friday, with a view to boost exports amid slowing global trade.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will announce the foreign trade policy, according to the ministry. The current foreign trade policy (2015-20) is in force till March 31, 2022.

The term of the previous five year policy had ended in March 2020. However, it has been extended repeatedly in wake of Covid outbreak and resulting lockdowns.

The last extension was given in September 2022 till March 31, 2023. Goyal will announce the foreign

trade policy which is expected to outline the vision statement for taking India's goods and services exports to \$2 trillion by 2030.

The country is likely to end this fiscal year with total exports of \$760 billion as against \$676 billion in 2021-22.

India's trade has been hit by supply chain disruptions and slowdown in global trade amidst ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Sources said the new policy is likely to incorporate WTO-compliant export promotion measures.

Speaking at an event in Mumbai, Goyal said that amidst all the economic challenges faced by many countries, India is the bright spot, which almost everybody recognises and respects.



FUNDING WINTER

IPO fundraising more than halves in FY23

FUND RAISE THROUGH IPOs MORE THAN HALVES TO ₹52,116CR IN FY23 FROM AN ALL-TIME HIGH COLLECTION OF ₹1,11,547CR IN FY22

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 30: The total amount raised through initial public offerings (IPOs) more than halved to ₹52,116 crore in FY23 from an all-time high collection of ₹1,11,547 crore in the previous fiscal, according to Prime Database.

Pranav Haldea, managing director of Prime Database Group, said ₹20,557 crore which is 39 per cent of the total amount raised in FY23 was by LIC alone, without which the IPO fundraising would have been just ₹31,559 crore in the year. Yet, FY23 is still the third highest in terms of IPO fund-raise, he said.

Overall public equity fundraising also dropped by 56 per cent to



Just 37 firms hit the listing process in FY23, much lower than 53 IPOs in FY22

₹76,076 crore in the reporting year from ₹1,73,728 crore in FY22.

While IPOs were worth ₹54,344 crore in the year, total fund raising through the capital markets stood at ₹85,021 crore, of which ₹11,231 crore were from the offer for sale route, ₹9,335 crore were from QIPs/InvITs/REITs of which Rs 1,166 crore were from InvITs/REITs, taking the total equity fund raising to ₹76,076 crore.

A total of ₹8,944 crore were mobilised through public bonds, taking the total through IPOs and bonds to ₹85,021 crore. As against this, FY22 saw ₹1,12,512 being raised from IPOs, ₹4,314 crore via SME issue, ₹14,530 crore through OFS, ₹28,532 crore through QIPs/InvITs/REITs of

which ₹13,841 crore were from InvITs/REITs, taking the total equity capital mop-up to ₹1,73,728 crore. The year also saw ₹11,710 crore being raised via public bonds, adding which the total capital markets funding reached ₹1,85,438 crore.

However, despite being hit by the Covid pandemic, FY21 was the best in overall capital markets performance with the total fund mobilisation from the market scaling to an all-time high of ₹2,00,812 crore, boosted by a record ₹28,440 crore through OFS, ₹33,515 crore InvITs/REITs and ₹15,029 crore of FPOs including from SMEs.

The main-board IPOs included the country's largest ever issue by Life Insurance Corporation,

followed by Delhivery (₹5,235 crore) and Global Health (₹2,206 crore). The average deal size hit a high of ₹1,409 crore.

As many as 25 of the 37 issues came in just three months of the year (May, November and December) and the fourth quarter was the lowest in the last nine years. Only 2 of the 37 issues (Delhivery & Tracxn) were from new-age technology companies compared to five such companies raising ₹41,733 crore in FY22, pointing towards the slowdown in IPOs from this sector.

Overall public response was also moderate with only 11 issues receiving good response of over 10 times subscription and two of them got more than 50 times, while 7 issues were oversubscribed by more than 3 times. The balance 18 issues were oversubscribed 1-3 times.

In comparison to FY22, the response of retail investors also moderated with the average retail applications dropping to just 5.64 lakh from ₹13.32 lakh in FY22 and from 12.73 lakh in FY21. LIC got the highest retail applications (32.76 lakh) followed by Harsha Engineers (23.86 lakh) and Campus Activewear (17.27 lakh).



