



## Media influence

Actor Parul Gulati talks about how her social media experience helped to prep for the upcoming show #BlueTickVerified

LEISURE | P2



## India slams Pak

India dismisses Pakistan's attempt to inject Kashmir into a discussion of the workings of the Security Council

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Spectrum auctions

Telcos buy over ₹11,341 crore worth of radio waves on day-2 of spectrum auctions, with Bharti Airtel emerging as the top buyer

BUSINESS | P11



## India eye revenge

Rohit Sharma-led India will eye revenge for the 2022 loss when they meet England in the semis of the T20 World Cup Thursday

SPORTS | P12

# State likely to ban liquor in phases

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** Odisha may go Bihar way soon as the newly-elected Mohan Charan Majhi government reportedly plans to ban liquor sale and consumption in the state. If not completely now, the BJP government is contemplating to make the state liquor-free in a phased manner, according to sources.

Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (SSEPD) Minister Nityananda Gond, while speaking on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse, Wednesday, said that the state government plans to ban liquor across the state.

"Just cannot encourage liquor sale fearing revenue loss. Society is being polluted due to liquor addiction," Gond told the media.

"Alcohol addiction is ruining lives. It is leading to distress. Our government will be looking at making Odisha free of liquor and also discourage use of narcotics," the SSEPD minister said, mentioning similar bans in other states.

He said, "Our government is also committed to doing the same. Necessary steps will be taken after discussing this with Excise and other departments. We will try to make Odisha liquor-free in a phase-wise manner," the minister added. The minister further said that his government will also take steps to curb drug addiction to create a healthy society.

Meanwhile, Mohd Imran Ali, an anti-drug activist and managing director of Salaam Jeevan, said, "It is the longstanding demand of the people of Odisha for banning liquor sale and if the minister is contemplating about this, then it is a welcome step. The state already has in place 'Orissa Prohibition Act 1956' that can help prohibit the manufacturing, sale and consumption of intoxicating drugs and liquor in the state."

Significantly, several states, including Bihar, Gujarat, Mizoram, and Nagaland, have already prohibited the sale of liquor.



**RAIN PAIN:** Motorists waded through a waterlogged stretch between Bomikhal and Rasulgarh in Bhubaneswar following a brief spell of rain, Wednesday (PHOTO BY OP/PTO)

# LIGHTNING CLAIMS 5 LIVES IN STATE

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Padmapur, June 26:** Five people were killed and three others sustained injuries in separate incidents of lightning in Bargarh and Bolangir districts, Wednesday.

In the first incident, three villagers were killed while two others sustained injuries when lightning struck them under a banyan tree at Duandhi under Buden police limits in Bargarh district. The deceased were identified as Sukhdev Banchhor, Niroj Kumbhar and Dhanurjaya Nayak, all natives of the village. The critically injured villagers were identified as Maniram Luhar and Brunda Sahu of the village.

In the second incident, a woman and her son were killed while the former's brother-in-law sustained injuries when they were working in a farmland at Chaulabanji under Khaprakhol block in Bolangir. The deceased were identified as Suryakanti Kharsel, 40, and her son Deepak Kharsel, 18. The injured was identified as Suryakanti's brother-in-law Purandar Kharsel, 38.

CM Mohan Charan Majhi expressed his grief over the deaths and announced ex-gratia of ₹4 lakh to the next of the kin of each deceased.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Happy to see a larger Opposition. The Speaker can break the record of suspending members

# BIRLA IS BACK

After much hype and hoopla about Speaker election which was held for 4th time post-Independence, BJP's Kota MP Om Birla emerged victorious by defeating INDIA bloc candidate K Suresh and took charge as the Speaker of 18th Lok Sabha. While PM Narendra Modi congratulated Birla for his second term in a row, by saying "your sweet smile keeps the entire House happy", Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi greeted him but said, in a sharp message, that the Opposition must be allowed to speak, as they too represent the voice of the people. Birla was elected as the Opposition did not press for a division of votes



AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 26:** National Democratic Alliance (NDA) nominee Om Birla was elected Lok Sabha Speaker Wednesday after a motion moved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was adopted through voice vote, capping intense debate on the issue with the Opposition in a rare move proposing its own candidate.

Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab made the announcement after the Opposition, which had forwarded the name of eight-time Congress MP Kodikunnil Suresh as its candidate, did not press for votes to the motion.

With this, Birla got a second consecutive term in the chair; the fifth time that a Speaker will serve beyond the tenure of one Lok Sabha.

"I announce Om Birla elected as the Speaker," Mahtab said. Soon after, Modi and Parliamentary Affairs Minister

## Speaker's Emergency reference sparks row

**New Delhi:** Speaker Om Birla Wednesday read out a resolution condemning the imposition of Emergency and termed the decision by then PM Indira Gandhi an attack on Constitution. "This House strongly condemns the decision to impose Emergency in 1975. We appreciate the determination of all those people who opposed the Emergency, fought and fulfilled the responsibility of protecting India's democracy," Birla said amid vociferous protests by opposition parties. Opposition MPs, including from the Congress, were on their feet, raising slogans against the Speaker's reference to the Emergency. P8

Kiren Rijju went to Birla's seat in the front row of the Treasury benches to escort him to the chair. Congress leader and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi also joined them. Gandhi greeted Birla and also shook hands with the PM. After that, Modi, Gandhi and Rijju escorted Birla to the chair

where Mahtab welcomed him. "It is a matter of honour that you have been elected to this chair for a second time," Modi said. "I congratulate you on behalf of the entire House and look forward to your guidance for next five years," he said, adding that Birla's "sweet smile" keeps the entire Lok Sabha happy.

Congratulating Birla on his election, Gandhi said he hoped the Opposition would be allowed to raise the voice of people in the House. He said the Opposition wanted the House to function "often and well" and added that it was very important that cooperation happens with trust. Several opposition leaders, including Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, echoed him.

With the NDA having 293 MPs in its kitty and the INDIA bloc 233 in the Lok Sabha, the numbers were clearly in favour of Birla.

# Dalit woman dragged, thrashed by cops

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Chandbali, June 26:** Brutality of police crossed all limits in Bhadrak district when the video of a Dalit woman being beaten up and dragged in front of the police station here went viral on social media, Wednesday.

The video shows three male police officers assaulting the woman on the premises of the police station, sparking widespread condemnation. The victim has also lodged a complaint with the police.

According to the complaint, Mita Sethi, wife of Sambhuram Sethi under Chandbali NAC, along with her minor sister-in-law and her three-year-old daughter had gone to meet her husband at



Chandbali police station Tuesday evening. Meanwhile, Mita saw her daughter playing with a discarded shoe box near the police station. She snatched it from her and threw it away. Constable Rabindra Sethi present there questioned Mita as to why she threw the garbage outside the PS instead of using the dustbin.

Mita argued with the constable, who then slapped her repeatedly. She then threw a stone at him. As it was raining, Mita moved towards the Hanuman temple in front of the PS.

After this, ASI Nepal Saha, the constable and driver Kishore Mohapatra went to the temple, thrashed Meeta with a plastic pipe and dragged her in the rain to the PS. Mita's sari was ripped apart, while she started bleeding from her ear. She also alleged that her sister-in-law was beaten up when she tried to intervene.

The entire incident was captured by the onlookers and posted on social media. Bhadrak SP Varun Guntupalli has formed a committee to conduct a probe into the incident.

## MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	CHANGE	PERCENTAGE
SENSEX	78674.25	↑ 620.73	0.79%
NIFTY	23868.80	↑ 147.50	0.62%
DOLLAR	83.45	↑ ₹0.02	0.24%
EURO	89.28	↓ ₹0.09	-0.10%
GOLD	₹71,020	↓ ₹447	-0.63%
SILVER	₹86,835	↓ ₹102	-0.12%

## WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.0°C	35.8°C
Min Temp	26.4°C	26.4°C
Humidity	88%	77%
Rainfall	21.3mm	Nil

FORECAST: GENERALLY CLOUDY SKY

## SHORT TAKES

### President to visit Odisha July 6

**Bhubaneswar:** President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to visit Odisha July 6, officials said Wednesday. During her four-day visit to Odisha, the President is likely to attend Rath Yatra in Puri July 7, they said. As per the tentative schedule, Murmu is likely to attend a programme in Bhubaneswar July 6 evening. She would also visit Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves here July 8, Cuttack-Bhubaneswar Police Commissioner Sanjeev Panda said here Wednesday.

### Odia BBA student raped in Punjab

**Phagwara (Punjab):** A 21-year-old BBA student from Odisha, who was studying at a private university here, was allegedly raped near railway tracks, police said Wednesday. The incident took place in early hours of Tuesday in a desolate place near the railway lines of Dakoha village railway barrier here, the police said. They added that three men, identified as Amanjot, Manjit Singh and Ranbir Singh, have been arrested in the case. P3

### Kejriwal sent to 3-day CBI custody

**New Delhi:** A Delhi court Wednesday sent Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to three-day custody of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) after the central agency arrested him in a corruption case related to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Amitabh Rawat passed the order on an application moved by the CBI, which formally arrested Kejriwal after obtaining permission from the court. P9

# NASA visuals show greenhouse gases altering oceans

ELABORATING ON THE VISUALISATION, NASA SAYS THE DIFFERENT COLOURS DEPICT THE AVERAGE TEMPERATURE FOR THE SEA SURFACE CURRENTS

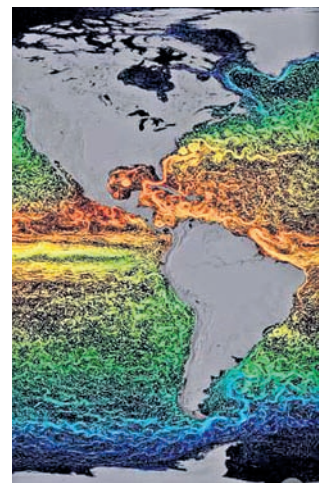
AGENCIES

**Washington DC, June 26:** With around 70 per cent of the Earth's surface covered by waterbodies, they bear the brunt of climate change the most through rising accumulation of greenhouse gases, resulting in their alteration, claims a research by National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Taking to Instagram, NASA Climate Change shared a visualisation showing sea surface currents based on the Estimating the Circulation and Climate of the Ocean, Phase II

(ECCO2) model. In the caption, the space agency wrote that the gases produced by human activities are altering the ocean.

The greenhouse gases are impacting Earth's water bodies, NASA's scary visualisation of the oceans revealed. In its Instagram post, NASA Climate Change said, "Our ocean is changing."

"With 70 per cent of the planet covered by water, the seas are important drivers of Earth's global climate. Yet, increasing greenhouse gases from human activities are altering the ocean before our eyes. NASA and its partners are



on a mission to find out more," NASA further posted.

Elaborating on the visualisation, NASA shared that the different colours depict the average temperature for the sea surface currents. "With warmer colours (red, orange, and yellow) representing warmer temperatures and cooler colours (green and blue) representing cooler temperatures," the agency added.

NASA shared the visualisation just two days back. Since then, it has accumulated nearly 14,000 likes. Social media users posted varied comments while reacting to the post.

"Can you please explain what this data is showing? Is it taken over days or months? What time of year? Is it ocean currents or ocean temperatures? What have we concluded from this data?" asked one user. To this, NASA responded, "The visualisation shows sea surface current flows. The flows are coloured by corresponding sea surface temperature data. The time range for this particular visualisation is from 2007-2008."

"The earth speaks and humanity ignores due to the lack of responsibility of organisations and leaders who take the

the majestic chariots just before the car festival and uninstal those after the Niladri Bije rituals of the Srimandir deities.

"Climate change is a huge problem," posted a fourth user.



# leisure



## EMMA HIGHLIGHTS UNSEEN REJECTION OF NEPO BABIES

Actress Emma Roberts has spoken about how even successful actors with family working in the industry don't always have an easy path toward stardom. She said, "That's the thing that I always talk about people kind of only see your wins but don't see all the rejection along the way."

## I DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY FOR CHALLENGING ROLES: RENNER

Actor Jeremy Renner, who was seriously injured in an accident in January 2023, said the incident has changed the face of his career. "I just don't have the energy for it. I don't have the fuel for challenging roles," he added.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL \$5181\*

**ARIES**  
Right now you need to summon all your mental abilities as you will have to take quick, on-the-spot decisions. However, Ganesh cautions you to take proper advice as your decisions may have a long-term impact, more so if they involve monetary matters.

**TAURUS**  
Ganesh sees you acting very possessive about people and things. You are, consequently, likely to feel suspicious, uncertain and insecure about everything, particularly people. It's even possible that you may even suspect the feelings and intentions of those who are close to you. An uneasy anxiety and excitement will prevail at home.

**GEMINI**  
You will be seized by a desire to go on a trip with friends and family. This trip may have been some time in the planning as well. The day will be filled with fun and frolic and entertainment. Marital life will be blissful as well, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Though you work with dedication, you will be dejected as higher-ups do not fully appreciate your devotion. Don't take it to heart, says Ganesh, and suggests not to be sad. In the end, you will succeed with your firmness and boldness.

**LEO**  
Your competitors will try to malign your reputation today. They will try to spoil your image and impression in front of others. You need to be courageous and nip their efforts in the bud. You need to delegate decision-making activities to others today. Your wrong decisions need to be buried by you, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Ganesh says a turning point in life is important if you wish to understand it in a better way. You will excel in whatever you do today. Financial matters and relationships are on top of the priority list, but perhaps not in the same order. You will spend a lot of time praying to God.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that you will be a different person today, full of vigor and enthusiasm. You will be able to showcase your creative skills in your personal life and at the same time you will be able to go ahead in your chosen field and gain prestige too. You will have to make a decision about studying further in the field of higher education abroad.

**SCORPIO**  
Elegance personified, you are loaded with compliments today. This may encourage you to do better work and have good equations with people. However, make sure your success does not go to your head and affect your work, warns Ganesh. Watch your words while communicating.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Conversation and interaction with like-minded people is going to make your day, says Ganesh. Shooting ideas, brainstorming and casual discussions may enlighten you today. Those around you will enjoy your company.

**CAPRICORN**  
It is always easy to lose mental balance when going gets tough, but Ganesh advises you to hold on to your patience as it will help you reach your destination. Don't enter into war of words with anyone at work as the conflicts may harm you very badly. On personal front, you will open up to your partner, and make him/her feel how important he/she is for you.

**AQUARIUS**  
Today, you will decide to clean up the pile of files on the desk at work. Also, you will do everything that it requires to lighten the burden. Ganesh advises you to plan out your career wisely and set targets for the future.

**PISCES**  
You are not too much of a money-minded person. Planning your finances for the future may not really be your cup of tea. You take every day as it comes. However, you will have an epiphany of sorts today and decide to become more serious towards life.

## Parul on social media validation

**Mumbai:** Actress Parul Gulati, who has worked in shows such as *P.O.W. - Bandi Yuddh Ke*, *Selection Day* and the film *Silence 2: The Night Owl Bar Shootout* among many others, has talked about how her social media experience helped to prep for the upcoming show *#BlueTickVerified*. *#BlueTickVerified* revolves around a young girl seeking validation and her existence on social media through the coveted blue tick verification. Parul said, "Being savvy with social media and running a popular social media-driven brand has given me unique insights that were invaluable in preparing for *#BlueTickVerified*. The show dives deep into the psyche of a young girl who equates her worth with social media validation, a reality many people face today."

"In real life, I've gained popularity on social media, which helped me build my own business in the beauty and care industry. This journey taught me a lot about the highs and lows of seeking validation online and the importance of finding a balance," she added. "Bringing these experi-

ences into my role in *#BlueTickVerified* was a fascinating process. It allowed me to channel my real-life experiences into a reel-life narrative that I believe many will resonate with," she concluded.

IANS



## Avika explains journey from TV to movie

**Mumbai:** Actress Avika Gor, who began her career with *Ssshhh...Koi Hai* in 2007 and gained fame as Anandi in *Balika Vadhu*, is driven by a desire to explore diverse storytelling realms and challenge herself creatively.

"I truly appreciate the beauty of storytelling on both big and small screens. *Balika Vadhu* was a profound journey on television, allowing me to explore complex narratives and touch viewers with powerful messages," Avika told this agency.

Last seen on television in the 2019 reality show *Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 9*, she explained her move away from the small screen. "Television has been an incredible journey, but as an artiste, I have an innate desire to explore different realms of storytelling and challenge myself creatively," she said. Despite her success on TV, she

feels drawn to the dynamic landscape of cinema, excited to delve into new characters and narratives.

Meanwhile, the rise of OTT platforms has given creators the freedom to explore unconventional narratives, leading to diverse content that resonates globally. "By celebrating the positives of both mediums, we can elevate the quality and impact of storytelling in all its forms," she concluded.

IANS



## Shabana, Rajamouli in Academy member list



**New Delhi:** Veteran actor Shabana Azmi, *RRR* director SS Rajamouli, producer Ritesh Sidhwani, and noted cinematographer Ravi Varman are among the new 487 members invited this year by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

In a statement shared on its website late Tuesday night, the Academy said the list includes artists and executives who have distinguished themselves by their contributions to theatrical motion pictures.

Shabana Azmi, known for films such as *Godmother*, *Arth*, *The*

*Reluctant Fundamentalist*, *In Custody*, and most recently *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani*, has been invited to join the actor branch. The news comes as Azmi completes 50 years in the industry; she made her groundbreaking debut in *Shyam Benegal's Ankur* (1974).

Rajamouli, the man behind the epic period spectacle *RRR*, which became the first Indian feature production to win an Academy Award in 2023, has been included in the director's branch.

Other members joining the list are renowned producer Ritesh

Sidhwani, who will be part of the Producers branch. Director of Photography Ravi Varman has been invited to join the Cinematographers branch. Rama Rajamouli, an *RRR* costume designer, has been invited to the Costume Designers branch, and documentary filmmaker Hemal Trivedi is also part of the Documentary branch.

"We are thrilled to welcome this year's class of new members to the Academy. These remarkably talented artists and professionals from around the world have made a significant impact on our filmmaking community," Academy CEO Bill Kramer and Academy President Janet Yang said in a joint statement.

IANS

## Sonakshi's gentle rebuke to haters

**Mumbai:** Sonakshi Sinha and Zaheer Iqbal have been trolled on social media for almost two weeks now, after reports of their wedding surfaced online.

They may have turned off comments on their Instagram profile to keep trolls at bay, but she has not been oblivious to all the hate they are facing for their interfaith marriage. Sonakshi dropped a gentle but important hint for her haters.

Sonakshi dropped a comment on an artist's Instagram post in which they shared an artwork featuring the newly-married couple in wedding reception attire. The artist captioned the post, "Love is the univer-

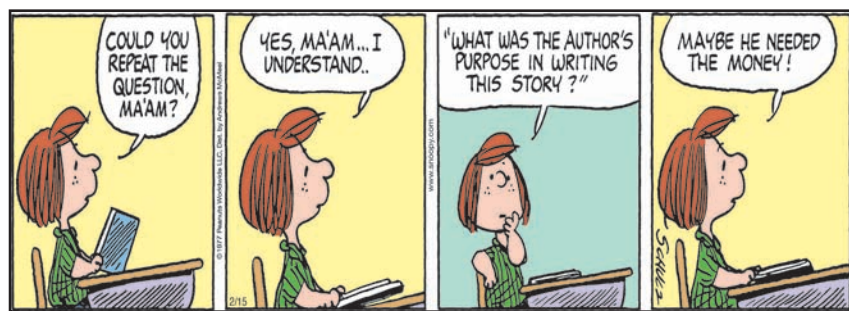
sal religion. Wishing @alisona @iamzahero a happy life." Sonakshi commented, "Truest words!! This is adorable. Thank you."

