



Content set to rule

Actor Avika Gor says she is optimistic that meaningful storytelling will find its way back onto small screens

LEISURE | P2



Defence pact

Leaders of North Korea and Russia sign a treaty which deepens their military cooperation and includes a defence pledge to help each other

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Short of target

The government monetises assets worth ₹1.56L-cr under the National Monetisation Pipeline in FY24, lower than the target of ₹1.8L-cr

BUSINESS | P11



India favourites

Title-favourites India face Afghanistan in their opening Super 8 fixture of the T20 WC in Bridgetown, Thursday

SPORTS | P12

SHORT TAKES

Vax drive against diphtheria launched

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government launched Wednesday a special vaccination drive in Rayagada district to contain the diphtheria outbreak, especially in Kashipur locality where five children have died. The Health & Family Welfare department has also asked officials in the districts of Kalahandi and Koraput where the disease is slowly spreading its tentacles. Officials said kids under one year will be administered pentavalent vaccines while children aged between one and seven will be administered single-dose diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) and tetanus (DPT) vaccines.

P3

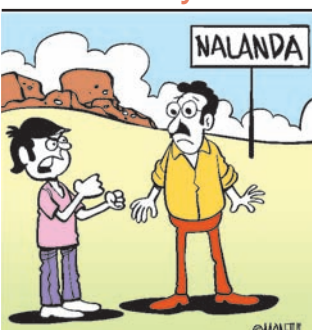
Actress killed, four hurt in road mishap

Cuttack: An actress of a TV serial was killed and four others suffered critical injuries when the car they were travelling in met with a head-on collision with a truck on Kuakhai bridge in the wee hours of Wednesday. The condition of the four injured persons including the drivers of the car and the truck are stated to be critical. All are undergoing treatment at the SCB Medical College & Hospital here. Police said that among the four, two are also actresses and they were returning from a late shoot when the accident occurred.

68 Indian Hajj pilgrims among 600 dead

Riyadh: A diplomat here said Wednesday that 68 Indian nationals died during the Hajj pilgrimage this year due to searing heat, bringing the overall tally to 645. "We have confirmed the death of 68 Indian pilgrims ... Some are because of natural causes. However, most were due to the weather conditions, the diplomat informed. Another official informed that 323 of those who died were Egyptians while 60 Jordanian pilgrims had also succumbed to the heat.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



When I hear about paper leaks, poor education, and joblessness... I feel like setting my college on fire too

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	77337.59 ↑ 36.45
NIFTY	23516.00 ↓ 41.90
DOLLAR	83.41 ↑ ₹0.05
EURO	89.64 ↑ ₹0.11
GOLD	₹71,654 ↓ ₹85
SILVER	₹89,213 ↑ ₹133

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.6°C	37.0°C
Min Temp	26.1°C	24.5°C
Humidity	88%	88%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
PARTLY CLOUDY SKY



BONHOMIE TIME: Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama with former US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other members of the US Congressional delegation after a meeting Wednesday at his residence in Dharamsala

No decision on Ratna Bhandar: Harichandan

A full-fledged controversy erupted Wednesday after an ASI official announced that the Ratna Bhandar will be opened July 8 for repair and maintenance work. The state government was quick to rebuff the claim stating that such a decision could only be taken by it. The Ratna Bhandar was last opened in 1985, but the inventories were last made in 1978. During the recently-concluded general and Assembly elections in Odisha, all BJP leaders, including the PM had made the opening of the Ratna Bhandar a major political issue

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 19: Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan rubbished Wednesday the claims of an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) official that the doors of the Ratna Bhandar in Puri Srimandir will be opened July 8. Earlier in the day, DB Garnayak, Superintendent of ASI, Puri Circle had claimed that the Ratna Bhandar will be opened in the presence core and technical committee members on the above mentioned date as inspection would be done for maintenance and repair work.

However, Harichandan denied that any such decision has been taken. "The state government has not taken any decision to



open the Ratna Bhandar. 'Chhatisha Niyog', the apex decision-making body of the Jagannath Temple is yet to take a call in this regard. No one can take any such decision solely," Harichandan stated.

"An official of the ASI has stated wrongly that the doors of the Ratna Bhandar will be opened July 8. Stern action will be taken against the official," added the law minister.

A separate release issued by the Law Ministry said, "No proposal from Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee regarding opening of the Ratna Bhandar has been received by the government today (Wednesday). If any such proposal is received by the government in future, necessary action will be taken."

Earlier in the day, Garnayak had pointed out that the Ratna Bhandar was in need of urgent repair work. "As per a 2018 report, an inspection was done and cracks were observed, some stones had fallen and some iron rods were missing. The condition of the walls was not good. In the

Missing key report in next Cabinet meet

CUTTACK: The state government Wednesday informed the Orissa High Court that it will make public Justice Raghuraj Das Commission's inquiry report on missing keys of Srimandir Ratna Bhandar in the next Cabinet meeting. While hearing the state's affidavit, a division bench of Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh and Justice Savitri Ratho posted the next hearing to July 10. In line with the HC's directive, the Justice Raghuraj Das Commission was instituted to probe the missing key episode of the temple treasury. The panel submitted its report with the state government within the scheduled timeframe. Although the Commission of Inquiry Act mandates tabling of the probe report in the Assembly within a fixed period, the then state government reportedly preferred to stay mum.

laser scanning, cracks were detected in the outer wall and joints. Through these cracks, rainwater might be entering and destroying the valuables," said Garnayak. The ASI official also said that unless preventive measures are implemented quickly, the treasury may suffer more damages during the upcoming monsoon season. He added that after taking everybody's consent, the date July 8 had been fixed.

Surama set for Speaker's post

Choice expected to be unanimous as her candidature may be supported by all parties

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, June 19: Senior BJP leader and Ranpur MLA Surama Padhy filed Wednesday her nomination papers for the election to the post of Speaker of the Odisha Legislative Assembly. Accompanied by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Deputy Chief Ministers KV Singh Deo and Pravat Parida, Padhy submitted her nomination paper to Dasarathi Satpathy, the secretary of the Odisha Legislative Assembly.

Earlier, the BJP Legislature Party had unanimously decided on Padhy's name for the post of Speaker. Odisha Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mukesh Mahaling told reporters that the chief minister has requested



BJD president Naveen Patnaik to support Padhy's candidature. Padhy (63) is possibly the lone candidate in the fray for the Speaker election as the opposition BJD has not fielded any candidate against her. She is likely to be declared as the Speaker of the 17th Odisha Legislative Assembly (OLA) Thursday. Padhy will become the second

woman Speaker of the state after Pramila Mallik of BJD. Mallik was the Speaker in the 16th OLA. Padhy was first elected to the Assembly from Ranpur in Nayagarh district on a BJP ticket in 2004. She had also served as a Minister of State with Independent charge of the Cooperation department in the BJD-BJP coalition government.

Naveen elected LoP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 19: Former CM Naveen Patnaik said Wednesday he would be the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Odisha Legislative Assembly. Speaking to reporters here, Patnaik said the decision was taken at the BJD's legislature party meeting held here at the Sankha Bhavan. "We had a meeting of the MLAs of the BJD. I congratulated and thanked them. They have elected

me as the Leader of the Opposition and leader of the BJD legislature party," Patnaik informed. Senior BJD MLA Prasanna Acharya was named the deputy leader of the Opposition, while former Speaker Pramila Mallik would be the chief whip of the Opposition in the House. Patnaik named Pratap Keshari Deb as the deputy chief whip of the Opposition in the Assembly. The BJD, which ruled the state for 24 years, lost power to the BJP in the recently-concluded polls.

PADDY MSP HIKED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: The government Wednesday raised the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy by 5.35 per cent to ₹2,300 per quintal for the 2024-25 kharif marketing season.

The hike in paddy support price comes despite the government sitting on surplus rice stocks, but it is significant ahead of elections in states like Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi.

Announcing the MSP increase, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the Cabinet has approved the MSPs for 14 kharif (summer) crops based on recommendations from the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

The MSP for 'common' grade paddy has been raised by ₹117 to ₹2,300 per quintal, while for the 'A' grade variety it has been hiked to ₹2,320 per quintal for the upcoming kharif season, Vaishnav told reporters here. This is the first Cabinet decision taken in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term in office, he added.

Vaishnav said the government had a clear policy decision taken in the 2018 Union Budget that MSP should be at least 1.5 times the cost of production, and this principle was followed in the latest MSP. The cost was scientifically calculated by CACP, he added.

FCI currently holds a record stockpile of around 53.4 million tonne of rice, officials said.

Over 4K millionaires to leave India in 2024

DESPITE THE EXODUS, INDIA SHOULD NOT BE WORRIED AS EVERY YEAR IT CREATES MORE HIGH NET-WORTH INDIVIDUALS THAN THOSE EMIGRATING

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 19: Approximately 4,300 millionaires are expected to leave India this year, with a significant number choosing the UAE as their permanent destination, according to a report by international investment migration advisory firm 'Henley & Partners'. Last year the same firm had reported that 5,100 Indian millionaires had relocated abroad. India, the fastest-growing economy in the world, is expected to rank third globally in terms of millionaire migrations, after China and the United Kingdom (UK). While India has overtaken China

as the world's most populous nation, its net millionaire exodus is less than 30 per cent of China's.

The report however states that India has nothing to worry about the exodus of millionaires. "While India loses thousands of millionaires each year; concerns over the outflows may well be mitigated as with wealth growth of 85 per cent over the past decade, the country continues to produce far more new high net-worth individuals than it loses to emigration," the report states.

The report also highlights many of the departing millionaires retain business interests and second homes in India, which suggests ongoing economic ties.



Indian private banks and wealth management platforms are actively expanding into the UAE to offer seamless investment advisory services to their clients. Recent examples include 'Nuvama Private' and 'LGT Wealth Management', both known for supporting Indian

clients with global diversification and expansion needs.

Similarly, other banks are also bolstering their presence in the UAE, ensuring competitive wealth management services for Indian families.

"Kotak Mahindra Bank and '360 ONE Wealth' are joining the dots to provide Indian families with wealth management services in the UAE, ensuring that they don't lose out to their competitors," the 'Henley' report said.

The reports states that around 1.28,000 millionaires worldwide are expected to relocate in 2024, with the UAE and the USA topping the list of preferred destinations. Migrating million-

aires contribute significantly to foreign exchange reserves by moving substantial assets with them. Their investments also stimulate local stock markets through equity placements. A millionaire is defined as an individual with liquid investable assets totaling US\$1 million or more.

High net-worth families opt to relocate for various reasons, including safety, financial considerations, tax benefits, retirement prospects, business opportunities, favorable lifestyles, educational opportunities for children, healthcare systems and overall quality of life, the report states.

leisure



HATHAWAY SHARES DIY HACK FOR PLUMPER LIPS

Hollywood star Anne Hathaway has shared a quick and simple DIY trick to achieve plumper lips. In a video, noticing that her upper lip looked a bit wilted on the monitor, Hathaway used a hairpin to gently tap her lip, stimulating blood flow and giving her lips a fuller appearance.

PRINCESS DIANA HAD A SECRET CRUSH ON KEVIN COSTNER

Kevin Costner has revealed that William, Prince of Wales asked for a private chat with him and the royal revealed his mum Princess Diana had a big crush on him. Costner told *PEOPLE*, "I've never talked about this. But I can now as I think it's a story worthwhile about him ..."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You will remain undecided today, which is quite unlike you, says Ganesh. This will lead to speculation, which is not a bad thing by itself, unless you put all your money into the bargain. Also, be careful not to take wild guesses in love and relationships.

TAURUS
People around you will be surprised to witness the considerate and compassionate side of you today, says Ganesh. Problems may come knocking but you, along with support from your loved ones, will handle them with brilliant tact. Enjoy the company of near and dear ones and let your presence be felt in social outings, suggests Ganesh.

GEMINI
Today, you are likely to focus on self-improvement, predicts Ganesh. Self-employed people may expect huge profits in their businesses. You may end up spending more time at work and less time with family. You need to strike a balance between work and family.

CANCER
What good is life if it doesn't involve great fun and merrymaking. Keeping this in mind, you will set about planning your day. There may be no stopping you as you go about your day having a blast at every possible moment. There will be no limit to your gregarious behaviour, says Ganesh.

LEO
Call it the momentary re-ignition of the spark of brilliance and energy, this day finds you at the peak of your dynamism. Ganesh predicts a fantastic day for all, especially those in the freelancing business, as your imagination and inspiration reach new heights and motivate others to excel.

VIRGO
Today is the day when you'll be like the Iron Man: heart of gold, nerves of steel - minus the shiny body armour, though. Tolerance, optimism and exceedingly artistic talents will rule the roost. Pursue academics in the arts, advises Ganesh. Your understanding of life will help you serve society better. Yes, like Iron Man.

LIBRA
You may not have been crowned 'Employee Of The Month', but do not let that distract you from the fact that today, you are the brightest star in office. Be prepared to get some special treatment at work, as your bosses shower praise on you. Apart from that, a lot of tangible and intangible benefits await you.

SCORPIO
Ganesh warns you of a long, dreary day today. Though not completely at a loss, you may feel lost and desire to spend some time alone with yourself. The empty nest syndrome is likely to invade and hold your mental peace at ransom, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
A balanced day is in store today. Find yourself as much at home as at your desk. You may engage in a time of fun and games with your buddies. But when it comes to family, something more practical, like re-arranging your house, is on the cards.

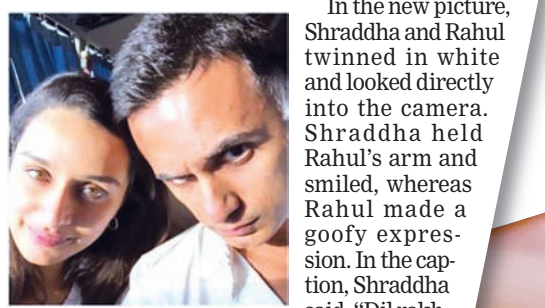
CAPRICORN
If you are a sports person, you will enjoy both good health and fame, while engineers will mull investing money in new business ventures, foresees Ganesh. But make sure you know what you are doing, a minor slip can cost you a fortune, and you would have realised by now that repenting won't undo anything.

AQUARIUS
Money matters are very important, and your family will demand your presence in all financial dealings. At work, things will be more comfortable. You may also get new projects. Ganesh predicts a trip in the offing.

PISCES
Your inherent dynamism and energy will sparkle forth today. Freelancers will be struck with inspiration, and will conjure masterpieces. Pleasant surprises await you in the evening, says Ganesh.

SHRADDHA MAKES RELATIONSHIP WITH RAHUL OFFICIAL

Mumbai: Shraddha Kapoor just confirmed her relationship with Rahul Mody. The actor took to Instagram Stories and posted a selfie with Rahul. The two have been dating for a while now, after they reportedly got close while working on *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar* (*TJMM*). Rahul was a writer of the film



In the new picture, Shraddha and Rahul twinned in white and looked directly into the camera. Shraddha held Rahul's arm and smiled, whereas Rahul made a goofy expression. In the caption, Shraddha said, "Dil rakh le, Neend toh vaapis de de yaar (Take away my heart, but at least return my sleep)." The two made an appearance together when they were spotted by the paparazzi and fans in Jamnagar, where they attended Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's pre-wedding festivities.

The couple met on *TJMM* sets for the first time, with friendship turning into love. Meanwhile, in March this year, Shraddha was spotted wearing a pendant with the initial 'R' on it, adding more fuel to the romance rumours.



