HERE . NOW

OrissaPOST

LOOKING AHEAD

Actor Deepika Padukone, who is part of the jury at Cannes, believes India is on the cusp of greatness

LEISURE | P2

GEOPOLITICAL SHIFT

Finland and Sweden formally apply to join NATO, a decision taken due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL | P10

NIKHAT EYES GOLD

Nikhat Zareen enters the 52kg final in the women's World Boxing Championships, beating her Brazilian opponent

SPORTS | P12

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12 dead in Guj factory wall collapse

Morbi (Gujarat): At least 12 labourers were killed Wednesday when a wall collapsed at a salt packaging factory in this district, officials said. The tragedy took place at Sagar Salt factory situated inside the Halvad industrial area, said Gujrat's Labour and Employment Minister and local MLA Brijesh Merja. PM Narendra Modi expressed grief over the tragedy and announced compensation of ₹2 lakh each for the kin of the deceased. He also announced a relief of ₹50,000 to those injured. The Gujarat government also announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh for the families of those dead. P9

Anti-ship missile successfully tested

Balasore: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian Navy successfully conducted Wednesday the maiden flight-test of indigenously-developed Naval anti-ship missile. It was launched from a helicopter from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur off the coast of Odisha, DRDO sources said. The mission met all its objectives. It is the first indigenous air launched anti-ship missile system developed for the Indian Navy. The DRDO said that the missile hit the designated target with degree of accuracy and it employed many new technologies, including an indigenously developed launcher for the helicopter, the defence organisation added. P5

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CM opens revamped Tara Tarini temple

Facilities at the refurbished shrine include a dining place and a discourse hall for tourists and devotees

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik along with 5T Secretary VK Pandian takes a stroll around the Tara Tarini Temple, Wednesday OP PHOTO

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, May 18: Devotees in Ganjam district soaked in the religious fervour Wednesday as Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the revamped Maa Tara Tarini Temple here atop Kumari Hill.

Patnaik, who hails from Ganjam district, also took part in the consecration rituals at the temple, situated on the banks of river Rushikulya, as its chief patron.

Dedicating to people the newly-built infrastructure at the temple complex, Patnaik said the amenities provided, such as a dining place, a discourse hall and street lamps, would prove to be 'highly beneficial' to the tourists and devotees. He expressed his gratitude to the workers, artisans and masons for their contributions. Patnaik also felicitated sculptor Narayan Tripathi on the occasion.

"I offered prayers to Maa Tara Tarini, sought her blessings for the welfare of people of Ganjam. Whenever I visit this temple, I find peace," the chief minister said as thousands of people from every nook and corner of Ganjam and nearby districts thronged the shrine to witness the rituals being performed on the last day of the consecration ceremony.

Servitors from Jagannath temple in Puri, Lingaraj shrine in Bhubaneswar and Samaleswari temple in Sambalpur were among those who performed the rituals.

SIGNATURE MOVE

Artistes of cultural outfit Mayuri perform Odissi during the Chandan Yatra of Srimandir deities at Narendra pond in Puri, Wednesday OP PHOTO

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

High command said it's time seniors give something to party. I decided to give my resignation

MARKET WATCH

	INDEX		VARIATION	
BOURSES	SENSEX	54208.53	↓	109.94
BOURSES	NIFTY	16240.30	↓	19.00
CURRENCY	DOLLAR	78.12	↑	₹0.14
CURRENCY	EURO	81.58	↓	₹0.10
BULLION	GOLD	₹50,097	↓	₹76
BULLION	SILVER	₹60,777	↓	₹379

WEATHER

	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	36.0°C	36.2°C
TEMP MIN	27.3°C	27.2°C
Humidity	78%	77%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

Forecast: Light rain very likely

Badadanda: Rickshaw man falls into drain, dies

The incident brings back memories of Jyoti Prakash Behera who fell into an open drain and died in Bhubaneswar in September, last year

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 18: A rickshaw puller died reportedly after falling into an open drain at Market Square here late Tuesday night, an official said Wednesday. The incident on the Grand Road (also known as Badadanda) has shocked many. The deceased was identified as Nidhi Bhoi, 41, of Biranarasinghpur Gohiri Sahi here.

The incident came to the fore after a few locals spotted a lifeless Nidhi in the drain and informed the police. Kumbharpada police reached the spot and sent the body for autopsy.

On being informed, the aggrieved family reached the hospital and took Nidhi's body for his last rites.

According to Kumbharpada inspector in-charge (IIC) Bichitrananda Sethi, they are yet to ascertain the exact cause of death. "We have registered a case (7/22) of unnatural death in this regard. The autopsy report will help ascertain if suffocation is the cause of death," the IIC said.

Local residents and shopkeepers meanwhile, raised questions as to why the drain was not covered.

According to Seshadeb Rath, a local, the cleaning of drains has been completed for around two months now. However, the authorities are yet to cover those with slabs. "This four-foot-deep drain is no less of a death trap. On several occasions, we've urged the civic body to cover the drain with slabs but to no avail," said Rath.

Meanwhile, Nidhi's widow Sulochana, mother of a 12-year-old boy, blamed the civic body and the district administration for the mishap and demanded compensation for the death of her husband.

"My husband was the sole breadwinner of the family. Don't know how we'll survive now. It's the district administration's carelessness," an inconsolable Sulochana said as tears rolled down her cheeks.

When asked, Puri Municipality executive officer Saroj Kumar Swain said a committee will probe the matter. "Cleaning of drains is on. Although the drain near Market Square was cleaned a fortnight ago, it was not covered. We've formed a committee to probe why the drain was kept open despite completion of the cleaning long back. Action will be taken against those found guilty," Swain informed.

SC relief for Indrani

■The CBI has interviewed only 68 of the 237 eyewitnesses named in the case in more than 6 years and hence it would take a long time to complete investigations, argued Indrani's counsel

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 18: The Supreme Court granted bail Wednesday to Indrani Mukerjea, the prime accused in the murder of her daughter Sheena Bora. A three-judge bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao said the trial is not going to be completed anytime soon. Indrani was arrested August 25, 2015.

"The allegation made against the petitioner is that she planned the murder in view of the live-in relationship of her daughter with Rahul Mukerjea, who was the son of Peter Mukerjea and his earlier wife," the bench said.

"We are not making comments on the merits of the case. Even if 50 per cent witnesses are given by prosecution, the trial would not be over soon. She will be released on bail subject to satisfaction of the trial court. The same conditions imposed on Peter Mukerjea will also be imposed on her," the bench also comprising Justices BR Gavai and AS Bopanna said.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi appeared for Indrani, who is currently lodged at the Byculla women's prison. Rohatgi submitted that a large number of witnesses are yet to be examined.

RAJIV KILLING: CONVICT RELEASED

New Delhi: Invoking its extraordinary power under Article 142 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court ordered Wednesday the release of AG Perarivalan, who has served over 30 years in jail in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. A bench comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and BR Gavai said the Tamil Nadu Cabinet's advice recommending the premature release of all seven convicts in the case was binding on the governor. The apex court also discarded the Centre's argument that the president exclusively has the power to grant pardon in a case under section 302 the IPC. It said this would render article 161 (power of governor to grant pardon) functionless. P7

Mission Shakti extended by another 5 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: The State Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approved 32 proposals Wednesday including extension of the Mission Shakti scheme for another five years with a budgetary allocation of ₹4,973.39 crore.

Also approved was a proposal to build a barrage at Pandara on the outskirts of the Odisha capital to provide clean drinking water to its residents.

Mission Shakti, a popular and vote bank scheme of the BJD government will now continue till the financial year 2026-27.

Briefing about the decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said that Mission Shakti launched in 2001 as an initiative to form self help groups (SHGs), has grown organically and developed into one of the most successful women's empowerment programmes.

"In just two decades, Mission Shakti has been able to organise 70 lakh women into more than 6.02 lakh SHGs. A pioneering initiative in Odisha has also been to enable government departments to source goods and services worth ₹5,000 crore from SHGs in the next five years," informed Mahapatra.

During the next five years, many more milestones have been targetted under this scheme, including ₹50,000 crore bank credit to SHGs, interest subvention of ₹1,200 crore to SHGs and 500 Mission Shakti bazaars and outlets to be set up across Odisha, the chief secretary added.

The Cabinet also approved the proposal from IDCO to procure 871.427 acres of land from Tata Power Co Ltd. The land had earlier been leased out for its coal-based thermal power plant at Barang tehsil in Cuttack district. The procured land can be utilised for attracting new industrial and infrastructure projects, which will create huge employment opportunities for the people of Odisha, said the chief secretary. Mega drinking water projects for Mayurbhnaj, Sambalpur and Deogarh districts were also approved. More P3&4

Andhra gobbles up Odisha village again

[Villagers blame Koraput district admin officials alleging that their grievances are never addressed in a proper manner]

POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, May 18: Taking advantage of the Odisha government's apathy in dealing with the problems of people living close to the borders of neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh, the latter has once again included a few villages of the former in its jurisdiction.

Officials of the Odisha government do not regularly visit the fringe areas under Pottangi block in Koraput district. Lack of monitoring and vigilance on the border situation has provided the neighbouing state an opportunity to lure people by carrying out various developmental activities and offering sops in these areas.

Reports said, Bangargudi village in Talagolur panchayat is close to the Andhra border. There are 35 families in the village with a population of 120. The residents are availing various facilities from the Odisha government – road connectivity, pension and rice at subsidised rate. But they feel it is not enough.

"The problem is no MLA, BDO or child welfare officer ever visit the village to redress our grievances," the residents said.

The half-constructed Anganwadi centre at Bangargudi village

Two years ago, construction of an Anganwadi centre started in the Bangargudi village, but work is progressing at a snail's pace. A total of 14 children are studying at this semi-completed building. Most of the time they are exposed to the harshness of nature as there is no rooftop to protect them.

Residents pointed out that an Anganwadi worker from AP often visits the village and invites the children to a pucca house where they are taught. The kids are also provided meals.

Sources said that the Andhra government has taken advantage of the negligence on the part of the district administration. It has included Bangargudi village under its Paspendi block in Parvatipuram district. The village has been shown as part of Ward-8 in Muduku panchayat in Andhra Pradesh

To keep the families living in the village happy, the Andhra government has provided 25 housing units. Five villagers are also receiving monthly pension from Andhra government. However, only two residents get the same benefit from the Odisha government. Contd... P4

leisure

JOHNNY DEPP TRIED TO KILL ME: AMBER HEARD

Actress Amber Heard completed her testimony, defending herself from accusations that she had faked her abuse claims against former husband Johnny Depp. "You weren't scared of him at all, were you?" Depp's attorney Camille Vasquez asked at one point. "This is a man who tried to kill me," Heard responded.

URBAN TURNED HIS LIFE AROUND TO STAY MARRIED TO KIDMAN

Keith Urban has shared he had to curb his partying ways to remain married to Nicole Kidman. The country music star has battled with drug and alcohol addiction in the past and he returned to rehab in 2006, shortly after tying the knot with the *Paddington* actress.

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

You experience a sense of freedom today. And in this mood you feel like doing all the things that you loved to do in your childhood. It is a nice time to take your family on an outing, says Ganesha. Given your mood, you may start planning for the future of your loved ones.

TAURUS

This may be, health wise, a bad day for you. Ganesha urges you to take special care and not to do anything that invites illness or discomfort. The least you can do is to ensure that you do not over exert or get into situations that generate tension and anxiety. Be careful about the food you eat.

GEMINI

An extremely productive and fulfilling day awaits you. Alongwith your daily routine, you will also concentrate on your houshold issues. You will feel the need to have someone to call your own. You may find yourself in two minds over things like marriage and partnership.

CANCER

An awareness of optimism and idealism will mark your activities this day. You may benefit by traversing from one terrain to another. You will be liberal and generous with ideas; your internal beauty will blossom.

LEO

You are fond of travelling. You will make plans for a trip or a journey and will include your family and friends in your schemes. For those in artistic fields, you will receive critical acclaim. A progressive day awaits, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

A single-headed mission to be the master of your destiny will drive you ahead. Your management skills will be immaculate, and the fire to succeed will get you up and running. Your skill in the managerial post will be accentuated by your quick decision-making and superior analytical ability, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

Wedding bells are ringing, and you are about to get very lucky! Ganesha foresees a plethora of marriage proposals coming your way on this day full of special occasions, as you turn up your charisma and sweep the enthralled opposite sex off their feet with your charm. You may end up spending quite a bit on fun and entertainment, but it's all for a good cause.

SCORPIO

Friends in influential positions will be of much help today. You may plunge into a new business venture without much ado. Appreciation for your abilities and efforts will fly in thick and fast. Your reputation is sky-rocketing among the opposite sex.

SAGITTARIUS

Running helter-skelter and muddling of affairs is on the menu. Expect not to find even a moment's peace. But take a break, says Ganesha. And dive right back in the chaos and make the most of it.

CAPRICORN

Impulsiveness, which is not really your trait, will be very evident in whatever work you do today, say Ganesha. Money matters will keep you preoccupied for major part of the day, but ironically, your otherwise methodical approach to everything will go for a toss.

AQUARIUS

Planning to buy a house or vehicle? Then today's the day to make the booking. However, don't buy anything in haste. Deliberate, says Ganesha, especially when it involves a huge sum of money. You may even shift residence, or change a job, and it's very likely you will enjoy the whole process.

PISCES

Well begun is half done. With this in mind, you will set out to actively seek the cooperation of your colleagues and the sanction of your seniors to tackle some important projects, says Ganesha.

India on the cusp of greatness: Deepika

Deepika at Cannes in a Sabyasachi creation

Cannes: Deepika Padukone, who is a part of the Cannes Film Festival jury this year, says she is grateful that she is able to represent India on a global platform and she truly believes that India is on the cusp of greatness. At the inauguration of India Pavilion on Wednesday, Deepika said, "It's the 75th year of Cannes, but it is also 75 years of India and to have India as the spotlight country and to be a part of the jury is something I never imagined, something I never expected."

Deepika has joined cine personalities from around the world, like actresses Rebecca Hall and Noomi Rapace, actor-director Jasmine Trinca and directors Asghar Farhadi, Jeff Nichols, Ladj Ly and Joachim Trier, as a member of the Cannes jury, led by actor-filmmaker Vincent Lindon.

The actress added that she truly believes that India is on the cusp of greatness. She said, "When we look back at the 75 years of Cannes, and I have said this earlier, there are literally a handful of Indian films or Indian actors or Indian talent that are going to make it. And I feel collectively as a nation, we have it. We have the talent, we have the ability and I think we just need that sort of conviction and there will come a day when India won't have to be at Cannes, Cannes will be in India."

IANS

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY AT CANNES

'The world needs a new Chaplin'

New Delhi: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky outshone the galaxy of stars assembled at the Cannes Film Festival after he addressed the opening night crowd of actors and filmmakers, delivering an emotional plea on behalf of his war-torn country, reports Variety.

Appearing via video, Zelensky said "We continue fighting and we have no choice but to do it for our freedom."

Zelensky's remarks came shortly before the premiere of Final Cut, which Variety describes as "a wacky zombie comedy that seems far removed from the brutality on display in Ukraine after Russia's illegal invasion."

Even as Cannes returned in glamorous form after two years of the pandemic, Zelensky's "passionate rallying cry served as a reminder of the political turmoil still roiling the world," Variety noted.

Ukraine's President spoke about the responsibility of cinema in promoting the values of democracy and freedom. "Hundreds of people are dying today," Zelensky said to an audience that included Deepika Padukone and Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi, both serving as jury members, as well as Hollywood stars Julianne Moore and Eva Langoria, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences CEO Dawn Hudson.

"Is cinema going to stay quiet or is it going to stay out of it?" Zelensky asked rhetorically.

He said movies have always played a crucial role in uniting people against authoritarianism and cruelty, reminding the crowd of the power of Charlie Chaplin's The Great Dictator, a satire of Nazism that debuted before America had even entered World War II.

"The world needs a new Chaplin who will prove [to] us that cinema isn't silent," Zelensky said. IANS

FATIMA TALKS ABOUT BEAUTY OF CINEMA

Mumbai: Actress Fatima Sana Shaikh is enjoying the appreciation she has been receiving from the audience for her performance in Raat Rani from the anthology series *Modern Love: Mumbai*.

The actress has given a realistic performance that is being noticed by viewers and critics.

Fatima in *Raat Rani* plays the character of an open-hearted, flamboyant girl Laali, who is heartbroken because of her partner's betrayal but then emerges as a self-loving girl.

"I am very happy to see that the audience is connecting with the character and it's even more special because now people are reaching out to me and sharing their stories and telling that Laali has inspired them to cross the flyover and there is nothing more beautiful than a film that connects people and inspires people and I am just humbled by everybody's love," said the *Dangal* actress while speaking about the beauty of cinema.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Fatima is currently gearing up for the release of *Sam Bahadur* alongside Vicky Kaushal and Dhak Dhak, with Ratna Pathak Shah, Dia Mirza, and Sanjana Sanghi.

IANS

Film industry hails Naga actress Andrea

Mumbai: Mainstream actors in Hindi film industry have welcomed Andrea Kevichusa from Nagaland who's playing the lead opposite Ayushmann in Anubhav Sinha's *Anek*.

The supermodel is the latest sensation from the North East. Andrea is the typical small-town girl all set to make the leap into Hindi film industry.

The actress had commenced her journey to be the next big thing when she was scouted at the age of 15. And since then, the talented Andrea has never looked back.

Welcoming the debutante, several Indian actresses including Tapsee Pannu, Bhumi Pednekar, Kriti Sanon, Aditi Rao Hydari, Dia Mirza, Neena Gupta, and Huma Qureshi came forward with open arms, accepting diversity in uniformity.

Andrea, is playing the role of a boxer named AIDO in the movie.