Others on the post echoed the thought. "No problem with Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan, Kareena Kapoor, and Saif Ali Khan, but why are people making an issue out of their relationship," wrote one. "That is so true. Humanity is the ultimate goal," commented another.

Sonakshi and Zaheer opted for a civil marriage at her home, Sunday and were joined by her dad, Shatrughan Sinha, her mother, Poonam Sinha, and his parents. They later threw a party for their friends and family at a restaurant in Mumbai.



### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

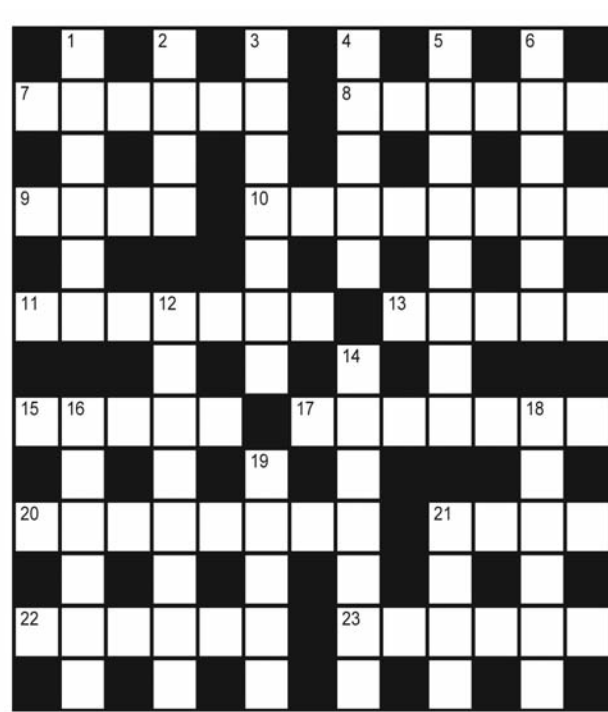


### BREVITY



### FUN post

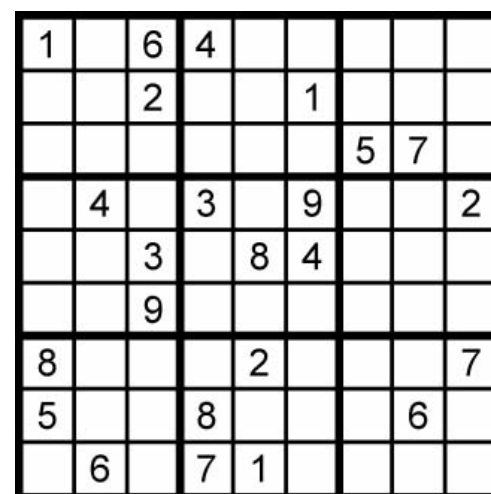
### CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Make bubbly
  - 8 Land on Lake Victoria
  - 9 Snowman prop
  - 10 Peace
  - 11 Counsellor
  - 13 Scimitar
  - 15 Fashion plate
  - 17 Lofted iron
  - 20 Brain disorder
  - 21 Dart
  - 22 Preserved
  - 23 Spring bloomer
- Down
- 1 Hockey division
  - 2 Superhero accessory
  - 3 South African oryx
  - 4 "Faster!"
  - 5 Drops from above
  - 6 Copyreader
  - 12 Lazy
  - 14 Frog's hangout (4,3)
  - 16 Attraction
  - 18 Carpentry tool
  - 19 Gardener's purchase
  - 21 Banner

### SUDOKU

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



### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# downtown

## Odisha Police ready for new laws: DGP

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** Odisha Police is prepared to implement the three new criminal laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), director general of police (DGP) Arun Sarangi said, Wednesday. “The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued notifications for implementation of the three new criminal laws from July 1 and we are prepared to implement it,” Sarangi said.

Odisha Police has been conducting training for police officers (for inspectors and above-rank officers). Training of more than 85 per cent of police personnel has already been completed, he said.

### IN A NUTSHELL



ODISHA POLICE HAS BEEN CONDUCTING TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR OFFICERS (INSPECTORS AND ABOVE RANK) ON NEW LAWS

TRAINING PROGRAMME OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS AND PUBLIC PROSECUTORS ON NEW LAWS WERE ON

MHA HAS BEEN UPGRADING THE CCTNS TO MAKE IT ENABLE TO ACCEPT THE CHANGES IN NEW LAWS

THE BNS, BNSS AND BSA THAT WILL REPLACE THE IPC, 1860; CrPC, 1898; AND THE IEA, 1872, RESPECTIVELY, RECEIVED THE PRESIDENT'S ASSENT DECEMBER 25, 2023 AND WILL COME INTO FORCE JULY 1

Similarly, the MHA is continuously upgrading the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) to make it enable to accept the changes in

new laws, Sarangi said.

As inputs can be submitted on the CCTNS only in English language, the police officers are being trained accordingly, he said.

The DGP said standard operating procedures and circulars are being issued to the field-level police officers to implement the new laws.

On the other hand, the training programme of judicial officers and public prosecutors on the new criminal laws are also going on in the state, said a senior official of the Home department.

Public awareness of the new laws will be created to make people aware about the provisions of new Acts, he added.

The BNS, BNSS and BSA that will replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860; Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898; and the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, respectively, received President Droupadi Murmu's assent December 25, 2023.

## Odia student raped in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Phagwara (Punjab), June 26:** A 21-year-old BBA student from Odisha, who was studying at a private university here, was allegedly raped near railway tracks, police said Wednesday.

The incident took place in early hours of Tuesday in a desolate place near the railway lines of Dakoha village railway barrier here, the police said.

They added that three men, identified as Amanjot, Manjit Singh and Ranbir Singh, have been arrested in the case.

The woman is a final-year BBA student and lives at a rented accommodation near the university, the police said.

According to the police report, the woman informed the police that she and her friend from Bihar had gone on a bike to meet another friend from Jammu, who currently lives near the

Dakoha rail barrier.

The three friends were going from Pooanpur colony to Talhan roadside when three motorcyclists accosted them and then one of them took out his 'kirpan' and threatened them, the report said.

She told the police that the other two men then pushed her friends aside and forced her to sit on the pillion of their motorcycle. After taking her to a deserted place, one of the accused, Amanjot, allegedly raped her in presence of another accused, Manjit, and then left her there, the woman told the police in her complaint.

Her friends took her to a hospital, where she was medically examined, and also reported the matter to the police.

Police have booked and arrested the accused under Sections 366, 376, 506 and 120-B of the IPC, the police said.

## CM embarks on 3-day Delhi visit

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday embarked on a three-day tour of New Delhi, where he is scheduled to meet senior leaders to discuss various issues of Odisha.

Majhi was accompanied by deputy chief ministers Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo and Pravati Parida. “In his first visit to Delhi after taking oath as CM of Odisha, Majhi would meet President Droupadi Murmu, VP Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss various issues related to the state,” an official said.

He is also slated to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, among others, it said.

## State gears up for smooth Rath Yatra

PNN & AGENCIES

**Puri, June 26:** The state government has made elaborate arrangements to ensure devotees have a smooth darshan of Srimandir deities during the Rath Yatra.

While chairing the second Rath Yatra coordination meeting at Town Hall here



Wednesday, Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan directed the Health administration to set up dedicated beds for heatstroke and burn victims, and deploy an adequate number of doctors and other support staff for emergency needs.

Railway sources said about 150 pairs of special trains will ply to the Holy City during the festival. Besides, bus services to Puri will also be increased to meet the demands of devotees.

As many as 18 temporary parking lots will be developed for buses at different places in the town and downtown areas.

This apart, the Law minister asked officials to ensure supply of drinking water, uninterrupted power supply, illumination of

Grand Road and other places of the town, and to streamline the transport system.

CCTVs will be installed at various strategic places to monitor the crowd from an integrated control room.

Hundreds of lifeguards will be deployed along the beach to prevent drowning.

Coast Guard vessels will patrol along the coast during the festival, while adequate police personnel will be deployed on the Parikrama Marg.

Special arrangements will be made as President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to visit Puri for witnessing the car festival.

Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena, Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, Additional Director General of Police Sanjay Kumar, Superintendent of Police Pinak Mishra, Puri Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain, SJTA Chief Administrator Vir Vikram Yadav and senior servitors were present in the meeting.

The annual car festival is scheduled to commence July 7. This year, Netra Utsav, Nabajouban darshan, and Rath Yatra have been clubbed together.

## 'Ratna Bhandar needs immediate repair'

**Bhubaneswar:** Renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattanaik has sought Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's intervention to immediately carry out repair work inside Srimandir Ratna Bhandar. In a letter to the Chief Minister, Pattanaik said a technical committee of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had inspected the inner Ratna Bhandar in 2018 and found several structural damages in the walls, ceiling and basement while recommending immediate repair. “It has not been acted upon even after six long years thus the damages might have further deteriorated by now. The laser scanning done in February 2024 also detected cracks on the outside of Ratna Bhandar,” he said in the letter dated June 25.

## Bombay HC: Dress code doesn't violate fundamental rights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 26:** The Bombay High Court Wednesday refused to interfere with a decision taken by a city-based college to impose a ban on hijab, burka and naqab, observing that such rules do not violate students' fundamental rights.

A dress code is meant to maintain discipline which is part of the college's fundamental right to “establish and administer an educational institution”, held a division bench of Justices AS Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil.

The dress code was applicable to all students irrespective of religion or caste, the HC said, dismissing a petition filed against the ban by nine girl students. The students, who are in the second and third year of the

science degree course, had moved the high court earlier this month, challenging a directive issued by the Chembur Trombay Education Society's NG Acharya and DK Marathe

College imposing a dress code under which students cannot wear a hijab, naqab, burka, stoles, caps and badges on the premises. The petitioners claimed it was against their fundamental right to practice religion, the right to privacy and right to choice. The college's action was “arbitrary, unreasonable, bad-in-law and perverse”, the plea said.

The court, however, said it could not see how the prescription of dress code by the college violated Articles 19 (1) (a) (freedom of speech and expression) and 25 (freedom to practice religion) of the Constitution.

MSMEs are crucial for our economy as they drive innovation, employment, and contribute significantly to growth. Our Government attaches great importance to this sector.

- Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

## MSMEs for Viksit Bharat

- Whopping 20 times increase in registered MSMEs in last 10 years, from just 22 lakh in 2014 to 4.6 crore registered MSMEs now.
- Udyam Registration portal has ensured simple and free of cost registration for MSMEs.
- Over 20 crore employment generated in MSME sector alone in last 10 years, contributing to equitable development.
- PM Vishwakarma scheme has provided end to end holistic support to artisans and craftspeople of 18 trades; 2.22 crore enrolments within 9 months of launch.
- 73.57 lakh credit guarantees worth Rs. 5.56 lakh crore provided for Micro and Small enterprises in the last 10 years under the Credit Guarantee Scheme.
- Under PMEGP, 6.93 lakh new micro enterprises established with margin money subsidy of Rs. 19,800 crore, generating employment for more than 55 lakh persons.
- Through Public Procurement Policy, efforts for inclusive growth made. Further, National SC-ST Hub committed for providing holistic support and handholding of SC-ST. 15 fold increase in procurement from SC-ST MSEs.
- More than five-fold increase in Khadi sales. Boost to Khadi and Gramodyog products generating employment opportunities in rural areas.



Shri Jitan Ram Manjhi, Union Minister for MSME, in presence of Ms. Shobha Karandlaje, Union Minister of State (MSME), will preside over 'Udyami Bharat Programme' on the occasion of 'International MSME Day 2024'

On 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 at 11:00 AM  
Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi



# Odisha plays key role in UAE-India bilateral partnership: Abdunnasser



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** Odisha has played a critical role in supporting the UAE-India bilateral partnership, said Abdunnasser Alshaali, the Ambassador of the UAE to India Wednesday. Abdunnasser was speaking at a business roundtable meeting organised here Wednesday by UAE-India CEPA (comprehensive economic partnership agreement) Council (UICC), in collaboration with the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC). "Odisha has played a critical role in supporting the UAE-India bilateral partnership. Its highly developed minerals and industrial sector and strong human capital are of key interest to UAE investors. We are confident that today's event will serve to ensure businesses in Odisha take advantage of a range of economic, trade, and investment opportunities that have been offered through the signing of the CEPA," he said.

The UAE and Odisha reached USD 2.63 billion in the 2023-2024 fiscal year, with Odisha constituting the UAE's eighth-largest trading partner among India's 28 states and eight union territories. "It is essential that we undertake all efforts to continue to build upon this constructive trading relationship and seek out new avenues for mutually beneficial growth. The UICC, in partnership with the ICC, is committed to supporting businesses in Odisha to achieve their international trade and investment ambitions," he added. Odisha is India's largest producer of steel, stainless steel, ferroalloys, alumina, and aluminium. The state holds a significant share of India's reserves of nickel, bauxite, iron-ore, and coal. Over recent years, constructive steps have been undertaken to develop deeper investment and trade collaboration between the UAE and India, he said. In June 2022, several memoranda of understanding, valued at USD 2.76 billion, were signed between the Government of Odisha and UAE companies.

Most notably, the Lulu Group committed to exploring opportunities to establish hypermarkets, shopping malls, and agriculture and seafood processing hubs in the state, officials said. Underlining the key role of the CEPA in strengthening economic ties between the UAE and India, trade between the two countries stood at 83.64 billion for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The importance of the CEPA is exemplified by the substantial trade growth in specific sectors such as gems and jewellery, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and fruits and vegetables, which rose to 64 per cent, 39 per cent, and 35 per cent, respectively, over the 2023-24 fiscal year. The UAE is India's second-largest export destination, third-largest trading partner, and fourth-largest investor. The UICC, established in early 2024, has played a pivotal role in harnessing the opportunities created by the signing of the CEPA. The impacts of the CEPA have been profound, catalysing billions of dollars in investments and fostering a heightened level of business confidence that spans multiple industries. The CEPA has not only facilitated easier market access and reduced barriers to trade but has also encouraged a dynamic exchange of goods and investments, leading to a diversified economic partnership between the UAE and India. The UICC is dedicated to fostering open dialogue, facilitating tangible cooperation, and accelerating trade ties between UAE and Indian businesses to cultivate mutual growth and prosperity.



**AWARENESS DRIVE:** Cutoff collector Arindam Dakua participates in a bicycle rally on International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking near Chandi Chowk in Cuttack, Wednesday

# Heavy rain leaves City waterlogged

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** The Capital city witnessed heavy traffic jams due to waterlogging at many places following heavy rain that lashed several parts of the state, Wednesday. Three buses got stuck near Iskon temple as motorists had tough time negotiating the waterlogged stretches at Rashulgarh, Bomikhal, Saheed Nagar, Acharya Vihar and Laxmisagar. The City received 21.3 mm rainfall. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted more rains in the coming days. Moderate rain or thunderstorm with lightning and one or two intense spell of rain may occur in some parts of Kandhamal, Kahahandi, Nayagarh, Khurda including



**Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Nupada districts.** The weather agency has warned of waterlogging in low-lying areas, occasionally poor visibility and traffic disruption in urban areas. It has also issued yellow warning of light to moderate rain or thundershowers with lightning for some parts of Bolangir, Bargarh, Malkangiri, Jajpur,

**Sundargarh and Gajapati.** People have been advised to keep a watch on the weather and accordingly move to safer places to protect themselves from lightning strikes. Meanwhile, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) decided to deploy 80 sanitary workers to keep watch on 48 waterlogging-prone areas in the city during the monsoon season.

**Moderate rain or thundershower with lightning and one or two intense spell of rain may occur in some parts of Kandhamal, Kahahandi, Nayagarh, Khurda including Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Nupada districts.** The choking of internal drains leads to waterlogging in residential areas as rain water overflows. Regular cleaning will help direct rainwater without causing spillover, officials said. The toll-free number 1929 has been activated to receive calls from citizens regarding waterlogging problems, they added.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Debasmita, W/o- Asish Ranjan Lenka, resident of At/P.O.-Malasasan,P.S.-Salepur, Dist.-Cuttack, Pin-754201, Odisha declared by this affidavit No. 68AA 159452, dated 29.05.2024, that now onwards I shall be known as Debasmita Sahoo for all future Purposes.

## LOST

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Barbil vide Sl. No.1563, Date.19.04.2024, Deponent Sabru Khaton, W/o. Md. Faruque of Barbil declares that the Registered Sale Deed No. 355/2009, Date.06.02.2009 was misplaced and beyond recovery till today.

I, Sujata Jena, W/o Basanta Kumar Jena of Vill.- Bajapayee Nagar, P.O.- RRL, P.S.- Maitri Vihar, Dist.- Khordha, Odisha declare that on Dtd. 11.05.2024 at about 11 A.M. I lost the Original Land Patta (R.O.R.) and sale deed of the scheduled property, situated under Mouza- Terundia, Tahasil- Nimapara, Dist.- Puri bearing Khata No.- 1222/314, ROR No.-1190, Area- 0.30 Dcml. Sale Deed No.- 11521200512 during my tranist to Patia Chhak & unable to trace the same of my best efforts. If anyone finds it, please contact on Mob. No.- 9853311189. This is to be produced before the competent authority.

# PET bottles to be collected during Car Fest

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** In a welcoming step for waste management during the Rath Yatra, Puri district administration and municipality, in partnership with Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB), announced 'used PET bottle-free' initiative.

The initiative is estimated to collect over 50 lakh used Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) bottles during the festival.

HCCB Public Affairs and Communications chief Himanshu Priyadarshi called



upon the Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna

Chandra Mohapatra here Wednesday and handed him over the projected activity map for Rath Yatra. Mahapatra appreciated the initiative and said, "Promoting circularity and recycling practices, sets a benchmark for corporate responsibility towards sustainable development." "With more than a million devotees to attend the festival, the initiative is impressive, not only in preserving the sanctity and cleanliness of this grand festival but also in leading the way for environmental stewardship," he added.

# 'Docu aimed at busting prejudices'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, June 26:** Actor-turned-filmmaker Arpita Chatterjee has stitched together narratives of LGBTQIA+ community members in a documentary series in an attempt to bust prejudices against people with various gender identities. "This is Me", her first venture in documentaries, is being streamed on an OTT platform from June 25 during Pride Month which commemorates the long struggle for the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual

(LGBTQA) individuals. The five episodes of "This is Me" highlight prominent members of the community, including transgender judge Jyoita Mondal, first trans celebrity hair stylist Sylvie Rodgers and interdisciplinary artist-elocutionist Sujoy Prasad Chatterjee who share their intensely personal and moving stories, Chatterjee said. "This is Me sheds light on the often misunderstood notions of gender identity and sexual orientation. It will also highlight the significant challenges faced by the community," she further added.

# Establish trauma care centres: CM

**Bhubaneswar:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi recently directed officials of the Planning and Convergence department to establish trauma care centres using the District Mineral Fund (DMF) at medical colleges, in mineral-rich districts. CM also directed the officials to constitute a task force and submit proposals regarding the creation of the Northern and South Odisha Development Council. The ruling BJP in its manifesto had promised to establish the councils within 100 days of forming the government.