Meaningful storytelling will be back: Avika

New Delhi: Actress Avika Gor makes no bones about seeing a surge in shows addressing social issues after her socio-drama *Balika Vadhu*, where she portrayed the iconic character of Anandi on the small screen.

When asked about the decline in shows with social messages on television, Avika told this agency: "It's true that after *Balika Vadhu*, we did see a surge in shows addressing social issues." However, the trend of social dramas soon dipped on the small screen, and Avika shared her perspective on the possible reasons.

The 26-year-old actress, who made her film debut with the Telugu film *Uyyala Jampala* in 2013, added: "Additionally, the dynamics of television programming and audience ratings play a significant role in shaping the content landscape. It's also

possible that networks are exploring different genres and formats to cater to changing viewer interests."

Avika is positive that meaningful storytelling will find its way back onto screens. "While shows with social messages may not be as prevalent on TV currently, I remain optimistic that meaningful storytelling will always find its way back onto our screens, whether through television or other platforms."

IAN5

'Face yoga has been a gamechanger for me'

Mumbai: Television actress Naqiyah Haji has shared insights into her yoga routine, highlighting its profound impact on her well-being.

The International Day of Yoga is celebrated June 21, and Naqiyah, who is currently portraying Nikki in the fantasy thriller drama *Shaitani Rasmlein*, revealed the transformative benefits of yoga.

Speaking about the advantages she has experienced through yoga, Naqiyah said: "Yoga has been a true blessing in my day-to-day life. It helps me stay grounded and focused amid the chaos of a busy schedule."

"Whether it's a challenging shoot or juggling multiple roles, yoga

mind-set. It keeps my energy levels up and ensures I am both physically and mentally balanced," shared Naqiyah.

She further elaborated, "Face yoga has been a game-changer for my skin. Incorporating it into my daily routine has not only helped me achieve a natural glow but has also improved my skin's elasticity and firmness. The simple exercises are a great way to relax and rejuvenate, giving me a refreshed and youthful appearance without any invasive treatments."

Shaitani Rasmlein airs on Star Bharat. IAN5

Khushi's definition of a perfect date

New Delhi: Actress Khushi Kapoor says her 'opening move' to approach someone for a date involves seeking 'shared interests' and building the conversation from there.

Talking about her 'opening move', the actress told this agency: "I would seek a shared interest and build our conversation from there, discovering mutual likes. For instance, I might inquire about new movies that the opposite person would be eager to watch or if they have an interest in sports."

She also mentioned that exploring new activities and reading the "about me" section of her date's profile is something she would do. "Exploring a new and enjoyable activity that neither of us has tried before could be a wonderful way to connect. Reading the 'About me' section of my date's profile

would be helpful to see the kind of topics you can speak on," said the actress, who is rumoured to be dating actor Vedang Raina.

What's a perfect date for Khushi like?

"A perfect date for me would definitely be something private and special where I'm able to talk and get to know the other person in a more personal space, so there's no pressure and it's relaxed and fun," said the 23-year-old actress.

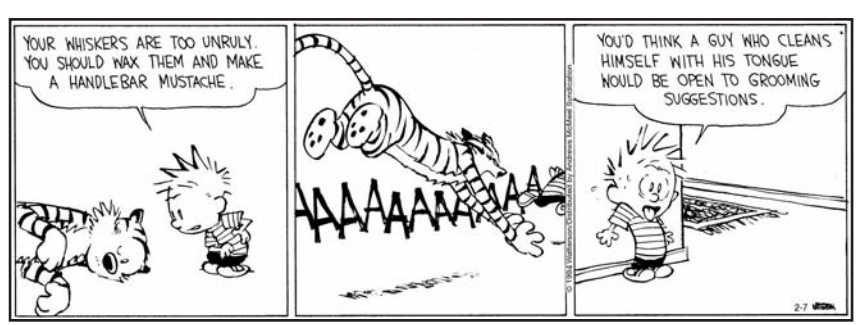
"Anything that can be fun for both of us, like a game night at home or a movie marathon with our favourite food," she added. IAN5



PEANUTS



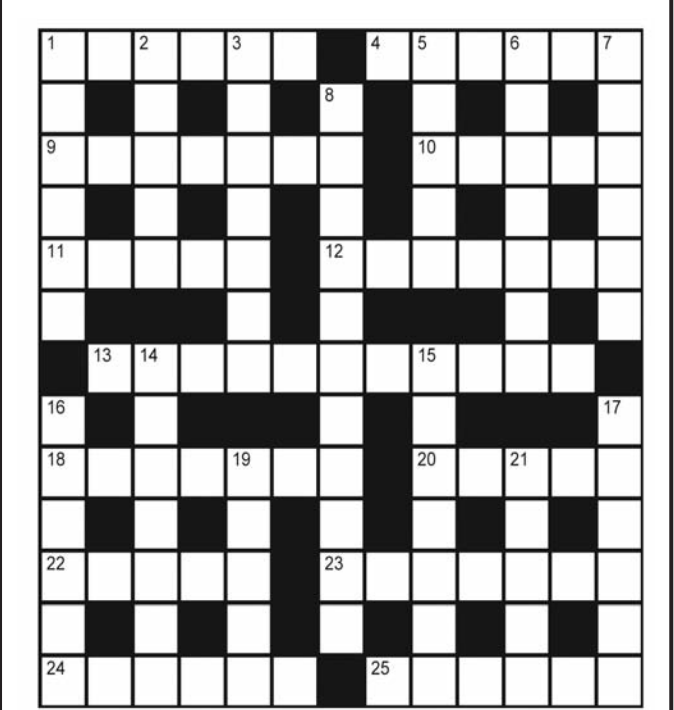
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



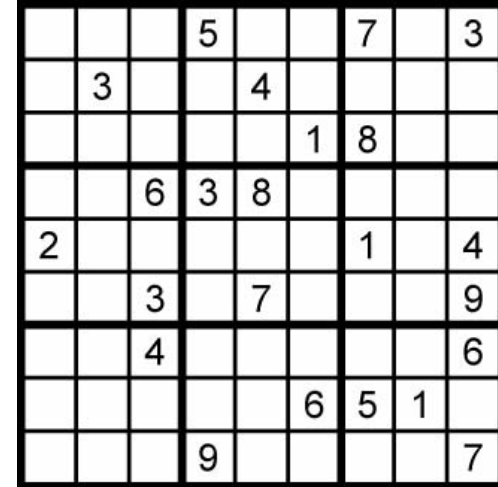
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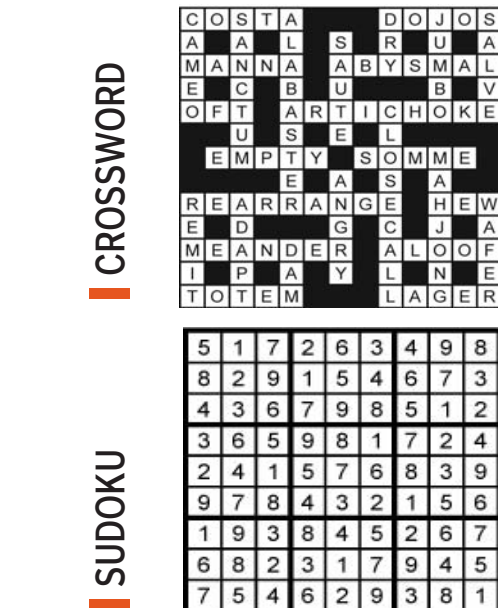
- Across**
- 1 Free-and-easy
 - 4 Lasso
 - 9 Suitor
 - 10 Mount Asama locale
 - 11 Couplet
 - 12 Overly sentimental
 - 13 Casino game (6,2,3)
 - 18 He was a prince
 - 20 Genesis tower
 - 22 Eating places
 - 23 It can be standing
 - 24 Onerous
 - 25 Draw back
 - 5 Pear variety
 - 6 Driving force
 - 7 Boarder
 - 8 Foreboding
 - 14 City in Nova Scotia
 - 15 Hug
 - 16 Long-legged shorebird
 - 17 Side-look
 - 19 Illegal firing
 - 21 Hush money
- Down**
- 1 Modest
 - 2 Brazilian dance
 - 3 NATO is one

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



CUTTACK: The Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha announced the results of Odisha Secondary School Teachers' Eligibility Test (OSSTET) 2024, Wednesday. Candidates can check their results by visiting BSE's website—www.bseodisha.ac.in. "Candidates need to furnish their roll number and date of birth to obtain the results," BSE sources said, adding that digitised certificates can be downloaded within one month of the publication of the results. The 2.5-hour-long state-level teacher recruitment test was held offline January 19, 2024.

downtown

STA gears up for smooth Rath Yatra

ARINDAN GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 19: The State Transport Authority (STA) has undertaken a host of measures, including special buses from Cuttack and Bhubaneswar to Puri and police assistance at bus stops, to ensure devotees reach the Holy City and take back pleasant memories during Rath Yatra, an official said, Wednesday.

Chairing a coordination meeting with representatives from National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), police administration and bus owner associations at STA headquarters here, Transport Commissioner Amitabh Thakur said like previous years, special permits will be issued for buses from other routes to Puri for Rath Yatra, Bahuda Yatra, and Suna Besha.



IN A NUTSHELL

Special emphasis will be given to increasing the number of buses from Cuttack and Bhubaneswar to Puri. Bus owner associations will have to ensure that passengers are not fleeced. Any instance of overcharging will be dealt strictly in accordance with the law.

"Interested bus owners can apply for permits which will be approved through a single window system at the STA headquarters," Thakur said.

He said special emphasis will be given to increasing the num-

ber of buses from Cuttack and Bhubaneswar to Puri.

Bus owner associations will have to ensure that passengers are not fleeced. Any instance of overcharging will be dealt strictly in accordance with the law,

Thakur said. "Not only buses, auto-rickshaws and other vehicles coming from Malatipatpur or Talabania to Grand Road should also refrain from overcharging. Puri Police and RTO will monitor this closely," he added.

Temporary rest sheds will be set up at bus stops, with arrangements for food and water by the administration. Lighting along the roads will also be ensured. Buses will be provided with first aid kits and ORS. Special permit buses don't need to pay toll, fulfilling a long-standing demand of bus owners, the Transport Commissioner said.

NHAI representatives present at the meeting were requested to take necessary steps in this regard.

"Police assistance will be provided at bus stops to ensure that

no passenger is harassed. Strict action will be taken against anti-social elements, with dedicated teams monitoring the facilities at bus stands, especially in Puri, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Additionally, CCTVs will be installed at Talabania. Out-of-Odisha vehicles will stay at Malatipatpur," he said.

For the convenience of passengers and vehicles during Rath Yatra, a 24-hour control room will be set up in Puri by the RTO.

"Vehicle breakdown services in collaboration with various companies, crane and ambulance facilities will also be available. Special attention will be given to maintaining traffic flow. Dedicated teams will monitor critical points on national highways, especially areas prone to congestion like Palasuni and Hanspal here," he said.

16 Odisha coal blocks to go under hammer June 21

OUT OF 60 COAL MINES, 24 ARE FULLY AND 36 ARE PARTIALLY EXPLORED

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, June 19: In a move aimed at enhancing domestic coal production and ensuring energy security for the nation, the Ministry of Coal is all set to launch the 10th round of commercial coal block auction involving 60 mines, including 16 from Odisha, during an event in Hyderabad, June 21.

Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy will launch the auctions in presence of MoS for Coal and Mines, Satish Chandra Dubey, Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Coal Secretary Amrit Lal Meena, the ministry said Wednesday.

"The upcoming auction round

includes 60 coal blocks, encompassing a diverse range of coking and non-coking coal mines. Strategically located across different states/regions, these blocks will support regional economic development and employment generation," it said.

Out of 60 coal mines, 24 are fully explored, while 36 are partially explored. Additionally, five coal mines are being offered under the second attempt of round nine of commercial coal auctions.

Apart from 16 in Odisha, other mines are spread over Bihar (three), Chhattisgarh (15), Jharkhand (six), Madhya Pradesh (15), Maharashtra (one), Telangana (one) and West Bengal (three).

Min thrust on NEP implementation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 19: State Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj Wednesday said that the government is committed to implementing the New Education Policy (NEP) in order to promote poor and meritorious students of the state.

This was revealed during his first review meeting chaired by him during a Lok Seva Bhawan here after assumed the charge. Higher Education department's commissioner-cum-secretary Aravind Agrawal and other officials were present at the meeting.

Agarwal, special secretary of the department Pramod Kumar Mishra, Ramakant Nayak and other senior officials welcomed the minister by offering him bouquets and informed him about various programmes being implemented in colleges and universities of the state, and also various activities being undertaken by the department.

Suraj said the government is determined to promote meritorious and poor students through implementation of the New Education Policy (NEP). On being informed about the performance and issues in different colleges—private, non-aided and block grant—and universities of the state, the minister asked the department officials to take necessary steps to resolve the same as soon as possible.

He also emphasised on the enrolment and attendance of female students in colleges and universities.

The minister said that there would be no shortage of funds for infrastructure development and other activities in higher education institutions of the state. All the schemes and programmes launched by the Higher Education department should be implemented in letter and spirit to help the students, especially the poor and meritorious ones, reap the benefits.

DIPHTHERIA OUTBREAK

Govt to conduct genome sequencing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, June 19: With at least three districts of the state reporting diphtheria cases, the state government has decided to conduct genome sequencing of samples from patients to ascertain the variant of the bacteria, a senior health official said on Wednesday.

At least five people have died due to diphtheria in Rayagada district over the last one week. Of them, four died at home and one in the hospital.

About 15 such cases have been reported in Rayagada district, one in Koraput and five suspected cases in Kalahandi, Public Health Director Nilakantha Mishra said.

"After the disease was included in the universal vaccination programme, it was almost eradicated. The disease can be prevented through vaccination... so the outbreak in the state might have occurred due to lacunae in vaccination or evolution of a new variant of the bacteria," he said.

"Samples from infected

persons will be sent for genome sequencing to know about the variant of the bacteria," Mishra said.

He said no new cases have been reported in Rayagada and all the patients have been discharged, while the patient from Koraput is undergoing treatment at Maharaja Krishna Chandra Gajapati (MKCG) Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. The patient is suffering from pneumonia and on ventilation and his condition is being closely monitored, the official said.

Four persons from Kalahandi district are suspected to have been infected with diphtheria and have been admitted to Bhawanipatna hospital. Their swab samples were sent for testing. Another person, who was found to be infected during a survey but later went somewhere else, is being traced by officials.

Surveys for detecting suspected cases of diphtheria are being conducted in the three districts by officials of the state health department and World Health Organisation (WHO).

Do Yoga, Stay Healthy

On the **International Day of Yoga**

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will join thousands of enthusiasts in **Srinagar** for Yoga demonstration. You are also invited to join. **June 21st, 6 am onwards**

DD NEWS Live telecast on DD News

Share your beneficial experiences from Yoga directly with the Prime Minister, by uploading your Video, Photo, or Reel on social media using **#YogaforSelfandSociety**

10th International Day of Yoga

cbc 1720113/0003/2425

CDRI to ensure resilient power infrastructure



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 19: The Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the state government jointly launched a report, 'Disaster Resilient Power Systems for Odisha,' in an event here, Wednesday.

"Heavy rains, flooding, and severe waterlogging impact uninterrupted functioning of critical power infrastructure in coastal regions during disasters," the report said.

"Disruptions result in high maintenance costs, asset loss, socio-economic losses, crippled emergency services and delayed response," it further said.

CDRI's report on resilient power infrastructure lays out a methodology for enhancing power sector resilience in coastal regions, particularly those affected by cyclones, hurricanes and floods.