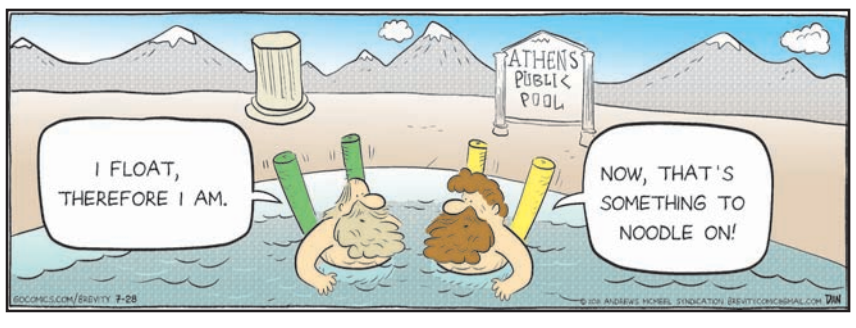
Sharing her experience of working with Ayushmann and Anubhav Sinha, Andrea says, "When it finally dawned on me, I think I just scared myself into thinking I wouldn't be able to deliver. But Ayushmann and Anubhav Sir created such a comfortable environment for me on set that I felt no added pressure to over-perform or do anything that was beyond my capabilities."

AGENCIES

PEANUTS

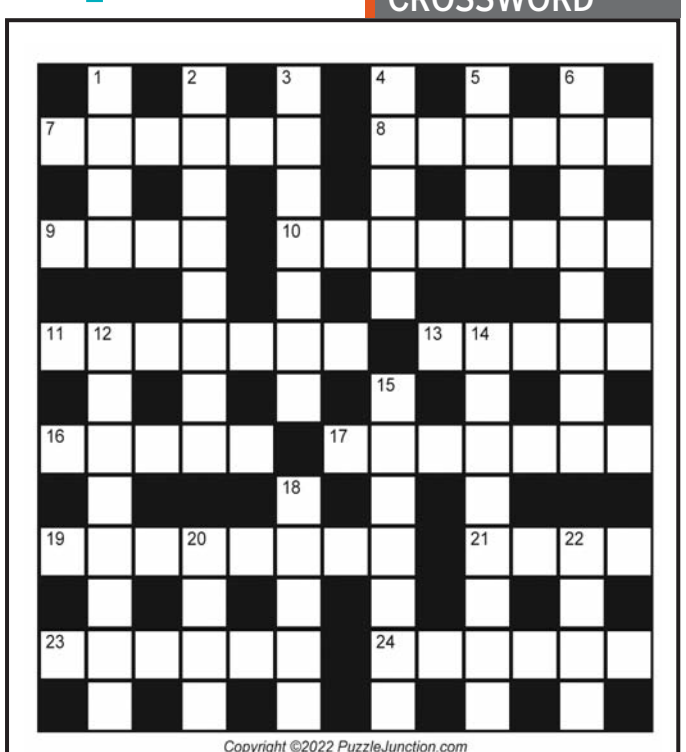
CALVIN AND HOBBES

BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across
7 Type of route
8 Hardy's partner
9 Wild hog
10 Legal ambiguity
11 Sea captain
13 East Indian pheasant
16 Links figure
17 Slumber (4-3)
19 Aquarius, e.g. (4,4)
21 "Piece of cake!"
23 Tornado cloud
24 Whirlpools

Down
1 Reverberate
2 Fearless
3 Surgical implement
4 Single-master
5 Verdant
6 Green-eyed monster
12 Capital of Sudan
14 Cheap tires
15 Sea lane, possibly
18 Move furtively
20 Litter member
22 Percolate

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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.

							4	
			5	6	7	2		
	7			9				
	9	7		2	4	8		
		6						5
	1		9					4
		8	7					
		9						
3	4					6	8	

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

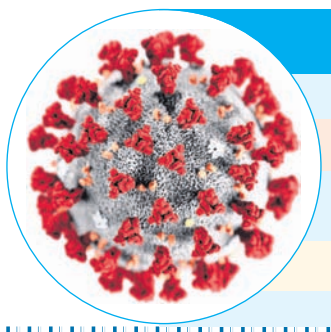
V	A	L	E		T	A	S	M	A	N	I	A
I		U		T		D		A		O		I
C	O	N	Q	U	E	R		S	O	U	N	D
A		G		S		O		S		R		A
R	E	S	T	S		I	B	E	R	I	A	
A				L		T				S		E
G	O	B	L	E	T		C	A	C	H	E	T
E		R				S		S				E
	B	A	M	B	O	O		S	N	E	E	R
I		I		A		M		I		X		N
S	A	L	E	M		B	A	S	M	A	T	I
I		L		B		R		T		C		T
S	P	E	C	I	M	E	N		S	T	A	Y

SUDOKU

1	5	4	9	6	8	2	7	3
8	6	3	2	7	4	9	5	1
7	2	9	5	3	1	4	6	8
9	4	8	3	2	7	5	1	6
3	1	6	4	9	5	7	8	2
2	7	5	8	1	6	3	4	9
4	9	7	6	8	2	1	3	5
6	3	1	7	5	9	8	2	4
5	8	2	1	4	3	6	9	7

ZILLA PARISHAD MEET

Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain and Cuttack Collector Bhawani Shankar Chayani at a meeting of Zilla Parishad in Silver city, Wednesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	52,43,74,327	49,43,16,612	62,93,401
India	4,31,27,199	4,25,87,259	5,24,293
Odisha	12,88,327	12,79,040	9,126

Now, fire stations in all 314 blocks

Revenue Minister Sudam Marndi and MoS, Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra Wednesday virtually inaugurated new fire stations at Chandua under Kuliana block of Mayurbhanj and Swabhiman Anchal of Malkangiri

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, May 18: With the inauguration of two new fire stations Wednesday, the state now has at least one fire station in each of 314 blocks, fire service officials said.

Revenue Minister Sudam Marandi and MoS, Home, Dibya Shankar Mishra have jointly inaugurated two new fire stations at Chandua under Kuliana block of Mayurbhanj district and Chitrakonda Swabhiman Anchal under Chitrakonda block of Malkangiri district on a virtual platform.

With this inauguration, the fire service directorate has fulfilled the state government's ambition to have one fire station in each block. The total number of fire stations operating in the state has now gone up to 341, said the officials.

The newly operated fire station at Chitrakonda will cater to the needs of Swabhiman Anchal (earlier known as cut-off area) of Malkangiri district.

The newly-inaugurated fire station at Chitrakonda in Malkangiri district

The state government has already sanctioned 15 staff for each of the two newly opened fire stations at Chandua and Chitrakonda. The two stations are now operating on temporary accommodations and will soon be shifted to their own buildings, they said.

The Malkangiri collector has already allotted land at Chitrakonda for construction of its own fire station building with staff quarters. Similarly, the land selected for Chandua fire station is awaiting forest clearance, the officials said.

In November 2015, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had announced that his government will set up 335 fire stations across the state in a phased manner with an objective to open at least one fire station in each block of the state.

Nod to 5 drinking water projects worth ₹1,081cr

The state government has decided to provide financial assistance of ₹428.95 crore to develop a mega aluminum park at Angul

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: The State Cabinet Wednesday approved tenders for execution of five piped drinking water projects worth ₹1,081 crore.

The government has taken a decision for execution of two of mega piped water supply projects worth ₹369.11 crore to provide safe drinking water in Sambalpur and Deogarh districts out of Jal Jeevan Mission funding, Chief Secretary SC Mahapatra said.

With the execution of these projects, around 1,68,418 people of 481 villages under 50 Panchayats of Kuchinda, Jamankira and Rengali blocks of Sambalpur district and Tileibani block of Deogarh district will be provided with safe drinking water.

Similarly, the Cabinet has approved another tender of ₹183.23 crore for execution of another mega piped water supply project in Sambalpur district out of JJM funding. Around 1,31,587 people of 221 villages under 37 panchayats of Kuchinda and Bamra blocks of Sambalpur will be benefited through the project, he said.

The government has also approved executions of two mega piped water supply projects in Mayurbhanj district out of OMBADC funding.

With the execution of a project worth ₹151.43 crore, drinking water will be provided to around 1,13,540 people of 164 villages under 19 panchayats of two blocks in Mayurbhanj, he said.

The tender for the second project worth ₹377.23 crore has also been approved by the Cabinet to provide piped drinking water to 3,23,414 people under 484 villages of 62 panchayats under four blocks of the district.

The state government has also decided to provide financial assistance of Rs 428.95 crore to develop a mega aluminum park (Including land acquisition) at Angul. The project would be completed in three years, said Mahapatra.

A proposal for enactment of a separate legislation for establishment of a self-financed private unitary university in the name of DRIEMS University has also been approved by the Cabinet.

1,280 more check dams in 3 yrs

BHUBANESWAR: The state Cabinet Wednesday decided to build 1,280 check dams under Mukhya Mantri Adibandha Tiari Yojana (MATY) in three years with an outlay of Rs 811.45 crore.

"With an investment of Rs 811.45 crore, the state government will create irrigation potential of 27,600ha during 2022-23 to 2024-25," said Chief Secretary Suresh Chandra Mahapatra.

The state Cabinet has also decided to install one lakh deep borewells in five years under the Biju Krushak Vikash Yojana- Deep Borewell Secha Karyakrama. The scheme will be implemented in 256 blocks of 26 districts, subject to feasibility, said Mahapatra.

An amount of Rs 4,198.16 crore will be spent for creation of irrigation potential of 2 lakh hectare in Rabi and 5 lakh hectare in Kharif seasons, he said.

The Cabinet has also decided to construct two in-stream storage structures across river Kuakhai near Pandara in Khurda with an outlay of Rs 127.32 crore and across IB river near Kudabaga in Sundargarh with an expenditure of Rs 162 crore.

The Cabinet has given its approval to tender of Rs 177.10 crore for construction of Gangadhar Meher Lift Irrigation Project and another tender of Rs 160.33 crore for rehabilitation and renovation of Bargarh main canal.

The state has decided to sanction lease of 100.05 acre land in Basantpur under Sambalpur tehsil for a Sainik School on free of premium and free of incidental charges.

The government will provide gross financial assistance of Rs 856 crore to Idco from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The Cabinet has decided to provide government grants to 24 private upper primary schools from January 1, 2022 as per GIA order 2013. The state exchequer will bear Rs 68.55 lakh per annum for the purpose.

Chariot construction in full swing for this year's Rath Yatra

Carpenters busy constructing chariot wheels at Rath Yard in Puri, Wednesday OP PHOTO

CONSTRUCTION OF CHARIOTS FOR ANNUAL RATH YATRA BEGAN ON THE AUSPICIOUS DAY OF AKSHYAYA TRITIYA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, May 18: The construction work of chariots for Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra for the world famous Rath Yatra in Puri is in full swing.

While the work for nine 'Tumba' and 'Bindha' for Nandighosa chariot of Lord Jagannath has been completed, construction of six 'Tumba' of Taladhwaja chariot of Lord Balabhadra and five 'Tumba' for Debadalana chariot of Goddess Subhadra is nearing completion, sources said.

Similarly, 'Kanaguja' work of the three chariots has begun from Nrusingha Chaturdashi.

Rupakar servitors are providing all kinds of assistance in the construction work. The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) and the Maharana servitors are confident that the chariot construction work will be completed on time. The Maharana and the Bhoi servitors are now working in two shifts to meet the deadline.

Notably, the chariot construction work for the mega festival began on the auspicious day of Akshyaya Tritiya.

The SJTA has decided to install additional 236 CCTV cameras at Srimandir and Gundicha temple as part of its effort to enhance security arrangement during Rath Yatra.

"The CCTV cameras would be installed at Srimandir and Gundicha shrine to ensure safety for the devotees during Rath Yatra. However, the cameras will be switched off during the performance of rituals," said a temple official.

Puri Collector Samarth Verma had earlier said the administration has two plans for the Rath Yatra — either holding the festival sans devotees as was the case the last two years, or with the participation of the public. This year, the nine-day festival will begin July 1.

As the Rath Yatra was held without the participation of devotees last two years, the administration estimates that more than 15 lakh people may turn up this time, he added.

Barang woman 'commits' suicide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barang, May 18: A married woman reportedly committed suicide at Godisahi here late Tuesday night, the police said Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Subhadarshini Behera, 26, wife of Silu Behera, they added.

Subhadarshini ended her life by hanging herself from the ceiling of her room Tuesday night. Family members informed the incident to Godisahi police outpost as well as to Subhadarshini's husband, who has been working outside the state.

Officials of Godisahi police reached the spot Wednesday morning and seized the body in the presence of the deceased woman's family members. "The body has been sent for post-mortem. The autopsy report will help ascertain the exact cause of death," said a police officer.

CURBING TAX EVASION

Realtors' turnover under govt scanner

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: In view of large-scale tax evasion by real estate developers, Commissioner of CT and GST, Wednesday, asked the regional heads to make a scrutiny of returns of such developers to ascertain the authenticity of their turnover.

In a letter to enforcement units and commercial tax (CT) and goods and service tax (GST) circle heads, the State Commissioner stated that real estate developers who have taken up residential and commercial projects should be scrutinised for the genuineness of the turnover disclosed by them and payment of tax by the real estate sector. While conducting this exercise, the Commissioner also instructed to ensure that no genuine taxpayer is put into any kind of harassment.

It can be mentioned here that based on complaints received from flat owners, the state GST enforcement wing found that

some of the real estate developers having turnover of more than Rs 100 crore have shown no turnover in their VAT returns. Moreover, some developers have collected VAT @2% on gross value of the apartment but have not deposited the same with the government. Similarly, some others have collected VAT on the strength of money receipt and not through invoice with an intention to evade tax.

"Data has been collected from Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) by the state GST department. Investigations in respect of 12 developers have been completed and adjudication against eight developers for tax default of Rs 38 crore has already been initiated," said a senior GST official.

7 rice bran oil units raided

BHUBANESWAR: State CT and GST Enforcement Wing Wednesday raided seven rice bran oil units in three districts on allegations of tax evasion.

On the allegations of oil extraction plants (rice bran) purchasing raw materials out of accounts and selling oil manufactured out of the same without issuing tax invoice in order to evade tax payment, seven teams of the wing, comprising 30 officers, raided as many rice bran oil units and godowns in Sambalpur, Bargarh and Kalahandi, said a source.

Sources said the teams verified sale-purchase details and manufacturing accounts.

"Investigation revealed that these units have paid very negligible amount of differential tax on their sales despite having huge turnover. These units are also not reversing Input Tax Credit (ITC) on exempted sales, leading to non-payment of legitimate tax due to excess claim of ITC," an official said.

The official added the details regarding the result of inspection shall be ascertained soon after completion of the investigation.

NOVEL WAY TO PROTEST

OP PHOTO

A groom rode a bicycle to reach the wedding venue in Tankapani area of Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, apparently to protest against the soaring fuel prices

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY 2022

Museums are windows to our rich culture: CM

TAKING TO TWITTER, THE CM URGED EVERYONE TO VISIT MUSEUMS ACROSS THE STATE AS THEY ARE THE TREASURE TROVE OF KNOWLEDGE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Museums are windows to our rich culture, heritage and glorious past, said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the occasion of International Museum Day, Wednesday.

Taking to Twitter, the CM urged everyone to visit museums across the state as they are the treasure trove of knowledge. On the occasion, Fire Services personnel conducted a mock drill at the Odisha State Museum here and demonstrated various techniques that could be used in protecting monuments from eventualities like fire mishaps.

A mock drill organised at Odisha State Museum in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday, to protect monuments during fire mishaps OP PHOTOS

Culture department Director and Additional Chief Secretary Ranjan Kumar Das graced the occasion as the chief guest while Odisha Fire Academy Principal Ramesh Chandra Majhi was the guest of honor.

"We hope, this mock drill will be very helpful in protecting monuments from natural calamities," said Odisha State Museum superintendent Bhagyalipi Malla.

Meanwhile, the Regional Science Centre (RSC) is organising a host of events between May 16 and 20 to mark the day.

According to a RSC official, there is no entry fee during the celebration. "All are invited to be a part of the advocacy campaign for museums as agents of positive change. A STEM Hobby Camp is on to mark the day," said the official.

Science and Technology Department Deputy Director Puspashree Puhan inaugurated an exhibition—My artifacts and my collection— on the RSC premises to mark the day.

"Children, who participated in the expo, displayed their philatelic, coin collection and other artifacts," said the official, adding that an open house quiz was also organized for the visitors to create awareness about museum.

Celebrated every year May 18, International Museum Day aims at spreading awareness on the value of museums as a means of important cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures, and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among all.

WATCO bags Global Water Leader Award in Madrid

The award has been presented to Odisha for the achievements made in providing 24x7 Drink from Tap water supply and accomplishing 100 per cent household connections in the urban areas under WATCO

The award was received by Housing and Urban Development department Principal Secretary G.Mathi Vathanan, who is also the chairperson of WATCO

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: The Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO) has received the prestigious 'Distinction of Global Water Leader Award, 2022' in the Global Water Summit held in Spain's Madrid recently.

The Global Water Intelligence (GWI) announced the awards at the Global Water Summit 2022, which recognises the industry's greatest achievements made in the year 2021. It rewards initiatives and companies in the water, wastewater and desalination sectors that are moving the industry forward through improved operating performance, innovative technology adoption and sustainable financial models.

The award has been presented to Odisha for the achievements made in providing 24x7 Drink from Tap water supply and accomplishing 100 per cent household connections in the urban areas under WATCO. The award was received by Housing and Urban Development department Principal Secretary G.Mathi Vathanan, who is also the chairperson of WATCO.

"We recognise the pioneers and innovators who have been pushing the industry to greater heights. The awardees represent outstanding quality and exceptional achievement," said the organisers.

WATCO is a state owned, not-for-profit company, to provide drinking water supply and sewerage services in efficient, accountable and sustainable manner to urban citizens.

The objective of WATCO is to foster functional autonomy, operational flexibility and customer centric service culture in water supply and waste water management on a sustainable basis.

Earlier, the state government's 'Drink from Tap Mission' had received the 'Award of Excellence' in the 18th CSI SIG e-Governance Award 2020.

The 'Drink from Tap Mission' had won the award for the smart water management in Puri city amongst 178 nominations received from across the country.

TEACHERS' DEMO

School teachers staged a demonstration at the office of Puri district education officer, Wednesday, seeking salaries as per the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission

OP PHOTO

CONTINUED FROM P1

'Mission Shakti' extended...

For this purpose, the state government has decided to provide Rs 62.83 crore to IDCO, Mahapatra added. To provide ample scope for employment generation in rural areas and augmentation of the income of the farmers, the Cabinet has approved a five-year financial allocation amounting to Rs 1,350 crore for popularisation of 'Farm Mechanisation' in Odisha.

Similarly, the government has decided to merge the district rural development agencies (DRDA) with Zilla Parishads (ZPs) in the districts. The present structure of the DRDAs will be abolished and the employees of such organisations will be shifted to ZPs, informed the chief secretary.