# Genetic testing cannot reveal the gender of baby

Advancements in genetic research have led to the development of a simple blood test called cell-free DNA prenatal screening that screens for whether a baby has extra or missing pieces of genetic information - chromosomes - as early as 10 weeks into pregnancy. Included in this test are the sex chromosomes, otherwise known as X and Y that play a role in the development and function of the body. This blood test is informally called noninvasive prenatal testing (NIPT). Many people refer to it as 'the gender test' but this blood test cannot determine gender. Genetic testing is critical for providing affirming counseling to any patient seeking pregnancy-related genetic testing and resisting the erasure of transgender and intersex people in healthcare. Sex and gender are often used interchangeably, but they represent entirely different concepts. Typically when people think of sex, they think of the categories female or male. Most commonly, sex is assigned by health-

care providers at birth based on the genitals they observe on the newborn. Commonly, people with XX chromosomes are assigned female at birth, and people with XY chromosomes are assigned male. Since cell-free DNA, or cfDNA, prenatal screening can report on sex chromosomes months before birth, babies are receiving sex assignments much sooner than previously possible. While cfDNA prenatal screening can offer insights into what sex chromosomes an infant may have, sex determination is much more complicated than just X's and Y's. Intersex people, or those with variations in sex characteristics that deviate from societal norms of binary sex, exemplify the complexities of sex. These variations can manifest in various ways beyond X and Y chromosomes, such as differences in hormone levels, genitalia or secondary sexual characteristics. The oversimplification of sex based on societal norms has led many to believe that there are only two discrete sexes. The binary framework of sex excludes intersex people and perpetuates



their erasure and mistreatment within both healthcare and society at large. While sex typically describes someone's anatomical characteristics, gender is an umbrella term that encompasses the way someone views and presents themselves to the world. Countless aspects influence how someone defines their own gender and how the world views their gender, including clothing, haircuts and voice tone. Similar to how Western cul-

tures have historically confined sex to two buckets, it has also created two gender categories: man and woman. Gender is not dependent on anatomical parts or chromosomes. People are not math equations, and having certain combinations of biological parts does not equal someone's gender. For example, some people may be transgender, meaning their assigned sex is not congruent with their socially or self-defined gender. The blood test, which is called noninvasive prenatal testing (NIPT), is referred by many people as 'the gender test' but this test cannot determine gender. Sex and gender are often used interchangeably, but they represent entirely different concepts. While sex typically describes someone's anatomical characteristics, gender is an umbrella term that encompasses the way someone views and presents themselves to the world. Nonbinary people do not identify exclusively with either of the two genders in the binary, regardless of their assigned sex. Just like sex diversity, gender diversity is not rare. A 2022 Pew Research Center analysis found that approximately five per cent of adults in the US under the age of 30 are transgender or nonbinary. These estimates will likely increase as societal awareness and acceptance of gender-diverse individuals increases. Anti-transgender legislation often oversimplifies gender as strictly bi-

nary, conflating it solely with sex assigned at birth. The idea that biology plays the largest role in determining who an individual is or bioessentialism, has governed misconceptions about sex and gender for many years. This concept is used to confine people to buckets and limit their self-determination. Marketing strategies for children's toys often adhere strictly to gender roles, steering girls toward dolls and domestic play sets while steering boys toward action figures and construction sets. Educational systems often reinforce gender norms by directing girls toward subjects such as literature and arts while steering boys toward science and mathematics. Upholding binary constructs of sex and gender does not allow for individuality and gender fluidity. Categorizing people from the time their chromosomes are analyzed or the moment their genitals are observed at birth restricts their autonomy and authenticity. These simple assumptions set expectations that can be harmful.

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# Joda toddler makes it to India Book of Records

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Joda, June 26:** Armed with amazing memorising skills, Akshit, a toddler from this town, has made a rare feat by entering into India Book of Records.

Akshit, the one-and-a-half-year old son of Bishwajit Beuria, living in the Contractor Colony here in Keonjhar district, can recognise all 26 English alphabets and mimic sounds of animals without any training or prompting. His strong memory and amazing mimicry have brought glory to the family and the region as his name is now etched in the India Book of Records.



According to sources, Akshit was born November 5, 2022. He has developed a habit of imitating animals' sounds and uttering alphabets. The boy used to perform feats many a times on

camera. Keeping the interest of the minor boy in mind, the family sent the video recordings of his performances to the annual India Book of Records competition. After some days, the India Book of Records named Akshit as an 'IBR Achiever' and issued a certificate.

Apart from memorising English alphabets, Akshit can identify 20 body parts, 12 colours, 12 pictures, 10 types of shapes and seven types of fruits.

The certificate issued by the India Book of Records states that 'Akshit was selected for being able to mimic the sounds of nine different animals'.



**SAY NO TO DRUGS:** Girl students participate in an awareness rally organised by the Social Security department of Sambalpur district on the occasion of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Wednesday

# Jajpur sees no let-up in laterite loot

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Jajpur, June 26:** Loot of laterite stones sees no let-up in west Barchana area of Jajpur district despite the state government taking a host of measures to check the smuggling of minor minerals.

Laterite stones are rampantly plundered in west Barchana area of the district allegedly due to connivance between some unscrupulous officials and political leaders. The unabated loot in Darpangad revenue circle is allegedly due to the go-slow approach of the tehsildar and police personnel of Barchana and Bairi. This has emboldened the illegal miners as they continue to extract and smuggle the laterite stones with impunity.

Recently the quarries were filled with water following rainfall. However, illegal miners started extracting stones after draining water from the quarries with motor pumps. Locals alleged that the wrongdoing could never have taken place without the tacit support of the administrative officials who are hand in gloves with the illegal miners.

Several agitations, demonstrations, sit-ins and hunger strikes have been staged in the past in protest against the min-



**ADMIN IN SLUMBER**  
There are over 40 illegal stone quarries at Bairi, Shalapada, Paria, Chhama and Kaimatia panchayats in Jajpur district

Several agitations, demonstrations, sit-ins and hunger strikes have been staged in the past against the mineral loot but to no avail

Locals alleged that smuggling is going on with tacit support of the administrative officials who are hand in gloves with the illegal miners

eral loot. The affected villagers have even filed cases in the Orissa High Court praying for prevention of the loot which not only affects the environment but also the life and livelihood of villagers.

The state government has even established an office of the Deputy Director, Minor Minerals to check the illegal mining and smuggling. However, there seems to be no let-up in the loot as fraudsters continue to make hay putting the environment and people at stake. This has also left the state government bleeding off precious revenue. With the change

of government in the state, some new faces were learnt to be preparing for the loot with renewed vigour and enthusiasm. There are over 40 illegal stone quarries at Bairi, Shalapada, Paria, Chhama and Kaimatia panchayats in Jajpur district. The stone miners are using heavy equipment like earthmovers to extract laterite stones and smuggle those outside for a premium.

Demanding crackdown on such illegal mining and stringent action against the traders, the locals have staged several agitations but to no avail. Initially, the local administration allegedly tried

to ignore such agitations but later tried to suppress those by making false promises.

The administration had promised to clamp prohibitory orders under Section-144 of CrPC on the illegal mining undertaken on government land and take stringent action against the wrongdoers. However, the administration is yet to live up to its promise.

It is alleged that the administration slowed down on taking action due to intervention of some influential persons. The administration continues to make tall claims but has failed to check loot of minor minerals in the district.

Despite a change in political representation in the area after the elections, people involved in loot of minor minerals have remained unchanged. It is alleged that some new players have entered into the illegal business by using their political influence and clout.

Taking advantage of the silence of the administration, the illegal miners continue to extract laterite stones from the quarries in Siha, Patharkata, Samian, Chheliapada, Charigochhia, Baunsamuli, Gabhashohala, Kolasahi, Bhusandpur, Kochilgadadia and Kanchan Nagar; and smuggle those outside in trucks on daily basis.

# Court jolt to writer Haraparsad Das

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, June 26:** A defamation suit filed by noted Odia poet Haraprasad Das against the publisher and the editor of an Odia daily was dismissed by a local court here.

Das had filed the suit over publication of reports alleging mental harassment of a woman lecturer by him through sending obscene messages on social media and making video calls to her at night. The courts dismissed the case after Das and his lawyer failed to appear in the court during hearings.

The issue had then raised hue and cry and the victim filed a complaint before local police against Das. Some eminent writers also lodged a complaint in the state women's commission in this regard.

Das however, rejected all the charges and filed a defamation suit in the court of the 2nd Addl. Civil Judge (Sr. Divn.) against the publisher of Sambad Kalika newspaper Basanti Roy, its editor Jayashis Roy, Palishree Pattanayak, Umakanta Rout, Dr Kulangar (Preetikanta Panda), Asit Mohanty, Manu Dash, Amiya Pandav and Bimalendu Mohanty.

Recently, his lawyer again sought more time and filed time petition in the court, April 10. The court dismissed the petition after neither Das nor his lawyer appeared in the court during hearing of the petition. Similarly, the court of 2nd Addl. Civil Judge (Sr. Divn.) also dismissed his original petition in the matter.

# Sundargarh stares at acute water shortage

RAJESH MOHANTY, OP

**Rourkela, June 26:** Due to the water scarcity in Ib river, Sundargarh is facing an acute crisis. The construction of a pipe to supply water from the river to various parts of the town is more or less complete. However, there is no water to flow through it.

Sundargarh requires approximately eight lakh cusecs water daily. However, at the moment, WATCO can only provide three lakh cusecs. Earlier the Sundargarh urban body consisted of eight wards. Now the number of wards has gone up to 19 and the demand for water has grown substantially.

The BJD government had planned to include Sundargarh in the 24x7 water supply scheme. Accordingly piped connections were provided to houses at a cost of ₹36 crore. Other than the 19 wards, it was also decided that water will be provided in localities like Patrapada, Thanapada, Luhuradhupa and Sankara. Accordingly overhead tanks were constructed. When government funds fell short, DMF stepped up to meet the costs. However, for the project to be successful, the most important ingredient is water which is missing, locals pointed out.

"There is no guarantee that every project will be successful. No doubt, the government's effort was commendable. However, for the project to be successful, water is required in large quantities. Where is that water," asked Sudhir Das, a resident of



Sundargarh town. He blamed the construction of barrages on the upstream for the shortage of water in Ib river.

Officials of WATCO expressed their helplessness. "When there were eight wards we managed to handle the situation. Now with 19 it is impossible as we can at the most supply three lakh cusecs daily," said an official.

A pump house was constructed in Ranibagicha a couple of years back. It initially solved the water crisis to a certain extent. However, now with 19 wards and a few other localities needing water, WATCO's problems have compounded.

The previous BJD government, which initiated the piped water scheme, laid the foundation stone for a barrage near Semina before the last gram panchayat and urban local body elections. The tender process has also been completed. "We residents are waiting anxiously for the barrage work to begin so that the water crisis eases. Hopefully the present government will understand our plight and do something fast," another local resident said.

# Prohibitory order imposed in cremation ground in Ganjam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Berhampur, June 26:** Ganjam district administration has imposed Section 144 of CrPC prohibiting assembly of four or more persons in a cremation ground at Talapatna after members of one community opposed the entry of others, an official said.

The prohibitory order was imposed by Bhanjanagar Sub-Collector Anil Kumar Sethi Monday as a precautionary measure to avoid any conflict between

two communities in the village, a police officer said Wednesday. Tension started when one community opposed to entry of others into the ground.

"We have tried to solve the matter amicably by holding a meeting between the two communities. But they could not agree. As there is no other option, the district administration has imposed prohibitory order restricting entry into the area," said Sanjay Kumar Mohapatra, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Bhanjanagar.

# Snakebite claims woman's life

**Ganjam:** In a tragic incident, a woman died from snakebite at Roul Sahi in Ward No. 4 of Ganjam NAC in this district Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Minati Gouda, wife of Kalu Gouda of the locality. According to reports, Minati was on her way to bring her son back from tuition class when she was bitten by a poisonous snake near her residence. After returning home, she suddenly collapsed and became unconscious. She was rushed in an auto-rickshaw to Ganjam PHC. She was later shifted to Chhatrapur Government Hospital as her condition deteriorated but doctors there pronounced her dead on arrival. Her husband lodged a written complaint at Ganjam Police Station in this regard.

# Croc found dead in Bhitarkanika

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kendrapara, June 26:** The carcass of a five-foot-long saltwater crocodile was found floating on Brahmani river in Bhitarkanika National Park under Kendrapara district Wednesday, officials said.

Some locals sighted the dead crocodile and informed the Forest officials of the park. After getting information, a team of Forest officials rushed to the river to retrieve the carcass of the crocodile, said Manas Das, the Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) of the park.

"We have sent the carcass to the veterinary office for its autopsy. After getting the autopsy report we will ascertain the exact reason behind the death of the reptile," he said. Saltwater crocodiles are covered under the Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Bhitarkanika National Park has 1,811 saltwater crocodiles as per the recent census.

# Minor girl's lover held over betrayal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Attabira, June 26:** Cops from Rusuda police outpost under Bheaden police station limits in Bargarh district arrested a youth Wednesday on charge of betraying a minor girl.



The accused has been identified as Laxman Guru, a resident of Gurupali village. According to the source, Laxman was in a romantic relationship with a minor girl of his village. The lovebirds even decided to get married but as they belonged to different castes, their family members did not

agree with the proposal. However, the accused eloped with the minor girl outside the state December 23 last year. After living together happily there for a few months, the accused left the girl alone and did not return. Unable to contact Laxman, the minor returned to her village and narrated her ordeal to family members.

The minor girl's father then lodged a written complaint in this regard at Rusuda police outpost. Acting on the complaint, police registered a case under sections 363, 376 of IPC and POCSO Act. Police arrested the accused after launching a manhunt and forwarded him to court Wednesday.

# RMC parks losing sheen sans maintenance

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rourkela, June 26:** Most of the major parks under Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC) are in dire need of maintenance. Otherwise, these public utility places will cut a sorry figure of the Steel City in the days to come.

Many parks of different sizes have been set up by the RMC for public use. Some of those came up on vacant lands, shady areas or the land used for dumping of garbage. During last five to six years, these parks have come up with walking tracks, open air gym equipment, proper lighting and rain water harvesting system, yoga platform, tiled benches and basic amusement facilities for children.

However, lack of proper maintenance has left these places in bad shape. Take the example of two major parks -- Netaji Subash Fitness Park (NSFP) and Senior Citizens' Park (SCP). The NSFP is situated just in front of the RMC office and the SCP is situated at 'C' Block of Koel Nagar, right in front of the Jhirpani PS.

The NSFP was constructed by the RMC and later Rourkela Smart City contributed in making it a favourite spot for fitness enthusiasts and those in search for some quality time in the lap of nature. "But today, the park is inching towards a slow decay," said a regular visitor there. The public toilets are in a bad shape with taps miss-



ing, commodes broken and water unavailable. Stray animals, especially cows are freely roaming inside and causing problems for the visitors. Majority of the light bulbs have gone missing. "Electric wires are hanging dangerously low at the end. Only two days back two cows had a miraculous escape when they touched the naked

wires," said a visitor. Complaining about cleanliness, another person said, "No one bothers to keep the place clean... so you find garbage everywhere."

The situation of SCP at Koel Nagar is not any better. The park has become a safe haven for drug addicts and after sundown it turns into an open bar. Major portion of the park goes dark in the

evening. "I preferred to come in the evening earlier. Now I don't feel safe here," said a middle-aged lady. The tiles on majority of the benches are broken and pose a real danger. A few days back an old lady had to get four stitches on her left hand as she mistakenly pressed her hand on the sharp edge of tiles on one of the benches.

Former RMC commissioner Subhankar Mohapatra, during the Hockey World Cup, had informed that each of the parks, NSFP and SCP, would get ₹2 crore for maintenance and improvement, and work would begin immediately after the completion of the game.

Speaking about the parks, Priyabrata Mohapatra, the in-charge officer of RMC for parks said, "Soon the heights of the parks' boundaries will be increased, else we cannot stop the thefts of taps, fittings and light bulbs."

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Witness and stand back from Nature, that is the first step to the soul's freedom.

SRI AUROBINDO



## The Dollar Question

In a 1955 speech to a group of investment bankers, then-US Federal Reserve Chair William McChesney Martin shared a story about an economics professor who always administered the same exam. When asked how any student could possibly fail such a test, the professor replied, "The questions don't change, but the answers do."

This story remains relevant today, and not just for Martin's successors at the Fed. The ongoing debate about the health of the dollar is often framed in binary terms: either its status as a global reserve currency is rapidly eroding, owing to geopolitics and US fiscal policies, or it remains the unrivaled dominant currency with no competition in sight.

The reality is more complicated. While the dollar remains dominant in areas like trade finance and foreign-exchange, these may be lagging indicators of the dollar's strength. Payment systems may be a more reliable sign of a currency's likely position in the future. Central bankers liken payment systems to plumbing: you can turn on the water only after the pipes have been built. Once this infrastructure is in place, a shift in currencies' status may occur faster than expected. Few predicted the transition from pound sterling to the dollar in the 1920s.

In recent years, countries have been actively improving their financial plumbing. Fast-payment systems have transformed the financial landscapes of countries like India and Brazil. Countries have also begun interlinking their financial infrastructure, enabling near-real-time settlement across national borders. Project mBridge connects central and commercial banks from China, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates without relying on the dollar. Saudi Arabia joined the project earlier this month, and several more countries are expected to do so this year.

Gita Gopinath, the International Monetary Fund's First Deputy Managing Director and its most senior US official, recently attributed the increased use of the renminbi to China's Cross-Border Interbank Payments System, which acts as a clearinghouse, similar to the US Clearing House Interbank Payments System. While many of these projects are relatively small compared to the overwhelming volume of dollar-based transactions, they should not be overlooked.

The increased interest in alternative financial architectures can be partly attributed to the perception that relying on Western systems is risky. Research by the Atlantic Council has identified a sharp increase in the number of countries exploring new payment technologies since the West imposed economic sanctions on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine.

Many of these projects are not mere clones of legacy systems; rather, they aim to make cross-border payments faster, cheaper, and more reliable. Over time, they could reduce demand for the dollar, increasing costs for US borrowers and making the United States more vulnerable to macroeconomic shocks.

The more immediate risk is that these new systems could undermine America's national-security interests. Many new cross-border payment systems can facilitate transactions without the involvement of US banks, limiting the Treasury Department's access to financial intelligence and eroding its ability to enforce sanctions. For years, governments and banks around the world have sought ways to bypass the dollar, often at great cost. Now, cutting-edge digital technologies could make this much cheaper.

In responding to these challenges, US policymakers' top priority should be to ensure that future cross-border payment systems align with US values and interests, such as maintaining the global financial system's stability. One way to pursue this objective is to advocate that new cross-border payment systems meet existing international standards. But the US would likely have greater influence over these new payment systems if it were actively involved in developing, building, and operating them, as it was in establishing the SWIFT and Continuous Linked Settlement interbank payment systems.

Despite a slow start, America's enormous incumbent advantage should enable it to catch up quickly. Correspondent banks in the US are the central nodes of cross-border payments, and America is home to some of the world's largest and most sophisticated mobile-payment providers and fintech companies. Policymakers should communicate to the private sector that new cross-border payment solutions are a geopolitical imperative, and establish clear guidelines to support responsible innovation.