THE REPORT CARRIES RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENSURE POST-DISASTER RESILIENCE OF THE POWER SECTOR IN COASTAL AREAS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION WILL ENHANCE RESILIENCE AND ENSURE RELIABLE POWER SUPPLY DURING EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS AND DISASTERS

Joining the programme as chief guest, Chief Secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena shared his experience combating the cyclones and problems in restoration. He added that, the state learnt from these experiences and started making the power infrastructure disaster proof.

He urged the officials to make infrastructure resilient. "This small beginning by CDRI will help other coastal states in India and many countries to come up with disaster resilient power infrastructure," he concluded.

Industries Department

Principal Secretary Hemant Sharma said, "Today we have one nation, one Grid. Disaster resilience in power systems is a universal theme. The report is not just meant for Odisha but for other regions too."

Finance Department Principal Secretary Vishal K Dev said, "The state government has established a strong foundation for climate-proofing our power infrastructure, reaffirming our collective vision of fostering a future that is resilient, sustainable, and better prepared to confront the evolving threats posed by the changing environment."

CDRI Director General Amit Prothi said, "The resilience of the power sector to extreme weather events is pivotal in safeguarding lives and livelihoods, particularly those in vulnerable regions. Recommendations from our study on climate and disaster resilient power systems can be replicated across coastal regions to enable disaster resilient power infrastructure."

According to the report, recommendations for future action will enhance resilience and ensure reliable power supply during extreme weather events and disasters.

Key recommendations include enhancing codes and standards for wind zones, integrating risk assessments into financial planning, incorporating the resilience component in policy, training and capacity building initiatives among others.



SPORTS INFRA: Former Indian cricketer Bharat Arun inaugurates a Cricket Indoor Hall at MGM School of Sports in Gurudijhatia near Athagarh in Cuttack, Wednesday

SKILLED DRIVERS TO GET OVERSEAS JOBS

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 19: The State Transport Authority (STA) is taking significant steps to create employment opportunities for skilled drivers from the state.

According to an official press release, STA Commissioner Amitabh Thakur inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the chairman of HR Navis Rajkumar

Sambandam in the presence of Commerce and Transport Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, Tuesday.

The signing of the MoU has created the possibility of employment in Japan for drivers trained under the Subahaka Yojana.

The state government, through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode, operates four free heavy vehicle driving training

centers located in Palur (Ganjam), Bonai (Sundargarh), Chhatia (Jajpur), and Kendujhar districts.

In these Centres, eligible individuals are provided with free training in an ultra-modern training set-up, food, accommodation along with allowance and driving license which is rare in the country.

The STA strives to get employment for the drivers who

have been successfully trained at these centres.

It is pertinent to mention here that Navis HR is a leading agency in the country for providing overseas employment.

In this context, the signing of the MoU has created a huge potential.

In the future, eligible drivers from the state will get an opportunity to fetch high-salary jobs in Japan.

State media fraternity pays tributes to Rao



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 19: The state media fraternity paid heartfelt tributes to media baron late Ramoji Rao at an event in Soodhana Bhawan here, recently.

Editors and senior media professionals from print, television and digital media, along with producers and actors from the entertainment industry participated in the memorial evening.

"Ramoji Rao was a trendsetter of Indian media. He had demonstrated a vision with compassion while building media organisations and promoting people's journalism. The Indian media fraternity will remember his contributions to the field of journalism and entertainment," highlighted Nilambar Rath, convener of the event.

Among the attendees were BMC mayor Sulochana Das, Bhograi MLA Goutam Buddha Das, former Odisha Information Commissioner Dilip Kumar Bisoi, actor Kuna Tripathy and Nitu Singh.

CM invites people's suggestions to draft Annual Budget 2024-25

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, June 19: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has urged the people to give their suggestions and participate in the Budget-making process.

The suggestions will be used by the Finance Department in the process of preparing the Annual Budget for 2024-25.

"Finance Department has been holding Pre-Budget consultations with a cross-section of the society. I am to indicate here that our government is the people's government. So there is a need to seek common people's proposals and opinions for the budget-making process," read a communique from the Chief Minister's office.

To make the budgetary process more open and participative using Information and



Communication Technology (ICT), the Finance Department has initiated obtaining inputs for Budget preparation through the dedicated Budget web portal, e-mail, WhatsApp and SMS.

The Finance Department has invited suggestions in a structured format in the Budget web

portal <https://budget.odisha.gov.in/> to be used as input in the preparation of a full-fledged Annual Budget.

Similarly, suggestions for Budget are also being invited through WhatsApp to the Mobile number (+91) 9438161111, and through social media platforms like X (@FdOdisha), Facebook (@FinanceOdisha) and Instagram (@fdodisha).

The Finance Department said the people can send their suggestions and opinions from June 20 till July 5 by e-mail to the address odisha.budget@gov.in.

Members of the public, Civil Society organisations, Advocacy Groups and other stakeholders have been also requested to make use of this unique opportunity to participate in the budget-making process of the state government.

BHUBANESWAR DRAIN TRAGEDY

H&UD min visits drain mishap site

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, June 19: Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra Wednesday visited the site where an eight-year-old boy died in an open drain near Jama Masjid in Unit III area here, Tuesday.

Mahapatra took serious note of the situation and directed the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Commissioner to provide a detailed report, explaining the absence of barricades near the drains. The Commissioner had been instructed to submit the report by Wednesday evening.

Speaking to media persons, Mahapatra said the department's priorities are addressing the drainage problems, drinking water facilities and transportation issues across all urban local bodies (ULBs).

The minister also visited the



H&UD department at Kharavel Bhawan and interacted on key issues and initiatives with the officials and staffs. The Minister's engagement underscores a hands-on approach in addressing urban development challenges and improving administrative efficiency.

Mahapatra was warmly re-

ceived by the additional chief secretary along with other senior officers from the department.

Later, the Minister visited the State Urban Development Agency to evaluate the current projects, strategies of the agency and to ensure the effectiveness of urban development initiatives.

Depression around childbirth linked to future heart risk

Women who are diagnosed with depression around the time they give birth appear to have a higher risk of heart problems in later life, according to a new study.

Those diagnosed with perinatal depression -- which includes postnatal depression and depression during pregnancy -- may be at higher risk of heart problems including high blood pressure, heart disease and heart failure for up to 20 years afterwards.

Swedish researchers said that the links between depression around childbirth and the long-term risk of cardiovascular disease are "largely unknown" as they published a study tracking women for more than a decade.

The study, published in the European Heart Journal, examined data on almost 56,000 women diagnosed with perinatal depression between 2001 and 2014.

Their information was matched to almost 546,000 who

had babies during the same time period who were not diagnosed with perinatal depression.

The women were tracked an average of 10 years, with some monitored for up to 20 years after diagnosis.

Some 6.4 per cent of women with perinatal depression were diagnosed with cardiovascular disease during the follow-up, compared to 3.7 per cent of those who were not diagnosed with depression.

Researchers found that those diagnosed with perinatal depression had a 36 per cent increased risk of cardiovascular disease during the follow-up period.

Women diagnosed with depression before childbirth had a 29 per cent increased risk, while those diagnosed with postnatal depression had a 42 per cent higher odds of developing heart disease, they found.

The results were "most pronounced" in women who had



not suffered depression before pregnancy, the authors said.

They said the elevated risk was found across all types of cardiovascular disease, drawing particular attention to the increased odds of women developing ischemic heart disease, heart failure and high blood pressure.

"Our findings may help iden-

tify people who are at a higher risk of cardiovascular disease so that steps can be taken to reduce this risk," said Emma Brann, from the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm.

"We know that perinatal depression is both preventable and treatable, and for many people it's the first episode of depression they've ever experienced," Brann

those diagnosed with perinatal depression -- which includes postnatal depression and depression during pregnancy -- may be at higher risk of heart problems including high blood pressure, heart disease and heart failure for up to 20 years afterwards

Researchers said that the links between depression around childbirth and the long-term risk of cardiovascular disease are "largely unknown" as they published a study tracking women for more than a decade

can find the best ways to prevent depression and lower the risk of CVD."

Academics also analysed data on sisters, where available, and found that the increased risk of developing CVD remained in the sister who experienced perinatal depression compared with her sister who had not experienced it.

Women who suffered perinatal depression had a 20 per cent higher risk of heart disease compared to their sisters.

"The slightly lower difference in risk between sisters suggests that there could be genetic or familial factors partly involved," Brann said.

"There could also be other factors involved, as is the case for the link between other forms of depression and CVD. These include alterations in the immune system, oxidative stress and lifestyle changes implicated in major depression," Brann concluded.

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LOST

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Cuttack on 18 June 2024, I Saurav Bose, Ranihat, Cuttack, P.O.-Buxi Bazar, P.S.-Mangalabag. I have lost my original B.Tech. Certificate Reg. No. 1601335010 on 17 June 2024. Any kindhearted person found this please inform to me on 6372546269.

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FOCUS FOREIGN POLICY

TIME TO TAKE SIDES



To pose a hypothetical question, can India rely on Russia to come to her aid in case of an armed conflict with China? The chances are slim

lines. If there is no historical cut-off point for nationhood or sovereignty of countries, any country can claim any other. The British Empire covered half of the world, should they be allowed to reclaim it? Indian culture and spiritual influence spread across South-East Asia. Bharatvarsha, in ancient period, included Myanmar and Afghanistan. In 20th century, Bangladesh and Pakistan were parts of India. Should India retrieve them?

Reclaiming a country on the basis of historical links, similarity of language and culture in current time and age is ridiculous and unsustainable. So, it is advisable to stick to international laws and conventions.

New Delhi has been tied up with Russia in the transfer of defence material. Bulk of the maintenance of the defence structure is contingent on Russian supply. There are two ways to cut the Gordian knot. One, what New Delhi is perhaps doing to create alternative sources of supply and be self-reliant. The second is to enter into a security arrangement with other countries to defend herself in case of external aggression. That is perhaps a better option. Spending heavily on defence while India's per capita GDP is lowest among G20 countries, is not wise.

To pose a hypothetical question, can India rely on Russia to come to her aid in case of an armed conflict with China? The chances are slim. Soviet Union refused to help India in 1962 war. It then said, "India is a friend, but China is a brother." It was US and the UK, which offered to send their air force in support of India. Now China and Russia are bound in an in-frangible bond of friendship forever. Is New Delhi's expectation or calculation realistic vis-à-vis Russia? Or is it not a time for a serious rethink?

The writer is Secretary General, Association for Democratic Socialism.

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In the Ukraine peace conference, held on 14-15 June in Burgenstock, Switzerland, India abstained from signing the communiqué. India already had a watered-down participation in the conference. India's delegation was led by Pavan Kapoor, a senior diplomat in South Block. While abstaining, he said, "Only those options acceptable to both parties can lead to abiding peace." The Foreign Ministry, in a similar and separate statement, reiterated that New Delhi was committed to "lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy."



DK Giri

RECLAIMING A COUNTRY ON THE BASIS OF HISTORICAL LINKS, SIMILARITY OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN CURRENT TIME AND AGE IS RIDICULOUS AND UNSUSTAINABLE

India's reservation on signing the communiqué was based on two factors. One, Russia was not a party to the deliberations as it was not invited. Second, which in fact is repetition of the first in other words, that is, a peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy with both parties involved. The conference was indeed an exercise in deliberation and diplomacy, though not dialogue as by definition. About hundred countries were present, 56 were represented by leaders, and 80 countries signed the joint statement while 20 abstained or declined.

Indubitably, India knew that Russia was not invited. New Delhi would also have anticipated that a communiqué will emerge at end of the conference. So, was it a foregone conclusion that India would not sign any statement? Is it a part of multi-engagement, reincarnation of non-alignment policy? India should attend the conference in order to be seen with other countries, and at the same time, not sign any document as Russia was not a party to it. Pavan Kapoor had said, "India had joined the summit to explore the way forward to a negotiated settlement of a very complex and pressing issue."

What was the communiqué? Among other things referred above, the final document said that the "UN Charter and re-

spect for territorial integrity and sovereignty will serve as a basis for achieving a comprehensive just and lasting peace in Ukraine." As a matter of principle, no country should have any objection to that. If there has to be a negotiated settlement through dialogue, New Delhi should elicit the terms of reference from both countries. In fact, India should take the lead in getting both Ukraine and Russia to the negotiating table.

In the meantime, New Delhi is venturing to be the voice of Global South. Nehru wanted a similar profile for India and the world by pursuing non-alignment. Modi government has been critical of Nehru's 'narcissist' foreign policy, but falls into the same pattern. Nehru's non-alignment did not work. On the contrary, it incurred heavy cost on India in maintaining her defence system. India sought to be independent and self-reliant. But the need of the time was to make alliances, partners and allies in building the country. To some extent, India's reluctance to ally with Western powers was understandable as it was coming out of colonialism.

Be that as it may, the world is currently caught hopelessly in two bloody wars - Ukraine and Gaza in addition to several border skirmishes. The US, which once enjoyed the epithet of world

policeman, has been unable to stop them. In Gaza, it directly supports Israel while diplomatically tries to prevent the war from escalating in the region; holding back other countries, mainly Iran from jumping into the fray. In Ukraine, the US, along with other NATO allies, is indirectly supporting Ukraine to continue fighting. This is surely not a desirable situation.

How should India react? Or it should not? The latter option is not on as India aspires to be a world power and it has stakes. So far, New Delhi has maintained neutrality or abstained from taking sides. Is it in the long-term interest of the country? Not speaking up for the UN Charter will be disastrous for the world, a dog-eat-dog situation. Quite a few countries are in irredentist and expansionist mould in their foreign policy. So, several countries are vulnerable. Taiwan is an obvious candidate. There are intermittent demands on Indian territories too, not to speak of the bits already taken away by China and Pakistan.

In order to maintain peace and stability in the world, territorial integrity as recorded and recognised by international organisations, bilateral and international summits are inviolable. Irredentism pursued by Russia in Ukraine, and China, have limits in terms of time-

The Cost of Health

In recent years, governments in low- and middle-income countries have been experimenting with ways to alleviate the financial burden of high out-of-pocket costs for health care, which account for 40% of households' catastrophic health spending. To ensure universal access, they are gradually shifting away from public provision of health care to publicly funded insurance that covers treatment at private facilities.

India is a prime example. Since the mid-2000s, the central government and various states have introduced such insurance programmes in an effort to expand health-care access in low-income communities.

These kinds of public-private partnerships (PPPs) have long been integral to health-policy discussions in developing countries. Given that building physical infrastructure is often costly and plagued by bureaucratic delays, political favouritism, and budgetary constraints, national and sub-national governments across Asia, Africa, and South America have implemented health-insurance schemes that enable low-income families to receive private care at substantially or fully subsidised prices.

The success of these programmes varies by country and depends on their design and local context. For example, China and Vietnam are often cited as success stories, with nearly 100% and 80% of their populations, respectively, covered by some health insurance scheme as of 2016. But while out-of-pocket expenses for tertiary care in China have increased, they have decreased following the PPP programme's expansion in Vietnam. India's approach is similar to Vietnam's, focusing on providing the poorest communities with free access to government-funded insurance.

Fully subsidised insurance can improve health outcomes by providing access to private facilities and freeing up space in public hospitals. Yet, despite numerous free insurance programmes and high out-of-pocket expenditures, adoption rates in India remain low. Estimates based on data from India's National Family Health Survey show that just 41% of Indian households have some form of health insurance. And even those who are covered seem to have little understanding of how these programmes work.