Andhra gobbles up Odisha village again

The Odisha government started construction of a bridge across Tatmamadi river near the village. However, work has been stalled by the AP administration. Locals alleged that if the Koraput district administration had been firm, the bridge would have been completed by now.

Sources said the AP government is providing annual assistance of Rs 15,000 to each student living in the village. They pointed out that the Odisha government's work has been limited to the appointment of two teachers and start construction work of a school building.

Another fringe village is Katraguda where 13 families reside. The AP government has provided housing units to the residents.

Heat spell likely from next week

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 18: A spell of intense heat may grip Odisha again from next week as the mercury is set to surge by several notches, the Met office said Wednesday.

The state is likely to witness rain accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds for the next three days due to strong southwesterly winds from the Bay of Bengal and an east-west trough.

After this, the temperature will rise from the next week, the weatherman said.

The state witnessed heatwave conditions before cyclonic storm Asani brought rain giving a much-needed relief to people around a week ago.

The mercury fell by around 2-4 degrees in some places, while the humidity was over 75 per cent in many areas, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said.

Nine towns recorded a maximum temperature of over 40 degrees Celsius while several districts, including Kandhamal, Mayurbhanj and Koraput experienced heavy to moderate rainfall. It said.

Woman found dead

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, May 18: A woman was found dead under mysterious circumstances at Krushak Bazar in Bidanasi area of Cuttack Wednesday morning.

According to sources, locals spotted the body under a water tank and informed police. A liquor bottle was found near the body.

The identity of the deceased was yet to be established till last reports came in. Though the cause of the death was yet to be known, it is being suspected that she might have been murdered.

Police have recovered the body and launched a probe to ascertain the circumstances under which she died. "We are trying to identify the woman, which will make it easier to investigate whether the woman had committed suicide or she was killed," said a police official.

Locals were also questioned to identify the deceased, sources said.

PAYING HOMAGE

People paid floral tributes to labour leader Bishwanath Pandit on his death anniversary in Cuttack, Wednesday

Shut career counselling cells: Govt to 52 colleges

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: The Higher Education (HE) department Wednesday directed 52 state-run colleges to discontinue the career counselling cells (CCCs).

According to HE department Special Secretary Rajashree Mohanty, the department had in February 2021 directed the principals of degree colleges for discontinuation of their CCCs as they have failed in serving the desired purpose. "However, the department did not receive any update on the issue from the colleges. The Accountant General has been pressing hard for the same," Mohanty wrote to the colleges.

The CCCs were established in colleges in 2018 in order to bridge the employability gap and establish link with the job market so as to facilitate placements for the students

The HE department Special Secretary asked the colleges to refund the unspent amount, if any, lying with them under the head of CCCs along with the interest accrued. The colleges were also asked to furnish physical and financial achievement made under the scheme. The CCCs were established in colleges in 2018 in order to bridge the employability gap and establish link with the job market so as to facilitate placements for the students, it was learnt.

Govt allows JKBK College to use women's hostel as classrooms

BHUBANESWAR: The Higher Education (HE) department Wednesday allowed Jatiya Kabi Bira Kishor Das (JKBK) Government College, Cuttack, to use rooms of non-functional women's hostel for conduct of degree classes.

In a letter to JKBK College, HE department joint secretary Snigdha Champatiray said, "I am directed to say that the department is pleased to accord the permission for usage of non-functional women's hostel, which has been built with UGC assistance, for conduct of degree classes till further orders."

Earlier, the HE department had written to the Skill Development and Technical Education (SD&TE) department secretary to use the building of new model degree college (MDC) at Jogimunda under Patnagarh subdivision in Bolangir district as an industrial training institute (ITI).

In the letter to the SD&TE department secretary, the HE department said, "A decision has been taken to make alternative use of model degree college buildings to provide skill development and vocational education to the youths. We would therefore request you to take action on the proposal of the Bolangir collector so that our department can start the process of handing over the MDC building to Skill development and Technical Education department for the purpose."

Before that HE department had directed the collectors of Gajapati and Kandhamal districts for alternative use of MDC buildings, constructed under RUSA 2.0.

Efforts soon to bring dropouts back to school: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Worried over the absence of nearly 15,000 students in the final exams of Class IX, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash Wednesday said that steps will be taken to bring the students back to schools. As per reports, a total of 14,935 students had skipped the Class IX annual examinations.

Dash said Wednesday that the department has already asked officials to submit a report by May 31 regarding candidates remaining absent in the examinations. He asserted that efforts will be made to bring the students back to schools after holding discussions with their parents. Dash also said that the government has started analyzing the reasons behind such absenteeism.

REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

In the Class IX annual exams, a total of 30,138 students got grade F (II) while 27,358 got grade F (I). Those who got Grade F (II) will have to improve their performances in tests to be conducted by the schools concerned, said a Board of Secondary Education (BSE) official.

Grade F (I) candidates have been declared passed because they fulfil some minimum criteria with regard to aggregate and individual subject marks. Grade F (II) candidates will be given three chances to acquire qualifying marks in each subject they have failed in.

The improvement tests will be conducted June 1, 8 and 16. Schools will prepare questions of 20 marks each and the test will be of 40 minutes duration. Earlier, the BSE had declared the results of Class IX HSC and Madhyama examinations 2021-22.

A total of 5,51,334 students had appeared in the exams while 14,935 students remained absent. In Madhyama exam, 3,279 students appeared while 128 remained absent.

IRCTC launches spl tourist package

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Indian Railways Catering & Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Bhubaneswar, has launched special tourist package 'Swadesh Darshan with Maata Vaishnodevi' for July this year.

The cost of the tourist package (six nights and seven days) has been fixed at Rs 16,650. Under this package, the tourists will visit Mata Vaishnodevi shrine at Katra, Taj Mahal at Agra, Krishna Janmabhoomi at Mathura, and Golden Temple and Wagah Border in Amritsar along with other tourist destinations.

The package includes night accommodation (dormitory /hall/budget hotel), sightseeing, vegetarian meals, tour escorts, unarmed Security arrangements, travel Insurance, and parking and toll charges, IRCTC sources said.

The people may avail the tourist package to visit religious places and tourist destinations from the boarding points at Berhampur and Sambalpur stations in Odisha.

Chardham Yatra

The IRCTC Regional Office at Bhubaneswar is offering the most affordable domestic air packages for Chardham Yatra (eleven nights and twelve days). The air package is very well designed and economical, IRCTC sources said. The package includes air tickets, hotel accommodation, meals and sightseeing in AC vehicles.

13 Covid cases in Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Odisha recorded 13 more Coronavirus cases, while there was no new fatality for a fortnight, the Health department said Wednesday.

There are 123 active Covid-19 cases and eight more patients have recuperated from the disease, according to a bulletin.

The daily positivity rate was 0.09 per cent and four children were among the newly infected, it said, adding that 14,295 samples were tested in the past 24 hours, a bulletin stated.

The state had logged three infections and zero death Tuesday.

The toll stood at 9,126 and these are confirmed as Covid deaths after an audit. Fifty-three other coronavirus patients have died due to comorbidities so far, according to data. The tally rose to 12,88,327, including 12,79,025 recoveries, it added.

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Man killed over suspected witchcraft

POST NEWS NETWORK

Malkangiri, May 18: A man was allegedly beaten to death while his son was also attacked severely when the latter was trying to save his father at a village meeting in Kangurukonda village under Kalimela block of Malkangiri district, Wednesday, over suspected practicing of witchcraft and sorcery.

The deceased has been identified as Padia Madkami of the village. On being informed, a team of Kalimela police led by IIC Raghunath Majhi rushed to the spot and detained some youths before interrogating them in this connection. Police sent the body for post-mortem and further investigations are on.

A scientific team from Koraput was also pressed into service and a case registered in this connection, the IIC said.

According to sources, Madkami was on the radar of the villagers over his alleged practice of witchcraft and sorcery as he was always conducting some rituals at his home. A week back, a woman of his family had fallen ill for which her family members consulted some sorcerer instead of hospitalising her.

Later, the woman died which reinforced the suspicion of villagers and others that the woman died due to alleged sorcery and witchcraft practice of Madkami.

Wednesday's ghastly incident occurred when over 60 villagers had assembled near the village road to participate in the 10th day rituals of the deceased woman. Madkami and his son Bira were also present there.

> The deceased has been identified as Padia Madkami of the village. A team of Kalimela police led by IIC Raghunath Majhi rushed to the spot and detained some youths before interrogating them in this connection
>
> Madkami was on the radar of the villagers over his alleged practice of witchcraft and sorcery as he was regularly conducting some rituals at his home

The villagers were into discussion when some irate locals thrashed Madkami on the spot suspecting him of practicing witchcraft. They beat him up with lathis leading to his death on the spot. The irate youths also assaulted Bira when he tried to save his father. Failing in his bid, he fled the scene and saved his life.

Reports said that sorcery is a vicious practice in the remote and tribal hinterlands of the state where the tribal inhabitants rely on witchcraft to cure diseases and ward off evil forces by invoking their gods and goddesses despite advancement in healthcare services.

Even in urban areas, most educated people believe in black magic. Many fall prey to suspected witchcraft and sorcery practice with superstition ingrained in the minds of people.

BOOSTING ENROLMENT

Teachers and students of a school in Balasore district, Wednesday, took a pledge during a campaign on 'No to child marriage, Yes to School' launched by the district administration

OP PHOTO

BRAJARAJNAGAR BYELECTION

BJD, BJP ratchet up campaign

POST NEWS NETWORK

Brajarajnagar, May 18: With the political atmosphere becoming warmer each passing day for the byelection to Brajarajnagar Assembly seat, both BJD and BJP intensified their election campaigns Wednesday.

BJD's Alaka Mohanty and BJP's Radharani Panda along with their party supporters are campaigning in 19 mouzas under Lakhanpur block in Jharsuguda district. The two candidates are leaving no stone unturned to grab the seat.

Panda had started her campaign Monday from native village Dhulunda in the Assembly segment while BJD's Mohanty has covered the areas coming under Brajarajnagar municipal limits.

The BJD and BJP candidates have already covered several villages under Kandheikela, Remata, Pithinda, Kanaktora and Badimal panchayats. They tried to convince the voters by highlighting their respective welfare programmes.

The bypoll is scheduled to be held May 31. A total of 11 candidates are in the fray after withdrawal of three nominations May 17.

SHORT TAKES

Three critical in bear attack

Patana: A bear went on a rampage in Patana range of Keonjhar district Wednesday morning and attacked three people, leaving them critically injured. Two of the injured were admitted to Karanjia sub-divisional hospital in Mayurbhanj and later shifted to Keonjhar district headquarters hospital. The injured were identified as Nilakantha Mohanta, 50, of Baunsanali, Sekhar Mohanta, 47, of Kamarmara and Majura Siddhu, 80, of Kaliaduma. The animal is reportedly holed up in Kamarmara forest. Forest officials have initiated efforts to drive out the bear from the forest.

Locals' plea for land records

Dasamanthpur: People of Liguma under this block of Koraput district have demanded land pattas for their dwelling places under Forest Rights Act. In the absence of and records, they are being deprived of availing various government benefits like housing and caste certificates. They have to live in huts when they are eligible to get pucca houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana (BPGY). "The government provides houses to us, but we have no land records to claim our rights," said some local residents. Tehsildar Ajay Prakash Tirkey said he would talk to the revenue inspector to issue land pattas to them.

India successfully flight tests anti-ship missile

AGENCIES

Balasore, May 18: The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Indian Navy Wednesday successfully conducted the maiden flight-test of indigenously-developed Naval anti-ship missile launched from a Naval helicopter from Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the Odisha coast, DRDO sources said.

The mission met all its objectives. It is the first indigenous air launched anti-ship missile system developed for the Indian Navy, they said. The missile followed the desired sea skimming trajectory and reached the designated target with high degree of accuracy, validating the control, guidance and mission algorithms, they said.

Stating that all sub-systems performed satisfactorily, DRDO said that sensors deployed across the test range and near impact point tracked the missile trajectory and captured all events.

The missile employed many new technologies, including an indigenously developed launcher for the helicopter. The missile guidance system includes state-of-the-art navigation system and integrated avionics. The flight test was witnessed by senior officers of DRDO and the Indian Navy. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO, Indian Navy and associated teams for the maiden developmental flight test. He said, "India has attained a high level of capability in indigenous design and development of missile systems." Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO, G Satheesh Reddy appreciated the efforts of the project team. He complimented the Indian Navy and Naval Flight Test Squadron for their support to the project and said that the system will strengthen offensive capability of Indian Navy.

> The missile employed many new technologies, including an indigenously developed launcher for the helicopter

13 PG seats in BBMCH get nod

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, May 18: The Bhima Bhoi Medical College and Hospital (BBMCH) in Bolangir has received the approval for Post Graduate studies in medical science, said sources.

The college till now had facilities for MBBS studies in medical science. However, after launch of PG courses teaching in two-year post MBBS diploma courses have started from May 2022.

The college has received nod for 13 PG seats from National Board of Examination (NBE), sources from the district information and public relations department (DIPRO) said.

The PG courses have been launched in medicine, ear, nose and throat (ENT), ophthalmology and radiology departments.

The admission for these courses were conducted through NEET and PG entrance examinations under 50 per cent of all India quota and 50 per cent of state quota from February till May this year.

Notably, BBMCH is the lone medical college among the newly established four medical colleges in the state where facilities for studies in PG courses have been launched.

Tipsy man hacks son to death

DEOGARH: A man hacked his son to death under the influence of alcohol at Gunduriposi under Deogarh Model police station late Tuesday night. The deceased was identified as Golbadan Patra, 32. As per sources, Golbadan was asleep in his house when his father Muchi Patra came home at 11:30pm in a drunken state and woke up him. Later, the father and son had a verbal duel over some issue. In a fit of rage, Muchi took out a sharp weapon and attacked his son, killing him on the spot.

Mason nabbed for betraying girl

BERHAMPUR: Police here Wednesday arrested a mason on charge of betraying a girl after keeping physical relationship with her on the pretext of marriage. The accused identified as Dushmant Das, 30, a mason by profession, was produced in the court but his bail plea was rejected. A case was registered in this connection and a medical examination was conducted on the accused and the survivor. The survivor also recorded her statement in the court. Police said Dushmant had engaged the girl as a daily wager to assist him in construction works.

SUNFLOWER FARMERS RUE LACK OF GOVT AID

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhapur, May 18: Although the government is promoting cultivation of cash crops including oilseeds through incentives, farmers of Ostapal region under Odapada block of Dhenkanal district have alleged lack of access to credit facilities which is dampening their spirit.

These farmers have reportedly set an example by cultivating oilseeds like sunflower without the aid and support from the state Agriculture department, said sources. However, what has hit them hard is lack of loan facilities and provision of other aids.

This year, they have a bumper crop and they hope this would help them get a handsome amount. Though sunflower cultivation has the potential to make them self-reliant, the apathetic attitude of the Agriculture department has disappointed them.

Reports said that the climate of Dhenkanal district is conducive to sunflower cultivation, which is being undertaken in Ostapal under Odapada block, Chandrasekharprasad, Beguniapal villages under Sadar block and in Bhapur block of the district.

However, what makes it difficult for them to undertake cultivation of this cash crop is lack of government support and bank loan for which many farmers are giving up this farming.

The Agriculture department is neither providing them with technical assistance nor with agricultural equipment or good seeds. As a result, many youths are turning away from sunflower cultivation.

Moreover, many farmers are unaware of government schemes and incentives available for sunflower farming for which they are unable to come out of their traditional paddy and vegetable farming.

When contacted, Suraj Prasad Sahu, agriculture officer Kalang panchayat, said sunflower seeds were earlier provided to farmers while this year they are yet to get the seeds. The seeds, once available, will be provided to the farmers who have irrigation facilities, on priority basis.

Kamesh Parida, a farmer, said sunflower oil is high in demand and that he produces oil worth around ₹25,000 by spending only ₹10,000.

Prasant Khatua, another farmer, said he has been cultivating sunflower for the last two years but his interest in the cultivation is declining due to lack of government assistance.

NOTICE

I Runita Patel, W/o- Sumanta Kumar Patel declare that, the original Sale deed bearing No. 2772, dtd.04/08/2008, rectification deed No. 1480, dtd. 01/06/2009 and R.O.O. bearing Khata No. 536/778, Area Ac.0. 150 dec.of Mouza- Jharsuguda Town Unit No.3, Debadihi has been lost and beyond recovery.
I have not created any mortgage with any Bank/ Co-Op.society or any financial institution by depositing the said Sale deed in original for security for any advance.