The Fed has a critical role to play in facilitating this shift. Central banks around the world – including the Bank of England, the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore – are driving payment innovation in their respective jurisdictions and globally. But the Fed's lack of a clear vision makes it difficult for US allies and partners to coordinate effectively, thereby increasing the risk of a fragmented international financial system. And if the Fed fails to keep pace with technological innovation, central-bank money could play a diminished role in settlement processes, introducing financial-stability risks.

Given that the Fed has traditionally focused on improving the efficiency and integrity of payment systems, aligning itself with a particular administration's geopolitical agenda, some may fear, could endanger its independence. But acknowledging the geopolitical implications of the Fed's role does not require rewriting its mandate. To enable dollar users to transact as efficiently and securely as possible, both domestically and internationally, the Fed should support innovation and experimentation in payments, thereby helping to preserve the greenback's global dominance, along with its economic and national-security benefits. This is not a new concept: one of the Fed's original responsibilities a century ago was to ensure faster processing of checks.

Already, the Fed has taken several promising steps. In 2023, it launched a new fast-payment service called FedNow, which, if widely adopted, could be linked to other jurisdictions' systems and enhance the dollar's international appeal. Meanwhile, the New York Fed is participating – along with the Bank of Japan, the BOE, and four other central banks – in the Bank for International Settlements' Project Agora, which explores how emerging technologies like tokenisation and shared ledgers could improve cross-border payments. While these initiatives are important, the Fed must act faster and more decisively, given the significant gap between proof-of-concept and implementation.

This July marks the 80th anniversary of the 1944 Bretton Woods conference, which took place while World War II was still raging. Recognising the need to establish a new monetary order, the 44 participating countries were able to look beyond the immediate crisis and lay the groundwork for new international institutions and future financial innovations.

To maintain the dollar's reserve-currency status and the benefits that the US government and financial institutions derive from it requires reviving the spirit of Bretton Woods. To paraphrase the economics professor from Martin's story, while the questions have remained the same, it is time for new answers.

Jordan Bleicher is Chief Legal Officer at Radius Technology Systems. Josh Lipsky is Senior Director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center. @PROJECTSYNDICATE



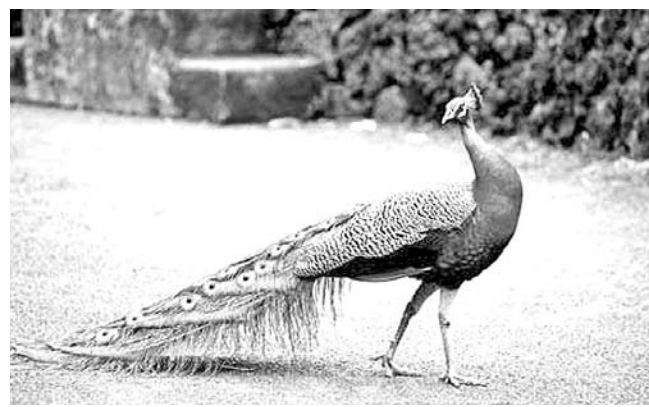
Jordan Bleicher and Josh Lipsky

In recent years, countries have been actively improving their financial plumbing. Fast-payment systems have transformed the financial landscapes of countries like India and Brazil

## FOCUS HEATWAVE

# DEATH OF A NATIONAL BIRD

Since 4 June, 27 peacocks have died from heatstroke in the heart of the national capital. At the highest security zone, the Palam Air Force Station, the death of such a large number of national birds is a grave concern. The fate of other wildlife under this heatwave spell is unknown. Is there any heatwave action plan or any contingency plan at the disposal of Delhi or the Union government for the national bird (and other wildlife) in urban areas (not only in zoos) and natural habitats?



We have to co-create, co-design and co-implement micro city wildlife action plans with resident welfare associations, households, and communities to address heatwave impact on wildlife, especially birds

bird has increased dramatically over the past few decades, while the numbers of vultures and eagles have decreased, according to the State of India's Bird 2020. Despite criticism against the police department that buried the carcasses of a Scheduled wildlife species without the presence of a Forest Official, the birds were provided proper burial following the established protocols.

Urban spaces need to accommodate or create more green spaces near water bodies. We have to co-create, co-design and co-implement micro city wildlife action plans with resident welfare associations, households, and communities to address heatwave impacts on wildlife, especially birds. We also have to integrate and widely campaign measures for feeding and nesting of local birds like the common tailorbird, grey whisked bulbul, purple sunbird, yellow footed green pigeon, koel, jungle babbler, sparrows and doves etc into urban greening programmes (avenue plantation, roof-top, terrace and wall gardening, small green spaces in buildings, parks, urban forests or mini forests). Just creating green spaces in urban areas is not helping. Proper assessment of the status of the city's wildlife and its winged visitors is a must. We must include measures for the city's wildlife in future Heat Action Plan, District Disaster Plan and Climate Change Action Plan. It is believed that the Prime Minister is very fond of the national bird. Therefore, the death of the national bird will not go in vain. This should be a wake-up call for all cities to devise an inclusive climate-resilient future for urban wildlife.

The writer is an advisor on climate change risk and transboundary rivers. Views are personal.



Avilash Roul

HUMANKIND IS NOT THE ONLY SPECIES AFFECTED BY THE EARTH'S CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Indeed, there is a Delhi Heat Action Plan (DHAP). Under the guidelines of the Disaster Management Act, of 2005, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA, Delhi Government) released the DHAP for 2024-2025 on 12 April, 2024. During the pre-heat season (January- March), the DHAP proposes to maintain waterbodies in forest areas as the only measure for wildlife and birds. There are no specific action plans for wildlife during the heat months (March-July) and post-heat season (July-September) except for greening degraded land by planting trees. No assessment has been initiated to understand the impacts on the city's wildlife after the longest heat days in Delhi. While the roles and responsibilities of the Forest Department are limited to planting trees, and increasing city forests/parks and the Wetland Authority of Delhi to restoring water bodies under the DHAP, the Animal Husbandry Department has been tasked to proactively engage in protecting cattle and poultry throughout the plan with village communities.

Increasing temperatures across India especially in Delhi in 2024 is not an aberration. If someone sees it as an aberration, it's a gross mistake. Several sci-

entific models/studies have already projected that India will have an increase in intensity, frequency and duration of heatwaves in coming decades. Since 2006, India has experienced several heatwave incidences with average temperature significantly above normal (+41 degrees Celsius). Despite warnings from the Indian Meteorological Department for the May-June heatwave, dispersing information, awareness and preparedness was abysmally low.

Humankind is not the only species affected by the Earth's climate emergency. Wildlife is facing significant, often catastrophic, impacts of climate change. Besides wildlife exploitation (poaching and illegal trafficking), land use change, pollution and invasive species and diseases, climate change, directly and indirectly, have exterminated 7.1% of the world's total wildlife so far. Under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, countries including India reaffirmed the goal of lim-

iting global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius, while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees. If not limited to a 1.5-degree increase, approximately 20-30% of plant and animal species are likely to be at risk of extinction. Most of the wildlife, especially birds, in urban areas will have a catastrophic impact if not intervened timely.

Unfortunately, the Delhi Forest Department was not aware of deaths of the national bird until 25 June. The peacock, Indian Peafowl (*Pavo Cristatus*), is protected under Schedule-I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, which is the highest protection for any wildlife species in India. But the importance of the national bird or other wildlife is not at all equivalent to the national animal (tiger) in the eyes of the Indian government and its agencies. In Delhi, one would find peacocks freely roaming in and around residential apartments and colonies and their adjacent streets and fields. The number of India's national

## SPECTRUM POLITICS

# Poll manifestos as social contracts

The former Chief Justice of India, Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar, in 2017, criticised political parties for routinely failing to fulfill electoral promises, dismissing their manifestos as "mere pieces of paper." This sentiment remains relevant even today. Political parties unveil their manifestos at grand public events, investing substantial resources to disseminate their promises.

An election manifesto is a public declaration by a political party or candidate outlining their intentions, motives, and views. The manifesto serves as a roadmap of the party's vision and commitments to the electorate, addressing various societal issues. Recognising the significance of these promises, the Election Commission of India has proposed that each party submit an additional detailed form specifying every electoral promise, its financial implications, and plans for implementation based on the state's financial condition. Following elections, the majority party forms the government, and citizens can exert pressure on the party in power to fulfill promises made to the people in its election manifesto. For instance, the BJP's manifesto had 21 promises aimed at transforming Odisha into a trillion-dollar econ-

omy by 2036.

In democratic governance, political manifestos play a pivotal role in shaping promises and ensuring accountability. These documents are not merely ceremonial. Despite their importance, manifestos generally lack legal enforceability in most countries. In India too, the manifesto does not create legal obligations upon the party or the candidates once they come into power.

The Supreme Court had said in 2013, that commitment made by political parties in their election manifesto will not amount to "corrupt practice" under the Section 123 of The Representation of the People Act, 1951. It also stressed that it is not within its domain to legislate the kind of promises that can or cannot be made in the election manifesto. However, the Supreme Court directed the ECI to incorporate guidelines for manifestos in the Model Code of Conduct, aimed at preventing undue voter influence by political parties and candidates.

Following the direction of Supreme Court, the Model Code of Conduct drafted by the ECI for the 2014 general elections had guidelines that prohibited parties from making promises in manifestos that would exert an undue influence on voters. However, these guidelines do not

confer legal status on manifestos.

After 10 years, once again in 2023, the Supreme Court began hearing petitions seeking a judicial declaration that irrational freebies offered by parties to lure voters during election time should be considered a "corrupt practice." Hope some clarity will emerge before the next general elections.

Notwithstanding the legal tussle, it is worth examining the alternative frameworks for making political manifestos more meaningful. According to the social contract theory, a manifesto can be seen as an implicit social contract between political parties and voters. Political parties present their policies and promises as part of an agreement to govern in accordance with people's expectations. However, unlike legal contracts, social contracts are not governed by any specific law, but they are embedded in social relationships and trust.

Such understanding of a manifesto also fits well with Mahatma Gandhi's school of political thought. According to Gandhi's philosophy, a political manifesto should not be treated merely as a means for electoral campaigns, but a document of moral declarations of the values and principles that a political party or leader stands for. He believed that the manifesto should reflect

the highest moral standards and ethical principles, advocating for justice, equality, and non-violence.

Gandhi believed that the primary purpose of political activity and governance was to serve people selflessly. So, a manifesto, in his view, should outline concrete steps and policies aimed at improving the welfare and well-being of all sections of society, particularly the marginalised and disadvantaged.

Gandhi was of the view that the means adopted in any public activity often determine the moral quality of the outcome and that of the persons involved too. A manifesto is also one of the means of communication used by political parties before election. So, if a manifesto becomes a manifestation of grand promises sans truth, it reflects low moral values of the party and the party leaders.

Hope the new government will treat its party's manifesto in the spirit of Gandhi's social contract and will not forget the promises made to the people of Odisha. That reminds me of the famous poem by Robert Frost:

But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

The writer is a Professor at XIMB. Views are personal.



DV Ramana

GANDHI BELIEVED THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND GOVERNANCE WAS TO SERVE PEOPLE SELFLESSLY

## Freedom at last

Sir, This refers to "Julian Assange freed from jail," Orissa POST, June 26. The Wikileaks founder's release from prison marks the culmination of a long-running saga of international intrigue - ending nearly 15 years of legal battles that were essentially a tussle between freedom of expression and a government's determined effort to keep its secrets. Assange, who shot into global prominence with the 2010 and 2011 publication of military and government documents of US activities in Iraq and Afghanistan, and diplomatic cables, was wanted by the US on espionage charges. Wikileaks demonstrated the immense power governments, even in liberal democracies, have over their citizens and the extent to which a state will go to protect that power. Assange made us confront the ease with which governments use national security as a default rabbit to be pulled out of the hat. AI will only augment this power exponentially. So, it's all the more urgent to establish safeguards that protect privacy while considering the needs of genuine national security and interest. Assange was a hero of the civil liberties community when he published the US military files stolen by Chelsea Manning, but his image was dented when in 2016 he published the Democratic National Committee emails, stolen by Russian hackers, a move that worked favourably for Donald Trump's election as US president. N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

## Water crisis

Sir, Residents of Delhi are deeply troubled by the current water crisis, worsened by the ongoing heatwave. The severe shortage has caused immense hardship citywide, severely disrupting daily life. While the government's efforts to penalise water wastage and promote conservation are praiseworthy, the situation calls for more immediate and comprehensive intervention. Urgent steps must be taken, including bolstering negotiations with Haryana to secure the agreed-upon water supply for Delhi. Simultaneously, accelerating the development and utilisation of alternative water sources and upgrading water distribution infrastructure to reduce leaks and enhance efficiency are crucial. Launching extensive public awareness campaigns on water conservation techniques and sustainable usage, particularly during peak summer months, will also prove invaluable. Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

# Letters

## TO THE EDITOR

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

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NEET-NET ROW

Kerala passes resolution flaying NTA and Centre

MLA Vijin claimed that the NEET results were announced June 4, the same day as LS results, to divert attention from the outcome of the entrance test



Thiruvananthapuram, June 26: The Kerala Assembly Wednesday unanimously passed a resolution condemning the irregularities in the entrance exams, NEET and NET, conducted by the National Testing Agency and demanding that the Centre take urgent steps to address grievances of affected candidates.

Both the ruling LDF and the opposition Congress-led UDF were in agreement that the recently reported irregularities in the NEET-UG and UGC-NET exams call into question the National Testing Agency's (NTA) credibility and its competence to conduct such entrance tests.

They were also of the view that such incidents call into question the competence of the students or candidates who take these tests.

The issue was raised in the House by LDF MLA M Vijin who alleged that the Central government was responsible for the irregularities in the NEET exam.

Both ruling LDF and opposition Congress-led UDF accused the Centre of modifying the education policy of the country to suit their political interests

He also claimed that the NEET results were announced June 4, the same day as the Lok Sabha poll results, to divert attention from the outcome of the entrance test.

The issue raised by him was

backed by the UDF which too blamed the Centre for the irregularities in the entrance tests. The opposition and the LDF also accused the Centre of modifying the education policy of the country to suit their political interests.

Subsequently, state Higher Education Minister R Bindu moved a resolution condemning the manner in which the NTA was functioning and the support given to it by the Centre and demanding that the central government take urgent measures to address the grievances of affected students and candidates who took the NEET and NET exams.

The resolution was unanimously passed by the House. Amidst the discussions, UDF MLA PC Vishnunadh said the resolution should also include a demand that the states be allowed to conduct the entrance exams from now on.

The LDF government said that such a resolution can be moved later.

During the discussion, Congress MLA Mathew Kuzhalnadan alleged that there have been irregularities in PSC exams in Kerala and urged the state government to learn from these incidents to prevent them in the future.

UDF slams govt over inflation

The Congress-led UDF opposition in Kerala Wednesday slammed the ruling Left in the assembly over the issue of rise in prices of vegetables, fish and poultry in the state, accusing it of being 'oblivious' to the plight of the common people. The opposition made the allegation in its motion seeking adjournment of the House proceedings to discuss the issue of rise in prices of vegetables and other food items in the state.

Guj influencer told to join probe

YOGA AT GOLDEN TEMPLE

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Amritsar, June 26: Punjab Police Wednesday asked Gujarat-based social media influencer Archana Makwana, who is facing charges for performing Yoga at Sri Darbar Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple Amritsar, to join the investigation till June 30.

The incident sparked outrage among the Sikh community, terming it a violation of the 'maryada' of Darbar Sahib.

Amritsar Police have sent a notice to her. "If she does not appear by June 30, then two more notices will be sent to her. If still, she does not appear before the police, a team will be sent to arrest her," a senior police official said.

Darpan Ahluwalia, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police



(ADCP) Amritsar, said Archana Makwana's statement will be recorded first and only after that she will be arrested. "A notice has been sent to Archana to appear before the police and record her statement."

In a post on social media, Archana Makwana said she would no longer go to any gurdwara.

The social media influencer was last week booked by Punjab Police for hurting religious sentiments for performing Yoga inside the Golden Temple premises. She was provided protection by Gujarat Police after she received multiple threat calls.

The FIR under Section 295-A (deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class) of the Indian Penal Code comes after the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) had filed a complaint with Amritsar Police against the fashion designer.

SGPC General Secretary Gurcharan Singh Grewal Monday asked the woman Instagram influencer to join the police investigation.

Drive to boost school enrollment

PM NARENDRA MODI HAD STARTED 'SHALA PRAVESHOTSAV' IN 2003 WHEN HE WAS THE STATE'S CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, June 26: Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel Wednesday launched the 21st edition of 'Shala Praveshotsav', a state-wide annual drive to boost enrollment of students in Class 1, from a government school in tribal-dominated Dang district, said an official release.

Patel welcomed the students by gifting them books, stationery and school bags and enrolled them in the primary school at the Biliamba village in Subir taluka.

According to the release, 21 former students of the schools, who had been enrolled nearly two decades ago by then CM Modi, were also present during Wednesday's event.

IIT student Aviraj Chaudhary, MBBS doctor Anitaben Kuvar and international athlete Murali Gavit, all from this primary school, were also invited to the function.

"Today we are seeing the results of a movement launched by PM Modi when he was the chief minister of Gujarat. Twenty-one students who got enrolled in his presence back then are now with us here on this stage," Patel said.

According to an official document of the Gujarat government, the gross enrollment ratio for girls at the elementary level in the state is 94 per cent. The corresponding figure for boys is 91 per cent.

Students of the Biliamba school became doctors, went to IIT and excelled in sports, the CM said.

"I am told that the captain of



Financial aid to 4.37L girl students

Nearly 4.37 lakh girls have registered to avail benefits under two schemes launched by the Gujarat government in March to provide financial assistance to eligible female students from Classes 9 to 12, officials said. While 4.03 lakh girl students have registered for the 'Namo Lakshmi Yojana', nearly 37,000 have enrolled for the 'Namo Saraswati Vigyan Sadhana Yojana' as part of the 'Shala Praveshotsav - Kanya Kelavni Mahotsav 2024', an annual drive to enlist students in Class 1 in Gujarat, an official release said.

Gujarat's Kho Kho team is a student of this school. Though they had faced challenges during their journey, they did not give up.

The government also supports you whenever needed," he said. He lauded the teachers and locals for the school's quality of

Education is the first brick for a strong foundation for a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) as envisioned by PM Modi. People should also come forward and ensure that every child receives education

BHUPENDRA PATEL | CM, GUJARAT

education and the village's overall development.

The CM said Biliamba is considered the last village of Gujarat (bordering Maharashtra), but nothing is lacking here in terms of infrastructure.

"Along with science stream colleges, the state government is also building medical colleges in the tribal belt from Ambaji in the north till Umargam in south Gujarat. You should take advantage of these educational facilities," he said.

On the occasion, the CM also urged people to focus on environmental conservation amid climate change.

"During the monsoon, some parts now receive too much rain. And, during summer, the temperature rises above 50 degrees (Celsius). So, where are we heading towards? I am glad that children are taught about global warming from an early age," said the CM.

He appealed to people to follow the PM's advice and grow at least one tree to contribute towards environmental conservation.