MENTOR-MENTEE CLASH KICKS OFF THE 'SWEET 16'

It's Dhoni's CSK versus Hardik's GT in the season opener as both teams fret on 'impact players'

The never-ending speculations about MS Dhoni's impending 'last dance', Virat Kohli's endless pursuit of an elusive silverware and Rohit Sharma's customary nonchalance are things that make the IPL starting today a heady cocktail of cricket and entertainment. The mega troika has been the cash-rich league's driving force in the past 15 seasons, getting the cricket crazy Indian fans hooked on the event for nearly two months every year. As it enters the 16th season, innovations introduced in the form of potential game changer like the 'Impact Player' rule, DRS on wides and waist-high no balls, and two broadcasting giants locked in an ugly war of 'TV vs Digital' act as ingredients garnishing the mouth-watering dish, which will be devoured by millions for more than 50 days. However, the product will remain the driving force and players the main stakeholders, as the likes of Dhoni, Kohli and Rohit set the narratives for their respective franchises with amazing fan bases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, March 30: Hardik Pandya's youthful leadership template will meet its match in MS Dhoni's time-tested improvisations as defending champions Gujarat Titans clash with eternal title contenders Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League (IPL) opener here Friday.

The 2022 was Pandya's first year as an IPL captain and despite his flamboyance on and off the field, he did invoke a certain sense of calm in Titans' campaign that had an identical start to finish tempo, unmatched by any other team.

With Shubman Gill in the form of his life, Rashid Khan not losing one bit of his consistency and Pandya himself having his worth weight in gold, Gujarat are once again the team to beat.

David Miller's absence from the opener due to national duty will reduce some middle-order muscle but Rahul Tewatia, who has improved by leaps and bounds in recent years, could compensate for the temporary miss.

Kane Williamson might not be most sought after in this format but in low-scoring games on difficult surfaces, he could still be the man to watch out for.

Pandya has never shied away from admitting that he has learnt the ropes of leadership from Dhoni, who has always been his 'Mentor'.

But at 42, playing from IPL to IPL, Dhoni knows the template of IPL success only too well. There have been blips here and there, like last time when they failed to qualify for the play-offs but even with shut eyes, one can vouch that there was no fault in

planning but the execution wasn't on expected lines.

Friday, as the 16th edition starts, it will be very different from earlier ones as 12 players per side will take part in the pitched battle at the Motera Stadium with the 'Impact Player' rule coming into play for the first time.

Dhoni, who manoeuvres his resources having put in a lot of thought into his actions, might well make himself the 'Impact Player' if need be during chases. That for sure won't happen in the first few games as both teams try to make optimal use of the rule.

For CSK, the presence of Ben Stokes is sure to make the opposition wary but to Gujarat Titans' delight, the England Test captain perhaps won't bowl at least in the initial phase of the tournament.

That makes him an ideal candidate as 'Impact Player' depending on whether the team bats first or second and accordingly Dhoni can think of playing three foreigners instead of four. Devon Conway, Stokes and Moeen Ali at this point look the non-negotiable three starters in the playing eleven.

A lot will depend on how well Ravindra Jadeja, Ambati Rayudu and Dhoni himself perform with willow as the Indian pace bowling unit of Deepak Chahar and Simarjeet Singh will have their task cut out.

How well Dhoni can use either spinner

Mahesh Theekshana or slinger Matheesa Pathirana or all-rounder Dwayne Pretorius will also go a long way establishing a pattern in selections.

As far as GT is concerned, there is one strategic decision which has been baffling and that is release of tearaway quick Lockie Ferguson and bringing in Shivam Mavi. However Alazarri Joseph's presence is a bit reassuring in this format.

Save Mohammed Shami, the only other pacer of repute is the skipper himself. Yash



MATCH SCHEDULE
GT vs CSK
Time: 07:30 pm
Telecast: Sports 18 channels

THE SQUADS

GUJARAT TITANS
Hardik Pandya (C), Shubman Gill, KS Bharat (wk), Wriddhiman Saha (wk), Kane Williamson, Rahul Tewatia, Abhinav Manohar, Mohammed Shami, Pradeep Sangwan, R Sai Kishore, Vijay Shankar, Sai Sudharshan, Rashid Khan, Shivam Mavi, Mathew Wade, Odean Smith, Urvil Patel, Darshan Nalkande, David Miller (not available in first 2 games), Josh Little (first match not available), Yash Dayal, Jayant Yadav, Odean Smith, Noor Ahmed, Alzarri Joseph

CSK
MS Dhoni (C & wk), Devon Conway, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Ambati Rayudu, Moeen Ali, Ben Stokes, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajinkya Rahane, Sisanda Magala, Shivam Dube, Dwaine Pretorius, Ajay Mandal, Nishant Sindhu, Rajvardhan Hangargekar, Mitchell Santner, Subhanshu Senapati, Simarjeet Singh, Matheesa Pathirana, Mahesh Theekshana, Bhagath Verma, Prashant Solanki, Shaikh Rasheed, Tushar Deshpande.