This underscores the importance of the unique context of developing countries, where informal risk-sharing networks traditionally help mitigate the impact of health shocks. In rural areas, households often rely on their local communities and even join groups whose members pool money for health emergencies. Some studies show that the presence of these informal groups can reduce the willingness to pay for formal insurance. While this suggests that informal insurance crowds out formal schemes, our research shows that informal networks might actually facilitate the widespread adoption of government-provided plans. For example, the support of such networks can make it easier for people to travel to remote hospitals.

That said, governments must assess whether the PPP model is the best way to deliver health-care services. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that health is a public good with many positive externalities and that in some cases, direct public provision might be the only feasible option. Even in less extreme circumstances, it is crucial to understand whether the money spent on one type of programme could have been used more effectively elsewhere.

In an ongoing study, we examine the complex implications of the PPP model for health-care access. In theory, if the private system is better than or as good as the public one, health outcomes might improve. But if the public system is better than its private counterpart, overall health outcomes might be adversely affected. For example, one area where India consistently lags behind its peers is maternal and child health, partly owing to the low rate of hospital deliveries, which in turn can be attributed to the high cost of private services and long wait times in overcrowded government facilities. If private care were subsidised, more women might choose to deliver their babies in private hospitals instead of non-institutional settings like their homes.

We find that women often switch from public to private facilities for childbirth following the introduction of a formal health-insurance programme. Moreover, such programmes lead to a decrease in out-of-pocket expenses, suggesting that individuals who previously paid for private care can now access it at a subsidised rate. Households located far from hospitals, however, remain unaffected by such programmes.

Recent estimates from India's National Health Accounts reveal two significant trends: a massive decline in government spending on tertiary health care and a sharp increase in the government's social security expenses, including social health insurance. This reflects the country's shift from direct public provision to the PPP model for tertiary health care.

But if there are too few private facilities, reduced government spending could force people to travel longer distances to access health care. Our findings suggest that in Andhra Pradesh, where hospital density is among the highest in India, the difficulty of getting to a hospital - whether monetary or otherwise - affects insurance adoption rates, even when insurance is fully subsidised. By contrast, Vietnam's success in achieving universal coverage can be partly attributed to substantial public investment in hospitals and health centers.

If India's new social insurance policy leads to the establishment of private hospitals, it could expand access to tertiary health care and offset reduced government spending. However, if the growth of these facilities is concentrated in urban areas, far fewer people will benefit. To make essential health-care services accessible to all, it is not enough to foster PPPs. It is also crucial to ensure that private hospitals are accessible in all parts of the country.

Titir Bhattacharya is a research fellow at the University of Warwick. Tanika Chakraborty is an associate professor at the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta.

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Titir Bhattacharya & Tanika Chakraborty

Estimates based on data from India's National Family Health Survey show that just 41 per cent of Indian households have some form of health insurance

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

The ease of living imperative

The real test of the Central government lies in how Prime Minister Modi handles the coalition government and ensures consensus on various issues. He has to address not only the causes behind the party's poor performance compared to 2019 but also the challenges that lie ahead.

According to a Lokniti-CSDS post-election survey, voters were concerned about inflation, unemployment, decreasing income and the government's handling of corruption and fraud. Lifestyle inflation is increasing at a much higher rate. Food inflation hovers above 8% which is affecting the poor and vulnerable section more as their incomes are generally lower and more susceptible to price changes.

Inflation has contributed to a protracted negative growth in rural consumption because of a significant reduction in purchasing power among rural consumers. The S&P Global Market Intelligence asserts that weak private consumption in India remains the largest concern at a time when the country's overall growth remains strong.

According to Nomura, real rural consumption grew at a CAGR of 3.1% during 2012-23 as

compared to 6.6% in 2010-12. The growth rate of private consumption, which forms more than 60% of GDP, had hit a 21-year low, stumbling at around 3.5% as of the third quarter of 2024, compared with 8.7% a decade ago.

According to data from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), adjusting for inflation, real incomes and wages for people employed in agriculture and construction sectors, which employ the poorest, have been flat during the past five years.

Over the decade until 2022, the average monthly real earnings of regular salaried workers declined by 1% each year, according to the ILO and the Institute for Human Development (IHD), pointing towards poor-quality employment and the possible adverse impact of the pandemic.

According to a 2023 report on food security and nutrition released by five UN agencies, 74.1% of Indians, or 104.3 crore people, were unable to afford a healthy diet in 2021. Agricultural reforms to increase farm incomes, coupled with enhanced rural infrastructure and food security, are essential to reversing this trend.

Corporate behemoths and some economists are more worried

whether the new coalition government will continue with economic reform process. What exactly do these reforms mean? The reforms mean liberalisation of rules and regulations to enhance the interests of the rich and the corporates. Further, they think that reforms mean disinvestment and privatisation of public sector; changing labour laws in order to give unfettered power to businesses to hire and fire at will.

The reduction of corporate tax from 30% to 22% is a glaring example. India Inc's profit (Nifty 500 companies) as percentage of GDP has risen to a 15-year high of 4.8% of GDP. However, this has not translated into higher investments from the corporate sector. Moreover, the burden of taxes is falling upon the poor as higher proportion of taxes is collected through indirect taxes like GST, VAT, and excise.

The net financial savings plummeted to 5.1% of GDP in 2022-23, a 47-year low, while household debt soared to an unprecedented level of 40% of GDP by December 2023, from 38% of GDP for 2022-23. This indicates a significant escalation in financial strain and distress. Higher household debt may lead to a crisis especially when heavily indebted

households sharply squeeze their spending and consumption to repay debt.

Employment is a mammoth challenge for a country where millions of young people enter the job market every year. India's youth continue to grapple with soaring unemployment rates, with nearly 83% of the jobless population belonging to this demographic.

There are too few jobs for the millions entering the workforce each year and growth has been uneven. The unemployment rate rose to 8.1% in April from 7.4% in March, according to CMIE.

The figure was at 6% before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The objective of the ruling dispensation should be not only to raise GDP but ensure a qualitative life and "ease of living" for all Indians. For this, it is imperative to raise purchasing power of people. Instead of floating so many schemes, health and education should be provided free of cost. Equally important is taxing the rich and reducing inequality which is higher than even the British era today.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RULING DISPENSATION SHOULD BE NOT ONLY TO RAISE GDP BUT ENSURE A QUALITATIVE LIFE FOR ALL INDIANS

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1837: Victoria becomes Queen of the United Kingdom. During the 64 years of her regency, the United Kingdom became one of the world's most potent powers. The British Empire soon encompassed large parts of the planet. Queen Victoria died in 1901.
1942: Kazimierz Piechowski and three others escape from Auschwitz concentration camp. In a feat of "exceptional courage and gallantry", as stated by the Polish author Kazimierz Smole, the four prisoners left via the front gate in a stolen SS staff car, dressed as SS officers. During World War II, the Nazi regime murdered 1.1 million people in Auschwitz. Only 144 are known to have escaped.
1963: The "Red Telephone" is instituted. The hotline between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was established following Cuban Missile Crisis. Contrary to popular belief, communications between the two superpowers occurred via teletype or fax, and today, via email.
1975: Steven Spielberg's thriller Jaws was released in theatres, and it was a huge success, essentially creating the genre of summer blockbusters.

Perverting education

Sir, Protests continue across the country against the drastic changes in the school curriculum in the fourth round of revision and update of NCERT textbooks since 2014. Two fundamental principles of modern science, Darwin's theory of evolution and Mendeleev's periodic table, have been removed from Class X Science syllabus. Poems by two prominent Muslim poets, Iqbal and Faiz Ahmad Faiz, have been removed. The history of the Mughal and Sultanate periods has been reduced to a minimum. A two-page table detailing the achievements of Mughal emperors such as Humayun, Shah Jahan, Akbar, Jahangir and Aurangzeb has also been removed. Details of the anti-minority riots in Gujarat have been omitted. The Babri Masjid has been described as "a three-domed structure" built in 1528 at the birthplace of Lord Rama, but the structure has clear displays of Hindu symbols and images on its interior and exterior. All newspaper clippings on Babri demolition have been removed. This is nothing but perversion of the learning process and pushing school education towards destruction. Although officials claim that there is no intention to saffronise education and that such updates occur regularly, the truth is that this complete metamorphosis is deliberately destroying education at its core.
Asit Mohanty, JAJPUR

Exam scam

Sir, The recent NEET 'scam' has exposed some ingrained issues in the examination process, including allegations of cheating, question paper leaks at some exam centres, awarding of grace marks and unusual scoring pattern. All these repulsive occurrences undermine the principles of merit and raise serious concerns about the competence of future Indian medical professionals. The nauseating incidents have sparked widespread concern among students, parents and educators alike over the conduct of NEET. The very basic principle of education is for all, but its purpose to prepare emphatic doctors is being flouted through these kinds of unsavoury incidents. Instead of becoming means to fulfil the above objectives, NEET has become means to make projects.
Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

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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Rahul retaining Raebareli boosts Cong revival plans

Party strategists also feel that Rahul's presence in UP will further strengthen the alliance with Samajwadi Party



The party has already given indications that its alliance with the SP will continue

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, June 19: The decision of Congress MP Rahul Gandhi to retain his Raebareli seat has given new hope to Congress workers in Uttar Pradesh. What has further added to their joy is the fact that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will now be contesting the Wayanad seat. "The situation now is doubly advantageous for us. Rahul Gandhi choosing to retain Raebareli will mean his increased presence and involvement in party affairs here. Besides, with Priyanka going to Wayanad, her coterie will also follow her there and Uttar Pradesh will be free from their clutches," said a veteran Congress leader who had been expelled from the party by former UPCC chief Ajay Kumar Lallu when Priyanka was in charge of Uttar Pradesh. The leader, who did not wish to be named, said that maximum damage to the Congress in Uttar Pradesh was caused by Priyanka's team. "Her coterie misbehaved with senior leaders, sold tickets for a

price and did not allow anyone to meet Priyanka who, in any case, was not willing to listen to complaints against her team. It was the misbehaviour by her team that led to a massive exodus from the party. Leaders like Jitin Prasada, RPN Singh, Laliteshpati Tripathi and dozens of others left the Congress," said another senior party leader. He further said that those, who did not move to greener pastures, receded into their shells and stopped even coming to the UPCC office. A senior leader said to be close to Rahul Gandhi said that the latter was keen to bring back party veterans into the political mainstream on one hand, and on the other, he wanted to include young blood in the Congress. Party strategists also feel that Rahul's presence in UP will further strengthen the alliance with Samajwadi Party. "The outcome of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh has indicated that the Congress-Samajwadi Party alliance's votes and conversion of seats increased after Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh

Yadav decided to contest 2024 polls from Kannauj and Raebareli seats respectively. Moreover, their relationship was marked by camaraderie and this percolated down to the cadres who worked together in the polls. With Rahul here, there will be no room for middlemen to create confusion between the two alliance members," said a senior leader. Senior party leaders have called this the right move and say this was an indication towards the party's continuing increased focus on Uttar Pradesh. The party has already given indications that its alliance with the SP will continue. The Congress, which contested 17 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh in alliance with the Samajwadi Party and won six seats, has been looking for a push for a turnaround and the 2024 poll results appear to have provided the desired opportunity. The Samajwadi Party won 37 seats, compared to the five seats it had won in 2019. Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh focussed on issues like the caste census, the move to change the Constitution, rising unemployment and scrapping of the Agnipath scheme etc. This worked effectively in the state. Rahul Gandhi has given indications that he will continue to focus on such issues. A Samajwadi Party leader said that the alliance would work on the ground if the two leaders - Rahul and Akhilesh - keep their channels of communication open. "There will be trouble if they allow second-rung leaders to start negotiations but with Rahul now staying here, this will be unlikely," he said.

'UP KE DO LADKE' Rahul, Akhilesh camaraderie on

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: UP's two sons would make India's politics all about love, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Wednesday to signal his bonhomie with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav. Gandhi's witty take, recalling the 'mohabbat ki dukaan' tagline from his pan-India yatra and the Lok Sabha election campaign, came in response to Yadav's greeting on his 54th birthday. In response to Yadav's wish, Gandhi said, "UP ke do ladke Hindustan ki rajneeti ko mohabbat ki dukaan banayenge - khata-khat, khata-khat (loosely translating to two boys of UP will make India's politics all about love)."



'UP ke do ladke' was a tagline used to underline the coming together of Yadav and Gandhi in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls when the two parties had joined hands. However, in those elections, the alliance failed miserably and the BJP came to power in the state. Prime Minister Narendra

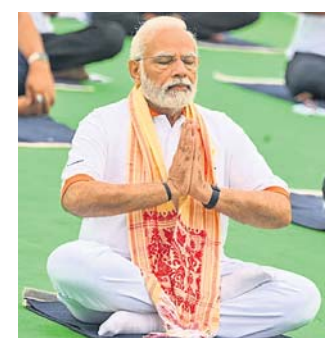
Modi had also taken a dig at Gandhi and Yadav during the Lok Sabha election campaign. Without naming Gandhi and Yadav, the prime minister had said, "You might remember here in Uttar Pradesh that the film featuring two boys ('do ladke'), which had flopped last time, the film of the two boys has been re-

released by these people." Gandhi's remarks came amid talk of the Congress and the Samajwadi Party contemplating continuing the alliance in the bypolls and even later. With 37 out of 80, the Samajwadi Party won the highest numbers of seats in Uttar Pradesh in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, giving a record performance since its inception. Its ally the Congress won six seats while the BJP won 33. The saffron party's allies the Rashtriya Lok Dal won two seats and Apna Dal (S) one. The Congress-Samajwadi Party bonhomie was visible on the ground, with the results proving that the vote transfer between the two allies had also been successful.

Modi to lead 10th Int'l Yoga Day celebrations in Srinagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will mark this year's International Day of Yoga June 21 in Srinagar during which he will address the gathering and also participate in a yoga session, his office said Wednesday. Modi will visit Jammu and Kashmir June 20 and 21, 2024, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. Prime Minister Modi will participate in 'Empowering Youth, Transforming J&K' event at Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar at around 6pm June 20. Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects in J&K. He will also launch Competitiveness Improvement in Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP), the statement said. The prime minister will participate in 10th International



Day of Yoga event at SKICC in Srinagar at around 6:30 am June 21. He will address the gathering on the occasion and take part in the yoga session thereafter; it said. This year's Yoga Day event underscores yoga's profound impact on young minds and bodies. The celebration aims to unite thousands in the practice of yoga, promoting health and wellness on a global scale. Since 2015, Prime Minister Modi has led the International Day of Yoga (IDY) celebrations at various iconic locations, in-

cluding Kartavya Path in Delhi, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Ranchi, Lucknow, Mysuru and even the United Nations Headquarters in New York. This year's theme 'Yoga for Self and Society' highlights the dual role in fostering individual and societal well-being. The event will encourage grassroots participation and the spread of yoga in rural areas. The event June 20 -- 'Empowering Youth, Transforming J&K' -- is a pivotal moment for the region, showcasing progress and providing inspiration to young achievers, the statement said. On the occasion, the prime minister will inspect stalls and interact with the young achievers of Jammu and Kashmir. Prime Minister Modi will also lay the foundation stone and inaugurate 84 major developmental projects valued at more than Rs 1,500 crore. The inaugurations will include projects related to road infrastructure, water supply

schemes and infrastructure in higher education etc. Additionally, the prime minister will also lay the foundation stone for projects like improvement of Chenani-Patnitop-Nashri Section, development of Industrial Estates and construction of six government degree colleges. Prime Minister Modi will also launch the Competitiveness Improvement in Agriculture and Allied Sectors (JKCIP) Project worth Rs 1,800 crore. The project will be implemented in 90 blocks across 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir, and will have the project outreach of 3,00,000 households covering 15 lakh beneficiaries. Prime Minister Modi will also distribute appointment letters to more than 2,000 persons appointed in government service, the statement said. The foundation stone laying, inauguration and launch of these projects will empower the youth and upgrade the infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir.