Gender-neutral toilets at Kerala college spark social media debate

The gender-neutral toilets, which have been present for years on the campus of the well-known Government Maharaja's College, have suddenly become a topic of debate, with some netizens expressing support for the idea and others opposed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, June 26: Gender-friendly toilets that can be used irrespective of sex in a state-run college in Kerala have triggered a raging debate on social media platforms.

The gender-neutral toilets, which have been present for years on the campus of the well-known Government Maharaja's College here, have suddenly become a topic of debate, with some netizens expressing support for the idea and others opposed.

A recent Facebook post by writer-columnist Ram Mohan Paliyath about his experience using the gender-friendly toilet during his visit to the campus initiated the debate on social media platforms.

In the FB post, the writer, also an alumnus of the college, was all praise for the initiative and said it was the first time in the past 57 years that he was using

such a facility.

A large number of persons commented below his Facebook post, both supporting and opposing the gender-friendly toilets. It triggered a raging debate on various social media platforms later.

While the majority of people hailed the gender-friendly initiative of the college authorities as a progressive move, there was also a section of people who indulged in trolling and posting sarcastic remarks against the college and its students.

However, the students and the management of the college have rejected the criticism as an expression of a narrow mindset.

Maharaja's College sources said gender-friendly toilets have been on the campus since 2018. At present, over 30 toilets in various study departments on the campus are gender-friendly, they said.

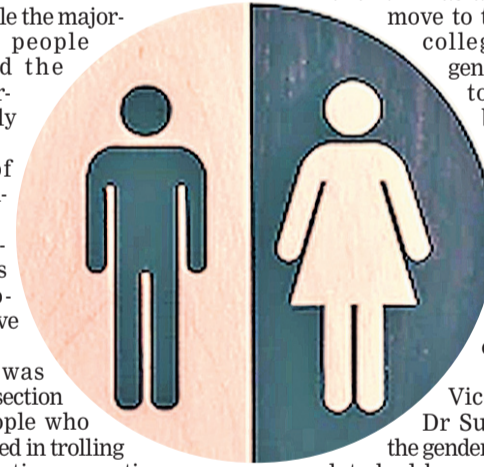
A student said there is nothing unusual about the gender-neutral toilets. "Do we have separate toilets for men and

women in our houses? Then what is wrong with using the same toilet by male and female students on a college campus?" he asked.

Another student, a woman, raised suspicion that the present row was a deliberate move to tarnish the college. "These gender-friendly toilets have been here for some time. Suddenly, it has become a topic of debate," she pointed out.

College Vice-Principal Dr Suja TV said the gender-neutral toilets had been introduced years ago as part of attempts to make Maharaja's College an inclusive campus.

"Every space here should be accessible to everyone. Every individual should be treated as an individual, cutting across genders. That was the objective," she told a news channel. She also dubbed the social media criticism of the initiative as narrow-mindedness.



Lifejacket wearing animated dolphin to educate fishermen

MUTHALAPOZHI AT PERUMATHURA IS A PLACE WHERE THE VAMANAPURAM RIVER AND KADINAMKULAM LAKE MEET THE ARABIAN SEA AND HAS BECOME A DEATH TRAP FOR FISHERMEN WHILE GOING TO SEA AND ALSO WHEN RETURNING TO SHORE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, June 26: An animated video of a life-jacket wearing dolphin will be used to create awareness among fishermen to wear lifejackets while going out and returning from sea to prevent fishing-related accidents and deaths, the Kerala government said Tuesday.

State Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan told the Assembly that the government has taken several steps to prevent accidents and

resultant deaths of fishermen in the coastal areas, but the measures were not being utilised effectively at the ground level.

Cheriyan said the government had distributed thousands of life-jackets and lifebuoys in the coastal areas, but it has been noticed that fishermen were not making use of them while going out to sea or when returning to shore.

The minister was replying to a query in the House by Left MLA V Joy with regard to steps taken by the government to prevent



deaths of fishermen in fishing-related accidents.

Cheriyan said that most of the accidental deaths, including those at Muthalapozhi harbour here, occurred when the fishermen were going out to sea or returning to shore.

The minister said that aware-

ness campaigns were being carried out in the coastal areas to educate fishermen on the benefits of using lifejackets.

As part of the awareness campaign, an animation of a dolphin wearing a lifejacket would be used to educate fishermen about using lifejackets, he said.

Advertisement for Balasore Wildlife Division recruitment notice, including contact details and application information.



# national

## of the day quote

As Engineer Rashid secured a decisive victory in the Lok Sabha polls with overwhelming public support, the government should acknowledge the mandate and allow him to take the oath

GHULAM NABI AZAD | FORMER J&K CHIEF MINISTER

I hope under your able and effective administration the Lok Sabha would achieve incredible outputs which would strengthen Parliamentary democracy

N RANGASAMY | PONDICHERRY CM

The Maha Vikas Aghadi constituents should stay away from naming anyone as the Chief Minister (candidate). Instead, their priority should be returning to power. There should be no competition among the alliance members to avoid a gap

JAYANT PATIL | NCP (SP) STATE PRESIDENT

## SHORT TAKES

### 6 cops sentenced to life imprisonment

**Tinsukia (Assam):** Six police personnel were on Wednesday awarded life imprisonment by a local court in Tinsukia district of Assam for beating one person to death in an open market 11 years ago. Tinsukia District and Sessions Judge Dipankar Bora sentenced the six policemen to life term under Section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code. The incident dates back to October 7, 2013, when a person named Ajit Sonowal was beaten at Ambikapur market.

### ACB registers FIR against Kulgam DySP

**Jammu:** The Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Wednesday registered a case and conducted raids on the various properties allegedly owned by a deputy superintendent of police (DySP) in J&K and Himachal Pradesh in connection with disproportionate assets (DA) case, officials said. The ACB is investigating allegations of acquisition of disproportionate assets, including two hotels in Manali in Himachal worth crores of rupees accumulated by DySP Chanchal Singh, they said.

### Demand for three more DCMs in K'taka

**Bangalore:** With the demand to have three more deputy chief ministers resurfacing in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the decision of the Congress high command is final. Some of the ministers have been pitching for DCM posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities. Currently, D K Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is the only deputy chief minister in the Siddaramaiah cabinet.

### Akhilesh visits Atishi

**New Delhi:** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav visited Delhi Cabinet Minister Atishi at the LNJP Hospital here Wednesday and said the problems of chief ministers have increased ever since the BJP came to power at the Centre. He was speaking to media persons after visiting the senior Aam Aadmi Party leader who was hospitalised Tuesday due to her worsening health conditions while on an indefinite hunger strike to demand water for the national capital amid its ongoing scarcity.



We are strong. The foundation of Indian democracy has become so strong that there is democracy in villages, Nagar Palika and districts

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT OF INDIA

## SPEAKER RECOGNISES RAHUL AS LOP IN LS

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla recognised Rahul Gandhi as the leader of Opposition Wednesday, a day after the Congress communicated its decision to name him for the position to the Lok Sabha Secretariat



# Speaker's Emergency reference sparks row

"The Emergency is a black spot in history. The aim of these amendments made by the Congress government was to bring all the powers to one person, to control the judiciary, and to destroy the basic principles of the Constitution. By doing this, the rights of citizens were suppressed and the principles of democracy attacked," said Om Birla, amid slogan-shouting by the Opposition



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** Soon after his election as Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla Wednesday set off a firestorm by reading out a resolution condemning the imposition of Emergency as an attack on the Constitution by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi, an act that triggered vociferous protests by Congress member in the House.

Birla recalled that it was June 26, 1975 that the country woke up to the cruel realities of Emergency, when the Congress government jailed Opposition leaders, imposed many restrictions on the media and also curbed the autonomy of the judiciary.

"As we enter the 50th year of the Emergency, this 18th Lok Sabha reiterates its commitment to uphold, protect and preserve the Constitution built by Babasaheb Ambedkar," he said as Opposition members, mostly from the Congress, were on their feet, raising slogans against the

reference to Emergency.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the Speaker's reference to Emergency in the Lok Sabha and said it was important for the youths as the period was a "fitting example of what happens when the Constitution is trampled over, public opinion is stifled and institutions are destroyed".

"The happenings during the Emergency exemplified what a dictatorship looks like," Modi said. While Congress members raised slogans against the reference to Emergency in the Lok Sabha, BJP MPs gathered in huge numbers on the footsteps of the Parliament building to protest against the suspension of civil liberties 49 years ago.

"India has always promoted democratic values and the spirit of discussion and debate. Democratic values have always been protected, they have always been encouraged. Such an India was subjected to dictatorship by Indira Gandhi, India's democratic values were

crushed and freedom of expression was stifled," Birla said in the resolution.

"This House strongly condemns the decision to impose Emergency in 1975. We appreciate the determination of all those people who opposed the Emergency, fought and fulfilled the responsibility of protecting India's democracy," he said amid vociferous protests by Opposition parties.

"June 25, 1975 will always be known as a black chapter in the history of India. On this day, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in the country and attacked the Constitution made by Babasaheb Ambedkar," the speaker said.

"Those were the times when Opposition leaders were jailed, the entire nation was turned into a prison. The then dictatorial government had put several restrictions on the media and there was restraint on the autonomy of judiciary," Birla said.

He said Indira Gandhi also talked about committed bureaucracy and committed judiciary, which was an example of her anti-democratic attitude. The Emergency brought with it terrible antisocial and dictatorial policies that destroyed the lives of the poor, the Dalits and the deprived, he said.

"During the Emergency, people had to suffer the brunt of compulsory sterilisation imposed by the Congress government, arbitrariness in the name of removing encroachment in cities and the evil policies of the government. This House would like to express its condolences to all those people," Birla said.

## Pitroda reappointed chairman of Indian Overseas Congress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Wednesday reappointed Sam Pitroda as chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, days after he had resigned from the post following some controversial remarks in the middle of Lok Sabha elections which the BJP termed as "racist".

"Congress president has reappointed Sam Pitroda as chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress with immediate effect," AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said in a statement.

Pitroda, who is considered a close aide of Rahul Gandhi, resigned from the post May 8, and his resignation was accepted by the Congress chief.

Pitroda, who held the post of chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, stoked a major controversy with his remarks during a podcast where he cited ethnic and racial identities like Chinese, Africans, Arabs and Whites to describe the physical appearance of Indians from different parts of the country.

The veteran leader was an advisor to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and has been closely associated with Rahul Gandhi, accompanying him during his foreign visits.

Pitroda has also arranged several interactions of Gandhi with students of foreign universities in the UK, the UAE and the US.

The BJP made Pitroda's remarks a poll issue, forcing the Congress to act swiftly and distance itself from his remarks, calling them "most unfortunate and unacceptable".

With campaigning in full swing ahead of the fourth phase of polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the BJP's all-out attack on the Congress on Pitroda's analogy and slammed his comments as "racist".

He asserted that people will not tolerate the attempt to insult them on the basis of their skin colour.

## PANNUN CASE

# Consistently pressed India for updates on inquiry: US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** The US has consistently pressed India for updates on the Indian investigation into the alleged foiled plot to kill Sikh separatist Gurbhagat Singh Pannun and made it clear that it seeks accountability in the case, a senior Biden administration official said Wednesday.

US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said the US raised the issue directly at the most senior levels of the Indian government. Campbell made the comments at a virtual media briefing on his and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to India last week.

"We have had constructive dialogue with India on this topic and I would say that they have been responsive to our concerns," he said.

"We've made clear that we seek accountability from the Government of India and we have consistently asked for updates on the Indian committee of inquiry's investigations," the senior official said.

"And I would just simply say that we raised this issue directly with the Indian government...at the most senior levels between our two sides," he said.

Campbell was responding to a question on whether the 'murder-for-hire' plot targeting Pannun was raised during meetings that he and Sullivan held with their Indian counterparts.

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta of working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun in New York. Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

Gupta, who was arrested in the Czech Republic in June last year, was extradited to the US June 14. Following the allega-



An indictment filed by US prosecutors in a federal court in New York alleged that an Indian government employee, identified as "CC-1" directed Gupta to arrange the assassination of Pannun

The prosecutors allege that Indian national Nikhil Gupta hired a hitman to kill Pannun and paid \$15,000 in advance

Gupta, through his attorney, has denied the charges and said that he has been "unfairly charged"

tions by the US, India appointed a high-level inquiry committee to look into the inputs provided by the US on the plot.

In April, *The Washington Post* named an Indian official for allegedly plotting to assassinate Pannun on American soil.

Asked about reports suggesting that the plot was the work of some rogue elements, Campbell did not give a direct reply but said further information in the case is likely to come through law enforcement channels. Following Gupta's extradition, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said it "makes clear that the Justice Department will not tolerate attempts to silence or harm American citizens."

# Research on 'Thyrogrit' in world-renowned journal

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Haridwar, June 26:** Hypothyroidism is becoming a prevalent condition worldwide, leading to severe side effects such as heart disease, infertility and impaired brain development in children.

In the modern medicine system, the primary treatment of this widespread yet alarming ailment is hormonal replacement therapy, requiring patients to remain on medicines for life.

To free people from this condition, Patanjali developed a herbal medicine 'Thyrogrit', based on the extensive and ancient science of Ayurveda. Research has demonstrated its efficacy on hypothyroidism-induced rats. Ayurvedic medicine

'Thyrogrit' not only restores the thyroid gland affected by hypothyroidism but also reverses the kidney damage caused by the disease. Patanjali is proud to announce that this research has been published in the globally-renowned peer-reviewed journal, *Clinical Phytoscience*, providing contemporary scientists and researchers with insights into innovative Ayurvedic medicinal research.

On this occasion, Acharya Balkrishna said that the breakthrough by Patanjali is set to bring new hope to individuals worldwide suffering from thyroid disorders. All the people associated with Patanjali are dedicated to making the world disease-free and will continue to devote their efforts to this noble cause.



Boys jump from a boat into the water to cool themselves for respite from the scorching heat on a hot summer day in Nadia, West Bengal

## Eight killed in lightning strike incidents

**Patna:** At least eight people were killed after being struck by lightning in six districts of Bihar, an official said Wednesday. The deaths were reported in the last 24 hours from Bhagalpur, Munger, Jamui, East Champaran, West Champaran and Araria districts, the official said. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Wednesday expressed grief over the death of eight people in lightning strike in the last twenty-four hours in the state. According to the Chief Minister's Office, an ex-gratia of ₹4 lakh has also been announced for the next of kin of each deceased.

# Nagaland civic body polls take place after 20 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kohima, June 26:** Around 80 per cent of the over 2.23 lakh electorate Sunday exercised their franchise in the Nagaland civic polls, held after a gap of 20 years, a senior official said.

Voting for 25 urban local bodies (ULBs) in 10 districts began at 7:30 am amid tight security and continued till 4 pm, he said. The turnout figure is likely to increase as voters were still in queue at many polling stations, the official said. "Voting has been peaceful... A three-tier security arrangement was put in place in 214 polling stations across the 10 districts," a State



Election Commission (SEC) official told reporters here.

Instead of EVMs, voting took place through ballot papers in the 420 polling stations, he said. This is a historic election for the

northeastern state, as the polling to three municipalities and 36 town councils were conducted after a gap of 20 years.

The urban local body polls were also held for the first time

with 33 per cent women reservation, the official said. The votes will be counted June 29.

Over 2.23 lakh voters, including 1,13,521 women, will decide the electoral fate of 523 candidates from 11 political parties. The government had announced elections to urban local bodies several times in the past, but objections from tribal bodies and civil society organisations against reservation for women, and tax on land and properties, created hurdles in conducting the polls.

Among the parties contesting

the elections are the NDDP, BJP, Congress, Naga Peoples' Front (NPF), Rising Peoples' Party, RPI (Athawale), JD(U), LJP, NCP and the NPP. The Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO), however, had declared that six districts in the region would not participate in the elections.

ENPO, the apex body of seven Naga tribes in the six eastern districts, has been demanding a 'Frontier Nagaland Territory', claiming that the region has been neglected for years.

Instead of EVMs, voting took place through ballot papers in the 420 polling stations

## B'lore court rejects bail plea of Prajwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, June 26:** A Bangalore court Wednesday rejected the bail plea of former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of rape and sexual harassment in multiple cases.

The Additional City Civil and Sessions Court Judge had reserved his ruling on the plea Monday and passed the orders today rejecting it.

The 33-year-old is presently in the custody of the Special Investigation Team, formed to probe his alleged sex crimes.

Revanna was Monday remanded to judicial custody till July 8, but a day later was sent to the SIT custody till June 29 by the Magistrate court judge, after the SIT sought a body warrant through the Special Public Prosecutor (SPP).

Four separate cases have been registered against the grandson of former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, all of which are being investigated by the SIT.

Revanna had failed in his bid to retain the Hassan Parliamentary constituency in the recent polls.

The bail was sought in connection with the case registered in the Holenarasipura town police station in which he is accused of sexually harassing a 47-year-old former maid.

He is listed as accused number two, while his father and local MLA, H D Revanna, is the primary accused.

The cases of sexual abuse came to light after pen-drives containing explicit videos allegedly involving Prajwal Revanna were reportedly circulated in Hassan, ahead of Lok Sabha polls there April 26.

JD(S) suspended him from the party following the cases filed against him.

Meanwhile, according to sources, Prajwal Revanna was taken to Holenarasipura for a "spot mahazar" (inquest) at his residence in connection with the last case registered against him.



# national

## of the day quote

Congratulations to Om Birla on being elected as the Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha. I wish him success in upholding our Parliamentary traditions and leading the House with integrity and wisdom

Last year during the same time milk (production) was 90 lakh litres (per day), now it is more than 99 lakh litre. We have to procure milk from farmers, we cannot say no to them, the milk is produced and it has to be marketed. So we have enhanced the half litre milk packet quantity by 50 ml

Rahul Gandhi has become the leader of opposition. Millions of people who voted for the INDIA bloc to keep democracy alive and protect the Constitution, they hope that now Rahul Gandhi ji will fight the battle of truth

## X POST OF THE DAY

It's shameful that a regime that imposed an undeclared emergency on the country, and didn't even have the guts to declare it, is speaking about it. It is the same regime that is posing a threat to our constitution and our democracy. How much more will they keep us fighting over the past? Our young nation must fight for our future, for all, together!

## SHORT TAKES

### TMC MLAs fail to take oath

**Kolkata:** The deadlock over the swearing-in of two newly elected TMC legislators continued Wednesday as West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose refused to hold the programme in the Assembly as requested by them, and instead left for New Delhi, officials said. Miffed by the development, the two MLAs, Sayantika Bandyopadhyay and Rayat Hossain Sarkar, said they would again write to the Governor.

### Oppn MVA boycotts Shinde's tea party

**Mumbai:** The Maha Vikas Aghadi Opposition alliance Wednesday boycotted Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's tea party on the eve of the state legislature monsoon session, accusing the government of failing to address issues of the masses including farmers. This announcement was made by the Leader of the Opposition in the assembly Vijay Wadettiwar, who belongs to Congress, and his council counterpart Ambadas Danve of Shiv Sena (UBT). The customary tea party, held ahead of every legislature session, is scheduled later in the day Wednesday.

### Three killed as car rams into tanker

**Sehore (MP):** Three persons were killed after their car rams into a milk tanker in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district in the wee hours of Wednesday, police said. The accident took place at around 1 am on the Indore-Bhopal highway near Ashta town under Parvati police station limits, they said. The car hit the tanker, which was going towards Indore from Bhopal.