Sd/- Runita Patel

SCRAP FOR SALE (E-AUCTION)

E-Auction forms are invited from intending buyers for disposal, strictly on "As is Where Is" basis, on lot basis of water/flood damaged/effected mobile transmission tower materials - 46 nos. Battery Bank, 10 nos. DG Set, 2 nos. IPMS, 2 nos. PIU & 2 nos. SMPS - taxes extra.
Salvage belonging to M/s Indus Towers Ltd., 901 4th Floor, Tower A, DLF Cyber City, Gurugram, Haryana.
Material can be inspected at Indus Towers Ltd., Maa Utharani Flour Mills Compound, At-Alkar, P.O. Janla, Distt.-Khurda, Orissa-752054 site between **19.05.2022 to 30.05.2022** after taking prior appointment from **Mr. Jayashree Priyadarsani-8114394498**
E-Auction date/time-30.05.2022 between 03:00 PM to 04:30 PM
Interested buyers/bidders have to deposit an EMD (D.D.) of Rs. 3 Lacs in favour of "Indus Towers Ltd." payable at Gurugram to participate in the e-auction.
One or all bids/offers can be cancelled without assigning any reason.
E-Auction forms can be obtained from the Adwiti Technocrats Pvt. Ltd. (www.salvagemanagers.com), Basement, C-56, Sector-8, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301. Contact **Ms. Meenakshi Gupta (Manager Operations) : 9625137014**

JAHIR NOTICE
BEFORE THE HON'BLE CHAIRMAN MOTOR ACCIDENT CLAIMS TRIBUNAL AKOLA (MAHARASHTRA)
[CNR-MHAK01-001695-2018]
Process No.449/2022
District Court, Akola
Date 15/4/2022
M.A.C.P.No.111/2018 F.F. : 07/06/2022
Claimants :- Zoel Ahmed Khan Jameel Ahmed Khan ... Vrs ... Non-applicant :- Arjun Saand Kalakund Saand + 2
To, **1) Arjun Saand Kalakund Saand R/o Kulebhali, Post Bolangir Sadar, Dist.Bolangir (Orissa)**
2) Pradipkumar Jhasaketan Dora R/o. Ward No.27, Bhim Bhai Nagar, Sambalpur, Budharaja, (Orissa) 768004
Whereas Claimants has filed an application against your for grant of compensation of Rs.5,00,000/- u/s 166 & U/s 140 for compensation Rs.25,000 of M.V. Act, 1988 in respect of vehicular accident took place on dt. 22/11/2017 at about 10.30 a.m. Dongargaon Phata, Near Bahulgaon Phata, On National highway No.6 within jurisdiction of Police Station Borgaon Manju Dist. Akola (FIR no. 385/17) The vehicle involved in the accident was Vista Car bearing No. MH-30/AA-1101, & Truck no. OR-15/S-5391, Summons of the petitions were issued to you, however you have avoided service of the same. Therefore, you are hereby summoned to appear in this Court in person or by a pleader on the 07th Day of June 2022 at 10.30 o'clock, to answer the same, failing which the petition will be disposed of exparte. Given under my hand and the seal of the Court, this day of 25th April 2022.
(P. A. Bhandarkar)
Superintendent
Seal Judl Branch, Dist.Court, Akola (Maharashtra)

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. B-202
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER R&B DIVISION-V, BHUBANESWAR
E-mail ID: eernb5bbsr@gmail.com, Tel.: (0674) 2392424
No. 1854 Dtd.: 13.05.2022
NOTICE FOR BUILDING WORK
E-Procurement Tender Call Notice No. 5 of 2022-23

Number of the work	:	01 (One) Civil
Period of Completion	:	As mentioned in DTCN
Date & time of sale & receipt of bid document in the office of Inviting Authority	:	From 17.05.2022 at 11.00 A.M. to 26.05.2022 at 5.30 P.M.
Date & time of opening of bids	:	27.05.2022 at 11.30 A.M.
Name and address of Inviting Officer	:	Executive Engineer, R&B Division-V, Bhubaneswar

Further details can be seen from the State Govt. portal **https://tendersorissa.gov.in**.
Any amendment/cancellation/retenders will be availbale in the website.
Sd./- Executive Engineer
R&B Division-V, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-34135/11/0005/2223

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is for notice of the General Public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of Teen Ek Party. The office of the party is located At: Padalguda, Post: Majhiguda, Dist.; Nabarangpur, PIN - 764059, Odisha. This party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act., 1951 - Names/Address of the office bearers of the party are as follows:
President: Monasi Bhatra, S/o. Binod Bhatra, At: Padalguda, Post: Majhiguda, Dist.- Nabarangpur, PIN - 764059, Odisha.
Secretary: Kranti Kumar Kotina, S/o. K. Manohar Rao, At: Padalguda, Post: Majhiguda, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764059, Odisha.
Treasurer: Mohan Santa, S/o. Krushna Santa, At: Kadalijaba, Post: Baghasiuni, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764059, Odisha.
If anyone has any objection to the registration of Teek Ek Party they may send their objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi - 110001 within 30 days of publication of this notice.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BALUGAON, KHORDHA
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION No. BLN.01/2022-23, Date: 12.05.2022
No. 840 **Date: 12.05.2022**
No. C-306: The Executive Officer on behlaf of NAC, Balugaon invites percentage Bid thorugh e-procurement in double cover system according to norm of e-procurement.

1. Type of works	:	Civil construction works as in the D.T.C.N.
2. Total No. of works	:	08 Nos.
3. Tender Amount Cost	:	Rs.4,01,647.00 to Rs.17,81,800.00
4. Period of Completion	:	45 Days to 90 Days
5. Date and time of availability of Bid documents in the portal	:	From 10.00 A.M. of Dt.18.05.2022 upto 5.00 P.M. of Dt.25.05.2022
6. Original Bid documents submission in Tender Box	:	Dt.26.05.2022 upto 1.00 P.M.
7. Date & time of opening of tender	:	Dt.27.05.2022 at 11.00 A.M.

Further, the details of e-tender documents can be had from the E-Procurement portal **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**. Corrigendum if any shall only be published in above website.
Sd./- Executive Officer
N.A.C., Balugaon
OIPR-13173/11/0001/2223

SUNDARAM HOME
Regd Office: No. 21, Patullos Road, Chennai - 600 002.
Corporate Office: Sundaram Towers, No. 46, Whites Road, Chennai - 600 014.
Branch Office: A /108, 2nd Floor, C/O Sundaram Finance Banadev Bhawan, Saheed Nagar, Khurda Dist, Bhubaneshwar - 751 007.
DEMAND NOTICE
(Under Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002)
The under mentioned parties are hereby informed that the Company has initiated proceedings against each of you under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, that the notices under Section 13(2) of the Act sent to each of you separately by Regd. Post Ack. Due have been returned unserved. Hence both of you are hereby called upon to take notice to pay jointly and severally the outstanding amount within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the Company will proceed against the below mentioned properties to realize its dues with interests and costs as contemplated under the Act. Needless to mention that this notice is addressed to you without prejudice to any other remedy available to the Company.

Sl. No.	Name & Address of Borrower & Co-Borrowers	File No. Amount (Outstanding Rs.)	Description of Immovable Property
1	**Mr. Rajesh Kumar Sahoo (Borrower)** Lokanath Road, Harachandi Sahi, Near Bachali, Sahi Police Station, Puri - 752001.	**File No. 66200247, Rs. 9,25,412/-** (+ Interest @ 24% p.a. From 31.03.2022) + Future Interest + Statutory Expenditure + Legal Expenses + Incidental Charges.	All that piece and parcel of the property admeasuring 4600 Square Feet, comprised in Khata No.30, Plot No. 320(P) and Lay out Plot No.1 of Block No.2 of Kalinga Vihar/VIP Enclave, Sea Beach Housing Project, Mouza/Revenue Village, Sipasarubuli P.S. Puri No.78, Tahasil: Puri, under the Jurisdiction of Sub-Registrar Office- Puri, District: Puri, State of Odisha. **Bounded as under:** on or towards North by: 20' Wide Road, on or towards South by: Plot No.12, on or towards East by: 40' wide Road, on or towards West by: Plot No. 2.
2	**Mr. Murali Krishna Golla (Borrower)** Neheru Nagar 5, Gosaninuagaon, Brahmapur, Ganjam-760003. **Mrs. Mangamma Golla (Co-Borrower)**	**File No. 66200171 Rs. 50,37,164/-** (+ Interest @ 24% p.a. From 31.03.2022) + Future Interest + Statutory Expenditure + Legal Expenses + Incidental Charges.	All that piece and parcel of property admeasuring an area of Ac. 0.059 dec under Hal Khata No.1375/101, Hal Plot No.1051/3130, which correspondence to sabak khata No.742/1235, Further correspondence to Sabak Khata No. 511 & Sabak Plot No.1051 Kisam: Gharabari (Homestead) situated at Mouza/ Revenue Village: Gopabandhunagar under Tahasil: Berhampur, PS.Berhampur, No. 64, District: Ganjam in the State of Odisha.

for SUNDARAM HOME FINANCE LTD.,
Authorised officer.

> Nothing, not even the darkest falsehood can stop the ultimate triumph of Truth.
>
> THE MOTHER

Whither Cooperation

When US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau opened the Bretton Woods Conference almost 80 years ago, he reminded delegates that failures of international cooperation had led to the Great Depression, social division, and ultimately war. "Prosperity, like peace, is indivisible," he concluded, "we cannot afford to have it scattered here or there among the fortunate ... Poverty, wherever it exists, is menacing to us all."

That message speaks across the ages. We are again facing global challenges that can be met only through international cooperation. Large swaths of the developing world are being excluded from global prosperity. Extreme poverty is rising. Hard-won gains in health, education, and nutrition are under threat. Already obscene economic inequalities between and within countries are widening. The window of opportunity for averting a climate catastrophe is about to slam shut. And yet multilateral cooperation is paralysed by complacency, petty rivalries, and inward-looking nationalism.

Consider this year's IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings, which offered an opportunity to mobilise the finance needed to prevent wholesale reversals of progress toward the 2030 SDGs. Instead, Western governments and the G20 arrived with no shared agenda, spent a week swapping platitudes, and left the world with a set of vague and incoherent declarations.

Kevin Watkins

The World Bank and the IMF maintain anachronistic Western-dominated governance systems

We cannot afford leadership failures on this scale. The IMF and the World Bank, the twin pillars of the Bretton Woods system, should be at the heart of international cooperation in responding to the defining challenges facing our generation, starting with the two-tier recovery from the economic downturn triggered by COVID-19.

Unlike advanced economies, which have recovered on the back of vast government financing and vaccination programmes, many developing economies have suffered deep scarring. Growth has slowed, tax revenues have fallen, and two-thirds of low-income countries are either in or at risk of debt distress. The IMF estimates that the poorest countries will need an additional $450 billion to return to their pre-pandemic development trajectories.

Budget pressures are limiting governments' capacity to defend human development gains. The pandemic pushed almost 100 million people into extreme poverty. That figure is set to rise as safety nets are cut and Russia's war in Ukraine fuels food-price inflation, raising the spectre of increased malnutrition, or even famine, in some parts of the world. More than 40 of the poorest countries are spending more servicing their debts than on public health. Education budgets are being cut even as millions of the world's most disadvantaged children return to classrooms carrying the learning losses inflicted during pandemic-related school closures.

Against this grim backdrop, international cooperation to finance an "SDG recovery" has gained new urgency. The OECD estimates that the already-large pre-pandemic SDG financing gap has increased by $1.2 trillion. That's without the incremental investments of $2 trillion annually needed to support renewable-energy investments in developing countries to achieve the 2015 Paris climate agreement's goals.

When governments committed to the SDG agenda seven years ago, they pledged a bold new approach to development finance that would convert "billions into trillions." The architects of the Bretton Woods system created the vehicle to do so in the form of multilateral development banks (MDBs).

Designed to support postwar European reconstruction, the MDB system – the World Bank and its regional counterparts – enshrines a simple but powerful financial model. With small amounts of paid-in capital underpinned by much larger government guarantees, the MDBs can use their AAA credit ratings to issue bonds at low interest rates and lend to developing countries, effectively mobilising private finance for public investment. The World Bank, the largest MDB, has only $19 billion of paid-in capital, and $278 billion of callable capital.

Multilateral finance has multiplier effects that bilateral aid cannot duplicate. Every $1 invested in the World Bank through paid-in capital mobilises $4 in new finance. Yet the MDB system is at best weakly exploited. Apart from its soft-loan facility, the International Development Association, the World Bank system played a muted role in supporting developing countries during the pandemic, and the MDBs' financing portfolio for climate interventions in low- and middle-income countries is just $38 billion – a fraction of what is needed.

While the MDBs are undercapitalised, the bigger problem is a deeply entrenched conservatism in financial governance. Major shareholders – the US and European governments – refuse to allow callable-capital guarantees to be integrated into lending operations. Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute estimate that changing this rule could mobilise an additional $1.3 trillion, with only a marginal change in credit ratings and borrowing costs.

Speaking at the spring meetings, US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen lamented the MDBs' failure to mobilise the trillions needed for pandemic recovery. And yet the Biden administration has failed to overhaul the rules on callable capital.

Other attempts at innovation have run into a bureaucratic brick wall. Gordon Brown, the UN's Special Envoy for Global Education, has proposed a system of modest grants and guarantees that could double MDB financing for education, unlocking $10 billion. Yet even in the face of an unprecedented education crisis, donors have failed to act.

This is a travesty of the Bretton Woods system. In the misplaced defense of AAA credit ratings, the MDBs are eschewing solutions that would support recovery, prevent devastating reversals in human development, and bring hope to millions of children.

Sadly, it is not just the MDB agenda that is stuck. Nine months after G20 governments pledged to allocate $100 billion of the IMF's new issuance of special drawing rights to poor countries, not a single cent has been transferred. Meanwhile, with debt servicing set to surge by 45% this year – most of it going to commercial creditors and China – vital investments are being crowded out, and the risk of disorderly sovereign defaults is growing. Yet we are no closer to a comprehensive debt-reduction framework than we were a year ago.

As the crisis triggered by COVID-19 has deepened, some commentators have called for a new Bretton Woods system. They have a point. The World Bank and the IMF maintain anachronistic Western-dominated governance systems. But what is missing from the response to today's defining human-development challenges is not financial architecture, but rather the sense of urgency, shared purpose, and common endeavor that defined the original Bretton Woods conference.

The writer is a visiting professor at the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa at the London School of Economics.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

WISDOM CORNER

> Do one thing at a time, and while doing it put your whole soul into it to the exclusion of all else.
>
> SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

> The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack in will.
>
> VINCE LOMBARDI

> If you realized how powerful your thoughts are, you would never think a negative thought.
>
> PEACE PILGRIM

FOCUS NATION

ON DOWNWARD PATH

Anita Saluja

IF WE SEE THE HINDUTVA TRAJECTORY, THE RULING DISPENSATION WITH ELECTORAL NUMBERS ON ITS SIDE IN PARLIAMENT SUCCEEDED IN REACHING ITS GOALS

Whether it's the demolition drives, or restrictions on 'azaan' on loudspeakers, wittingly or unwittingly, rights of an estimated 15.4 per cent of the country's population are at stake. There is apprehension of abuse of laws like Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Sedition Laws, and Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), which are perceived to be tools for a larger design. There is international outcry in the form of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Perception gaining ground is that focus is on implementing the core agenda for the formation of Hindu Rashtra.

In times like this, with tempers running high, Prime Minister Narendra Modi needs to step in and press the pause button. Modi has to bring back sanity, by effectively taking charge and gaining control over the situation, which threatens to spiral out of control. After the pandemic, India has emerged with a promise of becoming the fastest-growing large economy. India has a burgeoning middleclass, technology and start-ups. The country needs to take advantage of its strong points and forge ahead.

While restrictions on 'azaan' and use of bulldozers in localities inhabited by minorities have become the order of the day under some municipal bodies and state governments, in the larger perspective, it is tantamount to nothing else but undue harassment of Muslims.

If we see the Hindutva trajectory, the ruling dispensation with electoral numbers on its side in Parliament succeeded in reaching its goals. First, it was the abrogation of Article 370, surprising both party colleagues and the Opposition, and the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories. Though there is talk that after the delimitation exercise, the statehood of J&K could be restored, it remains a distant possibility. Unless the region's majority community is brought in line, the BJP cannot afford to give them back their freedom. They will have to be controlled from Delhi.

To think that the BJP will retrace its steps is next to impossible, as it is religiously following its ideological path that will earn the party rich political dividends

The construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, the declaration adopted at the BJP convention in Palampur, way back in 1989, has also been achieved by the BJP. It was a Herculean task, but the BJP did not shy away from demolishing the Babri Masjid 6 December, 1992. Modi and Shah have achieved what Advani and Vajpayee could not achieve during their entire careers.

To fulfil their agenda, what they require is popular mandate. No wonder that the BJP is bent upon forming governments in one state after another. With a series of state elections due this year and the next, the BJP has once again turned belligerent on its Hindutva agenda.

The language issue raked up by none other than Union Home Minister Amit Shah emphasised that Hindi should be the language of communication in the country, a statement that infuriated leaders from many parts of the country. Social media was witness to a vitriolic spat between Hindi film actor Ajay Devgn and Kannada actor Sudeep. Trivial issues are being deliberately raked up to assess the response of the masses.

By bringing in non-issues into public discourse, it becomes easier for the BJP to assess the timeframe by which it can reach its political goal. Take the issue of Uniform Civil Code. Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra, or any Chief Minister raises the issue out of the blue to evaluate the fallout of the comment. If the issue is resisted severely, they will keep quiet for a while and again some maverick will be heard talking about it.

In the case of Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), the entire Muslim community stood up against the law, forcing the Modi government to go slow on its implementation. But, the Act has been shelved only till such time when the NDA government attains more power to bring it back.

The CAA is a classic example of virtually establishing India as Hindu Rashtra, the goal of the RSS. Just as a Jew in any part of the world can go back to Israel as his or her natural homeland, a Hindu can similarly move back to India, as a natural homeland. According to the CAA, any Hindu, who arrived in India before December 31, 2014, can fast-track the process to acquire Indian citizenship.

The demolition drive at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi, the epicentre of the protests against the CAA, was thwarted by the inhabitants of the locality, but till when? Ultimately, the government at the Centre will have its say, sooner or later.

The bulldozers and the restrictions on 'azaan' are all smaller steps to threaten and intimidate the minorities to fall in line, or face the consequences. Who will dare to raise their voice against the government, once they become familiar with the repercussions that will follow?

The smaller steps (ban on 'azaan' and demolition drive) and the bigger steps (CAA, Uniform Civil Code, Hindi as link Language) will, therefore, go side by side till the creation of Hindu Rashtra. It's an alarm bell for liberal Hindus and the secular Opposition, to join hands to halt the BJP on its track. Already, except for West Bengal, Maharashtra, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Delhi and some North-Eastern states, the BJP is in power in all the other states.

To think that the BJP will retrace its steps is next to impossible, as it is religiously following its ideological path that will earn the party rich political dividends. For this, they can go to any extreme, even amend the Constitution, if they can muster a two-thirds majority in Parliament. It is only the saner voices within the political spectrum which inclined to retain the secular identity of India that can rein-in the BJP. Unless, the saner voices join hands, India will cease to be a secular country, where Taj Mahal will be renamed a Shiva temple, Qutub Minar a Vishnu Stambh; and all roads and lanes will be christened after Hindu leaders.

The writer is a Delhi-based senior journalist and political commentator. Views are personal.

SPECTRUM METAVERSE

Inside a bubble of digital space

Bighneswar Swain

WE ALL HAVE MORE TO WORRY ABOUT IN DIGITAL SPACES THAN JUST TIME SPENT

The metaverse is the conjunction of two ideas -- virtual reality and a digital second life. Metaverse is unstated as a graphically rich virtual space, with reliability, where people can work, play, shop, socialise. It is often called a hypothetical iteration of the internet as a single, universal virtual world that is facilitated using virtual reality and augmented reality headsets. Metaverse development is often linked to advancing virtual reality technology due to increasing demands for immersion.