Sadhus at the Jammu Ram Mandir Base camp ahead of registration for the annual Amarnath Yatra 2024, in Jammu, Wednesday. PTI PHOTO

Terrorist killed in Bandipora was top LeT/TRF commander

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, June 19: Security forces said Tuesday that the terrorist killed in Monday's encounter in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora District was a top-ranking militant of the LeT and TRF. Addressing a joint Press conference, Brigadier 3 sector, Atul Tyagi said that Umar Lone, who was killed in Aragam Village of Bandipora in a joint operation by the Army, police and CRPF, had been active since 2018. "He belonged to Pattan area of Baramulla District and was active since 2018. He was a category 'A' terrorist of LeT and TRF. He was under our scanner for quite

some time and an operation was launched after we got information about the movement of terrorists in Aragam area yesterday." "One of our ambush parties came under terrorist fire and after this an encounter started during which Umar Lone was killed", the Army officer said. He said that the security forces have been maintaining high operational momentum and this is paying dividends in terms of more pro-active anti-terrorism operations. SSP Bandipora, Commandant 13 RR and Commandant CRPF 3 battalion were also present during the media briefing.

Breakthrough in Reasi terror attack: Police

Jammu: J&K Police Wednesday said a major breakthrough has been made in the June 9 Reasi terror attack, in which nine pilgrims were killed and 44 others injured, with the arrest of a terror associate. A major breakthrough has been achieved in the case pertaining to the terrorist attack on the pilgrim bus which was coming from Shiv Khori June 9. In this connection, one terror associate, namely Hakam, 45, has been arrested at Reasi. This person was involved in harbouring the terrorists multiple times, SSP, Reasi, Mohita Sharma said. Along with providing food and shelter, the said person also acted as a guide and helped them reach the spot of the incident. The arrested person is a prime militant associate who helped the terrorists in the execution of the attack. Further interrogation and investigation of the case is going on, she added.

Climate change, glass bangle industry's new adversary

For generations, artisans in the famed 'City of Glass' Firozabad have braved the heat of furnaces to mould glass into bangles, but climate change has worsened their woes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Firozabad (UP), June 19: The next time you see glass bangles, shimmering delicately on a woman's wrist or glittering in a shop, think of climate change. It's a link that is neither unlikely nor far-fetched but a living reality for lakhs of workers bearing the brunt of rising temperatures that have combined with furnace heat to add up to multiple health complications. For generations, artisans in this famed 'City of Glass' have braved the heat of furnaces to mould glass into bangles. The new adversary in already perilous working conditions is climate change, impacting the future of the Rs 1,000 crore industry that employs five lakh people.

Bangles are crafted through a meticulous process that begins with melting glass. For glass bangles, molten glass is drawn into thin tubes, cooled, and cut into the desired lengths, which are then reheated and shaped around a mandrel to form circles. Aastha Dev, who has been working in the traditional industry, where the skill of moulding glass into bangles has been passed down from generation to generation, has been hospitalised twice in the last one month after repeated dehydration and isn't sure how long her health will hold out. "It's like working in an inferno," the 35-year-old told PTI. "Earlier, the heat was something we could manage, but now, with the temperatures outside also climbing, it's become unbearable. Many of us fall sick but we have no choice but to continue working. But for how much longer?" The bangle factories, predominantly small-scale units, lack proper ventilation and cooling systems. During peak summer months, temperatures inside these workshops can soar above 50 degrees Celsius. And when outside temperatures them-



selves cross 45 degrees Celsius with a heat index of 50 degrees Celsius as in this unprecedented summer, the situation seems impossibly exacerbated. Workers often suffer from heat exhaustion, dehydration, and other heat-related illnesses. "By midday, it feels like I'm suffocating. My head spins, and my skin burns. We drink a lot of water, but it's never enough. There are days when I feel like I might just collapse," said 22-year-old Rajesh Kumar. "Some days, we have to take breaks just to catch our breath. It's especially hard for older people working with us and those with underlying health issues,"

the young man added. Kamlesh, a 50-year-old diabetic who works in the furnace of the bangle factory, is one such person. "Many of us have been hospitalised due to dehydration. In hospitals we are just given saline drips, and we bear its cost on our own. I earn Rs 300 per day. How can we pay medical bills with that income?" he said. The situation is particularly dire for women workers who make up a significant portion of the workforce. They often endure longer hours and more physically demanding tasks. They are often tasked with designing, painting and embossing each bangle. This has to be

After LS poll defeat, Shia leader blasts supporters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, June 19: A video of a Shia leader in Kashmir apparently angry with his supporters after his party's debacle in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls has gone viral on social media. The 19-second video of Shia leader Imran Reza Ansari, the general secretary of the People's Conference, has gone viral on social media and received harsh comments. The People's Conference is headed by separatist-turned-mainstream politician Sajad Gani Lone. Lone contested the polls from north Kashmir's Baramulla Lok Sabha seat, but his party was routed in the elections. Independent candidate Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid, who is in jail on terror funding charges, won the seat. National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah stood at the second place and Lone came a distant third. Apparently miffed over his

party's performance in the polls, Ansari is seen talking angrily to his supporters in the video. "I swear upon the grave of my father, I want to tear apart my clothes today. I was in an exalted position, you made me bite the dust," a visibly angry Ansari told his supporters in Kashmiri. Ansari also angrily threw a cup of tea, which he was offered and then goes on to shout at an elderly supporter. The People's Conference could only manage a lead on a single Assembly segment Handwara - out of 18 in the Lok Sabha seat. The party even trailed in Ansari's own Assembly segment Pattan where the National Conference candidate took the lead. However, All Jammu and Kashmir Shia Association said that it was an old video and not related to the elections. It's an old video (Chinabal Pattan) showing religious mediation between two parties, one of which refused to comply, the Shia Association said in a post on X.

of the day quote

When the Congress leaders talk about closing these portals, it reminds people of corruption, because during the Congress government, the workers did not receive benefits, but the present state government has ensured that benefits reach every section through the portals



NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

Our government made a law of 'Right to Health' so that free treatment can be done in emergency situations. The present government should take the colleagues of the Doctors Association into confidence and make and implement the rules of 'Right to Health' as soon as possible so that every resident of Rajasthan gets the right to treatment



ASHOK GEHLOT | FORMER RAJASTHAN CM

There is not an iota of truth in reports that talks are being held between Shiv Sena (UBT) and Bhujbal. There has been no dialogue between Sena (UBT) and Chhagan Bhujbal and there is no possibility of it



SANJAY RAUT | MEMBER OF RS

SHORT TAKES

Kiran Choudhry, daughter join BJP

New Delhi: Former Haryana Congress leaders Kiran Choudhry and her daughter Shruti Choudhry along with their supporters joined the BJP here Wednesday, a move which comes ahead of assembly polls in the state due later this year. Both Kiran Choudhry and Shruti Choudhry had resigned from the primary membership of the Congress Tuesday, alleging the state unit of the party was being run as a "personal fiefdom", in an apparent reference to former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda. Kiran Choudhry is daughter-in-law of former Haryana chief minister Bansi Lal and a sitting MLA from Tosham in Bhiwani district. Shruti Choudhry was the working president of the Haryana unit of the Congress.

ED arrests 1 in crypto case

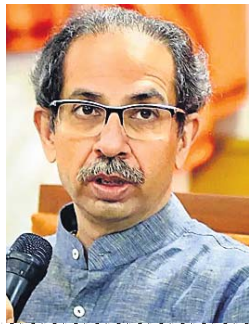
New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday said it has arrested a Delhi-based man on money laundering charge as his company allegedly sold cryptocurrencies worth more than ₹1,800 crore. Manideep Mago was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and produced before a special court in Delhi Tuesday. The court sent him to ED custody till June 23, the central agency said in a statement.

Cylinder blasts in jail; seven hurt

Srinagar: At least seven inmates were wounded in a gas cylinder blast inside a jail in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district Wednesday, authorities said. The blast took place inside the kitchen of the district Jail in the north Kashmir district, said an official. The injured, seven in all, were rushed to a hospital, which referred five of them to a hospital in the state capital. Police have registered a case.

Man lynched

Aligarh: A man was allegedly lynched here by a mob that accused him of theft, triggering communal tension. Six people were arrested after the mob attack on Fareed (35) Tuesday night in Mamu Bhanja locality, police said. Seven people, part of the mob, have been identified.



We will never go with those who tried to finish off the Shiv Sena

UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENNA (UBT) CHIEF

VOTERS TO GET INKED ON MIDDLE FINGER

Ink will be put on the middle finger instead of the forefinger in the upcoming byelections to be held in Dehra, Hamirpur and Nalagarh assembly constituencies slated for July 10, said Himachal Pradesh Chief Electoral Commissioner Maneesh Garg



India faces 20% rainfall deficit in June, says IMD

India's core monsoon zone covering most of the rain-fed agriculture areas in the country is predicted to receive above-normal rainfall this season, the Met office said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: India has received 20 per cent below normal rainfall since the start of the monsoon period June 1, and overall precipitation for the entire month will also be subpar, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said.

After reaching the Indian mainland two days earlier than usual and swiftly covering many other states, the rain-bearing system made no significant progress between June 12 and 18, extending the wait for north India, which is reeling from a sweltering heat wave.

However, conditions are now favorable for further advancement of the monsoon into parts of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, coastal Andhra Pradesh, northwest Bay of Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand over the next three to four days, the weather department said.

India received 64.5 mm of rainfall between June 1 and 18 which is 20 per cent less than the long period average (LPA) of 80.6 mm, it said.

Since June 1, northwest India has recorded 10.2 mm of rainfall (70 per cent less than normal), central India 50.5 mm (31 per cent less than normal), the south peninsula 106.6 mm (16 per cent more than normal), and east and northeast India 146.7 mm (15 per cent less than normal).

The southwest monsoon advanced into parts of the Nicobar Islands May 19. It subsequently covered most parts of the south and some parts of the central Bay of Bengal by May 26 along



with Cyclone Remal.

It simultaneously reached Kerala and the northeastern states May 30, two and six days earlier than normal, respectively.

By June 12, it had gradually covered the entire states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana; most parts of southern Maharashtra and some parts of southern Chhattisgarh and southern Odisha; and most parts of sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and all northeastern states.

"Thereafter, the monsoon has not progressed, and its northern limit June 18 passes through Navsari, Jalgaon, Amravati, Chandrapur, Bijapur, Sukma, Malkangiri, and Vizianagaram," the IMD said.

The IMD reported that 11 meteorological sub-divisions in the country have received normal to large excess rainfall between

June 1 and 18 while 25 have experienced deficient to large deficient rainfall.

The forecast suggests that the average rainfall over the country in June is most likely to be below normal (less than 92 per cent of the LPA). Normal to above-normal rainfall is expected in most areas of the southern peninsula and some parts of northeast India, while below-normal rainfall is anticipated in many areas of northwest and adjoining central India, as well as some parts of northeast India.

The IMD said in a May-end presser that the country could see above-normal rainfall in the four-month monsoon season (June to September) with cumulative rainfall estimated at 106 per cent of the LPA of 87 cm.

Below-normal monsoon rainfall is expected in northeast India, normal in the northwest and above-normal in central and south peninsular regions of the country.

India received 64.5 mm of rainfall between June 1 and 18 which is 20 per cent less than the long period average (LPA) of 80.6 mm

Pune accident rerun in Chennai

AGENCIES

Chennai, June 19: In what can be easily termed as the Pune Porsche rerun case, Beedha Madhuri, daughter of YSR Congress Rajya Sabha MP Beedha Masthan Rao was arrested and later released on bail for running over a man and causing his death by negligence, police said Wednesday.

Madhuri, who was at the wheel ran over a man, a painter by profession, sleeping on the pavement of a road in downtown Besant Nagar and later, fled the spot along with another woman, who was with her in the car. The incident occurred late on the night of June 17.

Locals later alleged both were intoxicated. The deceased, identified as Surya was declared brought dead by a state-run hospital.

Adyar Traffic Investigation Wing police registered a case for causing death by negligence and arrested her and later let her off on station bail Tuesday.

According to a top source, the police erred by letting the accused leave on station bail instead of court bail. "Had it been court bail, it would have also secured the medical report of the car driver and her condition," the officer said.

Madhuri's father became a Rajya Sabha MP in 2022 and has also been an MLA. The BMR group is a well-known name in the seafood industry.



Excise policy case: No respite for Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal demanded a ₹100 crore bribe from the South Group for his party, the Enforcement Directorate claimed Wednesday while opposing his bail application in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam.

The central probe agency told the court that if the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which has been arrayed as an accused in the case, commits a crime, the person in charge of the party will be held culpable.

The ED told the court that when former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia was made an accused in the case, the AAP was not named as an accused.

"Kejriwal demanded bribe. He asked for bribe of ₹100 crore. Kejriwal asked for funds for the AAP. Kejriwal demanded kick-backs from South Group. You can't say he is not guilty of offence. If AAP commits a crime, then every person in charge of the party will be deemed to be guilty," the ED told Special Judge Niyay Bindu. "Now AAP has been made an accused. Kejriwal is responsible for the conduct (of the party)," it added.

Kejriwal is the national convener of AAP. The judge, meanwhile, also extended Kejriwal's judicial custody after he was produced before the court through video conference on expiry of his judicial custody granted earlier.

The counsel appearing for Kejriwal opposed the ED's application seeking extension of his judicial custody, saying there were no grounds to justify his continued incarceration. During the arguments on his bail application, Kejriwal's counsel told the court that the entire case



against him rested upon statements. "The statements are of those who have confessed themselves to be guilty. They are not saints here. They are those who are not only tainted but it appears that some were arrested and were given a promise of bail and promise of being granted pardon. Approvers. And there is another category who have not been arrested," the counsel said. "Circumstances have to be so intrinsically linked (as to) lead to the guilt. These statements by tainted persons discredit the case of prosecution. There is no evidence that ₹100 crore came from South Group. These are all statements. There is no evidence. This is all in the form of statements," Kejriwal's counsel said.

According to the ED and the CBI, the South Group is a cartel of politicians, business people and others who lobbied for liquor licences for which they paid bribe to the Delhi's ruling party. Kejriwal's lawyer claimed there were contradictions in the statements made by several co-accused.

"I won't be surprised if another statement is recorded to fill the lacunae. This is the process they follow. The investigations are always unending. Whenever they want they implicate anyone. This is the biggest instrument of oppression," he added.

SNIPPETS

ED questions Rituparna Sengupta

Kolkata: Bengali filmstar Rituparna Sengupta was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate Wednesday in connection with its investigation into the multi-crore ration distribution irregularities, officials said. During the questioning, which lasted for over five hours, Sengupta was asked about her relation with former Food and Supplies Minister Jyotipriyo Mallick, who had been arrested in the case, they said. She was also asked if any financial transactions happened between her office and the state Food and Supplies Department when Mallick was the minister, they added.