In 2023, the number of tourists was more than 10 crore in Kashi. There were over 7.5 crore in Mathura-Vrindavan and over five crore in Ayodhya. After the construction of Lord Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya after 500 years, this number has increased manifold

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CHIEF MINISTER

## PRESIDENT TO ADDRESS JOINT SITTING OF PARL TODAY

President Droupadi Murmu will address the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha Thursday, where she is expected to unveil the priorities of the newly-elected government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi



## EXCISE 'SCAM'

AGENCIES

**New Delhi, June 26:** A Delhi court Wednesday sent Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to the CBI's custody for three days after the central agency arrested him in a corruption case related to the alleged excise scam.

Special Judge Amitabh Rawat passed the order on an application moved by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which formally arrested Kejriwal after obtaining permission from the court. "The CBI's application is allowed for three days. The accused be produced before 7 pm," the judge said.

The application seeking Kejriwal's arrest was moved by the CBI after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was produced before the court from the Tihar jail, where he was lodged in judicial custody in a money-laundering case linked to the excise "scam" being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Kejriwal will remain in the CBI's custody until his custodial interrogation in the corruption case comes to an end, which can go on for a maximum of 15 days. If he fails to secure bail in both the cases being probed by the CBI and ED, he will go back to judicial custody once his police remand ends in the present case.

The court had, June 19, extended Kejriwal's judicial custody in the money-laundering case till July 3. In the application seeking the AAP leader's custody, the CBI told the court that he was required to be quizzed for unearthing the larger conspiracy in the matter.

It said Kejriwal was required to be confronted with the other accused and evidence in the case. Kejriwal claimed innocence be-



fore the court. "It is being run in the media through CBI sources that I have a statement putting the entire blame on (former Delhi deputy chief minister) Manish Sisodia. I have not given any such statement that Sisodia or anyone else is guilty. I have said Sisodia is innocent, the AAP is innocent, I am innocent. Their entire plan is to defame us in the media. Please record that all these have been run in the media through CBI sources," Kejriwal told the court. He also claimed that the agency is sensationalising the issue.

"It needs to be clarified. This will be the top headline in all the newspapers. Their aim is to sensationalise the matter," he told the court. The CBI's counsel, however, said no sources had said any such thing.

"I argued in court. No source said anything. And I argued on facts," the counsel said. The judge, however, said the media picks up any one line. "It is very difficult to control the media that way," he said. The CBI made the arrest before the court after getting permission from the judge, who passed the order on

The Aam Aadmi Party national convener is lodged in prison in the Excise policy-linked money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Department

lobby is sitting in Delhi and they see to it that it is done, it is notified," the CBI told the court. It accused Kejriwal of levelling an "unnecessary allegation of malice"

"An unnecessary allegation of malice is being made. We could have conducted these proceedings before the (Lok Sabha) election. I (CBI) am doing my job, satisfying every court," the agency's counsel said. Replying to the court's "why arrest now" query, the counsel said the agency refrained from arresting Kejriwal, even from investigating the case while the polls were being held.

"The court was considering his interim bail for the election. If at that time I (CBI) would have arrested... That shows my restraint that I did not arrest him when he was campaigning," the counsel told the court. Kejriwal's lawyer opposed the CBI's plea seeking his custody, describing the agency's remand application as "totally vague".

"This is a classic case of abuse of power," the defence counsel said. The defence also requested the judge to provide documents linked to the CBI proceedings against Kejriwal, including the court order related to his interrogation in the Tihar jail Tuesday evening.

# No relief for Kejriwal

# TN pressing Centre for caste census

The resolution piloted by Chief Minister M K Stalin said the Central government should immediately commence the census work, which is due from 2021, along with caste-based population census this time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Chennai, June 26:** The Tamil Nadu Assembly Wednesday passed a unanimous resolution urging the Centre to take up caste-based census soon.

The Opposition AIADMK, evicted and suspended from rest of the session over another issue, claimed that its previous party-led government initiated the process in 2020 but could not complete the task due regime change.

The resolution piloted by Chief Minister M K Stalin said the Central government should immediately commence the census work, which is due from 2021, along with caste-based population census this time.

"This House considers that caste-based population census is essential to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities in education, economy and employment to every citizen of India," the resolution stated.

Legislators belonging to various political parties including the BJP supported the resolution which was adopted by the House in the absence of the principal Opposition AIADMK members who were suspended from the Assembly for disrupting proceedings.

Speaker M Appavu said the resolution was adopted unanimously. Earlier moving the resolution, Stalin said only the Union government was em-

powered to conduct the population census as per section 3 of the Census Act, 1948.

Though the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008, facilitated state governments to collect data about the socio-economic status of the people, under part A of Section 3 of the Act, state governments cannot collect data on communities listed under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the Chief Minister said.

"It is not possible to collect census data under the Collection of Statistics Act. The only option is the conduct of the Population Census by the Union Government. That's why we insist that the caste census should be conducted by the Centre," he added.

Speaking on the resolution, PMK MLA R Arul termed the move as "unnecessary" as the state government has powers to conduct caste census. His party favoured caste-wise census, he added. Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Edappadi K Palaniswami claimed that his government had initiated the process in 2020 but could not complete the task due to change of regime.

## 3 terrorists killed in gunfight

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhaderwah/Jammu, June 26:** Three terrorists, suspected to be affiliated with the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit, were killed in a gunfight that lasted for more than six hours in a forest area in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district Wednesday, police officials said.

A policeman was also injured in the gunfight that broke out in Bajaan village in the Gandoh area around 9:50 am amid an intensified cordon-and-search operation launched by the police, Army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), following twin terrorist attacks in the hill district June 11 and 12, the officials added.

Six security personnel were injured when terrorists attacked a joint check post at Chattargalla June 11, while a policeman was hurt in a gunfight with terrorists at the Kota top in Gandoh the next day.

After the twin attacks, the security forces intensified their anti-terrorist operations and announced a cash reward of ₹5 lakh each on information about four Pakistani terrorists believed to have infiltrated into the district. During an operation in a village in Sinoo panchayat, the forces came under



heavy fire from the terrorists hiding in a "dhok" (mud house) on a slope, the officials said, adding that one ultra was killed in the retaliatory fire after he came out and started firing on the search parties. Heavy gunfire and explosions rattled the village as two more terrorists were eliminated by the security forces as the day progressed, the officials said, adding that a huge quantity of arms and ammunition, including two M4 carbines and an AK-series assault rifle, were seized from the possession of the slain terrorists. The identity and group affiliation of the slain ultras could not be ascertained immediately, they said.

However, the officials added that according to a preliminary investigation, the terrorists believed to have recently infiltrated from across the border are JeM members and likely from Pakistan. An Army helicopter was also seen hovering over the area for surveillance during the encounter, the officials said.

## CBI quizzes Hazaribag school principal in NEET 'paper-leak' case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hazaribag, June 26:** A CBI team Wednesday visited a school in Jharkhand's Hazaribag and quizzed its principal in connection with the alleged irregularities in medical entrance test NEET, an official said.

The CBI team interrogated the principal of Oasis School Dr Ehsanul Haque, who was the district coordinator of the NEET-UG exam in Hazaribag, for several hours and took him to a Charhi-based guest house in Hazaribag where he and a few other persons were reportedly quizzed till late evening, sources said.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Hazaribag Sadar, Kumar Shivashish said that they came to know about the investigation from other sources but they have not been officially communicated in this regard.

An eight-member team visited the school Wednesday and some of the team members also visited the main branch of the State Bank of India (SBI) in the district, as the manager of the bank was reportedly the custodian of the question papers.



Sadhus eat as they wait to be registered for the Amarnath Yatra at a base camp in Jammu. Amarnath Yatra for 2024 is scheduled to begin from June 29

## EAM Jaishankar meets Myanmar's deputy PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Wednesday conveyed to his Myanmarese counterpart U Than Shwe India's "deep concern" over the impact of violence and instability in Myanmar on the Indian border and sought cooperation for early return of Indians trapped in Myawaddy



town. Jaishankar met Shwe, also Myanmar's deputy prime minister, in Delhi, in the first publicly acknowledged engagement in India with a senior leader

of the military junta since it seized power in a coup February 1, 2021. Shwe was transiting through New Delhi while returning to Myanmar from a foreign trip. In a post on X following the meeting, Jaishankar said he pressed for "credible security" to India's ongoing projects in Myanmar and called for early return to the path of democratic transition in that country.

# 80% of marginal farmers affected by adverse climatic events: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** A staggering 80 per cent of marginal farmers in India have suffered crop losses due to adverse climatic events over the past five years, according to a report released Tuesday.

The survey, conducted by the Forum of Enterprises for Equitable Development (FEED) in collaboration with the Development Intelligence Unit (DIU), included 6,615 farmers across 21 states.

Conversely, scant rainfall has delayed the planting of various crops such as rice, corn, cotton, soybeans, groundnuts, and pulses in states like Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and West Bengal. The report, however, doesn't capture the impact of temperature variability.

In 2022, an early onslaught of heat waves impacted wheat crop in India with the production declining to 107.7 million tonnes from 109.59 million tonnes in 2021. This prompted the country, the world's second-largest wheat producer, to ban exports. The heat impacted wheat output again in 2023, with the official target down by almost 3 million tonnes.

The Climate Transparency Report of 2021 said that rice production could decline by 10 to 30 per cent, and maize production could dip by 25 to 70 per cent with temperature increases in the range of 1 to 4 degrees Celsius. Marginal farmers, those with less than one hectare of land, constitute the largest segment of India's agricultural sector, representing 68.5 per cent of all farmers but owning only about 24 per cent of the crop area. "Climate change is no longer



a threat somewhere on the horizon. It is here and now. The unprecedented summer heat in the NCR and across India this year is a clear indication of this crisis. Developing an adaptation strategy is not optional but essential. We need to promote climate-resilient agricultural practices, diversify livelihoods, and

improve access to financial services and technical advice," said Sanjeev Chopra, Chairperson of FEED.

The report highlighted significant gaps in support systems for marginal farmers. Although 83 per cent of them are covered under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, only 35 per cent

THE FINDINGS REVEAL THAT THE PRIMARY CAUSES OF CROP DAMAGE WERE DROUGHT (41 PER CENT), IRREGULAR RAINFALL INCLUDING EXCESSIVE OR NON-SEASONAL RAINS (32 PER CENT), AND EARLY WITHDRAWAL OR LATE ARRIVAL OF THE MONSOONS (24 PER CENT)

ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, NEARLY 43 PER CENT OF THE SURVEYED FARMERS LOST AT LEAST HALF OF THEIR STANDING CROPS

RICE, VEGETABLES, AND PULSES WERE PARTICULARLY AFFECTED BY UNEVEN RAINFALL

IN THE NORTHERN STATES, PADDY FIELDS OFTEN REMAIN SUBMERGED FOR MORE THAN A WEEK, DESTROYING NEWLY PLANTED SEEDLINGS

have access to crop insurance, and a mere 25 per cent receive

timely financial credit. The survey also found that two-thirds of the marginal farmers affected by extreme weather events have adopted climate-resilient agricultural practices, including changes in sowing time and methods, crop duration, and water and disease management strategies.

However, 76 per cent of those who adopted these practices faced challenges such as lack of credit facilities, physical resources, limited knowledge, small land holdings, and high up-front costs. While 21 per cent of the marginal farmers have cold storage within 10 km of their village, only 15 per cent have used these facilities.

Although 48 per cent have a custom hiring centre within 10 km of their village, only 22 per cent have hired equipment from these centres.



# international



If their (PTI) founder is facing troubles in jail, then I reiterate, come, let's sit down and talk. Let us sit together to take the country ahead. Let us talk for the betterment of the country. There is no other way forward SHEHBAZ SHARIF | PM, PAKISTAN

## BIG MOVE BEFORE ELECTION

France's government ordered the dissolution of extreme right and radical Muslim groups, four days before the first round of high-stakes legislative elections



## of the day quote

A reduction in drug addiction is not achieved by liberalizing drug use, as has been proposed, or already implemented, in some countries. This is a fantasy. You liberalise, they just consume more

POPE FRANCIS | HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We are keen to work with all partners, with Australia and China on how we can partner together to create transformational projects and programs in Solomon Islands that create jobs

JEREMIAH MANELE | PM, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Turkey stands with the brotherly people and state of Lebanon. I call on other countries in the region to stand in solidarity with Lebanon

TAYYIP ERDOGAN | PRESIDENT, TURKEY

# Assange finally free, flies to Oz

His arrival to Australia ends a saga in which he spent more than five years in a British high-security jail and seven years in asylum to Sweden on sexual assault allegations and to the US, where he faced 18 criminal charges

REUTERS

Canberra, June 26: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange landed to an ecstatic welcome in Australia Wednesday after pleading guilty to violating US espionage law in a deal that sets him free from a 14-year legal battle.

Assange disembarked from a private jet at Canberra airport just after 7:30 pm, waving to waiting media and cheering supporters before passionately kissing his wife, Stella, and lifting her off the ground.

He embraced his father before entering the terminal building with his legal team.

Australia Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who has lobbied for years to free Assange, said he had spoken to him by phone after his plane landed.

"I had a very warm discussion with him this evening, he was very generous in his praise of the Australian government's efforts," Albanese told a news conference.

"The Australian government stands up for Australian citizens, that's what we do."



Working as a journalist I encouraged my source to provide information that was said to be classified in order to publish that information. I believed the First Amendment protected that activity but I accept that it was a violation of the espionage statute JULIAN ASSANGE | WIKILEAKS FOUNDER

Assange's arrival ends a saga in which he spent more than five years in a British high-security jail and seven years in asylum at the Ecuadorean embassy in London battling extradition to Sweden on sexual assault allegations and to the US,

where he faced 18 criminal charges.

Those charges stemmed from WikiLeaks' release in 2010 of hundreds of thousands of classified US military documents on Washington's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, one of

the largest breaches of secret information in US history.

During a three-hour hearing held earlier in the US territory of Saipan, Assange pleaded guilty to one criminal count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified national defence documents but said he had believed the US Constitution's First Amendment, which protects free speech, shielded his activities.

"Working as a journalist I encouraged my source to provide information that was said to be classified in order to publish that information," he told the court.

"I believed the First Amendment protected that activity but I accept that it was...a violation of the espionage statute."

Chief US District Judge Ramona V. Manglona accepted his guilty plea, noting that the US government indicated there was no personal victim from Assange's actions.

HAILED AS HERO

While the US government viewed Assange as reckless for putting its agents at risk of harm by publishing their names, his supporters hailed him as a hero

for promoting free speech and exposing war crimes.

"We firmly believe that Assange never should have been charged under the Espionage Act and engaged in an exercise that journalists engage in every day," his US lawyer, Barry Pollack, told reporters outside the court.

He said WikiLeaks' work would continue. Assange's UK and Australian lawyer Jennifer Robinson thanked the Australian government for securing Assange's release. His father, John Shipton, told Reuters he was relieved.

Assange had agreed to plead guilty to a single criminal count, according to filings in the US District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The US territory in the western Pacific was chosen due to his opposition to travelling to the mainland US and for its proximity to Australia, prosecutors said.

Assange spent more than five years in what Judge Manglona called one of Britain's harshest prisons and seven years holed up in the Ecuadorean embassy in London as he fought extradition.

## Dutch PM to be next NATO chief

REUTERS

Brussels, June 26: NATO Wednesday selected Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte as NATO's next boss, as the war in Ukraine rages on its doorstep and uncertainty hangs over the United States' future attitude to the transatlantic alliance.

Rutte's appointment became a formality after his only rival for the post, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, announced last week that he had quit the race, having failed to gain traction. Rutte will take over October 1 from Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, who is stepping down after a decade in the post.

Ambassadors from the alliance's 32 members took the decision at a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels.



Rutte said he looked forward to taking up the job "with great vigour".

"The Alliance is and will remain the cornerstone of our collective security. Leading this organisation is a responsibility I do not take lightly," he posted on X.

After declaring his interest in the post last year, Rutte gained early support from key members of the alliance including the United States, Britain, France and Germany.

Others were more reticent, particularly Eastern European countries which argued the post should go to someone from their region for the first time.

But they ultimately ceded in behind Rutte, a fierce critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin and a staunch ally of Ukraine.

Stoltenberg said he warmly welcomed the selection of Rutte as his successor.

"Mark is a true transatlanticist, a strong leader, and a consensus-builder," he said. "I know I am leaving NATO in good hands."

NATO takes decisions by consensus so Rutte, who is bowing out of Dutch politics after nearly 14 years as Prime Minister, could only be confirmed once all 32 alliance members gave him their backing.

## SHORT TAKES

### EU sanctions Belarus

Brussels: European Union countries agreed a sanctions package against Belarus Wednesday, EU diplomats and Belgium said, to try to close off a route to avoiding restrictions on Russia. The EU adopted this week its 14th package of sanctions to punish Russia for its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which included clauses that increased responsibility on EU companies exporting via non-EU countries. "This package will strengthen our measures in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including combating circumvention of sanctions," Belgium, which holds the EU presidency until the end of June, said on X.

### PIO jailed in S'pore

Singapore: A 25-year-old Indian-origin man in Singapore was sentenced to more than a year in jail and fined SGD 2,000 for his involvement in a rival gang-inspired brawl at a hotel here in 2023 in which one person was killed. Sharvin Jay Nair pleaded guilty Tuesday to one charge of voluntarily causing hurt to Mohammad Issrat Mohd Ismail, who died following a brawl at a hotel in the tourist belt of Orchard Road, The Straits Times newspaper reported.

### Heatwave in Pak kills 450 in 4 days

Karachi: A searing heat wave that has hit Pakistan's biggest city has led to the death of at least 450 people over the last four days, a leading NGO claimed Wednesday. The Edhi Foundation said it received at least 427 bodies in the last four days excluding Wednesday while the Sindh government had Tuesday released 23 bodies in three government hospitals. Karachi, Pakistan's port city, has been hit by extreme hot weather since Saturday with soaring mercury crossing 40 degrees Celsius for the third consecutive day Wednesday, temperatures that are too high for a coastal areas.

### ICC convicts al-Qaida leader

The Hague: The International Criminal Court has convicted an al-Qaida-linked Islamic extremist leader of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Mali's Timbuktu. Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud was accused of playing a key role in a reign of terror unleashed by insurgents on the historic desert city in northern Mali in 2012. He was accused of involvement in crimes including rape, torture, persecution, enforced marriages and sexual slavery.

## India slams Pak for raising Kashmir issue at UNGA

Under the 1972 Simla Agreement signed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then Pakistan's President and India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Kashmir and all disputes between the neighbours are bilateral matters



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

United Nations, June 26: India has dismissed Pakistan's attempt to inject Kashmir into a discussion of the workings of the Security Council as an undignified misuse of the General Assembly forum.

Pratik Mathur, a minister at India's UN mission, reacting to Pakistan bringing up Kashmir, said that it "misused this forum to spread baseless and deceitful narratives, which is not a surprise."

"I will not dignify these remarks with any response just to save valuable time of this august body," he added wryly.

Mathur, who did not name Pakistan and referred to it as "one delegation" was reacting to Pakistan's Representative Munir Akram's suggestion to set up a Security Council body to monitor the implementation of its resolutions on Kashmir.

But the target of his condescending dismissal was clear.

Regardless of the topic under

discussion or its relevance, Pakistan consistently brings up Kashmir.