There are a few things that have catapulted to the forefront of the tech industry's thinking in the past few years. One of them is a couple of technologies closely associated with visions of the metaverse. Virtual reality, which was taking its first vacillating steps in the '90s, is now, well, a reality. Commercially available headsets of decent quality exist, including standalone wireless devices like Quest. Another is blockchain, the barely comprehensible and energy-hungry technology that has made cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs) possible. NFTs, which have become an obsession for crypto enthusiasts, snake-oil salesmen, suggestible executives, and (bizarrely) some parts of the art world over the last year or so, could enable the ownership of virtual items and real estate within the metaverse.

We all have more to worry about in digital spaces than just time spent. The probable idea that this is the direction technological innovation is heading does little to consider whether it should be the direction we are heading. "It's indispensable for humans to be with humans in real life." To that, I think that as kids grow up in this space, there will have to be channels for people to engage, go for a coffee together, walk in on a track, have a chit-chat with family, friends and have real fun under the shade of sun. Although we can simulate the same, but the simulation is not the same. It's bad for kids as they cannot socialise nor their cognitive skills can be developed.

At the time when the internet first arrived, it started with a series of technological innovations like the ability to let computers talk to each other over great distances or the ability to hyperlink from one webpage to another. These technical features were the building blocks that were then used to make the abstract structures we know the internet for: websites, apps, social networks, and everything else that relies on those core elements. And that's to say nothing of the convergence of the interface innovations that aren't strictly part of the internet but are still necessary to make it work, such as displays, keyboards, mice, and touchscreens.

There are some new building blocks in place, like the ability to host hundreds of people in a single instance of a server (idealistic metaverse predictions suppose this will grow to thousands or even millions of people at once, but this might not be too cheerful), or motion-tracking tools that can distinguish where a person is looking or where their hands are. These new technologies can be very exciting and feel futuristic.

But, there are limitations that may be impossible to overcome. When tech companies like Microsoft or Meta show fictionalised videos of their visions of the future, they frequently tend to gloss over just how people will interact with the metaverse. VR headsets are still very clunky, and most people experience motion sickness or physical pain if they wear them for too long. Augmented reality glasses face a similar problem, on top of the non-insignificant issue of figuring out how people can wear them around in public without looking like huge dorks. And then there are the accessibility challenges of VR that many companies are shrugging off for now.

From snow crash to The Matrix, metaverses are envisioned as an escape. It's a spectrum world and we stay inside a bubble of digital space where attachment, emotion, sense and social behaviours failed to develop. Two years of the COVID-19 pandemic in digital space taught a great view of what metaverse would be. Be with real, be with time, not future. Virtual, imaginary and metaverse are equally treatable future proceedings.

The writer works for a leading IT company and is the co-founder of Shri Jagannath Chetana. Views are personal.

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**

Orissa POST HERE . NOW
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Celebrating friendship

Sir, The article, "Friendship can boost your happiness" (**Orissa POST**, May 18) made an enchanting and a refreshing read. Friendship can have a major impact on your health and well-being. Good friends are good for your health. Friends help you celebrate good times and provide succour during difficult times. The gravitational pull of individual friendships can have an enormous cumulative effect on the quality of our lives. With the growing number of people living alone, either by choice or by circumstance, friends can provide and occupy the much needed emotional space. Friends can link us to broader social networks and help enrich our lives. Helen Keller once said: "Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light." Friends garden our hearts to let happiness bloom. Succinctly put, a true friend can be the emotional oasis that makes all the difference.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Fresh leadership needed

Sir, It was widely expected that the Congress' Chintan Shivir would provide greater clarity on the path the party must tread to counter the BJP's aggressive brand of Hindutva. However, the much-hyped conclave ended without any suggestions for the ideological crisis the party faces. Instead of finding a solution to the party's ideological crisis, the Congress only reaffirmed its commitment to pluralism. The conclave devised some strategies to re-establish its connect with people and to revive the party to equip it for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. However, political observers are of the opinion that the party needs to go miles to achieve success in its plans. The party must regain its credibility which is in shambles. The party cannot succeed by merely depending on the reputation of the Gandhi family and the legacy of the grand old party. The party must provide clarity on what it has to offer to the people and communicate this effectively to the people. For this the party requires powerful leaders who can interact effectively with the people. Given that the three Gandhis have failed miserably to impress the voters, new leaders need to come forward. The party leaders must understand that politics is a full time work. Leaders who sit in ivory towers cannot understand the pulse of people. The party needs a new leader who can rejuvenate it and enable it to win elections. Let's hope that the present leadership realises its faults and gives way to fresh leadership.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

national

The Centre is looting the common people by hiking prices of domestic gas, petrol and diesel. It's an anti-people government. They have earned over ₹17 lakh crore by raising fuel and gas prices

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

NEW MISSION

ISRO plans to launch Azadisat and 75 student satellites this year to coincide with the 75th anniversary of India's independence. ISRO chairman S Somnath said this during a joint meeting of science departments and ministries chaired by Science & Technology Minister Jitendra Singh here. The minister said over 55 start-ups have registered with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in just about two years since the space sector was opened for private firms.

Quote of the day

Distracting people won't change the facts. India looks a lot like Sri Lanka

RAHUL GANDHI | FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT

Under one tent, we can have all the religions combined. I had a Christian commanding officer who used to preside over 'havan' (a Hindu ritual) Sunday. It was a predominantly Hindu unit with some Muslims. He used to preside over the havan because he was the head of the family. He also used to go to the church later in his spare time

V K SINGH | UNION MINISTER

Food security challenges are inevitable in the coming years owing to the exhaustive population pressure. Focus should be on taking research outputs from labs to the fields

GIRIRAJ SINGH | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

MCDs to be formally merged May 22

New Delhi: The three municipal corporations of Delhi will be formally merged May 22, the central government announced Wednesday. According to a notification issued by the Union Home Ministry, the Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022 will come into effect from May 22. The legislation was approved by Lok Sabha March 30 and by Rajya Sabha April 5. President Ram Nath Kovind had given his assent April 18. "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022 (10 of 2022), the Central Government hereby appoints the 22nd day of May 2022 on which the Municipal Corporation of Delhi shall be constituted," another notification said.

13-yr-old girl gangraped by 8

New Delhi: A 13-year-old girl was gangraped in the national capital by eight people, including one juvenile. The police have apprehended four persons in connection with the case, who have been identified as Mohit (20), Aakash (19), Shahrukh (20) and one juvenile. Deputy Commissioner of Police (south district), Benita Mary Jaiker, said that at around 5 p.m. on April 24, the victim had gone to the market to purchase vegetables. "The girl took an auto for Shani bazaar which was about 2 km from her house," the DCP said.

SC orders release of Perarivalan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Invoking its extraordinary power under Article 142 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court Wednesday ordered the release of A G Perarivalan, who has served over 30 years in jail in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, and said the Tamil Nadu Governor ought not to have sent the "binding" advice made by the State Cabinet for his release to the President.

While ordering that Perarivalan is "set at liberty forthwith," the apex court also said the reference to Tamil Nadu Cabinet's recommendation to the President after two and a half years was without any constitutional backing and the "inexplicable" delay in deciding remission is "inexcusable" as it contributes to adverse physical conditions and mental distress to the inmates.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao said the Tamil Nadu state cabinet's advice is binding on the Governor in the exercise of his powers under Article 161 of the Constitution.

"The advice of the State Cabinet is binding on the Governor in matters relating to commutation/remission of sentences under Article 161. No provision under the Constitution has been pointed out to us nor any satisfactory response tendered as to the source of the Governor's power to refer a recommendation made by the State Cabinet to the President of India," the bench also comprising Justices B R Gavai and A S Bopanna said.

Observing that the Tamil Nadu Governor ought not to have sent the recommendation made by the State Cabinet to the President, the apex court said such action is contrary to the constitutional scheme elaborated above. "It is relevant to point out that the recommendation made by the State Cabinet was September 9, 2018, which remained pending before the Governor for almost two and a half years without a decision being taken. It was only when this Court started enquiring about the reason for the decision being delayed, that the Governor forwarded the recommendation made by the State Government for the remission of the Appellant's sentence to the President," the bench said. The apex court said it was fully conscious of the immunity of the Governor under the Constitution with respect to the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office or for any act done or purported to be done by him in the exercise and performance of such powers and duties.

The bench, however, said it has the power of judicial review of orders of the Governor under Article 161, which can be impugned on certain grounds, and non-exercise of the power under Article 161 is not immune from judicial review.

"Given petitions under Article 161 pertain to the liberty of individuals, inexplicable delay, not on account of the prisoners is inexcusable as it contributes to adverse physical conditions and mental distress faced by a prisoner, especially when the State Cabinet has taken a decision to release the prisoner by granting him the benefit of remission/commutation of his sentence," the bench said.

AG Perarivalan with his mother Arputham Ammal PTI PHOTO

The top court noted that Perarivalan was 19 years of age at the time of his arrest and has been incarcerated for 32 years, out of which he has spent 16 years on death row and 29 years in solitary confinement

Article 142 deals with the Supreme Court's power to exercise its jurisdiction and pass the order for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it

Pb farmers end protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, May 18: Punjab farmers ended their protest at the Chandigarh-Mohali border Wednesday after the Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann-led state government accepted several of their demands.

The development came after representatives of more than 20 farmer bodies held a marathon meeting with Mann at Punjab Bhawan here.

Conceding one of the key demands of the protesting farmers, Mann announced a fresh schedule for staggered sowing of paddy June 14 and June 17, thus restricting the total number of zones to just two instead of the earlier four.

However, the border belt across the fence has been excluded from the zonal restrictions and farmers of this region have been allowed to sow paddy from June 10.

Notably, it was earlier decided to undertake paddy cultivation in a staggered manner by dividing the entire state into four zones with dates of sowing being June 18, 22, 24 and 26 but the farmer bodies had rejected this schedule.

Mann told the farmer leaders that the state government has already issued a notification to procure the entire moong (green gram) crop at a minimum support price (MSP) of ₹7,275 per quintal, according to an official statement.

He also said the state government is finalising modalities to also procure maize at MSP to give a boost to its ambitious programme of crop diversification.

On the issue of MSP for Basmati crop, Mann said he will call on Union Home Minister Amit Shah Thursday to urge the Centre to announce MSP on Basmati crop so as to encourage growers to cultivate it in a big way.

'China building new bridge near Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: China is constructing a second bridge in an area held by it around the strategically key Pangong Tso lake in eastern Ladakh and it could help the Chinese military to quickly mobilise its troops in the region, according to satellite imagery Wednesday.

It is learnt that China has recently completed the construction of the first bridge in the area. The people cited above said the new bridge is being built in an area that is over 20 km from the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Damien Symon, a geospatial intelligence researcher, who keeps track of Chinese activities along the LAC, posted satellite images of the new construction on Twitter.

Symon, who uses the handle @detresfa_ said a "larger bridge" is being developed parallel to the first one, adding the likely aim of the construction is to "support larger/heavier movement" (of the military) over the lake.

The satellite image posted by Symon noted that the bridge is being built from both sides simultaneously. The bridge is likely to cut the distance significantly from the depth area of Rudok to the region around the LAC in Pangong Tso. The eastern Ladakh faceoff began May 4-5 in 2020. India has been insisting on the restoration of the status quo ante prior to the standoff.

India and China have held 15 rounds of military talks so far to resolve the eastern Ladakh row. As a result of the talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

PROVOKING NATURE

The bridge is being built amid the lingering standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries at several friction points in eastern Ladakh for over two years

There is no official reaction or comment by the Indian defence establishment on the new construction

India too has been constructing bridges, roads and tunnels in the border regions as part of overall efforts to enhance military preparedness

Centre asks states to be better prepared in view of Monsoon

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 18: Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla Wednesday said that the central and state governments should be better prepared in view of the South West Monsoon so that the losses due to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and landslides can be minimised.

He stressed on the need for building up capacities and response reflexes to ensure round the clock preparedness throughout the year.

Speaking at the Annual Conference of Relief Commissioners and Secretaries of Departments of Disaster Management of States and Union Territories, Bhalla said that through continued efforts over the last several years, the disaster management system has been able to reduce the impact of natural disasters on human lives.

He said that before 2014, the approach towards disasters was only relief centric but now it has changed and the focus on saving human lives has become an additional component of disaster management. Bhalla called on the states to undertake capacity building of urban local bodies, their State Disaster Response Forces (SDRFs), Fire Service and Civil Defence, since they are the first responders during a calamity. He emphasised on the importance of building capacities at the city and district levels and involving communities.

Noting that besides floods, in recent years cyclonic storms, forest fires, heat wave conditions and lightning strikes have shown an increasing trend, he stated that there was a need for synergies and effective coordination amongst institutions.

The two-day conference is being held to review the preparedness of states, UTs for dealing with any natural disasters that may occur during the coming South-West Monsoon season.

LINEN SHORTAGE IN TRAINS

Some material damaged during Cov waves, some used for masks

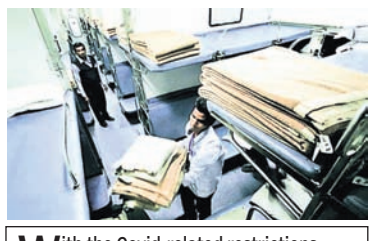
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: The Railways is struggling to provide linen to passengers even two months after announcing the restoration of the facility, with officials saying 60 per cent of the stock was damaged during the Covid waves and a significant amount went into making masks.

Sources said the facility was available in 1,114 pairs of trains before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, but now it is being provided only in 520 pairs. While 1,308 trains were provided with curtains in the compartment before Covid, currently, they are available in 1,225 trains. The officials said the coronavirus crisis resulted in a major disruption in the supply chain over the last two years. Earlier, linen provided on board trains was sourced from the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), now they have empowered Divisional Railway Mangers in the zones to procure the linen from mills. The Railways needs around 7.5 lakh packets of such linen set daily which comprise bedsheets, pillow case, blanket and hand towels. As of now, only around half of this is available, the officials said. Around 60 per cent of the stock that the Railways had from over the last two years has been damaged and a significant amount has already been used to make masks, they said.

Even the 70 laundries that the Railways used to clean their linens at need overhauling and the national transporter has already started restoration and recommissioning them, the officials said. They said the railways has to procure a total of 15,28,447 bed linen items, including 2,24,456 pillow covers, 4,73,591 handloom bed sheets, 92,743 handloom blankets, 29,124 bath towels and 1,36,118 handloom face towels among other items. Passengers have complained they are not informed about the train where they will get the linen set, leaving them confused and guessing.

After being inundated with queries about the same, the Railways now sends messages to passengers after they book a ticket, informing them about the availability of linen on board.



With the Covid-related restrictions largely lifted, the Railways had March 10 said the linen facility would be restored in trains in a phased manner.

The officials said the railways has placed orders for over 15 lakh bedroll items including bedsheets, towels, blankets and pillow covers to make up for the losses and restore the linen services fully

However, it has not been restored in full even more than two months after the announcement

रजिस्ट्री सं. डी.एल.-33004/99 REGD. NO. D. L.-33004/99

भारत का राजपत्र
The Gazette of India

सी.जी.-डी.एल.-अ.-19042022-235200
CG-DL-E-19042022-235200
असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग-II खण्ड 3-उप-खण्ड (ii)
PART II-Section 3-Sub-Section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

सं. 1764] नई दिल्ली, सोमवार, अप्रैल 18, 2022/चैत्र 28, 1944
No. 1764] NEW DELHI, MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022/CHAITRA 28, 1944

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
NOTIFICATION
New Delhi, the 18th April, 2022

S.O. 1854(E).—Whereas by the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) issued under sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highway Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government declared its intension to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the said notification for building (widening/four-laning, etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH49 on the stretch of land from Km 222 to Km 230 (At- Bangiriposi, Po. Bangiriposi, P/s. Bangiriposi, Dist - Mayurbhanj) in the district of MAYURBHANJ in the state of ODISHA

And whereas the substance of the said notification has been published in "Sambad" and "Orissa Post" both dated 23.01.2022; under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act;

And whereas no objections have been received from any corner by the competent Authority;

And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the competent authority has submitted its report to the Central Government;

Now, therefore, upon receipt of the said report of the competent authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that the land specified in the said Schedule should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose;

And further, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that on publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, the land specified in the said Schedule shall vest absolutely in the Central Government, free from all encumbrances.

SCHEDULE

Brief description of the land to be acquired, with or without structure, falling within the NH49 in the stretch of land from Km. 222 to Km. 230 (At- Bangiriposi, Po. Bangiriposi, P/s. Bangiriposi, Dist - Mayurbhanj) in the district of MAYURBHANJ in the state of ODISHA

State: ODISHA District: MAYURBHANJ

Sr. No.	Survey Number	Type of Land	Nature of Land	Area in Hectare	Name of the Land Owner/Interested Person Part Survey No.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Taluk: Bangriposi					
Village: Manada					
1	1273	Private	Sarad-I	0.0445164	Rasbihari Si, Kunjabihari Si, S/o. Kothu Si, Village-Nijgaon
Village: Sikarbhanga					
2	334/390	Private	Sarad-I	0.0445164	Narahari Basa, S/o. Padmalochan Basa, Village - Manada
			Total	0.0890328	

[F. No. NHAI/11013/Odisha/NH-6/L.A./Notification/3(a)/3D]
RAJESH GUPTA, Director

रजिस्ट्री सं. डी.एल.-33004/99 REGD. NO. D. L.-33004/99

भारत का राजपत्र
The Gazette of India

सी.जी.-डी.एल.-अ.-19042022-235209
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असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग-II खण्ड 3-उप-खण्ड (ii)
PART II-Section 3-Sub-Section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

सं. 1760] नई दिल्ली, सोमवार, अप्रैल 18, 2022/चैत्र 28, 1944
No. 1760] NEW DELHI, MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2022/CHAITRA 28, 1944

MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
NOTIFICATION
New Delhi, the 18th April, 2022

S.O. 1850(E).—Whereas by the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) issued under sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highway Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government declared its intension to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the said notification for building (widening/four-laning, etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH18 on the stretch of land from Km 1.5 to Km 7 (At- Bangiriposi, Po. Bangiriposi, P/s. Bangiriposi, Dist - Mayurbhanj) in the district of MAYURBHANJ in the state of ODISHA

And whereas the substance of the said notification has been published in "Sambad" and "Orissa Post" both dated 23.01.2022; under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act;

And whereas no objections have been received from any corner by the competent Authority;

And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the competent authority has submitted its report to the Central Government;

Now, therefore, upon receipt of the said report of the competent authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that the land specified in the said Schedule should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose;

And further, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that on publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, the land specified in the said Schedule shall vest absolutely in the Central Government, free from all encumbrances.