Dayal had a good first season hasn't been in great form in Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy with only 2 wickets from 6 games but to be fair, he was coming back from injury. The other cause of worry for GT will be keeper's slot. While Wriddhiman Saha was decent as an opener last year, they have a better T20 batter in KS Bharat this time round, who incidentally bats in the top order in the shortest format.

Cirstea cruises past Sabalenka to reach Miami Open semis

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami Gardens, March 30: Sorana Cirstea advanced to her first semifinal of Miami Open – a WTA 1000 event – in a decade, beating Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka 6-4, 6-4 at the Miami Open.

The 32-year-old Cirstea beat the highest-ranked opponent of her career by knocking off the second-ranked Sabalenka. Cirstea previously defeated No.4 Caroline Garcia this month at Indian Wells and topped Garcia again in the second round at Miami.

"I think I'm a bit speechless," Cirstea said. "I came out knowing that it's going to be a really tough match. Aryna hits so hard, so I knew I had to hold my ground, and I'm very, very happy with my performance today."

The 74th-ranked Romanian, who has two career singles titles, will face either Petra Kvitova or Ekaterina Alexandrova in the semifinals. The Kvitova-Alexandrova match had been scheduled for Wednesday night but was postponed to Thursday because of rain; also postponed was the men's match between top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz and No.10 Taylor Fritz.

Alexandrova advanced Tuesday when Bianca Andreescu suffered a left ankle injury and left the court in a wheelchair. Wednesday, the 22-year-old Andreescu tweeted that she tore two ligaments in her ankle and will be out indefinitely.

"It's tough to say exactly how long it will take, but let's just say it could've been much worse! I'm going to take it day by day, and I am optimistic that with the right work,

LIFETIME BAN FOR TENNIS UMPIRE

LONDON: A tennis umpire from the Dominican Republic was handed a lifetime ban from the sport on Thursday for manipulating the scoring of matches in 2019. Fabian Carrero was found to have committed 16 breaches of tennis' anti-corruption program across eight matches in tournaments held in the Dominican Republic in November and December 2019. Carrero manipulated the match scoring in a handheld device "to facilitate guaranteed betting wins on specific points," the International Tennis Integrity Agency said in a statement. He has been suspended since March last year while the case proceeded. He can no longer officiate or attend events organized by tennis governing bodies.

rehab, and preparation, I'll be back on court soon," the 2019 US Open champion said in her social media post.

Sabalenka had six double faults, three of them on break points, and made 21 unforced errors to just nine for Cirstea. "I guess people like to keep count of the age, the years, the results, but I never do that. I just mind my own business, work hard, do my thing, believe in my game, work with my coach Thomas Johansson — we just started in December and so far, I think it's going great," Cirstea said.

In the men's draw, 11th-ranked Jannik Sinner beat Emil Ruusuvuori 6-3, 6-1.



Spain-Serbia matchup in Davis Cup draw

LONDON: The draw for the group stage of the Davis Cup Finals set up a possible meeting between No.1 Carlos Alcaraz and No.2 Novak Djokovic as Spain and Serbia were placed in the group. Spain will host Group C, which also includes the Czech Republic and South Korea, in Valencia in September. The United States will face two-time champion Croatia along with Finland and the Netherlands in Group D. That group will be hosted by Croatia, although the city and venue has yet to be announced. Defending champion Canada, which won the tournament for the first time last year, is in Group A along with host Italy, Sweden and Chile. Group B consists of host Britain, last year's runner-up Australia, France and Switzerland. The top two teams in each group advance to the Final 8 tournament in Malaga, Spain, in November. Spain beat Serbia in last year's group stage, when neither Djokovic nor Spain's Rafael Nadal took part. Alcaraz, who reclaimed the No. 1 ranking from Djokovic this month, was in the Spain team last year but did not play against Serbia.