While India does directly take on Pakistan by naming it by exercising its formal right of reply on major issues, New Delhi does not name it on other occasions like Tuesday to deprive Islamabad of an opportunity to prolong the issue, which is ignored by almost all the other 192 members of the UN, but at the same time making a clear rebuttal.

Because Kashmir does not get traction at the UN, Akram repeatedly tries to link it to Palestine, as he did Tuesday, but with no effect.

Pakistan's former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has himself pathetically admitted Islamabad's failure to get support for its cause.

"We face a particularly uphill task to try and get Kashmir onto the centre of the agenda at the United Nations", he said at a news conference here last year.

## DEADLY PROTEST

# Kenya Prez takes U-turn on tax rises

The death toll rises to 23 a day after Kenyan protesters stormed parliament

REUTERS

Nairobi, June 26: Kenya's President Wednesday withdrew planned tax rises, bowing to pressure from protesters who had stormed parliament, launched demonstrations across the country and threatened more action this week.

William Ruto said he would not sign a finance bill including the hikes a day after violent clashes between police and protesters at the assembly and nationwide left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded, according to medics.

"Listening keenly to the people of Kenya who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this finance bill 2024, I concede. And therefore, I will not sign the 2024 finance bill, and it shall subsequently be withdrawn,"



he said in a televised address.

Ruto said he would now start a dialogue with Kenyan youth, without going into details, and work on austerity measures, starting with cuts to the budget of the presidency, to make up the difference in the country's finances.

The move will be seen as a major victory for a week-old protest movement that grew from online condemnations of tax increases into mass rallies demanding a political overhaul, in the most serious crisis of Ruto's two-year-old presidency.

It may see off the immediate

## India issues advisory

India has advised its citizens in Kenya to exercise utmost caution and restrict non-essential movement amid violent protests in the East African nation against the government's proposed tax hikes. "In view of the prevailing tense situation, all Indians in Kenya are advised to exercise utmost caution, restrict non-essential movement and avoid the areas affected by the protests and violence till the situation clears up," the Indian consulate in Kenya said in an advisory posted on social media platform X.

threat of more unrest, but leaves Ruto still caught between the competing demands of his hard-pressed citizens and of lenders such as the IMF, which is urging the government to cut deficits to obtain more financing.

# UK election betting scandal now engulfs Oppn

According to reports, around 15 Tory candidates may be under the scanner of the country's independent gambling watchdog

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, June 26: The escalating scandal of candidates placing general election-related bets has widened from the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak-led Conservative Party to engulf the Opposition Labour Party after its leader, Keir Starmer, suspended one of his candidates for betting against himself ahead of the July 4 polls.

Kevin Craig is running to become Labour's Member of Parliament for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich in eastern England, considered a safe Conservative seat. It was previously held by Dan Poulter, who defected from the Tories to Labour ahead of the election before exiting politics.

On Tuesday, Craig took to social media to confirm his "huge mistake" of betting in favour of



the Tories holding on to their stronghold.

"A few weeks ago when I thought I would never win this seat I put a bet on the Tories to win here with the intention of giving any winnings to local charities," said the now-sus-

pended Labour candidate.

"While I did not place this bet with any prior knowledge of the outcome, this was a huge mistake, for which I apologise unreservedly," he said.

As in the case of any suspended Tory MPs, the party symbol will appear beside his name in the ballot papers at this late stage in the campaign but he would be considered an Independent MP if elected. Meanwhile, he has said he will comply fully with a Gambling Commission's investigation into this bet and "will take the consequences of this stupid error of judgement on the chin."

# UN warns of overdose deaths after Afghan opium ban

PRELIMINARY FIELD OBSERVATIONS INDICATE A POSSIBLE SLIGHT INCREASE IN AFGHAN OPIUM CULTIVATION THIS YEAR BUT IT IS UNLIKELY TO RETURN TO PRE-BAN LEVELS, THE UNODC SAYS

REUTERS

Vienna, June 26: The Taliban-ordered crash in opium production in Afghanistan, long the world's dominant supplier, could drive up overdose deaths as heroin users switch to synthetic opioids already proving deadly in Europe, a UN report said Wednesday.

The cultivation of opium, from which heroin is made, fell by 95% in Afghanistan last year after the Taliban banned the

production of narcotics in 2022. Although opium production in Myanmar increased by 36% last year, it still fell globally by 75%, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in its annual World Drug Report published Wednesday.

"The result of a prolonged shortage of Afghan opiates could have multiple consequences in Afghanistan and in countries of transit and destination for Afghan opiates. The purity of heroin on the market is expected



to decline," the UNODC said. Preliminary field observations indicate a possible slight increase in Afghan opium cultivation this year but it is unlikely to return to pre-ban levels, the

UNODC said.

While there were "no real shortages" in the main destination markets for Afghan opiates such as Europe, the Middle East and South Asia were re-

ported until early 2024, that could change if future harvests remain small, it added.

"Demand for opiate treatment services, including for methadone, buprenorphine, and slow-release morphine treatment, may rise, but if these services are insufficient, heroin users may switch to other opioids," the report said, outlining the potential impact of reduced opiate supply.

"Such a switch may pose significant risks to health and lead to an increase in overdoses, especially if the alternative opioids include highly potent substances such as some fentanyl analogues or nitazenes that have already emerged in some European countries in recent years," it added.

Overdose deaths from nitazenes, a type of synthetic opioid more potent than fentanyl, have been reported in Ireland, Britain, Estonia and Latvia, UNODC research chief Angela Me told reporters.

Typically a heroin user will buy what they think is heroin but it will have been cut with far cheaper and more potent nitazenes, Me said. The drug is then detected when tests are performed after the overdose death.

The sprawling report also said cocaine supply hit a record high in 2022, the latest year for which data is available. While consumption in the United States appeared to fall, wastewater tests showed consumption increasing in Europe.



## of the day quote

With the establishment of our own plant in Brazil, we have achieved a quantum shift in our local capability to fulfil demand. Our Dominar brand has received an outstanding reception since its launch 18 months ago

**RAKESH SHARMA** | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BAJAJ AUTO

The demand for quality office spaces continues to surge, reflecting the confidence of occupiers and investors alike. Anticipated easing of global financial headwinds and continued resilience in domestic economy augurs well for sustained growth in India's office market

**ARPIT MEHROTRA** | MD (OFFICE SERVICES), COLLIERS

The Indian data centre industry has been witnessing exponential growth over the past few years. This is fuelled by rapid expansion especially post-Covid, in digital penetration levels and adoption of new-age technologies including 5G, cloud computing, IoT, and Generative AI

**VIVEK DAHIYA** | MD & HEAD DATA CENTRE ADVISORY TEAM, CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

## SHORT TAKES

### Vedanta divests 2.6% stake in Indian unit

**New Delhi:** Vedanta Resources Wednesday divested a 2.6 per cent stake in its Indian mining arm, Vedanta Ltd, for Rs 4,184 crore through an open market transaction. Finsider International Company Ltd, an affiliate of Vedanta Resources, offloaded shares of Vedanta Ltd through a bulk deal on the BSE. Finsider is one of the promoter entities of Vedanta Ltd. According to the bulk deal data available with the BSE, Finsider International Company sold 9,79,45,940 shares or 2.63 per cent stake in Vedanta Ltd. The shares were disposed of at an average price of Rs 427.21 apiece, taking the transaction size to Rs 4,184.35 crore. After the stake sale, the combined shareholding of promoter and promoter group entities of Vedanta has declined to 59.32 per cent from 61.95 per cent.

### Infra projects: SBI raises ₹10K-cr

**New Delhi:** State Bank of India (SBI) Wednesday raised Rs 10,000 crore through its fifth infrastructure bond issuance. The country's largest lender raised the funds at a coupon rate of 7.36 per cent. The issue attracted overwhelming response from investors with bids in excess of Rs 19,884 crore and was oversubscribed by around four times against the base issue size of Rs 5,000 crore, SBI said in a regulatory filing. The total number of bids received was 143, indicating wider participation with heterogeneity of bids, it said.

### Proceedings against BYJU'S 'still ongoing'

**New Delhi:** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs Wednesday said proceedings initiated against edtech player BYJU'S under the companies law are "still ongoing" and a final conclusion cannot be drawn in the matter at this stage. Last year, the ministry ordered the inspection of the books of BYJU'S in the wake of various developments at the edtech company, including its inability to finalise the statements and the resignation of an auditor. In a statement Wednesday, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) said reports claiming that BYJU'S has been cleared of financial fraud in an ongoing investigation by it are "factually incorrect and misleading".



**Granting infrastructure status to hotels and convention centers across all cities is crucial for attracting investments and accelerating growth in the hospitality sector**

**PRADEEP SHETTY** | PRESIDENT, FHRAI

## DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Tata Steel aims at having a minimum of 25 per cent of its workforce made up of diverse groups, including gender minorities, marginalised communities, persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ individuals, within the next few years, a company official said. It is one of the first companies in the country to roll out a special recruitment drive for transgender talent



# Spectrum sale fetches ₹11,341cr

## BHARTI AIRTEL EMERGES AS THE BIGGEST BIDDER CORNERING ABOUT 60% OF THE AUCTION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** Telecom czar Sunil Bharti Mittal's Airtel Wednesday emerged as the biggest bidder for radio waves used to transmit mobile phone voice and data signals, cornering about 60 per cent of the Rs 11,341 crore worth of spectrum sold in an auction that ended within two days.

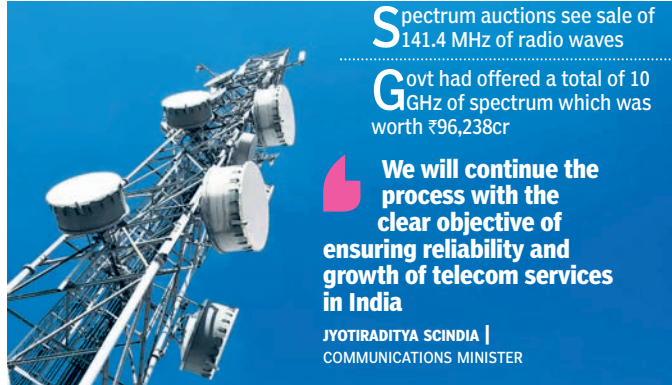
While Bharti Airtel bid and won airwaves worth Rs 6,856.76 crore, rival Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio - the market leader - got Rs 973.62 crore worth of spectrum - the least in the three-corner contest.

Vodafone Idea, the struggling telecom operator that recently got a fresh lease of life through India's biggest follow on share sale, bagged spectrum valued Rs 3,510.4 crore.

An official statement said, in all 141.4 MHz of radio waves were sold for Rs 11,340.78 crore.

The government had offered a total of 10 GHz of spectrum ranging between 800 MHz to 26 GHz, which was worth Rs 96,238 crore at the base or auction start price. However, only a small amount of the spectrum on offer got sold in seven rounds of auction.

Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea have successfully renewed their expired spectrum in 900 MHz and 1,800 MHz bands, and further an additional quantum of 87.2 MHz worth Rs 6,164.88 cr has been acquired by telcos to augment their services.



Spectrum auctions see sale of 141.4 MHz of radio waves  
Govt had offered a total of 10 GHz of spectrum which was worth ₹96,238cr

We will continue the process with the clear objective of ensuring reliability and growth of telecom services in India

**JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA** | COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER

"Spectrum auction 2024 was part of a continuous allocation process that is transparent, robust and progressive. Telecom service providers (TSPs) have taken spectrum not only for continuity of service but for expanding their services but the volume is limited because already a large part of the spectrum required was auctioned only last year," Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia told reporters here.

The bidding went above the reserve price in West Bengal and Bihar in 1,800 MHz band.

In all, the realisations from the 2024 auction works out to just about 12 per cent of Rs 96,238 crore minimum value that the government had estimated for the spectrum on offer. However, Telecom Department sources said that this is in line or even slightly above expectations, given that deposits (EMDs) by telcos just ahead of the auction gave a clear indication of the extent of

participation and sale. Further, almost 99 per cent of the spectrum on the block did not see much interest, as telcos had already picked up spectrum in those specific bands in the last auction conducted in August 2022.

Bharti Airtel, the top bidder, bought 97 MHz of radio frequency for mobile services for Rs 6,856.76 crore.

Notably, debt-ridden Vodafone Idea bought 30 Mhz of spectrum for Rs 3,510.4 crore and Reliance Jio Infocomm bought 14.4 Mhz for Rs 973.62 crore.

"Bharti Airtel Limited, Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited and Vodafone Idea Limited have successfully bid and taken spectrum in this auction also for growth and continuity of services," the statement said.

According to it, the level of response to the auction was on account of most of the 5G spectrum getting sold in the auctions that were held in August 2022 and their monetisation still in progress.

"As auction for 5G spectrum was held recently & 5G monetisation is still in progress, no bidding took place in 800 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 3,300 MHz and 26 GHz bands. A total quantum of 141.4 MHz (26.5 per cent) was sold from the balance 533.6 MHz spectrum. This is despite the fact that a very large amount of spectrum, that is, 51.2 Ghz of spectrum was sold in August 2022," the statement said.

In all, available spectrum in 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 2,500 MHz, 3,300 MHz, and 26 GHz bands were put to auction. Of these, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz and 2,500 MHz bands caught telcos' fancy.

The unsold spectrum will again be put to auction next time, it said.

## BIG DREAMS OF TELECOM BOSSES

Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO of Bharti Airtel, said the company continues to judiciously acquire the right amount of spectrum to deliver the best possible experience to its customers. "In this auction, we have bolstered our sub-giga hertz and mid-band holding which will significantly improve our coverage especially indoor," Vittal said. A statement by Jio said the company has consolidated its leadership position by acquiring the right to use spectrum in the 1,800 MHz band in the circles of Bihar and West Bengal. Akash M Ambani, Chairman, Reliance Jio Infocomm, said the company has already demonstrated its commitment to the Digital India vision by rolling out one of the world's fastest and widest stand-alone 5G networks within 12 months of allotment of spec-

trum. "This new spectrum acquisition will continue to enable us serving aspirations of the new India, in terms of growing traffic demands and superior customer experience, which is no longer limited to only urban markets," Ambani said. Akshaya Moondra, CEO, Vodafone Idea, said the company has strategically acquired spectrum in the select markets to enhance and strengthen its overall spectrum portfolio. "This acquisition will enable us to effectively use dedicated sub GHz spectrum towards advanced technologies to enhance the experience we offer to our customers. As VIL embarks on its growth journey with the fund-raising plan in place, this spectrum acquisition will further strengthen its competitive position in the market," Moondra said.

## STRONG OUTLOOK

### P-note investment surges to ₹1.49L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, June 26:** Investments through participatory notes in the Indian capital markets rose to Rs 1.49 lakh crore at the end of March from the previous year's level driven by a strong domestic macroeconomic outlook.

The latest data includes the value of P-note investments in Indian equity, debt, and hybrid securities.

Participatory notes (P-notes) are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to the latest data from markets regulator Sebi, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets - equity, debt, and hybrid securities - stood at Rs 1,49,120 crore at the end of March 2024, way higher than Rs 88,600 crore in March-end 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, the investment number slightly slipped from Rs 1,49,517 crore at the end of February.

The growth in P-notes generally aligns with the trend in FPI flows. When there is a global risk to the environment, investment through this route increases, and vice-versa.

Market experts said that the influx in March can be attributed to positive economic growth. India's economic growth accelerated to 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2023-24, mainly due to good performance by the manufacturing, mining & quarrying and construction sectors.

## Drop in trade deficit, rise in remittances aid current account surplus, says CRISIL

India's current account recorded a surplus of \$5.7bn, which is 0.6% of GDP in Q4

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, June 26:** India's current account surplus in the fourth quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal was aided by narrowing of the merchandise trade deficit, an increase in remittances and a surplus in services trade, according to a CRISIL report released Wednesday.

The country's current account recorded a surplus of \$5.7 billion, which is 0.6 per cent of the GDP, in the fourth quarter of the last financial year. It was in deficit of \$8.7 billion, equivalent to one per cent of GDP, in the third quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal, the report said.

In the corresponding fourth quarter of 2022-23, the country's current account was also in deficit of \$1.3 billion, which was 0.2 per cent of the GDP.

"The improvement in current account balance to 0.6 per cent of GDP surplus in Q4 fiscal 2024, from a deficit of 0.2 per cent of GDP a year ago reflects improvement on all three fronts ie merchandise trade deficit nar-



rowed, services trade surplus increased and remittances rose," the CRISIL report said.

Financial flows also increased leading to accretion in foreign exchange reserves during the fourth quarter amounting to \$30.8 billion, it said. The country's foreign reserves, as of June 14, 2024, stood at \$652.9 billion.

The report said even though the FDI inflows continued, there has also been a rise in outward FDI, leading to a reduction in net flows, the report said.

Healthy momentum in goods exports and expected moderation in imports suggest that the current account deficit (CAD) is likely to remain manageable this financial year (2024-25) as well.

Strong external buffers are crucial at this juncture because of global risks stemming from geopolitical uncertainties, tariff and trade wars have heightened, the report added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, June 26:** Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied for the third straight session and ended at their fresh all-time high levels Wednesday in tandem with Asian peers and buying in Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 620.73 points or 0.80 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,674.25. During the day, it rallied 705.88 points or 0.90 per cent to hit a fresh all-time high of 78,759.40.

The Nifty went up by 147.50 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 23,868.80. Intra-day, it surged 168.6 points or 0.71 per cent to hit the fresh lifetime high of 23,889.90.

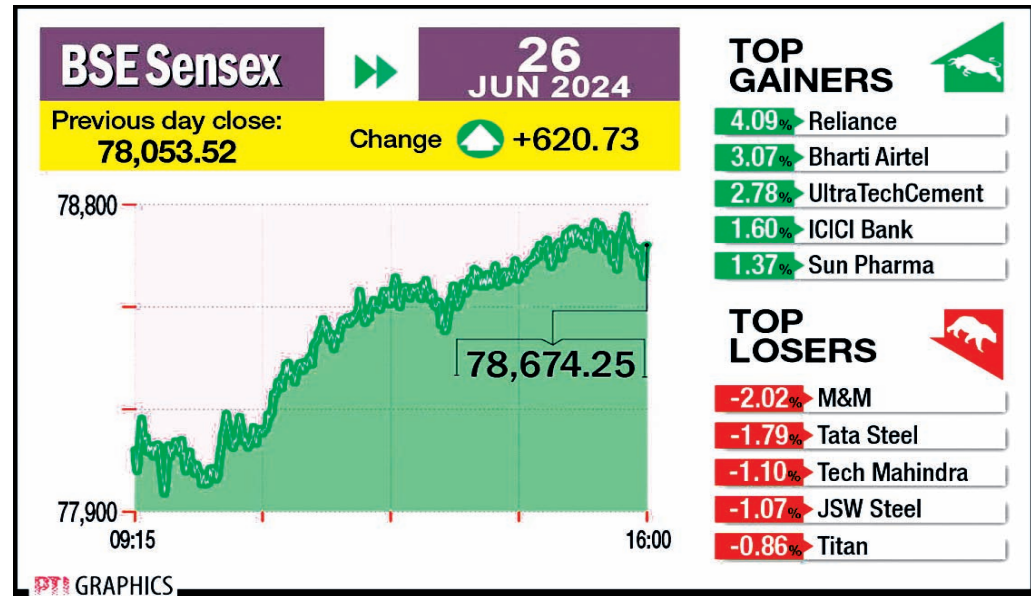
Among the 30 Sensex companies, Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, Adani Ports, Axis Bank, NTPC and Bajaj Finance were the biggest gainers.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra and JSW Steel were among the laggards.