Rain triggers landslides in Arunachal

Itanagar: incessant rain over the past few days had triggered landslides and flood-like situations in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, officials said Wednesday. The state capital witnessed landslides at several locations, with waterlogging reported along the Doimuk-Potin Road and several stretches of the Itanagar-Yupia Road. A portion of NH-415 and a culvert were washed away at Karsingna sinking zone Tuesday morning, severing connectivity between Nirjuli and Banderdeva.

5 dead after consuming illicit liquor

Chennai: Over 20 people from Kallakurichi district in the northern part of Tamil Nadu were hospitalised and at least five persons died after suspected consumption of illicit 'packet arrack', officials said Wednesday. K Kannukutti (49) has been arrested and an analysis of about 200 litres of illicit arrack seized from him has disclosed presence of deadly methanol, the government said. Chief Minister M K Stalin has ordered a CBI-CD probe to ensure comprehensive investigation.



AMAZON MANESAR WAREHOUSE ROW

NHRC issues notice to govt over 'anti-labour' practices

THE NHRC HAS OBSERVED THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE NEWS REPORT, IF TRUE, RAISE A SERIOUS ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF WORKERS IN VIOLATION OF LABOUR LAWS AND GUIDELINES ISSUED BY THE UNION MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT FROM TIME TO TIME

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: The NHRC has issued a notice to the Centre over a report alleging "anti-labour practices" at one of the warehouses of Amazon India in Haryana's Manesar, according to the proceedings of the case shared on the rights panel's website.

The NHRC, in a statement, said that it has taken suo motu cognisance of the media report that at one of the warehouses of a multi-national company in Haryana's Manesar "a 24-year-old worker was asked to pledge that they would not take toilet or water breaks until they finished unloading packages from six trucks, each measuring 24 feet long, after their team's 30-minute tea break had ended". "A female employee at the Manesar warehouse reportedly stated that no



restroom facilities are available on the working sites," it added.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in the proceedings of this case shared on its website, mentioned the company's name -- Amazon India. "The Commission has come across a news report dated 16.05.2024 revealing that at one of the warehouses of Amazon

India in Haryana's Manesar, a 24-year-old worker was asked to pledge that they would not take toilet or water breaks until they finished unloading packages from six trucks, each measuring 24 feet long, after their team's 30-minute tea break had ended," the proceedings read. When contacted, the company said that its employees and associates are

"free to take informal breaks throughout their shifts to use the restroom, get water, or talk to a manager". "Safety and well-being of our employees and associates is our top priority. The infrastructure and facilities at our fulfilment centres are industry leading, and are designed to ensure a safe and comfortable working environment."

"All our buildings have heat index monitoring devices and we constantly monitor changes in temperature, especially during summer months. If we do find increasing heat or humidity inside our buildings, then our teams take action to provide comfortable working conditions, including temporarily suspending work," the firm said in a statement.

"We have cooling measures in all our buildings, including ventilation systems, fans, and spot

coolers. We also provide water and other hydration options, as well as regularly scheduled rest breaks in a cooler environment, and additional breaks when temperatures are high. Employees and associates are free to take informal breaks throughout their shifts to use the restroom, get water, or talk to a manager or HR," it added.

The NHRC in its statement said that reportedly, the labour associations in India have accused five warehouses in and around Manesar of violating regulations outlined in the Factories Act, 1948. While labour inspectors can demand corrections, there is "limited enforcement", it said.

Accordingly, the NHRC has issued a notice to the Secretary, Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, seeking a detailed report within one week.

Flood situation worsens in Assam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, June 19: The flood situation in Assam worsened drastically Wednesday as almost 3 lakh people were reeling under the deluge across 17 districts, an official bulletin said.

According to the daily flood report of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), more than 2,96,00 people are hit by the floods in Bajali, Baksa, Barpeta, Biswanath, Cachar, Darrang, Goalpara, Haialakandi, Hojai, Karimganj, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Sonitpur, South Salmar, Tamulpur and Udalguri districts.

Karimganj is the worst hit with almost 2.5 lakh people suffering, followed by Tamulpur with over 11,500 people affected, and Bajali with more than 5,600 people reeling under flood waters, it said.

Till Tuesday, over 1.61 lakh people were suffering in flood waters across eight districts of the state. The total number of people losing their lives in this year's flood, landslide and storm stood at 35.

national

of the day quote

The nation will be developed by 2047 and eradication of sickle cell disease from the country will mark its identity. The PM had already launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission from the neighbouring district of Shahdol in 2023. The 'havan' (effort) has already begun and everyone has to take part in it

I had earlier said that 'Dehra is mera' and my wife would represent me in Dehra for the next three-and-a-half years and ensure development of the area

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Hon'ble MLAs from the Nationalist Congress Party (Ajit Pawar), Shri Nikh Kamini Ji, Shri Likha Soni Ji, and Shri Toko Tatum Ji, for their unconditional support to the BJP government in Arunachal Pradesh. The MLAs handed over their letter of support during their call on

POST OF THE DAY

CHINA VS INDIA
1) China is turning their desert green to combat deforestation.
2) 3 lakh trees are being cut in Chhattisgarh's Hasdev forest for the Adani coal mine. Meanwhile India is already breaking record climate change.

SHORT TAKES

2 terrorists killed in Baramulla encounter

Srinagar: Two terrorists are believed to be killed while two security personnel sustained injuries in an encounter that broke out in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district Wednesday, officials said. The security forces launched a cordon and search operation in Watergam area of Baramulla district Wednesday morning following information about the presence of ultras there, they said. The officials said the search operation turned into an encounter after the terrorists opened firing on the security forces.

AAP protests against NEET row

Mumbai: The Mumbai unit of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Wednesday staged a protest against the alleged NEET scam, calling it a "national disgrace" and demanded a fresh examination. The protest held at Dadar was part of the party's nationwide agitation against the alleged irregularities in the NEET examination, it said. Ruben Mascarenhas, AAP's Mumbai working president, alleged that the NEET "scam" is playing with the future of not just 24 lakh medico aspirants, but all of young India.

Cop deployed at Ram temple hit by bullet

Ayodhya: A 25-year-old police jawan deployed at the Ram temple here died after being hit by a bullet from his own weapon, with officials saying they are probing if it is a case of accidental firing or suicide. Shatrughan Vishwakarma was deployed as part of the Special Security Force (SSF) set to provide security at the temple premises.



There is a rumour doing rounds that there was pressure on me, which is not true. There is no pressure. Neither from a minister nor any MLA (to favour Darshan). These are all far from the truth

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

EAM TO VISIT SRI LANKA TODAY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will travel to Sri Lanka Thursday in his first bilateral visit abroad in his second consecutive term in office. The visit reaffirms India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and underlines New Delhi's continued commitment to Sri Lanka as its "closest" maritime neighbour and time tested friend, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said



DELHI WATER CRISIS

Atishi threatens indefinite strike

Addressing a press conference here, Atishi said Delhi is grappling with a water crisis since Haryana is not releasing the capital's share of water and claimed that over 28 lakh people are affected



New Delhi, June 19: Delhi Water Minister Atishi Wednesday said that she has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the water crisis in the national capital and threatened to go on an indefinite hunger strike from June 21 if the issue is not resolved within a couple of days.

all limits. "Today, 28 lakh people in Delhi did not get water, so I have made this humble request to PM Narendra Modi that he should get water for the people of Delhi, whether he gets it from Haryana or from anywhere, but now he will have to get water for the people of Delhi somehow," she said.

The BJP slammed Atishi, with its Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva accusing her of indulging in "theatrics" to distract attention from theft and black marketeering of water, and demanded that the AAP government be sacked for its "inaction".

In her letter to the prime minister, Atishi said, she highlighted the plight of Delhiites owing to the unprecedented heat wave and the steps taken by her to resolve the water crisis.

Addressing a press conference here, Atishi said Delhi is grappling with a water crisis since Haryana is not releasing the capital's share of water and claimed that over 28 lakh people are affected. Elaborating on what the 100 MGD water shortage means, she said one MGD water meets the daily water demand of nearly 28,500 people.

Invoking Hindu scriptures, she wrote in her letter, "It is written in our scriptures that there is no greater virtue than giving water to a thirsty person." In the letter, she said that if Delhi does not get water, she will have to do a 'satyagraha' from June 21.

"If Delhi is getting 100 MGD less water from Haryana, it means more than 28 lakh people are getting less water. This is the situation of Delhi today," she added.

"Yesterday, senior officials of the Delhi government went to meet the Haryana government officers and asked them for water for 28 lakh people of Delhi, but Haryana refused to give water," she said. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said Haryana had provided surplus water to Delhi Tuesday and Atishi was doing "drama" to hide the AAP government's failure.

US LAWMAKERS MEET DALAI LAMA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dharamsala (HP), June 19: The Tibetans have the right to self-determination and should be allowed to practise their religion freely, US House Foreign Affairs Committee chair Michael McCaul said Wednesday after he led a delegation here to meet spiritual leader Dalai Lama.



The visit by the US Congressional delegation that included former US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi comes days after the US Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Bill, calling for a peaceful resolution on the status of Tibet

The visit by the US Congressional delegation that included former US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi comes days after the US Congress passed the Resolve Tibet Bill, calling for a peaceful resolution on the status of Tibet. China has warned that it would take "resolute measures" if US President Joe Biden signs the bill into law.

future. You should be able to freely practise your religion and that is why we are here today in defiance of the CCP warning," he said. "Our delegation received a letter from the CCP warning us not to come here. They repeated their false claim that Tibet is part of China since the 13th century but we did not let the CCP intimidate us and we are here today," he said at the event organised by the Dharamsala-based Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). He added that the Dalai

Lama, the people of Tibet and the US know that Tibet is not part of China. The US delegation included Mariannette Miller, Gregory Meeks, Nicole Malliotakis, Jim McGovern and Ami Bera. At his residence, the Dalai Lama told them that he wanted people of the world to be happy and peaceful. "We are the same human beings, we all have the same rights and this world belongs to humanity. We should take care of the world irrespective of reli-

Brutal heat scorches north India

AGENCIES

New Delhi, June 19: Swaths of northern and eastern India grappled with punishing heat wave conditions Wednesday, and a western disturbance may provide much-needed relief, though only marginally, over the next few days, according to the India Meteorological Department.



ers Wednesday after a prolonged dry spell. The maximum temperature in Dehradun, which had shot up to around 40 degrees Celsius by Wednesday afternoon, plummeted sharply with the rains which were preceded by gusty winds. The plains in the state will witness a drop of around 2-4 degrees and the hills around 4-6 degrees Celsius due to Wednesday's rains, the MeT office said.

Also, conditions are now favourable for further advancement of the monsoon which had made no significant progress between June 12 and 18, extending the wait for rains in north India which is reeling from the sweltering heat. Maximum temperatures ranged from 43 to 45 degrees Celsius in many parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and north Rajasthan. A fresh western disturbance is expected to bring some relief in the northern region from the high temperatures. Delhi can expect light rainfall June 20. Several places in Uttarakhand, including Dehradun received light show-

Sharp rise in casualties

New Delhi: Hospitals in Delhi are witnessing a spike in casualties and heatstroke cases as a brutal heatwave continues to batter the national capital, officials of health facilities said Wednesday. A senior police officer also said that amid persisting heat wave, bodies of more than 26 people belonging to underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds have been found in five districts of the national capital in the last 48 hours, even as the cause of deaths is yet to be ascertained. An NGO, Centre for Holistic Development, which works for homeless people, claimed that 192 homeless deaths were recorded due to heat wave in Delhi from June 11 to 19. At the Centre-run RML Hospital, the authorities received 22 patients in the last two days.

PARLIAMENT STATUE ROW

Kharge writes to LS Speaker, RS Chairman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has written to Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman over the shifting of statues of Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar and other national leaders to a new location in the Parliament complex and has demanded that they be restored to their original places.

SI held for raping woman cop at gunpoint removed from service

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, June 19: A Sub Inspector (SI) of police who was arrested Wednesday for raping a woman head constable at gunpoint in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district in Telangana has been dismissed from service, police said.



her June 16 in a guest room of an irrigation project's accommodation facility, they said. In her complaint, the constable alleged that the SI threatened her using his revolver and raped her. He then warned her of dire consequences if she revealed to anyone what he did to her. Taking a serious view of the allegation against Sub Inspector Bhavani Sen, the Inspector General of Police (Multi Zone -1) A V Ranganath issued orders to permanently remove him from service.

Air pollution claims 2.1mn lives in India in 2021: Report

MORE THAN 90 PER CENT OF THESE GLOBAL AIR POLLUTION DEATHS -- 7.8 MILLION PEOPLE -- ARE ATTRIBUTED TO PM2.5 POLLUTION, INCLUDING FROM AMBIENT PM2.5 AND HOUSEHOLD AIR POLLUTION



New Delhi, June 19: Air pollution contributed to 8.1 million deaths worldwide in 2021, with India and China recording 2.1 million and 2.3 million fatalities, respectively, according to a report released Wednesday. Published by the Health Effects Institute (HEI), an independent US-based research organisation, in partnership with UNICEF, the report also highlighted that air pollution claimed lives of 1.69,400 children in India under

the age of five in 2021. Nigeria followed with 1,14,100 child deaths, Pakistan with 68,100, Ethiopia with 31,100, and Bangladesh with 19,100, it said. The report said nearly 50 per cent of all ozone-related chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD) deaths in 2021 were recorded in India (2,37,000 deaths), followed by China (1,25,600) and Bangladesh (15,000). The report also said that air pollution was the leading risk factor for deaths in South Asia, followed by high blood pressure,

diet, and tobacco. It was the second leading risk factor for death among children under five in 2021, after malnutrition. The report noted, "The year

and China (2.3 million deaths) together account for 54 per cent of the total global disease burden." Other countries with high impacts included Pakistan (2,56,000 deaths), Bangladesh (2,36,300) and Myanmar (1,01,600 deaths) in South Asia; Indonesia (2,21,600 deaths), Vietnam (99,700 deaths), and the Philippines (98,209) in Southeast Asia; and Nigeria (2,06,700 deaths) and Egypt (1,16,500 deaths) in Africa. Taken together, air pollution from PM2.5 and ozone was estimated to contribute to 8.1 million deaths -- about 12 per cent of the total global deaths -- in 2021. More than 90 per cent of these global air pollution deaths -- 7.8 million people -- are attributed to PM2.5 pollution, including from ambient PM2.5 and household air pollution.

These tiny particles, measuring less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, are so small they remain in the lungs and can enter the bloodstream, affecting many organ systems and increasing the risks for non-communicable diseases in adults such as heart ailment, stroke, diabetes, lung cancer, and COPD. According to the report, PM2.5 has been found to be the most consistent and accurate predictor of poor health outcomes around the world. "We hope our State of Global Air report provides both the information and the inspiration for change," said HEI President Elena Craft. "Air pollution has enormous implications for health. We know that improving air quality and global public health is practical and achievable," Craft said.