SPORTS ODISHA, OFC IN DIFFERENT IWL GROUPS

GROUP A
Gokulam Kerala FC, Mata Rukmani FC, HOPS FC, Misaka United FC, Kahaani FC, East Bengal FC, Sports Odisha and Mumbai Knights FC

GROUP B
Sethu FC, Kickstart FC, Celtic Queens FC, Eastern Sporting Union, CRPF FC, Churchill Brothers FCG, Lords FA Kochi and Odisha FC

SEASON 2022-23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 30: State football teams – Sports Odisha and Odisha FC – found themselves in different groups as the groupings for the upcoming Indian Women's League (IWL) were announced Thursday, after the draw was held at the Football House here.

Sports Odisha were drawn alongside Gokulam Kerala FC, Mata Rukmani FC, HOPS FC, Misaka United FC, Kahaani FC, East Bengal FC and Mumbai Knights FC in Group A. Odisha FC will be up against Sethu FC, Kickstart FC, Celtic Queens FC, Eastern Sporting Union, CRPF FC, Churchill Brothers FCG and Lords FA Kochi in Group B matches.

Among those present in the draw was All India Football Federation (AIFF) secretary general, Shaji

Prabhakaran. Speaking on the occasion, Prabhakaran said: "This season of the IWL is like a qualification competition of a more competitive league that will come into effect in the next campaign. My best wishes to all the 16 teams, who will be part of the Hero IWL. We had a meeting with several clubs and all efforts have been made to create a holistic situation for the development and rapid growth of Indian women's football," he said.

The IWL will start April 25. The 2022-23 season of the top women's meet will have 16 teams split into two groups. The top four teams from each group will qualify for the knockout stage, consisting of quarterfinals, semifinals and final. The top eight teams will also get direct slots in next season's IWL, which will be played on home-and-away basis.

Sindhu, Srikanth enter quarterfinals



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, March 30: Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu and Kidambi Srikanth moved to the singles quarterfinals of the Madrid Spain Masters badminton tournament with straight game wins here Thursday.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu dispatched Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia 21-16, 21-14 in a little over half an hour to enter her first quarterfinal in 2023. World No.21 Srikanth pulled off a 21-15, 21-12 second round win over compatriot B Sai Praneeth.

Second seed Sindhu has been struggling for form this season since returning to action following a long injury layoff. It is the first time this year that the 27-year-old has crossed the second round.

Sindhu, who has dropped out of the top 10 for the first time since November 2016, will take on 25-year-old Danish Mia Blichfeldt in the last eight stage of the Super 300 tournament.

While World No.21 Srikanth, seeded fifth, has a tough contest ahead of him as the former world No.1 is pitted against top seed Kenta



Nishimoto of Japan in the quarterfinals. Nishimoto was handed a walkover by France's Arnaud Merkle in their second round contest.

Kiran George and Priyanshu Rajawat crashed out of the men's singles event after suffering second round defeats. While George went down to Denmark's Magnus Johannesen 17-21, 12-21, Rajat was outplayed 14-21, 15-21 by eighth seed Toma Junior Popov of France.

Later in the day, Aakarshi Kashyap lost her women's singles pre-quarterfinals match to Japan's Natsuki Nidaira 13-21, 8-21. Malvika

Bansod gave a walkover to top seeded Spanish Carolina Marin, while Ashmita Chaliha was beaten 15-21, 15-21 by Yeo Jia Min in her second round match.

Sameer Verma lost his men's singles Round of 16 match, going down 15-21, 14-21 to Japanese second seed Kanta Tsuneyama. In men's doubles, MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila lost to Japanese duo of Shuntaro Mezaki and Haruya Nishida 16-21, 20-22, while the pairing of Sikki Reddy and Arathi Sara Sunil went down to Japan's Rui Hirokami and Yuna Kato 12-21, 13-21.

RCA to build 3rd biggest cricket stadium in world

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, March 30: Rajasthan Cricket Association Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Hindustan Zinc Limited (HZL) to build the "world's third largest cricket stadium" in Chonp village of Jaipur district here.

A release said that HZL, a Vedanta Group Company, will spend Rs 300 crore on the facility which will be named the Anil Agarwal International Cricket Stadium.

The stadium facilities will be spread across 100 acres and have a seating capacity of more than 75,000. Only Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium and Melbourne Cricket Ground have a larger seating capacity than this planned stadium, the release claimed.

Vedanta chairman Anil Agarwal shared his vision for the project. "Sport gives us the best life lessons in leadership, teamwork, competition and hunger to succeed. If India's youth participate wholeheartedly with energy and passion – nurtured by world class infrastructure – they will become an unbeatable talent pool," he said.