"The domestic market hit a new peak, bolstered by a rally in large-cap stocks, where the valuation is relatively fair. In contrast, mid and smallcap stocks saw profit-taking due to valua-

## MARKETS ON RECORD RALLY

SENSEX, NIFTY SETTLE AT NEW ALL-TIME HIGH LEVELS



tion concerns. Currently, the financials & consumption stocks are catching up driven by improved balance sheets, a strong GDP growth forecast, and softening inflation. Global market sentiments reflected similar trends, with a consensus on imminent rate cuts," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.15 per cent while midcap index declined 0.29 per cent. Among the indices, telecommunication jumped 2.30 per cent, energy (1.45 per cent), teck (0.78 per cent), bankex (0.58 per cent) and services (0.46 per cent). Commodities, consumer discretionary, IT and auto were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains. European

markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended mostly higher Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.80 per cent to \$85.69 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,175.91 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 78,053.52 Tuesday. The Nifty went up by 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at 23,721.30.

## Hyundai IPO banks set for India's 2nd biggest payday

Hyundai Motor IPO could be the nation's biggest and will see the South Korean parent raise around \$2.5-\$3bn at a valuation for the unit of up to \$30bn

REUTERS

**Mumbai, June 26:** Banks advising South Korean automaker Hyundai on its India IPO are set to make as much as \$40 million in fees, three sources said, a windfall in a market where banks typically struggle to make money given cost-conscious clients and fewer big deals.

That would be the second-highest fee pot ever for investment banks working on an initial public offering (IPO) in India and it comes amid a sharp surge in equity deals in the country, making it a bright spot in an

otherwise dull Asia. Hyundai Motor's India unit this month filed for regulatory approval for a listing, which could be the nation's biggest and will see the South Korean parent raise around \$2.5-\$3 billion at a valuation for the unit of up to \$30 billion.

Hyundai India will pay banks, including JPMorgan, Citigroup and HSBC, 1.3% of the IPO size, the sources, who have direct knowledge of the deal discussions, said on condition of anonymity as the talks are confidential.

That translates to \$40 million for a single deal at the top end of the deal size, making it the second best payday for banks after Indian fintech firm Paytm's 2021 IPO yielded \$44 million for its seven advisers, Dealogic data shows.

Banks in India get between 1% and 3% of an IPO size as fees, with larger deals giving more bargaining power to the

BANKS ADVISING HYUNDAI ON ITS IPO ARE SET TO MAKE AS MUCH AS \$40MM IN FEES  
HYUNDAI TO PAY 1.3% OF IPO TO BANKS, LOWER THAN US, HONG KONG, SOURCES SAY  
BANKERS SEE TIDE TURNING AFTER YEARS OF LOW-PAYING DEALS



issuers. An IPO worth about \$3 billion would see banks in New York earning 3%-3.5% in fees, while it could be 2%-3% in Hong Kong. Historically most big equity deals in India have come from state-owned companies that, bankers say, offer very low fees.

Western bankers privately complain about the Indian market's low revenue potential, but

they expect that to change in the coming years with both the size of deals and fees going up.

A \$40 million payout from the Hyundai India IPO would represent a fourth of India's total IPO fee income of \$164 million in 2023, according to Dealogic. Indian brokerages IIFL and Kotak Mahindra, and Jefferies topped the country's IPO fee

There is money to be made in India, and this (Hyundai IPO) is the start of a movement. More and more global banks believe there is an opportunity here

UTPAL OZA | FORMER HEAD, NOMURA INDIA

league table last year, London Stock Exchange Group data showed.

India's IPO fee rose 55% to hit \$164 million last year, with a record 234 companies listing. Banks in New York earned \$890 million while Hong Kong IPO fees totalled \$135 million last year, according to data from Dealogic.

"START OF A MOVEMENT" For Hyundai's India IPO, the fee split among its advising banks has not been decided yet, but typically lead managers get the lion's share. JPMorgan, Citi and HSBC are

the lead banks on the Hyundai India IPO, three sources said. Other banks on the deal include Morgan Stanley and India's Kotak, they said.

At \$2.5 billion, the lower end of the expected size of the Hyundai India IPO which is likely to be launched in the second half of this year, banks would end up pocketing a combined \$33 million in fees, still the second best IPO fee in the country.

Bankers are betting on a surge in big ticket, private company IPOs as well as investment banking fees in India over the next few years as valuations grow and foreign funds chase Indian equities amid an uncertain economic outlook in China.

Jefferies Financial Group expects investment banking fees in India to rise in the next couple of years as the number of deals grows, its country head said in December last year.



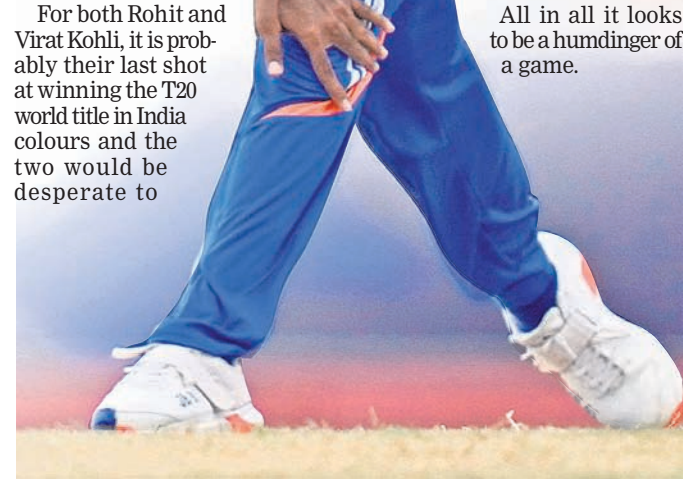
# Humdinger on cards

19 months after Adelaide defeat Men in Blue with aggressive intent ready for England challenge



the middle overs and they are expected to do a repeat act Thursday also. However, Ravindra Jadeja, who so far has had an underwhelming tournament, will also have to contribute. On paper, Rohit Sharma and his men look the stronger bunch for the conditions expected at the Providence Stadium and look primed for revenge. Spinners are not the only ones who will come into play; the pacers too have got success at the venue with Afghanistan speedster Fazalzaq Farooqi producing a match-winning spell against New Zealand at the start of the competition. For both Rohit and Virat Kohli, it is probably their last shot at winning the T20 world title in India colours and the two would be desperate to

leave a mark. May be the pressure of the semifinals will bring out the best in them and spur India on. The only worry for India in the tournament so far have been Shivam Dube. He has not batted as per expectations in the middle-order and it will be interesting to see how he fares against wily leg-spinner Adil Rashid. "Obviously, when we left England a few weeks ago, we left to come and obviously try and defend the title. To do that we have to beat tough opponents like India and we are looking forward to the challenge," England pacer Chris Jordan had said after the game against the USA. All in all it looks to be a humdinger of a game.



# Harmanpreet to lead hockey team at Paris



HI names 16-member squad with Amit Rohidas the only player from Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: Harmanpreet Singh was named Wednesday as captain and Hardik Singh his deputy as Hockey India (HI) announced a 16-member squad for next month's Paris Olympics. The team feature five Games debutants and a handful of seniors from the previous edition. The only player from Odisha in the squad is Amit Rohidas. India, who won a bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics 2020, are placed in Pool B alongside defending champions Belgium, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand and Ireland. It is a tough group, but a top-four finish will ensure a place in the quarterfinals. The Indian players are currently busy preparing for the Olympics at their national camp at the SAI Centre in Bangalore. The venerable goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and midfielder Manpreet Singh are set for their fourth Olympic appearance while skipper Harmanpreet is bracing up for his third Games. The five players who will make their

Olympics debut are Jarmanpreet Singh, Sanjay, Raj Kumar Pal, Abhishek and Sukhjeet Singh. Since their historic show in Tokyo, where the team won an Olympic medal after a gap of 41 years, Indian defenders Rupinderpal Singh and Birendra Lakra have retired whereas Suresh Kumar has been out of favour. "The selection process for the Paris Olympics squad was incredibly competitive due to the depth of talent within our ranks. However, I am confident that every player chosen will bring their best to Paris," head coach Craig Fulton was quoted as saying in a release issued by HI. "Each player selected has demonstrated exceptional skill, dedication, and resilience throughout our rigorous preparation phase. Our focus has been on building a cohesive team that can adapt to different playing styles and situations," he added.

**SQUAD**  
Goalkeeper: PR Sreejesh; Defenders: Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Harmanpreet Singh, Sumit, Sanjay; Midfielders: Rajkumar Pal, Shamsher Singh, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad; Forwards: Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Mandeep Singh, Gurjant Singh

AGENCIES

Georgetown (Guyana), June 26: Moeen Ali says 'it will be difficult' while Arshdeep Singh states that the aim is to 'enjoy the moment'. However, it will all boil down to 'sticking to plans' when India face England in the semifinals of the T20 World Cup here Thursday at the Providence Stadium. However, there is a third factor that might influence the context of the game. There are predictions of large-scale thunder showers here Thursday and the possibility of a washout. ICC hasn't kept a reserve day for the match. So what happens if there is a washout? In that case India will qualify as they finished on top of their group in the Super 8 while England finished second. There can be no doubt, that defending champions England will adopt an aggressive approach

against the Indian bowling attack. More so after skipper Jos Buttler's pyrotechnics in the game against the USA. However, India have also adopted a refreshingly attacking attitude in the tournament. It might boil down to which of the two bowling sides manage to contain the opposition. Both sides bat deep and hence the role of the bowlers will play a crucial role in deciding the fate of the game. The last time the two sides played in the semifinals of the T20 World Cup was at Adelaide in 2022 when the Buttler-Alex Hales cyclone blew India away

**Honestly I don't see India losing this time especially because of Jasprit Bumrah. No team have found an answer to him and his 24 deliveries hold the key to the game**  
PAUL COLLINGWOOD - FORMER PLAYER

**TIMINGS**  
6.00pm - Star Sports & Disney Hotstar

INDIA	MATCHES	ENGLAND
23	23	23
12	Won	11
6	Home won	5
4	Away won	5
2	Neutral	1

by 10 wickets. The chances of such a recurrence cannot be ruled out, but if the pundits of the game are to be believed, the pitch will have something for the bowlers, especially the spinners. And it is in this department that the Indians have a slight edge over their rivals. Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel have regularly been getting wickets in

## SHORT TAKES

### Head tops SKY

Dubai: Australia opener Travis Head has topped India's Suryakumar Yadav as the No.1 batter in the latest ICC T20 rankings that were announced Wednesday. The Australian is two points ahead of SKY (842 points). England's Phil Salt and the Pakistan duo of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan round up the top five batters. Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah jumped 44 places to zoom to 24th spot while spinner Kuldeep Yadav has also climbed 20 places to be just outside the top-10 at 11th. England's Adil Rashid remains on top of the bowling rankings.

## New innings

New Delhi: World Cup-winning former India cricket captain Kapil Dev has taken over as the new president of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), an elevation which marks a fresh beginning for the iconic player who also excelled as an amateur golfer. The 65-year-old, who was already a member of the PGTI board as its vice-president, was chosen unanimously and would be taking over from incumbent HR Srinivasan, officials stated here Wednesday. "It is an honour to become the president of PGTI, an organisation with which I have now been associated for quite a few years," Kapil said.

## All eyes on Praggn

Bucharest: World Championship challenger D Gukesh starts as the favourite to win his first major tournament since the triumph at the Candidates while R Praggnanandhaa will also eye success in the 2024 Grand Chess Tour (GCT), the sport's richest tournament, which begins here Thursday. The prestigious tourney attracts some of the world's top chess players, all vying for supremacy and a share of the significant prize fund.

## Raducanu wins

Eastbourne (UK): Emma Raducanu is in no rush these days. The 2021 US Open champion skipped the French Open and decided not to play at the Paris Olympics. She defeated Sloane Stephens 6-4, 6-0 in the first round of the grass-court Eastbourne International tennis tournament here Tuesday. The 21-year-old Raducanu wrote 'My own pace' on a courtside TV camera.

# Rohit wants team to remain calm

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Georgetown, June 26: India skipper Rohit Sharma said Wednesday his team are focussed on staying calm and keeping things simple in the high-pressure T20 World Cup semifinal against England here Thursday. He acknowledged that the team have battled a fear of failure in the past. The Indian team would look to extract revenge in the clash against England for the crushing 10-wicket loss it endured in the 2022 semifinal of the megagame at the Adelaide Oval. "It is a bit of both," said Rohit when asked whether his side have been let down by fear of failure or bad luck in its past quests for a world title. "We want to treat this as a normal game. We don't want to be talking about that it is a semifinal. We are enjoying each other's company and we need carry on. It is a knockout game. If you think too much it doesn't help," asserted Rohit.

The 37-year-old Mumbaier said he expects his teammates to play smart cricket. "Honestly not a lot has changed since 2022. We have tried to play with free mind, T20 and ODIs as well. It all depends on conditions which were challenging throughout the tournament here," pointed out Rohit. "We want to be a smart cricket team. I have kept things simple personally and for the players as well. We have done well with role clarity and rely on the players making good decisions on the field. Everyone knows they need to get the job done. We don't need to change from 2022 to 2024," Rohit added. The skipper said what has worked for him over the years is staying calm. "It is important to stay cool and calm. Staying calm has worked for me over the years. Sometimes you can lose cool as well. Indian cricket teams are always under pressure. Most of the guys are used to it," Rohit said.

**"I am ready to let you do what you want, but if it is at the cost of the team, I won't let it happen"**  
ROHIT SHARMA

# Argentina seal last 8 spot

88TH MINUTE WINNER HELPS WORLD CHAMPIONS BEAT CHILE

AGENCIES

New Jersey, June 26: Substitute Lautaro Martinez grabbed an 88th-minute winner as Argentina finally overcame Chile 1-0 to book their place in the quarterfinals of the Copa America here Tuesday. Lionel Messi hit the post for Argentina in the first half but the World Cup winners had their goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez to thank for keeping them on level terms before Lautaro's late strike settled a pulsating clash in front of 82,000 fans at MetLife Stadium here. There were enough openings for the 15-time Copa America champions to get the breakthrough much earlier but a combination of poor finishing and an inspired performance from Chile's 41-year-old goalkeeper Claudio Bravo left the score deadlocked. Messi's strike partner Julian Alvarez forced Bravo into a save in the 22nd minute with a first-time shot after Nicolas Gonzalez had pulled the ball back from the byline. Chile were doing a good job of neutralising Messi, closing him down with three players on occasions. But the eight-time Ballon



Lautaro Martinez goes on a joyous run after scoring against Chile, Tuesday

d'Or winner was inches away from an opener in the 36th minute with a shot from 25 yards which clipped the outside of the post. But while Chile proved stubborn, there were a real swagger about the world champions and a belief that they can always turn a game their way. As Argentina piled on the pressure, Bravo did well after the break to parry out a blast at the near post from Nahuel Molina and then showed great reactions to push a fierce Nicolas Gonzalez drive against the bar. Chile did counter-attack, but the Argentina defence stood strong.

## Injury not very serious: Messi

New Jersey: Lionel Messi said Tuesday that he hoped a leg injury sustained during Argentina's game against Chile is 'nothing serious'. The Argentina superstar received treatment on the thigh area of his right leg for nearly two minutes after getting kicked by Gabriel Suazo in the 24th minute Tuesday night. "It is nothing serious, but it is bothering me a little bit. It was hard for me to move freely, particularly side to side. We'll see tomorrow (Wednesday) how it feels," Messi told reporters.

# HUNT BEGINS FOR SHOOTING COACHES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, June 26: The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has initiated the process of hiring high-performance managers and coaches for the next Olympics cycle as the tenure of the current set of experts will end after the Paris Games in August. A record number of 21 shooters have qualified for the Paris Games, raising hopes that India will break the jinx of returning home without a medal in the two previous Olympics at Rio de Janeiro (2016) and Tokyo (2021). All the experts in the current set-up will also be eligible to apply for the posts of high-performance director, foreign and national coaches and the NRAI will keep them till 2028. The Indian team are currently having the services of HPD Pierre Beauchamp, while two-time Olympic medallist Munkhbayar Dorjsuren is the team's foreign coach for pistol events. "SAI always follows the Olympic cycle in terms of hiring coaches. Anybody who wants to render their services again will have to apply. The NRAI will discuss each and every case and based on the merit they will be selected," NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia said.

# US swimmers slam WADA over false tests

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, June 26: The USA Olympic athletes have lost faith in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to rid their sports of cheaters ahead of next month's Paris Olympics, two former gold medalists told a House sub-committee here. The testimony by Michael Phelps and Allison Schmitt followed revelations this spring that 23 Chinese swimmers had tested positive for a banned heart medication ahead of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 but were allowed by WADA to compete. Five of those swimmers went on to win medals, including three golds. Phelps is the most decorated swimmer in history and a 23-time Olympics gold medallist. Schmitt, a four-time gold medallist, was part of the US 800-metre



Michael Phelps testifies during the hearing of the House panel

freestyle relay team that finished a close second to China at the Tokyo Games. Both the Chinese and US teams broke the previous world record in the relay. "We raced hard. We trained hard. We followed every proto-

col. We accepted our defeat with grace," Schmitt said. "Many of us will be haunted by this podium finish that may have been impacted by doping," she added. Incidentally 11 of the Chinese swimmers who tested positive

ahead of Tokyo are set to compete again in Paris. Phelps, wearing a dark suit, nodded in agreement multiple times as members of the Congress criticised WADA and said Americans should be able to watch the Olympics without wondering if the competition is rigged. Phelps expressed frustration that nothing had changed since he testified before the same sub-committee seven years ago about WADA's handling of Russian state-sponsored doping. "Sitting here once again, it is clear to me that any attempts of reform at WADA have fallen short, and there are still deeply rooted, systemic problems that prove detrimental to the integrity of international sports and athletes' right to fair competition, time and time again," Phelps said.

# Top stars to vie for Olympic berths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panchkula (Haryana), June 26: The absence of Olympic javelin throw champion Neeraj Chopra notwithstanding, there will be no lack of star power as the country's remaining top track and field athletes will vie for Paris Olympics berths during the National Inter-State Championships beginning here Thursday. The championships will serve as the final qualifying event for the upcoming Paris Games where the athletics events begin August 1. Incidentally, the final day of the four-day championships - June 30 - also coincides with the Olympics qualifying window deadline. In the absence of Chopra, the likes of Avinash Sable (men's 3000m steeplechase), Kishore Jena (men's javelin throw), Ram Baboo



(men's 20km race walk) and Parul Chaudhary (women's 3000m steeplechase), Kishore Jena (javelin) - all of whom have booked Paris Games berths by breaching the qualifying standards - will headline the championships. Other athletes who can book Paris tickets through world ranking quota are Jyothi Yarraji (women's 100m hurdles), Annu Rani (women's javelin throw), Tajinderpal Singh Toor (men's shot put), Jeswin Aldrin (men's long jump), Praveen Chitravel and Abdulla Aboobacker (both men's triple jump).