SCHEDULE

Brief description of the land to be acquired, with or without structure, falling within the NH18 in the stretch of land from Km. 1.5 to Km. 7 (At- Bangiriposi, Po. Bangiriposi, P/s. Bangiriposi, Dist - Mayurbhanj) in the district of MAYURBHANJ in the state of ODISHA

State: ODISHA District: MAYURBHANJ

Sr. No.	Survey Number	Type of Land	Nature of Land	Area in Hectare	Name of the Land Owner/Interested Person Part Survey No.
1	2	3	4	5	6
Taluk: Bangriposi					
Village: Kalabaria					
1	130/309	Private (Gharabari)	Gharabari	0.0060704	Lalitendu Satapathy, S/o. Sunil Kumar Satapathy, Village : Jamunadeipur
2	130/309/381	Private (Gharabari)	Gharabari	0.0121408	Kaberi Rup, W/o. Ashit Rup, Village - Brahmamandirsahi
			Total	0.0182112	

[F. No. NHAI/BOT/11012/58/2005/Pt./LA/NH-5/Notification/3a/3D]
RAJESH GUPTA, Director

Half a million people flee floods in NE

REUTERS

Guwahati, May 18: More than 5,00,000 people have fled their homes in the northeastern state of Assam to escape heavy floods triggered by pre-monsoon rains that drowned seven, authorities said Wednesday, as they warned the situation could worsen.

One of the world's largest rivers, the Brahmaputra, which flows into India and neighbouring Bangladesh from Tibet, burst its banks in Assam over the last three days, inundating more than 1,500 villages. Torrential rains lashed most of the rugged state, and the downpour continued Wednesday, with more forecast over the next two days.

More than 5,00,000 people have been affected, with the flood situation turning critical by the hour, Assam's water resources minister, Pijush Hazarika, told Reuters, adding that the seven drowned in separate incidents during the last three days.

Soldiers of the Indian army retrieved more than 2,000 people trapped in the district of Hojai in a rescue effort that continues, the state's health minister, Keshab Mahanta, said.

Water levels in the Brahmaputra were expected to rise further, national authorities said.

The situation remains extremely grave in the worst-hit Dima Hasao district, with both rail and road links snapped due to flooding and landslides, said Assam's revenue minister, Jogen Mohan, who is overseeing relief efforts there.

Cities elsewhere in India, notably the capital, New Delhi, are broiling in a heat wave.

RESCUE ACT: Army evacuates people during flood relief operations after heavy rainfall in Hojai district, Assam PTI

40 new highlands built to save animals from flood

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, May 18: Assam Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya Wednesday said that 40 new scientifically designed highlands have been constructed to save the wildlife of Kaziranga National Park and other forests and to provide them shelter during floods in the state.

Suklabaidya said the forest department is in a state of "complete preparedness" to rescue animals from the ongoing floods in Kaziranga and other national parks and wildlife sanctuaries across the state.

"We have successfully completed the construction of around 40 highlands for tackling the prevailing flood situations in Kaziranga and other national parks and wildlife sanctuaries," he said.

The new highlands have been designed scientifically with provision for adequate grass and plants yielding fruits such as elephant apple and Indian gooseberry, Suklabaidya said in a statement.

"The highlands enable us to reduce the animal casualty during annual floods," he added.

Suklabaidya, who is closely monitoring the flood situation in the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, said that the department is fully geared to deal with it.

"Kaziranga bears the brunt of floods every year, be it small or big. We are fully equipped to tackle any sort of exigency along with food arrangements for officers and forest personnel deployed for rescue operations of animals in Kaziranga," he said.

More than 25 boats are kept ready for rescue of animals in Kaziranga National Park and a slew of initiatives have been taken by his department to deal with any deluge in a better and efficient manner, he said. A baby elephant was saved from drowning Tuesday morning, he added.

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve director Jatin Sharma said the park has a total of 144 man-made highlands, including 33 big ones for housing animals during floods. "In addition to that, we have built an 8.5 km long road-cum-highland for providing shelter to animals during floods and for patrolling," he said.

RailTel wifi helps stranded connect with kin

The railway administration also used this connectivity facility for organising the relief-and-rescue operation effectively

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: More than 1,000 passengers on board the Guwahati Express and the Guwahati-Silchar Express trains, which were stuck in the flood-hit areas of Assam, were helped by the RailTel's wi-fi facility at stations, where there was a complete breakdown of the mobile network, the rail PSU said Wednesday.

RailTel made special arrangements for providing communication using station wi-fi to the stranded passengers of the two trains stuck on the Lumding-Badarpur hill section in Assam last week because of heavy rains that led to a total breakdown of mobile services of all operators in the affected area.

The affected area falls under the Lumding railway division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR).

The passengers could communicate with their families using this special arrangement.

The railway administration also used this connectivity facility for organising the relief-and-rescue operation effectively.

Inclement weather and incessant rain caused massive landslides and waterlogging at several locations of the Lumding-Badarpur hill section. This resulted in damage to the railway track, bridges, road and communication network in this hilly terrain.

The NFR zone had geared up its entire machinery and controlled train services over the affected section due to this serious condition. However, two trains got stranded in these flash floods, each with about 1,400 passengers. One was train number 15616 Silchar-Guwahati Express at the Ditokcherra station and another was train number 15615 Guwahati-Silchar Express at the New Haflong station in Assam's Dima Hasao district.

The railway administration launched a massive evacuation operation with the help of the Air Force, the Railway Protection Force (RPF), the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the Assam Rifles and locals.

But another big challenge was the total breakdown of mobile services of all operators in the affected area, which left the passengers and the railway administration isolated from the world.

In this difficult situation, the wifi facility already available at railway stations provided by RailTel Corporation proved very useful in providing connectivity. Special arrangements were made for passengers to use station wifi to contact their families.

The railway administration also used this connectivity facility for organising the relief-and-rescue operation effectively. This special arrangement was made by temporarily suspending the requirement of OTP on the mobile phone of a user, as required under standard procedure for authentication purpose as mobile services were down in that area, the company said.

WBSSC RECRUITMENT SCAM

Cal HC upholds order for CBI probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 18: A division bench of the Calcutta High Court Wednesday upheld a single bench order for CBI inquiry into alleged illegal appointments made by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education on the recommendations of the School Service Commission (SSC).

The bench, chaired by Justice Subrata Talukdar, maintained that the single bench order requires no intervention.

Shortly after, Justice Gangopadhyay directed Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee to appear before the CBI in connection with the appointment scam.

Chatterjee's lawyer immediately moved an urgent oral plea before another division bench, led by Justice Harish Tandon, seeking a stay on Justice Gangopadhyay's order, but to no avail.

The bench, also comprising Justice Rabindranath Samanta, refused to hear the plea saying that the appeal has not been filed in the registry of the court, and hence cannot be heard as per the rules of the high court.

Later, in the evening, the minister visited CBI office here for his questioning.

Chatterjee, now the state industry, commerce and parliamentary affairs minister, held the education portfolio when the scam was allegedly pulled off.

Justice Gangopadhyay, in his order, observed that he expects Chatterjee to step down as minister in the interest of justice.

He also directed all five members of a committee -- constituted by the West Bengal School Education Department in November, 2019 for monitoring pending recruitments of teaching and non-teaching staff in government-run and -aided schools – to appear before the CBI.

WBSSC chairman resigns

Amid row over irregularities in recruitment in the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC), its chairman Siddharta Majumdar Wednesday resigned from his position. His resignation was forwarded to the state education secretary, Manish Jain on Wednesday evening at a time when the former state education minister and the Trinamool Congress secretary general, Partha Chatterjee was facing the grilling of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officials pertaining to the recruitment scam.

Tripura may use Chittagong port to transport essentials

All train services in Tripura, Mizoram and lower Assam have been suspended till May 25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Agartala, May 18: Tripura government is contemplating to transport essentials into the state through Chittagong port in Bangladesh in view of the possible shortage of food stuff and fuel due to the snapping of railway services in the ongoing flood and landslips in Assam, an official said Wednesday.

There has been no confirmation over the restoration of train service through Lumding-Badarpur section in Assam which has been majorly affected by landslides triggered by incessant rain, principal secretary to the Tripura transport department, LH Darlong said at a press conference.

The Assam-Agartala national highway has opened for vehicular movement from Wednesday after a brief halt, he said.

"Even though the Assam-Agartala national highway is opened for vehicular movement, disruption in train service for a long period will have an adverse impact on the normal supply of essential items to Tripura. That is why we are planning to bring essentials by using an alternative way - the Haldia- Chittagong-Akhaura-Agartala transhipment route to transport essential items on an emergency basis," he said.

The coastal route of Haldia-Chittagong- Akhaura-Agartala, inaugurated in July 2020, is 600 km.

Darlong said as of now Tripura has a rice stock for 43 days, wheat for 38 days, sugar for 28 days, besides pulses and vegetables.

But the stock for petrol will only last for eight days and diesel for five, which is a matter of concern, he said.

The state has already requested the Food Corporation of India and Indian Oil Corporation Limited to ensure normal supply.

Additional secretary to the food and civil supplies department, Tapan Kumar Das said "IOCL has already started sending petrol and diesel to Tripura through tankers from Guwahati and Silchar to prevent the possible shortage of fuel".

In view of the situation, the Tripura government has restricted the selling of petrol. Two wheelers can buy petrol of maximum Rs 200, three wheelers for Rs 300 and four wheelers for Rs 1000. A litre of petrol costs Rs 108.26 in Agartala.

There are, however, no restrictions on the sale of diesel but many of petrol pumps here have downed shutters in the capital town as they have run out of reserves.

Darlong said the state has already requested the civil aviation ministry to increase flight services to and from Maharaja Bir Bikram (MBB) airport here in view of the disruption in train service at Maibong in Assam since May 13.

Currently 18 flights are operating in MBB airport and prices of air tickets to Kolkata and Delhi, the two favoured destinations from Tripura, have already gone up substantially.

North East Frontier Railway sources said that all train services in Tripura, Mizoram and lower Assam have been suspended till May 25 and the situation will be reviewed after the date.

PTI

Cops use water cannons to quell ABVP protest

Kolkata: Police Wednesday used water cannons and baton-charged activists of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, who tried to force their way past the security cordon near Bikash Bhavan here in protest against alleged irregularities in appointments to various posts of the education department. An officer of the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate said around 100 ABVP members turned violent when they were stopped near Bikash Bhavan - the headquarters of the department - prompting security personnel to baton-charge and deploy water cannons. ABVP national secretary Saptarshi Sarkar said four of our activists were arrested while at least six others suffered injuries in the police action.

Mamata pans Centre for fuel, gas price hike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Midnapore (WB), May 18: Hitting out at the Centre over hike in domestic gas and fuel prices, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday accused the BJP-led government of looting the common people.

She also accused the Narendra Modi government of engineering communal disturbances to divert people's attention from issues affecting them such as price rise.

The Centre is looting the common people by hiking prices of domestic gas, petrol and diesel… It's an anti-people government. They have earned over Rs 17 lakh crore by raising fuel and gas prices," Banerjee claimed at a Trinamool Congress programme at Medinipur College grounds here. She maintained that the Centre was not releasing funds to Bengal under the MGNREGA and PM Awas Yojana (PMAY), as a result of which the state government was unable to make payments to the beneficiaries.

"Organise demonstrations in every block demanding the release of the funds by the Union government," the TMC boss told party workers.

Banerjee also announced a new slogan at the meeting - 'Ami Noi Amra' (Not me, we) - and asserted that those TMC workers who work to fulfill their own interests should "stay at home" and are not welcome in the party.

"Work for the people and stand beside them," Banerjee, who is on a tour of the western district, added.

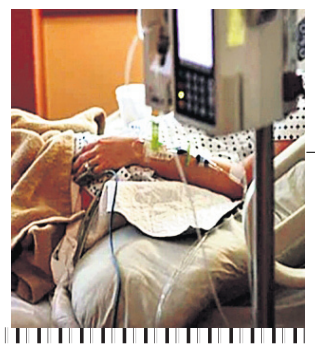
national

'Hunar Haat' has given employment and self-employment opportunities to over 10.5 lakh artisans and craft persons, removing the barriers of caste, community, region and religion

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | UNION MINISTER

SHOCKING INCIDENT

The Rajasthan BJP Wednesday demanded strict action against the Kota government hospital after rats gnawed at an eyelid of a paralysed woman undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Kota railway colony resident Devender Singh Bhati had filed a complaint saying that the doctors treating his wife's eyelid injury had admitted that the injuries were caused by rat bites



Quote of the day

Water resource management works like constructing check dams and creating farm ponds were taken up at a cost of ₹6,850 crore under MGNREGS. Construction of Anganwadi buildings and those for village panchayats were carried out for ₹2,786 crore

M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER

As rain is expected to continue for the next two-three days, directions have been given to take precautionary measures, especially in low-lying areas. Preparations were made for the rainy season and drains cleaned, but there are some geographical reasons too: Bangalore cannot hold even 90 mm rains; adding to that gas line, water and cable work is on

BASAVARAJ BOMMAI | KARNATAKA CM

The government is making every effort to provide quality school education in the state and asserted that filling up the vacant posts of teachers is its priority

ASHOK GEHLOT | RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

CBI arrests close associate of Karti

New Delhi: In more trouble for former Finance Minister and senior Congress leader P Chidambaram and his son Karti Chidambaram, who is a Lok Sabha member, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) Tuesday said that it has filed a charge sheet against them in its probe into INX media money laundering case. The probe agency filed an e-charge sheet against Chidambaram, his son and others before Special Judge Ajay Kumar Kuhar Monday. Besides the father-son duo, the charge sheet names Karti Chidambaram's chartered accountant SS Bhaskararaman and others.

Delhi LG Anil Baijal resigns

New Delhi: Delhi's Lt Governor Anil Baijal resigned Wednesday, citing personal reasons. According to the sources, Baijal sent his resignation to President Ram Nath Kovind. A 1969 batch IAS officer from the AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territory) cadre, he served as 21st Lt Governor of Delhi for a period of five years and four months from December 31, 2016 to May 18, 2022. As the Lt Governor, he had been at loggerheads with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal over several issues. Baijal had also served as Union Home Secretary during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.

Wild fire triggers landmine blasts

Jammu: A forest fire triggered several landmine explosions along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials said. The fire that started in a forest across the LoC Monday spread to the Indian side in the Mendhar sector, they said. The fire triggered the explosion of nearly half a dozen landmines that were part of the anti-infiltration obstacle system, officials said.

Centre green lights AIIMS for K'taka

Delhi/Bangalore: In a fillip to Karnataka's Health and Medical Education sector, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has given the green signal for establishing an All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Karnataka. The assurance was given during a meeting between Karnataka Health Minister K. Sudhakar and Union Health Mansukh Mandaviya in New Delhi Wednesday.

Pollution killed 2.4mln Indians in '19: Lancet

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 18: Pollution was responsible for nine million deaths in 2019 - equivalent to one in six deaths worldwide - and India leads with nearly 2.4 million deaths, according to a study published Wednesday in The Lancet Planetary Health.

Of the nearly 2.4 million deaths in 2019, air pollution accounted for 16.7 lakh deaths - the highest by any country. Further, more than 5 lakh lives were lost in the country due to water pollution, followed by occupational pollution (more than one lakh) and lead exposure (over 2 lakh).

Globally, of the nine million pollution - attributable deaths in 2019, air pollution (both household and ambient) remains responsible for the greatest number of deaths at 6.67 million worldwide.

Water pollution was responsible for 1.36 million premature deaths. Lead contributed 9,00,000 premature deaths, followed by toxic occupational hazards at 870,000 deaths.

The report states that although the number of deaths from pollution sources associated with extreme poverty (such as indoor air pollution and water pollution) have decreased, these reductions are offset by increased deaths attributable to industrial pollution (such as ambient air pollution and chemical pollution).

"The health impacts of pollution remain enormous, and low- and middle-income countries bear the brunt of this burden. Despite its enormous health, social and economic impacts, pollution prevention is largely overlooked in the international development agenda," said Richard Fuller, from Global Alliance on Health and Pollution, Geneva, Switzerland.

REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

"Preventing pollution can also slow climate change - achieving a double benefit for planetary health - and our report calls for a massive, rapid transition away from all fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy," added co-author Professor Philip Landrigan, Director, Global Public Health Programme and Global Pollution Observatory at Boston College.

Globally, pollution of any kind was responsible for nine million deaths in 2019 - equivalent to one in six deaths worldwide

The decline in deaths from traditional pollution since 2000 (household air pollution from solid fuels and unsafe water) is most evident in Africa. This can be explained by improvements in water supply and sanitation, antibiotics and treatments, and cleaner fuels.

However, this mortality decrease has been offset by a substantial increase in deaths from exposure to industrial pollution - such as ambient air pollution, lead pollution, and other forms of chemical pollution - across all regions over the past 20 years.

This is particularly evident in Southeast Asia, where rising levels of industrial pollution are combined with ageing populations and increasing numbers of people exposed.

Ambient air pollution was responsible for 4.5 million deaths in 2019, up from 4.2 million deaths in 2015 and 2.9 million in 2000. Deaths from hazardous chemical pollutants increased from 0.9 million in 2000, to 1.7 million in 2015, to 1.8 million in 2019, with 900,000 deaths attributable to lead pollution in 2019.

Overall, deaths from modern pollution have increased by 66 per cent in the past two decades, from an estimated 3.8 million deaths in 2000 to 6.3 million deaths in 2019. Figures on deaths from chemical pollutants are likely to be underestimated as only a small number of manufactured chemicals in commerce have been adequately tested for safety or toxicity, the report noted.

Hardik Patel quits Cong

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Ahmedabad, May 18: Congress party and Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS) leaders have lashed out at Hardik Patel, who resigned from the Congress party on Wednesday. Excluding one or two PAAS and BJP leaders, no one has come out in support of Hardik. Former Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel has been very cautious, while some leaders called Hardik an opportunist. Hardik Patel said he will address the media Thursday.