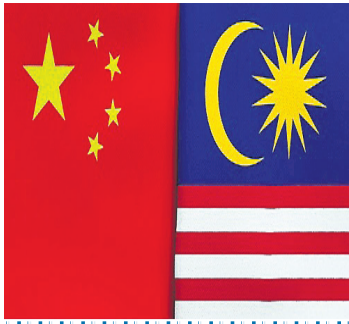
international



We are demanding that the Chinese return our rifles and our equipment and we're also demanding that they pay for the damage they caused
ROMEO BRAWNER JR | HEAD OF THE PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES

CHINA'S EYES ON ECRL

China said it was willing to study a plan to connect Malaysia's \$10-billion East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) to other China-backed railway projects in Laos and Thailand, potentially expanding Beijing's Belt and Road initiative across Southeast Asia



of the day quote

Our neighbour India is going through a phase of massive industrial development. Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are experiencing it. We must also join in
RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PRESIDENT, SRI LANKA

The President is going to do what he thinks is best on behalf of the American people, that's what I can tell you
KARINE JEAN-PIERRE | WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY, US

Indian citizens travel a lot...We are considering this (visa-on-arrival). We are going to talk with the Immigration Department. The Government can't single-handedly (do it), we have to discuss internally
TIEN CHUNG-KWANG | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, TAIWAN

39th anniversary of Kanishka bombing

IN ONE OF THE MOST HEINOUS TERROR-RELATED AIR DISASTERS IN THE HISTORY OF CIVIL AVIATION, 329 INNOCENT VICTIMS, INCLUDING 86 CHILDREN, LOST THEIR LIVES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ottawa, June 19: India stands at the forefront of countering the menace of terrorism and works closely with all nations to tackle this global threat, India's Consulate General in Vancouver has said as it reminded the world of the Kanishka bombing, the most heinous terror-related air disasters in the history of civil aviation. The Montreal-New Delhi Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182 exploded 45 minutes before it was to have landed at London's Heathrow Airport June 23, 1985, killing all 329 people on board, most of them Canadians of Indian descent. The bombing was blamed on Sikh militants in retaliation to

'Operation Bluestar' to flush out militants from the Golden Temple in 1984.

The Consulate General of India has planned a memorial service to mark the anniversary of the bombing.

India stands at the forefront of countering the menace of terrorism and works closely with all nations to tackle this global threat, the Consulate General of India in Vancouver posted on X Tuesday.

23 June 2024 marks the 39th Anniversary of the cowardly terrorist bombing of Air India flight 182 (Kanishka), in which 329 innocent victims, including 86 children, lost their lives in one of the most heinous terror-related air disasters in the his-



tory of civil aviation, it said. The memorial is scheduled June 23 at the Air India Memorial at Stanley Park's Ceperley Playground area in Vancouver. The Consulate encouraged members of the Indian Diaspora to join the event in a show of solidarity against terrorism. The memorial service hosted by India comes amid strain in

India's ties with Canada over the issue of Khalistan terrorists after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau alleged in September last year of the potential involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a designated Sikh terrorist. India has dismissed Trudeau's allegations as "absurd and motivated".

Ramaphosa starts new term as Prez

REUTERS

Pretoria, June 19: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa was sworn in Wednesday for a second term in which his African National Congress will share power with other parties after it lost its majority for the first time in 30 years of democracy.

A former liberation movement, the ANC came to power under Nelson Mandela's leadership in the 1994 elections that marked the end of apartheid and had long been unbeatable, but it lost its shine after presiding over years of decline.

Following a parliamentary election May 29 in which no party won a majority, Ramaphosa will head a government of national unity with five other parties, including the ANC's largest rival, the pro-business Democratic Alliance.

While investors have welcomed the inclusion of the DA, which wants to boost growth through structural reforms and prudent fiscal policies, analysts say sharp ideological divisions between the parties could make the government unstable.

African heads of state and dignitaries from as far afield as Cuba, a historical friend of the ANC, gathered outside the Union Buildings in Pretoria, seat of the South African government, to bear witness to Ramaphosa's inauguration.

A ceremony full of military pomp and pageantry began, with inter-faith prayers by Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and traditional African religious leaders, reflecting the diversity of South African society.

68 Indians among 645 Hajj pilgrims who died

SAUDI STATE TV SAID TEMPERATURES ROSE MONDAY AS HIGH AS 51.8 DEGREES CELSIUS IN THE SHADE AT THE GRAND MOSQUE IN MECCA RESULTING IN 'HEAT EXHAUSTION'



AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Riyadh, June 19: A diplomat in Saudi Arabia said Wednesday that 68 Indian nationals died during the hajj pilgrimage this year marked by searing heat, bringing the overall tally to more than 600.

"We have confirmed around 68 dead... Some are because of natural causes and we had many old pilgrims. And some are due to the weather conditions, that's what we assume," the diplomat told AFP.

The new toll comes after two Arab diplomats told AFP Tuesday that 550 deaths had been recorded during the hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam that all Muslims with the means must perform at least once.

That figure included 323 Egyptians and 60 Jordanians, the Arab diplomats said, and one specified that nearly all the Egyptians died "because of heat".

Fatalities have also been confirmed by Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia and Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, though in many cases authorities have not specified the cause. The total reported dead so far

is 645, according to an AFP tally. Last year more than 200 pilgrims were reported dead, most of them from Indonesia.

Saudi Arabia has not provided information on fatalities, though it reported more than 2,700 cases of "heat exhaustion" Sunday alone.

The diplomat who confirmed the Indian fatalities said there were also some Indian pilgrims missing, but he declined to provide an exact number.

"This happens every year... We can't say that it is abnormally high this year," he said. "It's somewhat similar to last year but we will know more in the coming days."

For the past several years the hajj has fallen during the sweltering Saudi summer.

According to a Saudi study published last month, temperatures in the area where rituals are performed are rising 0.4 degrees Celsius (0.72 degrees Fahrenheit) each decade.

More than 1.83 million Muslims performed the Hajj in 2024, including more than 1.6 million pilgrims from 22 countries, and around 222,000 Saudi citizens and residents.

Putin, Kim ink defence pact

Putin's visit, which is likely to reshape decades of Russia-North Korea relations at a time when both face international isolation, is being watched closely by Seoul and Washington, which have expressed concern about their growing military ties

REUTERS

Seoul, June 19: The leaders of North Korea and Russia signed an agreement Wednesday that deepens their military cooperation to include a mutual defence pledge to help each other if attacked, with the North's Kim Jong Un calling the new ties an "alliance".

Kim spoke at a rare press conference following his meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Pyongyang, announcing the signing of a "comprehensive strategic partnership" that the Russian leader said included defensive elements.

"The comprehensive partnership agreement signed today provides, among other things, for mutual assistance in the event of aggression against one of the parties to this agreement," said Putin, who was making his first visit to North Korea in 24 years.

Putin's visit, which is likely to reshape decades of Russia-North Korea relations at a time when both face international isolation, is being watched closely by Seoul and Washington, which have expressed concern about their growing military ties.

The reaction from China, the North's main political and economic benefactor and an increasingly important ally for Moscow, has been muted.

Kim said the pact would expand cooperation in the areas of politics, economy and defence, calling it "strictly peace-loving and defensive" in nature.

"Our two countries' relations have been elevated to the new



■ NEW PACT PROVIDES 'MUTUAL ASSISTANCE' UNDER AGGRESSION ■ KIM CALLS THE NEW TIES 'ALLIANCE' ■ WEST FEARS RUSSIA COULD AID NORTH'S NUCLEAR, MISSILE PROGRAMMES

higher level of an alliance," Kim said.

At the start of their summit, Kim expressed "unconditional support" for "all of Russia's policies", including "a full support and firm alliance" for Putin's war with Ukraine.

Putin said Moscow was fighting the hegemonic, imperialist policy of the United States and its allies, Russian media reported.

"We highly appreciate your consistent and unwavering support for Russian policy, including in the Ukrainian direction," Russian state news agency RIA quoted Putin as saying at the start of the talks.

Russia was hit with US-led Western sanctions after Putin launched a full-scale invasion of neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022 in what Moscow called a "special military operation".

'UNCONDITIONAL AND UNWAVERING SUPPORT'

Putin, who had hosted Kim at a summit in September in the Russian Far East that accelerated the two countries' military cooperation, received a lavish welcome in Pyongyang.

An honour guard including mounted soldiers, and a large crowd of civilians gathered at the

Kim Il Sung Square by the Taedong River running through the capital. The scene included children holding balloons and giant portraits of the two leaders with national flags adorning the square's main building.

Kim and Putin then rode to the Kumsusan Palace for summit talks.

Earlier, Kim said the increasingly complicated security environment around the world called for a stronger strategic dialogue with Russia.

"And I want to reaffirm that we will unconditionally and unwaveringly support all of Russia's policies," Kim told Putin.

North Korea "expresses full support and solidarity to the Russian government, army and people in carrying out a special military operation in Ukraine to protect sovereignty, security interests, as well as territorial integrity," he said.

Putin arrived at Pyongyang's airport earlier in the day. After Kim welcomed him with an embrace, the two shared "pent-up inmost thoughts" on the ride to the state guest house, North Korean state media said.

The countries' partnership was an "engine for accelerating the building of a new multi-polar world", North Korea's state news agency KCNA said.

Vietnam to host Putin in nod to old ties, risking ire of West

SHORT TAKES

3 Indians detained

Dubai: Three Indians, four Egyptians and a Kuwaiti national have been detained in connection with the devastating fire that killed 50 people, including 46 Indians, in the southern Ahmadi Governorate in the Gulf Kingdom, a media report said Wednesday. The massive fire which occurred at a six-storey building in the city of Mangaf July 12 was caused by an electrical short circuit in the guard's room on the ground floor. The building was home to 196 migrant workers, mostly Indians. "The Public Prosecution has ordered the detention of a Kuwaiti national, three Indian nationals, and four Egyptian nationals for two weeks in connection with the Al-Mangaf building fire case," English language daily Arab Times reported without identifying their names.

US okays arms sale to Taiwan

Washington: The Biden administration Tuesday approved a new \$360 million weapons sale to Taiwan, sending the island hundreds of armed drones, missile equipment and related support material, the State Department said in a statement that is sure to draw condemnation from China. The announcement was not unexpected but it comes at a time of high tension between Washington and Beijing, which regards Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to consolidate by force if necessary. The sale includes 291 Altius-600M systems, which are unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, with warheads. It also includes 720 Switchblade drones known as "extended-range loitering munitions," the State Department said.

In UK, world's 1st AI candidate to contest polls

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

London, May 19: When voters go to the polls in one English town next month they will get the chance to elect what is being billed as the world's first AI lawmaker.

Businessman Steve Endacott is among hundreds of candidates standing to become a member of parliament at Britain's July 4 national election, except unlike the others, the face on his campaign leaflet is not the 59-year-old, but an AI generated avatar.

"We're launching a party, we're going to be recruiting more AI candidates across the country after this election, and we see this as the launch, building block for something big and something democratic," he told Reuters.



Endacott, whose Neural Voice company powers his AI alter ego, said his frustration with "standard politics" made him decide to run as an independent for the Brighton Pavilion constituency in the southern seaside town.

"AI Steve", the name that will appear on ballot papers, engages real-time with locals on topics ranging from LGBTQ rights and housing to bin collection and immigration. It then puts forward policy ideas before asking for their suggestions.

"We're using AI in so many (areas), at work, social interactions, why don't we put it in politics?" said charity worker Eona Johnston, 23, after meeting "AI Steve" near Brighton's famous pier. "It might change the way we live."

When asked about AI Steve, the Electoral Commission, the elections watchdog, said if he wins, Endacott would be the Member of Parliament (MP), not any AI version of him.

Most locals appeared reluctant to vote for an AI candidate just yet.

Jim Cheek, a 37-year old accountant from Brighton, pointed out that an MP has to speak up for constituents in parliament. "AI and politicians have the one thing in common," another local resident, Andy Clawson, 42, said. "They can't be trusted."

No peace for people in Rafah

REUTERS

Cairo, June 19: Israeli tanks backed by warplanes and drones advanced deeper into the western part of the Gaza Strip city of Rafah Wednesday, killing eight people, according to residents and Palestinian medics.

Residents said the tanks moved into five neighborhoods after midnight. Heavy shelling and gunfire hit the tents of displaced families in the Al-Mawasi area, further to the west of the coastal enclave, they said.

Some eight months into the war, there has been no sign of let up in the fighting as efforts by international mediators, backed by the United States, have so far failed to persuade Israel and Hamas to agree to a ceasefire. Israeli forces have laid waste



to much of Gaza and seized most of the Palestinian territory but have yet to achieve their stated goal of wiping out Hamas and freeing Israeli hostages.

Medics and Hamas media said eight Palestinians were killed in Al-Mawasi and many families fled north in panic. They did not identify the fatalities and the Israeli military said it was looking into the report.

Residents said Israeli army forces blew up several homes in western Rafah, which had sheltered over half of Gaza's 2.3 million people before last month, when Israel began its ground offensive and forced most of the population to head northwards.

Some United Nations and Palestinian figures put those who remained at under 100,000 people.

of the day quote

India is poised to become the global epicentre for GCCs, capturing 60-75 per cent of the market by 2030

ANSHUL JAIN | CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

The current demand-supply gap of talent in the hospitality industry stands at around 55-60 per cent, indicating a substantial mismatch between the needs and the available talent pool

SANJAY SHETTY | DIRECTOR (PROFESSIONAL TALENT SOLUTIONS), RANDSTAD

India has talent and capability and now we are seeing far quicker adoption

ARUNDHATI BHATTACHARYA | CEO AND CHAIRPERSON, SALESFORCE INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Voda sells stake in Indus Towers

New Delhi: British telecom player Vodafone Wednesday said it has sold an 18 per cent stake in Indus Towers for 1.7 billion euro (about ₹15,300 crore). The company will use the major portion of the proceeds to pay 1.8 billion euro outstanding bank borrowings secured against Vodafone's assets in India.

ESIC adds 16.47L new workers

New Delhi: Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) added 16.47 lakh new members in April as per payroll data released Wednesday. "Through the data, it is noticeable that more jobs have been generated for the youth of the nation as out of the total 16.47 lakh employees added during the month, 7.84 lakh employees amounting to around 47.60 per cent of the total registrations belong to the age group of up to 25 years," a labour ministry statement said.

CIL gives 23 mines to private runners

Kolkata: In a bid to unlock coal reserves from its closed and discontinued underground mines, Coal India Limited (CIL) has awarded 23 such mines to private operators on a revenue-sharing model, the company announced Wednesday. These mines have a cumulative peak rated capacity of 34.14 million tonne per year, with estimated total extractable reserves of 635 million tonne.



If at all some relief could be given in the Budget regarding tax on the interest earnings, it will be an incentive to depositors. Eventually, the banking sector uses deposits mobilised for the capital formation in the country

DINESH KUMAR KHARA | CHAIRMAN, SBI

TATA MOTORS TO HIKE PRICES OF CVs

Tata Motors Wednesday said it will hike prices of its commercial vehicles by up to 2 per cent from July 1, 2024 to offset the impact of rising commodity prices. Earlier this year, the company had announced a price hike by up to 2 per cent from April 1, 2024 to offset the residual impact of the past input costs.



Govt falls short of monetisation aim

CENTRE MONETISES ₹1.56L-CR ASSETS IN FY24, LOWER THAN TARGET OF ₹1.8L-CR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: The government monetised assets worth ₹1.56 lakh crore under the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) in 2023-24, lower than the target of ₹1.8 lakh crore, an official statement said Wednesday.

According to the statement, the total target for the first two years -- 2021-22 and 2022-23 -- under the NMP was around ₹2.5 lakh crore, against which about ₹2.30 lakh crore was achieved. "During the financial year 2023-24, against the target of ₹1.8 lakh crore, which is the highest among all the four years, the achievement has been around ₹1.56 lakh crore," it said.



₹56,794 crore, power (₹14,690 crore), mines (₹4,090 crore), petroleum and natural gas (₹9,587 crore), urban (₹6,480 crore), and shipping (₹7,627 crore), the statement said.

All these ministries achieved 70 per cent of their monetisation targets, it added. According to the statement, to enable the investors plan their investments efficiently and thereby accelerate the monetisation process, NHAI has already identified and published an indicative list of 33 assets to be monetised during 2024-25.