Congress spokesman Manhar Patel launched counter attack on Hardik for his allegation on the party and leaders. "Hardik has no right to make any allegations, because at a very young age, party made him working president, a star pracharak of the party, campaigning in UP, Punjab and Uttarakhand. No other party will ever give him such importance."

"Gujarat Congress in-charge Raghu Sharma has alleged that Hardik is fearing Naresh Patel's entry in the Congress, as he felt that once Naresh Patel enters the party, his importance will wane."

There were eight big faces of PAAS movement in 2015, of which six -- Chirag Patel, Varun Patel, Lalji Desai, Lalit Vasoya, Gita Patel and Manoj Panara were against his decision to quit Congress, while Alpesh Kathiriya and Dilip Sabva welcomed it. In his resignation letter, Hardik Patel alleged that the Congress has no interest in Gujarat, just opposing policies and programmes, never becoming an option to the ruling party that people are looking for.

Guj: Factory wall collapse kills 12

THE INCIDENT OCCURRED IN SAGAR SALT FACTORY IN HALVAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

AGENCIES

Morbi (Gujarat), May 18: At least twelve workers were killed and 15 feared trapped in the wall collapse of a salt factory in the Halvad GIDC of the Morbi district in Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The Morbi district administration has claimed that 90 per cent of the rescue operation has been completed.

Sharing information about the tragic incident, Minister of State for Labour and Employment Brijesh Merja said that around 12 p.m., a wall collapsed in the Sagar Salt factory situated in Halvad GIDC. Till the time he briefed the media in Gandhinagar, 12 dead bodies of the workers were found from the debris.

He added that 90 per cent of the rescue operation has been completed, but it is not yet clear what caused the wall collapse. It is a matter of investigation, which will be done by the police.

The Minister said that the factory processed and packaged salt. Sources from the factory said, workers died after bags of salt stacked along the wall fell on them, and they got trapped.

Morbi District Collector JB Patel and District Superintendent of Police Rahul Tripathi along with their team rushed to the accident site and closely supervised the rescue operations. The district administration pressed in JCB machines to remove salt bags, hard rock salt and wall debris.

SP Tripathi said once the rescue operation is concluded and the area is completely cleared, FSL team with local police will investigate the incident. If factory management is found guilty for any negligence, a case can be registered against them too.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the tragedy and announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh each for the kin of the deceased. The PMO also informed on Twitter that a compensation of ₹2 lakh each will be given to the next of kin of the deceased from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. The injured would be given ₹50,000 each, it added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also took to Twitter to express grief over the tragedy.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel announced a compensation of ₹4 lakh each for the kin of the victims and gave instructions to the district administration about the rescue and relief work, said a statement by his office.

WATER WOES: Residents collect drinking water from a tanker at Laxmi Bai Nagar in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

Rains continue in Kerala, Red alert in four districts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, May 18: As heavy rains continued to lash several parts of Kerala, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) Wednesday afternoon issued a Red alert in four districts of the state for the day, indicating extremely heavy rainfall.

The Red alert was issued in the northern Kerala districts of Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod. In the morning, IMD issued an Orange alert for 7 districts, including the four as well as Thrissur, Palakkad and Malappuram. The Orange alert in Thrissur, Palakkad and Malappuram continues to be in effect. An Orange alert was also issued by IMD in Kannur and Kasaragod for Thursday. Various weather forecasting centres in the country have predicted isolated heavy rains across the state today.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority has predicted widespread rain in the state for the next 5 days with chances of isolated thunder, lightning and strong winds due to the cyclonic circulation in and around Kerala as well as a low pressure trough from north Kerala to Vidarbha region.

The Central Meteorological Department has predicted isolated heavy and very heavy rainfall showers in the state for the next 2 days and heavy rainfall on the 2 days after that. Kerala has been experiencing heavy rainfall for the past few days and it has disrupted normal life in certain places of the state.

GYANVAPI MOSQUE CASE

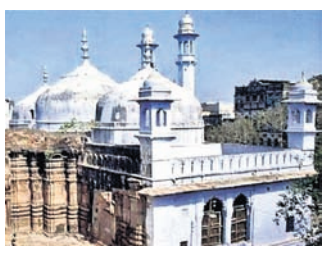
Hearing deferred due to lawyers' strike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi, May 18: Hearing in the Gyanvapi mosque case could not take place in a court here Wednesday as lawyers in the district were on a strike in protest against the remarks of a government official.

The Banaras Bar Association and the Central Bar Association, Varanasi had decided to boycott work as they were upset over the remarks of a Special Secretary against lawyers, according to advocate Abhay Yadav, representing the Muslim side in the case.

The court was scheduled to hear two petitions related to the case Wednesday. One of them filed by the Hindu side to remove a wall and debris around a "Shivling" which was claimed to have been found during a court-mandated videography survey, and the other moved by District Government Advocate Mahendra Pandey on shifting fish from a pond located on the premises. Madan Mohan Yadav, representing the Hindu side, said they had



urged the Bar Association to allow the lawyers to participate in the hearing in the case Wednesday since the eyes of the whole country are on the Gyanvapi Masjid case, but it did not yield any result.

On Tuesday, Pathak, Vyas and Sahu had filed a fresh plea in the court claiming that there is a basement to the east of the spot where the "Shivling" was claimed to have been found. The basement has been sealed with brick, stone and cement, they have said. Besides, there is also a wall and a basement in front of an idol of Nandi in the Kashi Vishwanath temple, and this basement has also been blocked with brick, stone, sand and other items, they have said.

'Eye on Pak-China, India plans to deploy S-400 missiles by June'

AGENCIES

New Delhi/Washington, May 18: India intends to deploy the Russian-made S-400 missile defence system by next month to defend itself from Pakistani and Chinese threats as it is pursuing an extensive military modernisation effort encompassing air, ground, naval and strategic nuclear forces, Pentagon's top intelligence official has said during a Congressional hearing.

India started receiving the delivery of the S-400 missile defence system from Russia in December last year, Lieutenant General Scott Berrier, Director of Defence Intelligence Agency, told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a recent Congressional hearing.

As of October 2021, India's military was seeking to procure advanced surveillance systems to strengthen its land and sea borders and boost its offensive and defensive cyber capabilities.

"In December, India received its initial delivery of the Russian S-400 air defence system, and it intends to operate the system to defend

S-400 missiles

against Pakistani and Chinese threats by June 2022," Lt Gen Berrier said. "India continued to develop its own hypersonic, ballistic, cruise and air defence missile capabilities, conducting multiple tests in 2021. India has a growing number of satellites in orbit, and is expanding its use of space assets, likely pursuing offensive space capabilities," he said. Lt Gen Berrier told the lawmakers that New Delhi is pursuing an extensive military modernisation effort encompassing air, ground, naval and strategic nuclear forces with an emphasis on domestic defence production.

India is taking steps to establish Integrated Theatre Commands that will improve its joint capability among its three military services.

Since 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given priority to strengthen India's economy by expanding its domestic defence industry and establishing a negative import list to curtail defence purchases from foreign suppliers.

According to Lt Gen Berrier, throughout 2021, New Delhi continued to implement a foreign policy aimed at demonstrating India's role as a leading power and net provider of security in the Indian Ocean region. India seeks to promote prosperity and ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific region by seeking strategic partnerships to build influence through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), he said. Following the collapse of the Afghan government, New Delhi is increasingly concerned about potential attacks against India by Pakistan-based terrorist groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed - empowered by a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, he said.

In December, India received its initial delivery of the Russian S-400 air defence system, and it intends to operate the system to defend against Pakistani and Chinese threats by June 2022

SCOTT BERRIER | LIEUTENANT GENERAL

international

India shares Jamaica's 'Vision 2030' goals of empowering its people and ensuring a secure, cohesive, and just society while becoming a prosperous and sustainable economy

RAM NATH KOVIND | PRESIDENT

MASKS TO RETURN IN OZ

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) Wednesday called for a return of face masks to mitigate an impending spike in Covid-19 and influenza cases. Chris Moy, Vice-President of the AMA, warned that a double blow of Covid-19 and the flu would put "enormous pressure" on the country's health system

Quote of the day

We are taking our ambition to yet another level to make sure that we become independent from Russian fossil fuels as quickly as possible

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The ADB as well as the World Bank had promised around 160 million each but the loan was blocked because we could not repay three million US dollars last month

RANIL WICKREMESINGHE | PM, SL

The detection of another case of wild poliovirus in Africa is greatly concerning, even if it's unsurprising given the recent outbreak in Malawi. However, it shows how dangerous this virus is and how quickly it can spread

MATSHIDISO MOETI | DIRECTOR (AFRICA), WHO

SHORT TAKES

EU offers 9bn euro loan to Ukr

Brussels: The European Commission proposed Wednesday a 9 billion euro ($9.5 billion) loan to Ukraine to keep the country going as it struggles to fend off the Russian invasion and wants to set up a reconstruction facility for after the war. The money for the 9 billion loan would be borrowed by the Commission on the markets under the macro-financial assistance mechanism, backed by guarantees of EU governments.

UK inflation hits 40-year high

London: There are growing fears of a recession as the latest statistics released Wednesday show that the UK economy's inflation has hit a 40-year high at 9 per cent. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that inflation, which is the rate at which prices rise, has surged from an already high 7 per cent in March. UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, who is under increasing pressure for further measures to ease the cost of living crisis amid rocketing household bills, blamed the inflation hike on global energy prices.

Pak bans import of luxury items

Islamabad: Pakistan government Wednesday decided to impose a ban on the import of non-essential and luxury items as the cash-strapped nation tried to avert a financial meltdown amid depleting foreign reserves, according to a media report. Quoting sources, Geo News reported that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has imposed a ban on the import of non-essential items that are not used by the common man. The decision is said to be important to control the dollar flight, it said.

Japan's quarterly economy contracts

Tokyo: Japan's economy shrank at an annual rate of 1 per cent in the first quarter, as rising prices and Covid-19 restrictions deadened spending and investment, according to data released Wednesday. Japan's real gross domestic product, or GDP, the sum of the value of a nation's products and services, contracted 0.2 per cent in January-March compared to the previous quarter, as household consumption and government investments fell, the Cabinet Office said.

Finland, Sweden hand in applications to join NATO

Turkey has surprised its allies by saying it had reservations about Finnish and Swedish membership, adding the two countries harbour individuals linked to groups it deems as terrorists & hitting out at arms export embargoes imposed on it after its 2019 Syria incursion

REUTERS

Brussels, May 18: Finland and Sweden formally applied to join the NATO alliance Wednesday at allied headquarters, a decision spurred by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but face objections from Turkey to an accession process that is expected to take only a few weeks.

Neutral throughout the Cold War, Sweden's and Finland's decision to join NATO is one of the most significant changes in Europe's security architecture for decades, reflecting a sweeping shift in public opinion in the Nordic region since Russia's February 24 invasion.

With the applications formally submitted, the Nordic countries and their many backers now face uncertain months where any resistance to their bids needs to be overcome, with all 30 of NATO's members needing to approve the enlargement. Ratification by all allied parliaments could take up to a year, diplomats say.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that he thought the issues between Turkey, Finland and Sweden could be resolved. "We are determined to work through all issues and reach rapid conclusions," Stoltenberg said, noting strong support from all other allies.

Seeking to move the membership process along, Sweden's defence minister has already headed to Washington and will be followed by Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson and Finnish President Sauli Niinisto later this week.

The countries hope speedy ratification by the United States, the alliance's premier power, will help smooth their path to membership with the White House having said it is confident any obstacles can be overcome.

The decision to seek a place under the NATO umbrella represents a setback for Moscow, with the war in Ukraine triggering the very kind of enlargement of the alliance on Russia's borders that it took to arms to prevent.

So far, Moscow's response has been unexpectedly muted, having previously warned of steps of a "military-technical" nature and that it could deploy nuclear weapons in its European exclave of Kaliningrad were the countries to join.

President Vladimir Putin said Monday that Swedish and Finnish NATO membership posed no threat to Russia, but cautioned that Moscow would respond if the Western alliance boosted military infrastructure in the new Nordic members.

This is a historic moment, which we must seize. I warmly welcome requests by Finland and Sweden to join NATO. You are our closest partners, and your membership in NATO will increase our shared security

JENS STOLTENBERG | NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL

- MOVE SEEN REDRAWING GEOPOLITICAL MAP OF EUROPE
- NON-ALIGNED FOR DECADES, UKRAINE WAR CAUSED POLICY UPHEAVAL
- COUNTRIES SEEKING TO RESOLVE TURKISH OBJECTIONS TO NATO BIDS

Mariupol finally falls as last fighters surrender

Ukrainian officials have spoken of hopes to arrange a prisoner swap for Mariupol defenders they describe as national heroes. Moscow says no such deal was made for fighters it calls Nazis

REUTERS

Kyivmariupol, Ukraine, May 18: Nearly 700 more Ukrainian fighters surrendered at the Mariupol steelworks in the past 24 hours, Russia said Wednesday, but leaders were reported to still be holed up inside, delaying the final end of Europe's longest and bloodiest battle for decades.

Russia's ministry of defence said the surrender of 694 more fighters meant a total of 959 people had now lain down their arms at the vast Azovstal steelworks - last bastion of Ukrainian defenders in the city.

If confirmed, the Russian announcement would resolve much of the mystery surrounding the fate of hundreds of fighters inside the plant, since Ukraine announced Tuesday it had ordered the entire garrison to stand down. The Ukrainian defence ministry, which has so far confirmed only about 250 having left the plant, did not immediately respond to a written request for comment.

The leader of pro-Russian separatists in control of the area was quoted by a local news agency as saying the main commanders inside the plant had yet to surrender They have not left, DAN news agency quoted Denis Pushilin as saying. The final surrender of Mariupol would bring a close to a near three month siege of the once prosperous city of 400,000 people, where Ukraine says tens of thousands of civilians died under Russian siege and bombardment, many buried in mass graves.

Kyiv and Moscow had both said Tuesday that around 250 people left the plant, giving little clue as to the fate of hundreds more believed to be inside. Ukraine said it would not reveal how many were there until the operation to rescue all of them was complete.

Japan okays plan to release Fukushima N-plant wastewater

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tokyo, May 18: Despite opposition from neighbouring nations, Japan's nuclear regulator Wednesday approved a plan to discharge radioactive wastewater from the disaster-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) said that once opinions on the matter from the public are heard, the plan will be officially approved, reports Xinhua news agency.

In 2011, a nuclear crisis, not seen since Chernobyl in 1988, was triggered by a massive earthquake and subsequent tsunami knocking out the Fukushima Daiichi plant's key cooling functions. The tainted water contains radioactive tritium, and the beleaguered site will soon reach its capacity of the water.

The government's plan is to release the radioactive water through a tunnel under the seabed into the Pacific Ocean roughly 1 km away from the stricken plant. The controversial plan is proposed to begin in the spring of 2023, much to the consternation of local fisheries and the international community.

Japan's fisheries industry has voiced its ardent opposition to the plan, as it will almost certainly cause further damage to the industry's already battered reputation.

China Eastern Airlines plane crash due to intentional nose-dive

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

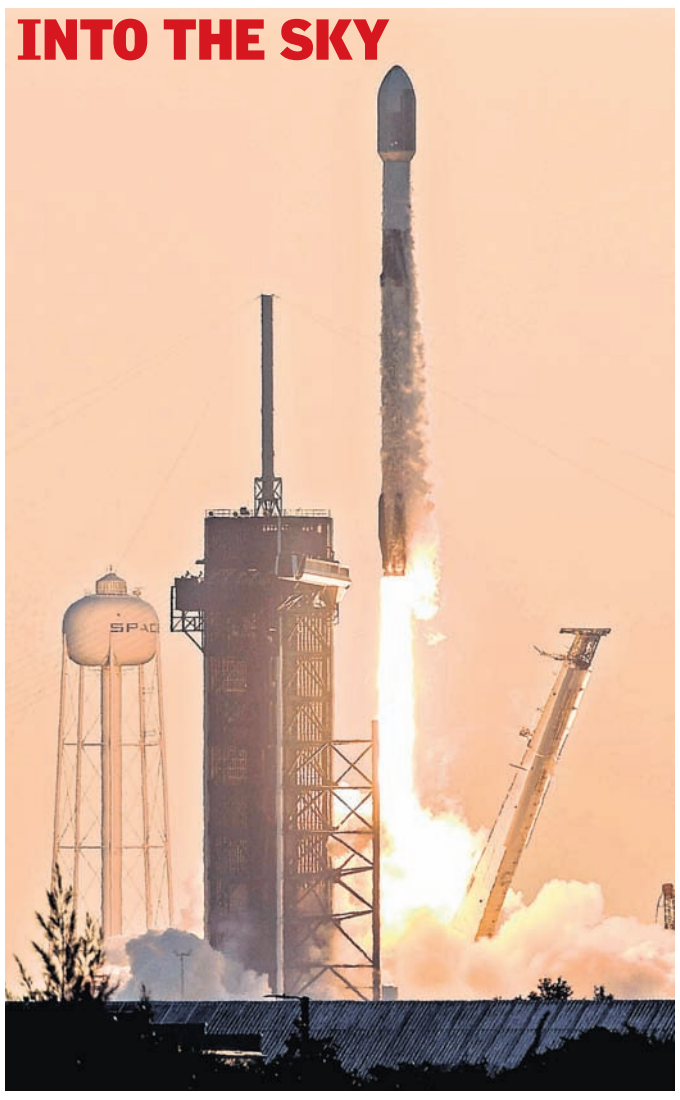
London, May 18: Flight data indicates a China Eastern Airlines plane that crashed in March was intentionally put into a nose-dive, according to US media reports.

Investigators have so far not found any mechanical or technical faults with the jet, as per the reports, citing a preliminary assessment by US officials, the BBC said.

The Boeing 737-800 was flying between the southern Chinese cities of Kunming and Guangzhou when it crashed. All 132 passengers and crew on board the plane died in the crash.

"The plane did what it was told to do by someone in the cockpit," according to the Wall Street Journal, which first reported the story, citing a person familiar with US officials' preliminary assessment of the cause of the crash.

INTO THE SKY



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off from Pad 39A at Kennedy Space Center Wednesday morning, May 18, 2022. The rocket is carrying a batch of Starlink satellites

PTI PHOTO

Taliban orders UN staff to wear hijab

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kabul, May 18: The Taliban-led government has ordered female staff members of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to wear the hijab.

The directive was issued by the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, Khaama Press reported.