Asset monetisation is aimed at tapping private sector investment to create new infrastructure

for calculation of IECV. Asset monetisation, based on the philosophy of creation through monetisation, is aimed at tapping private sector investment for new infrastructure creation. It also creates employment opportunities, thereby enabling high economic growth and integrating the rural and semi-urban areas for overall public welfare.

Automobile industry rises 19% to ₹10.22L-cr in FY24

INDIA IS AT NUMBER THREE IN TERMS OF VEHICLES REGISTERED BEHIND CHINA, US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 19: The Indian automobile industry grew 19 per cent to ₹10.22 lakh crore in FY24 driven by a robust growth in the utility and sports utility vehicle (SUV) segment, a report said Wednesday.



and shift to electric vehicles (EVs), it said. Indians are preferring higher, more expensive models across segments, and the average price of vehicles is increasing.

India ranks 63rd on Energy Transition Index: WEF

EUROPEAN NATIONS DOMINATE THE TOP RANKS WITH SWEDEN TOPPING THE INDEX, FOLLOWED BY DENMARK, FINLAND, SWITZERLAND AND FRANCE IN THE TOP FIVE. CHINA WAS RANKED 20TH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: India has been ranked 63rd on a Global Energy Transition Index released Wednesday by the World Economic Forum, which said the country has shown significant improvement across energy equity, security and sustainability.

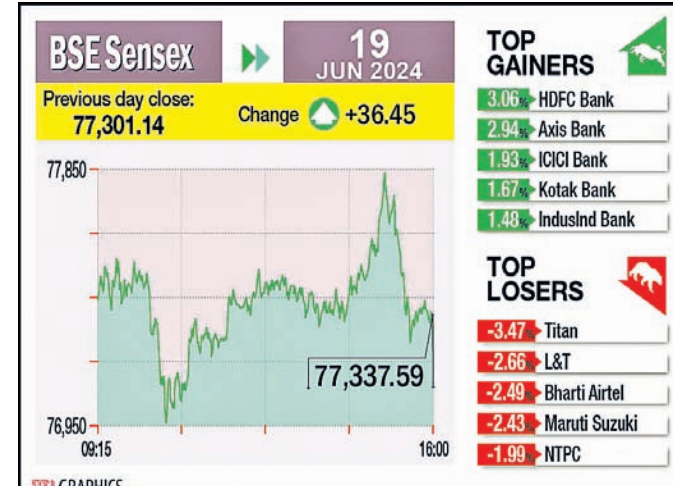
— security, equity and sustainability. Taking note of various initiatives taken in India, the World Economic Forum (WEF) said the country is leading the way in creating outcomes that can be replicated elsewhere.

Sensex extends gains to scale fresh peak

FIFTH DAY OF CLIMB NIFTY RETREATS FROM RECORD HIGH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, June 19: Benchmark equity index Sensex Wednesday ticked higher to scale yet another lifetime closing peak of 77,337, while the broader Nifty retreated from the record high level amid a lack of immediate triggers.



SENSEX CLIMBED 36.45 POINTS TO SETTLE AT A NEW CLOSING HIGH OF 77,337.59. NIFTY ENDED AT 23,516 AFTER TOUCHING NEW RECORD OF 23,664 INTRA-DAY



On the role of China and India, the WEF said that with roughly a third of the global population, these two countries will play a critical role. "Both have experienced progress in renewable energy buildout, energy access improvements and energy security. However, the phase-down trajectory of coal will be a major driver of emissions.

INDIA FOURTH-LARGEST RENEWABLES MARKET GLOBALLY THE COUNTRY IS DRIVING THE ADOPTION OF EVs, PRODUCTION OF GREEN HYDROGEN benchmarked in the report demonstrated progress on their energy transition journeys in the past decade, the overall pace of the transition has slowed and balancing its different facets remains a key challenge.

All eyes on Kohli

India clinch ODI series against SA

WITH A LACKLUSTRE START IN THE T20 WORLD CUP, THE INDIAN STAR IS EXPECTED TO SHINE AT SUPER 8 CLASH WITH AFGHANISTAN



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bridgetown (Barbados), June 19: Virat Kohli will be expected to hit his straps after a lean run while left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav will anxiously wait for his chance when title-favourites India face a sprightly Afghanistan in their opening Super 8 fixture of the T20 World Cup here Thursday.

The big talking point ahead of the game is the Indian team combination.

Will India go in with the same line-up that worked for them in the group league stage or bring in their best spinner over the last 12 months, Kuldeep, at the expense of a specialist pacer now?

At the start of the tourna-

ment, skipper Rohit Sharma had expressed his keenness to include all four all-rounders -- Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, and Ravindra Jadeja -- in the playing eleven.

That strategy suited the Indian team in the bowler-friendly conditions in New York and the captain is expected to retain the winning combination that stretches their batting till number 8.

The only way to fit Kuldeep into the team is to either drop Mohammed Siraj or Arshdeep Singh for the wily spinner. If that does happen, Siraj is most likely to be benched.

If the two practice sessions of the Indian team are an indication, the pitch could offer plenty to the spinners making

Kuldeep's case stronger. With the gentle breeze blowing across the Kensington Oval, the pacers should get the ball to swing in the powerplay.

As is often the case, all eyes will be on Kohli, who is yet to log a double digit score in the tournament. His strategy to go for his strokes did not yield the desired results in New York but he is expected to be at his imperious best on the better wickets in the Caribbean.

The 35-year-old is always operating at 100 per cent and the intensity he showed during the training sessions was a testament to his exemplary work ethic.

Shivam Dube, who was brought into the side to hammer sixes in the middle and

death overs, has sent the ball out of the park only once in this competition.

The pitches in USA did not allow him to go after the spinners. He would be expected to change that in the Super 8s and beyond.

India's premier T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav too was back among runs against USA, albeit not in his usual swashbuckling style. But the effort was enough to boost his confidence.

Besides Kohli, runs are pending from the bat of Hardik Pandya, who has been exceptional with the ball.

On the bowling front, Arshdeep Singh has grown in confidence with each passing game, playing perfect wingman

to Jasprit Bumrah in both the powerplay and death overs.

With the surface likely to aid the slower bowlers, Axar and Jadeja would be backing themselves to make a decisive impact in the game.

Afghanistan, on the other hand, head into the Super 8 fixtures after a humbling loss to the West Indies in St Lucia.

Their bowling attack, which allowed them to boss their first three games, was put to sword by the hard-hitting West Indies batters.

On the batting front, in-form openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran would be once again be crucial to the team's chances.



CENTURIONS MANDHANA, HARMANPREET SPARKLE AS INDIA BEAT SA BY FOUR RUNS ON SECOND ODI MATCH

AGENCIES

Bangalore, June 19: Ebullient hundreds of Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet Kaur were nearly unopposed by remarkable centuries from Laura Wolvaardt and Marizanne Kapp but India kept their nerves to beat South Africa by four runs in a last-over thriller to take an unassailable 2-0 in ODI series here Wednesday.

India had beaten South Africa by 143 runs in the first match here Sunday.

It was a matter of margin once India posted an imposing 325 for three, riding on Mandhana's 136 (120b, 18x4, 2x6) and Harmanpreet's unbeaten 103 (88b, 9x4, 3x6), their seventh and sixth one-day tons respectively.

However, the Proteas fought back through Kapp (114, 94b, 11x4, 3x6) and Wolvaardt (135 not out, 135b, 12x4 3x6), who added 184 runs off 170 balls for the fourth wicket, but could manage 321 for six.

The Chinnaswamy pitch stayed truer as compared to the previous match, and the Indian bowlers had to be precise in their line and length on this day

to be effective.

They did just that. At no point, the home bowlers allowed SA batters a free run, picking up wickets at regular intervals.

Pacer Arundhati Reddy, who replaced Renuka Singh, gave India a good beginning, beating the defence of Tazmin Brits with a delivery that came in by that bit.

However, Mandhana gave crowd the moment of the day when she accounted for Sune Luus, caught behind by Richa Ghosh, to bag her maiden international wicket.

Smriti Mandhana becomes first Indian woman to hit consecutive ODI hundreds, equals Mithali Raj's century tally

That brought together Wolvaardt and Kapp, who resisted the Indian spinners with excellent footwork and shot selection. The tourists required 103 runs in the last 10 overs and it did not look impossible with a set Kapp and Wolvaardt in the middle, but they had to take their chances for that. Earlier, Mandhana and Harmanpreet added 171 for the third wicket to lift India to a formidable total.

Wolvaardt's decision to have a bowl seemed vindicated as new ball bowlers -- Ayabonga Khaka and Masabata Klaas -- found appreciable bounce and movement under overcast skies.

SHORT TAKES

Williamson quits as white-ball captain

Christchurch: Kane Williamson has decided to forego a national contract for 2024-25 and also stepped down from white-ball captaincy in a bid to extend his international career. The news comes a couple days after New Zealand's shock early exit from the T20 World Cup. "Helping push the team forward across the formats is something I'm very passionate about and something I want to keep contributing towards," the 33-year-old said in a New Zealand Cricket (NZC) release Wednesday. "However, pursuing an overseas opportunity during the New Zealand summer means I'm unable to accept a central contract offer."

Djokovic to play in Paris Games

London: Novak Djokovic will compete in the upcoming Paris Games, the Serbian Olympic Committee confirmed. Djokovic had knee surgery after withdrawing from the French Open ahead of the quarterfinals and said he hoped to return to competition "as soon as possible." The Serbian committee said in its announcement that Djokovic had confirmed he will play in Paris. It will be his fifth Olympics. The 37-year-old Djokovic had said surgery on his right knee "went well." The tennis events for the Paris Olympics start July 27 at Roland Garros, the site of the French Open. Djokovic has only won a bronze medal at the Olympics.

Brussels says no to Belgium-Israel match

Brussels: The city of Brussels says it won't host a UEFA Nations League match between Belgium and Israel in September because of the "dramatic situation in Gaza" that creates a security headache for city officials. Brussels' first alderman Benoit Hellings said Wednesday the city considers it impossible to organize the match, which was scheduled to take place at the Stade Roi Baudouin September 6. Hundreds of pro-Palestinian demonstrators have repeatedly taken to the streets of Brussels since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas last year. Last month, ticket sales for the Belgium-Israel match were paused because of security concerns.

Chopra opens up on adductor niggle



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Turku (Finland), June 19: Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has opened up about his adductor niggle which has affected his season, saying he will consult "different doctors" after the Paris Olympics to address the nagging issue.

Chopra returned to competitions after a month-long break to fetch his maiden gold medal at the Paavo Nurmi Games here Tuesday with an effort of 85.97m, which came in his third attempt.

The 26-year-old, who created history by becoming the first Indian to win a track and field medal at the Tokyo Olympics, had withdrawn from last month's Ostrava Golden Spike as a precautionary measure after he felt something in his adductor (group of muscles located on inner thighs).

"The weather was good today, a little bit cold with the wind. But I am happy with my adductor now because I could do all 6 throws," Chopra said after the win.

"Every year I have some problems with my adductor, maybe after the Olympics I am going to talk to different doctors."

Chopra, however, expressed the desire to compete in more competitions this season.

He began his season at the Doha Diamond League in May, where he finished second with his final throw of 88.36m, the ninth best mark of his career.

He then participated at the National Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar, where he secured

Every year I have some problems with my adductor, maybe after the Olympics I am going to talk to different doctors

NEERAJ CHOPRA | JAVELIN THROWER

the gold medal with an underwhelming effort of 82.27m.

"Initially I wanted to compete more this season, but it was not possible due to my niggles," he added.

After the Paavo Nurmi Games, Chopra will next be seen in action at the Paris Diamond League July 7.

Chopra will be training in Europe in three different venues along with coach Klaus Bartonietz and physio Ishaan Marwaha ahead of the Paris Olympics.

The 26-year-old began his preparation in Kuortane in Finland. He will now head to Saarbrücken in Germany.

After spending just over two weeks in Germany, Chopra will start the final stretch of his preparation at the Gloria Sports Arena in Turkiye, where he will be located until July 28.

"I came from Kuortane and will now head to Saarbrücken, Germany and maybe to Turkey just before the Olympics. Most of the time I train alone with my coach and physio, but from time to time we exchange with other coaches, like Jan Zelezny. I will try to stay healthy in the next weeks, because then I will throw my best throws," he added.

T20 RANKINGS

Stoinis becomes top all-rounder; Surya leads among batters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, June 19: Australia's Marcus Stoinis Wednesday topped Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi as the number one all-rounder in the latest ICC T20 rankings.

Stoinis snared six wickets and also made valuable contribution with the bat to help Australia cruise to the Super Eights in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

India's Suryakumar Yadav retained his spot as the top-ranked batter in the shortest format with Phil Salt, Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan are static on second third and fourth respectively.

While Stoinis climbs a spot to become the premier all-rounder, Nabi dropped three places with Sri Lanka skipper Wanindu Hasaranga and Bangladesh veteran Shakib Al Hasan also rising to the second and third spot respectively.

Grand Slam champions get wild cards for Wimbledon

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wimbledon, June 19: Former Grand Slam champions Naomi Osaka, Caroline Wozniacki, Angelique Kerber and Emma Raducanu have all been awarded wild cards for Wimbledon.

The grass-court tournament starts July 1.

Osaka — a four-time major champion and former No 1 player — and three-time Grand Slam winner Kerber returned from maternity leave at the start of this season.

Currently ranked 113th, Osaka was the only player to take a set from top-ranked Iga Swiatek at the French Open and followed that up with a quarterfinal spot last week-Hertogenbosch, a warm-up event for Wimbledon.

Former US Open champion Raducanu made her breakthrough at Wimbledon by advancing to the fourth round in 2021. She will be playing there for the first time in two years after undergoing wrist and ankle sur-



gery in 2023.

Kerber won the 2018 Wimbledon title and was runner-up at the All England Club in 2016. She is also a former top-ranked player.

Wozniacki returned from maternity leave last August. She's never got past the fourth round at Wimbledon, where she will be playing for the first time since

2019. British players Francesca Jones, Heather Watson and Yuriko Miyazaki were also included in the initial list of invitations. One main draw wild card remains to be allocated. Seven British players have been invited to play in the men's draw, including last year's junior champion Henry Searle.

FADING FOOTBALL

FC Barcelona shut down academies in India

BARCA ACADEMY INDIA WAS THE LARGEST GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 19: World-renowned football club FC Barcelona has decided to shut down all its academies in India, 14 years after starting operations with an aim to train the country's kids in their famed 'La Masia (youth academy)' style.

FC Barcelona did not provide any official reason for the closure. All its academies in the Indian cities of Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bangalore and Pune will cease to exist from July 1. "FC Barcelona have informed



the families involved in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Pune will cease to operate as Barca Academies from 1 July 2024," the club said in a statement which it uploaded on its website.

"Barcelona's presence in India began back in 2010 and since then thousands of youngsters have learned to play football in the Barca style and with the Club's values. Furthermore, India was the venue for two

FC Barcelona did not provide any official reason for the closure

In the statement, FC Barcelona expressed gratitude to all the families for their trust in the project over the years, as well as to all the coaches, local staff, and Conscient Football, the club's India partner that has collaborated on the Barca academies project all these years.

As part of the venture, it set multiple football training centres in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Pune, organising programs, camps, leagues, tournaments, and exposure trips.

Barca Academy is the flagship FC Barcelona school aimed at boys and girls between 4 to 17 years of age and its main objective is to provide a comprehensive training environment for their students.