According to a UNAMA statement, a delegation of Taliban officials from the Ministry said that female employees should consider wearing the hijab, while reporting to duties. The statement also notes that the personnel of the Ministry will stand outside the UN office to "monitor if hijab is used or not".

If a female staffer is found without a hijab, they will talk to her "politely" to wear it as it is mandatory outside, Khaama Press reported.

In addition to that, outside the UN office, the Ministry has also placed a poster calling on women to wear the "hijab".

Taliban claim new women's dress rules are advice but are imposing them as mandatory, including on Afghan women working at UN

HEATHER BARR | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS DIVISION, UN HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

'Pak's relation with India will drive its defence policy'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington, May 18: Pakistan is likely to continue to modernise and expand its nuclear capabilities by conducting training with its deployed weapons and developing new delivery systems in 2022 as it perceives it as key to its survival, given India's nuclear arsenal and conventional force superiority, the Pentagon's top intelligence official has told lawmakers.

Lt Gen Scott Berrier, Director, Defence Intelligence Agency told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a recent Congressional hearing that Pakistan's tense relationship with India will continue to drive its defence policy.

He said Pakistan "perceives nuclear weapons as key to its national survival, given India's nuclear arsenal and conventional force superiority. Pakistan very likely will continue to modernise and expand its nuclear capabilities by conducting training with its deployed weapons and developing new delivery systems in 2022," Mr Berrier said.

"Pakistan's relations with India remain strained since a high-profile anti-India militant attack in the Union Territory of Kashmir in February 2019," he said, referring to the Pulwama attack in which 40 Indian paramilitary troopers were killed.

"New Delhi's August 2019 revocation of Kashmir's semiautonomous status added to these tensions. However, cross-border violence has decreased since February 2021, when both countries recommitted to a ceasefire," Berrier said, adding, "India and Pakistan have not made meaningful progress toward a long-lasting diplomatic solution since then." India announced withdrawing the special powers of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of the state into two union territories in August 2019.

US shares videos of UFOs at rare Congressional hearing

The hearing comes after the release of a brief report in June 2021 from the director of national intelligence on UAP that led to the creation of a task force to investigate the issue. The task force now has a database of over 400 UAP reports but nothing is conclusive

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, May 18: In a first public Congressional hearing in over 50 years on UFOs sightings in the US, the country's military officials unveiled new footage of what they call as unidentified aerial phenomena, or UAP, but nothing suggests the presence of aliens, media reports said.

According to Deputy Director of Navy Intelligence Scott Bray who shared the clips recorded by military personnel at a 90-minute committee hearing in the House of Representatives Tuesday, CNET reported.

One of the videos taken in 2019 from a US Navy ship through night vision goggles shows an unidentified triangular object. Another clip of the same phenomenon was also observed at a later date from a different location.

Bray explained that analysts suspect the object was actually an optical effect "correlated with unmanned aerial systems in the area". That's likely a drone appearing as a triangle because of the effect of light from the object passing through the goggles and then through the lenses of the SLR camera that recorded the clip, the report said.

Bray also shared another short video, taken in 2021, from the cockpit of a military jet appearing to show a spherical object for a fraction of a second.

"In many other cases we have far less than this," Bray was quoted as saying. He later added that there is currently no explanation for the object. "There are a small handful (of sightings) in which there are flight characteristics or signature management we can't explain with the data that we have," he said.

Bray also said that the military has never communicated with, fired upon or collided with a UAP, although there have been 11 documented near misses, as mentioned in last year's unclassified report from the director of national intelligence.

Since the early 2000s we have seen an increasing number of unauthorized and/or unidentified aircraft or objects in military controlled training areas and training ranges and other designated airspace. We've made no assumptions about what this is or isn't

SCOTT BRAY | DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NAVAL INTELLIGENCE

The June 2021 report by Pentagon on UAP sightings had listed five possible explanations for UAPs, which included things like airborne clutter, natural phenomena in the atmosphere, top-secret US technology, or technology from foreign adversaries like Russia and China, the Verge reported.

The report also included a fifth explanation, "other", which encompasses everything they can't explain. Those are the ones that continue to capture the imagination of the public. And while Bray emphasised that the UAP Task Force hasn't seen any wreckage that "isn't consistent with being of terrestrial origin", they are focused on explaining the unexplainable.

business

"As several storms hit together, our monetary policy response should be seen as an important step to steady the ship. The Indian as well as global evidence clearly shows that high inflation persistence hurts savings, investment, competitiveness and growth

SHAKTIKANTA DAS | GOVERNOR, RBI

RUCHI SOYA TO CHANGE NAME TO PATANJALI FOODS

Ruchi Soya Industries Limited has decided to change its name to "Patanjali Foods Limited". Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved will sell its food retail business to group firm Ruchi Soya Industries for ₹690 crore as part of its strategy to focus on non-food, traditional medicine and wellness business

Quote of the day

This is a mobility strategy that each big country like India needs to have, a strategy (of) not only imposing regulations and norms on the back of the carmakers, that's easy. Everybody has done that

CARLOS TAVARES | CEO, STELLANTIS

The spinning and trading community (should) ensure hassle free supply of cotton and yarn first to the domestic industry and only surplus cotton and yarn should be diverted for exports

PIYUSH GOYAL | TEXTILE MINISTER

5G growth will come from number of use case it would permit in various industrial settings...5G, because of nature of technology and capability it offers, will open up new range of skills

K RAJARAMAN | TELECOM SECRETARY

SHORT TAKES

Oilmeals exports up 10% in April

New Delhi: Oilmeals export increased by 10 per cent in April to nearly 3.34 lakh tonne on higher shipments of rapeseed meal, according to industry data. In a statement, Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said the export of oilmeals in April 2022 is provisionally reported at 3,33,972 tonne compared to 3,03,705 tonne in the same month last year. Rapeseed meal exports increased to 2,29,207 tonne during April from 93,984 tonne in March 2022.

IOB profit jumps 58% to ₹552cr

New Delhi: State-owned Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) Wednesday reported a nearly 58 per cent jump in net profit at ₹552 crore in the quarter ended March 2022, mainly due to lower provisioning for bad loans. The bank had posted a net profit of ₹350 crore in the year-ago period. However, the total income of the bank during the latest March quarter fell to ₹5,719 crore as against ₹6,074 crore in the same period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing.

ITC Q4 net profit plunges 11.60%

New Delhi: ITC Ltd Wednesday reported an 11.60 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to ₹4,259.68 crore for the fourth quarter ended in March 2022. The company had posted a net profit of ₹3,816.84 crore during the January-March quarter of the previous fiscal, ITC said in a regulatory filing. Its revenue from operations was up 15.25 per cent to ₹17,754.02 crore during the quarter under review, as against ₹15,404.37 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

IndiGo appoints Elbers as CEO

New Delhi: The Board of Directors of InterGlobe Aviation, which operates the airline IndiGo, Wednesday appointed Pieter Elbers as Chief Executive Officer. Elbers will join IndiGo on or before October 1, succeeding Ronojoy Dutta, who has decided to retire September 30. IndiGo Managing Director Rahul Bhatia said: "The Board of Directors and I would like to thank Rono for effectively leading our business for almost four years with a steady hand through what has been the most turbulent period in the airline's history and aviation globally."

CPSEs empowered on divestment of units

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Giving more autonomy to state-owned companies, the Cabinet Wednesday empowered their boards to decide on the closure and divestment of units/subsidiaries.

Presently, the board of directors of holding or parent public sector enterprises have powers to make decision on equity investments for setting up joint ventures (JVs) and wholly-owned subsidiaries and undertaking mergers/acquisitions, subject to a net worth threshold.

However, the boards do not have powers for disinvestment or closure of their subsidiaries or units or stake in JVs, except for some limited powers given to Maharatna public sector enterprises (PSEs) for minority stake disinvestment in their subsidiaries.

Therefore, approval of the Cabinet was required for both strategic disinvestment and minority stake sale or closure of the subsidiaries/units or sale of their stakes in a JV, irrespective of the size of operations or capital deployed of such subsidiaries.

"The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the proposal for empowering the Board of Directors of the Holding / Parent Public Sector

Enterprises to recommend and undertake the process for Disinvestment (both strategic disinvestment and minority stake sale) or closure of any of their subsidiaries/units/stake in JVs," an official statement said.

The alternative mechanism on disinvestment will accord 'in principle' approval for disinvestment (both strategic disinvestment and minority take sale) / closure of subsidiaries of Maharatna PSEs, which was delegated to them and review the process of disinvestment or closure by the parent or holding PSEs.

The process for undertaking the strategic disinvestment transactions/closures to be followed by the PSEs should be based on the principles of competitive bidding and consistent with the guiding principles to be laid down.

"For strategic disinvestment, such guiding principles will be laid down by DIPAM. For closure, DPE shall issue guiding principles," the statement added.

IMPETUS FOR ENERGY SECURITY

Cabinet amends biofuels policy

THESE DECISIONS WILL HELP INDIA, WHICH DEPENDS ON IMPORTS FOR MEETING 85% OF ITS OIL NEEDS, TO CUT RELIANCE ON OVERSEAS SHIPMENTS, TRADERS SAID

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: The Union Cabinet Wednesday approved advancing the target of blending 20 per cent ethanol in petrol by 5 years to 2025-26 as well as allowing more feedstocks for the production of biofuels in a bid to cut reliance on imported oil for meeting the country's energy needs.

The Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at its meeting Wednesday approved the amendments to the National Policy on Biofuels, an official statement said.

The main amendment is for advancing the target of blending 20 per cent ethanol in petrol (20 per cent ethanol, 80 per cent petrol) to 2025-26 from 2030. Currently, about 10 per cent of ethanol is blended in petrol.

Also, more feedstocks have been allowed for the production of biofuels which can be doped with auto fuels. It also provides for promoting the production of biofuels in the country, under the Make in India programme, by units located in Special Economic Zones (SEZ)/ Export Oriented Units (EoUs).

The Cabinet also approved granting "permission for export of biofuels in specific cases," the statement said.

"This amendment proposal will pave the way for the Make in India drive thereby leading to a reduction in import of petroleum products by the generation of more and more biofuels. Since many more feedstocks are being allowed for the production of biofuels, this will promote the Atmanirbhar Bharat and give an impetus to Prime Minister's vision of India becoming 'energy independent' by 2047," the statement added.

The main amendment is for advancing the target of blending 20 per cent ethanol in petrol (20 per cent ethanol, 80 per cent petrol) to 2025-26 from 2030

The amendments will also attract and foster developments of indigenous technologies which will pave the way for the Make in India drive and thereby generate more employment

Gencos directed to timely import coal for blending

New Delhi: Union power minister R K Singh has asked several states to direct electricity generation companies to ensure timely imports of coal for blending purposes so as to meet the requirements during the monsoon season. According to the power ministry, directions have also been issued to all gencos (power generation companies) asking them to place import orders well in time. The ministry has clarified that if orders for coal imports are not placed by May 31, 2022 and the imported fuel does not start arriving at power plants by June 15, the defaulter gencos will have to increase their imports to the extent of 15 per cent. The ministry had earlier advised state gencos to import 10 per cent of coal of their requirement for blending purposes. States were advised to place orders by May 31, 2022 so that delivery of 50 per cent quantity is ensured by June 30, 2022. The minister has also said that state gencos may lift the entire quantity of coal offered under RCR mode expeditiously to build coal stock. In case of failure on either account, it would not be possible to give additional domestic coal to make up for the shortfall.

SEE-SAW TRADE

Sensex snaps 2-day rally

- THE RUPEE PLUNGED TO ITS FRESH LIFETIME LOW AGAINST THE DOLLAR
- S&P GLOBAL RATINGS CUT INDIA'S GROWTH PROJECTION FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL TO 7.3% FROM 7.8% EARLIER ON RISING INFLATION AND RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 18: Equity benchmarks surrendered early gains to close with modest losses on Wednesday, snapping their two-day winning streak as investors pared exposure to power, IT and bank stocks amid a mixed trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex soared in opening trade, before succumbing to bouts of volatility in the afternoon session. It finally settled 109.94 points or 0.20 per cent lower at 54,208.53. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty dipped 19 points

or 0.12 per cent to finish at 16,240.30.

PowerGrid was the biggest laggard in the Sensex pack, slumping 4.55 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, SBI, L&T, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, NTPC and Wipro. In contrast, HUL, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints, Sun Pharma, ITC and Axis Bank were among the gainers, advancing up to 2.02 per cent.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.13 per cent, while the smallcap index gained 0.33 per cent. Barring basic materials, FMCG and healthcare, all other BSE sectoral indices ended lower, led by realty (1.82 per cent), oil and gas (0.68 per cent), consumer durables (0.64 per cent) and teck (0.60 per cent).

International oil benchmark Brent crude gained 1.13 per cent to $113.2 per barrel.

The rupee Wednesday declined by 16 paise to close at its fresh lifetime low of 77.60 against the US dollar amid unabated foreign fund outflows and a stronger greenback in overseas markets.

Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers in the capital market Tuesday as they offloaded shares worth ₹2,192.44 crore, as per stock exchange data.

28% GST levied on casinos, horse racing, online gaming

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: The panel of ministers tasked to review the GST levy on casinos, race courses and online gaming has finalised its report, which will be taken up in the upcoming GST Council meeting.

The Group of Ministers, chaired by Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma, had in its previous meeting earlier this month unanimously decided on hiking the tax rate on these services to 28 per cent.

The GoM met again Wednesday and finalised the method of valuing these services for the purpose of levying this tax.

"The Group of Ministers (GoM) on casinos, race courses & online gaming has come to a consensus. The report of our submissions will be handed over to Hon'ble FM, Smti. @nsitharaman Ji in a day or two & the matter will be presented in the next @GST_Council

Meeting," Sangma tweeted.

At present, services of casinos, horse racing and online gaming attract 18 per cent GST.

The government had in May last year set up a panel of state ministers for better valuation of services of casinos, online gaming portal and race courses for levying Goods and Services Tax (GST). The report of the GoM is likely to be taken up in the next meeting of the GST Council expected later this month.

UN drops forecast for global economic growth in '22 to 3.1%

ASSOCIATED PRESS

United Nations, May 18: The United Nations Wednesday significantly lowered its forecast for global economic growth this year from 4% to 3.1%, saying the war in Ukraine has triggered increasing global food and commodity prices and exacerbated inflationary pressures, upending the fragile recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The mid-2022 forecast from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs said the downgrade in growth prospects is broad-based, including the world's largest economies -- the United States, China and most significantly the European Union -- and the majority of other developed and developing countries.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects report also warned that the current forecast of 3.1% "faces significant downside risks from further intensification of the war in Ukraine and potential new waves of the pandemic."

"This slowdown and the war in Ukraine -- triggering sharp increases in food and fertilizer prices -- will hit the developing countries particularly hard, exacerbating food insecurity and increasing poverty," the report said.

According to the UN Forecast, global inflation is projected to increase to 6.7% in 2022, twice the average of 2.9% during 2010-2020, with sharp rises in food and energy prices.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "The war in Ukraine -- in all its dimensions -- is setting in motion a crisis that is also devastating global energy markets, disrupting financial systems and exacerbating extreme vulnerabilities for the developing world."

AIPNBOA welcomes new zonal manager

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Chapter of All India Punjab National Bank Officers Association (AIPNBOA) convened a meeting Wednesday at Hotel Presidency here to welcome the new Zonal Manager, Udaya Bhaskar Reddy and other senior dignitaries. Arabinda Satapathy, Circle President, Bhubaneswar delivered the welcome speech. Meanwhile, Bailochan Sahoo, Assistant General Secretary of Central Committee and Circle Secretary Bhubaneswar gave a vivid description of the working of the association in the zone. The association extended befitting farewell to all the senior executives who left the zone and wished them all success in their new assignments. Moreover all the officers who have retired from the Bank were given a memento on behalf of the association for their contribution to the bank as well as to the association in their long career. A booklet prepared by the association containing bank's operational guidelines was inaugurated by Bhaskar Reddy and Mukti Kanta Rai, General Manager, ZAO, Bhubaneswar.

BIDDERS WALKOUT

BPCL privatisation stalled

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Privatisation of BPCL, which was dubbed India's biggest ever, has been stalled with just one bidder left in the fray after two others walked out over issues such as lack of clarity in fuel pricing, a top source said.

The government had planned to sell its entire 52.98 per cent stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and invited Expression of Interest from bidders in March 2020. At least three bids came in by November 2020 but only one remains now after the others withdrew from the race.

Bharat Petroleum

"We are in a single bidder situation and it doesn't make sense that the single bidder dictates the narrative. So the disinvestment process is stalled for now," the source, who wished not to be identified, said.

The privatisation of India's second-largest state oil refining and fuel marketing company had not attracted much interest first due to the volatile global oil price scenario and later due to a lack of clarity in domestic fuel pricing.

Public sector fuel retailers, which control 90 per cent of the petrol and diesel market, sell petrol and diesel at prices below the cost. This has forced private sector retailers Reliance-bp, Rosneft-backed Nayara and Shell into a situation where they either sell fuel at losses or lose market in case they raise prices to the level of cost.

Zombie unicorns: Indian startups go from feast to famine

APRIL WAS THE FIRST MONTH IN MORE THAN A YEAR THAT INDIA HAD NO NEW "UNICORNS". INDIAN STARTUPS RAISED $5.8 BILLION IN MARCH AND APRIL, DOWN ABOUT 15% FROM THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD LAST YEAR

REUTERS

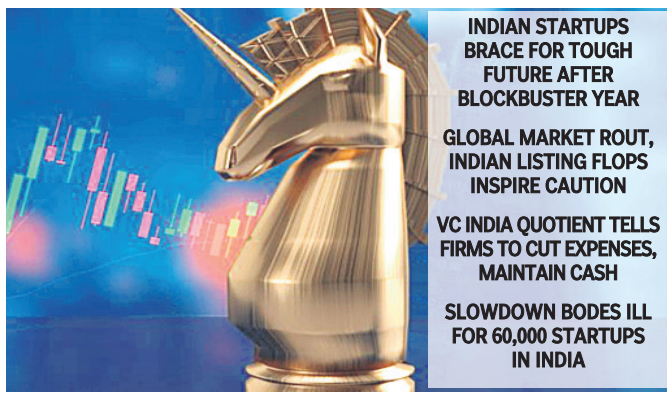
Mumbai, May 18: The valuation of Meesho, the Indian e-commerce rival of retail giant Amazon, more than doubled last year to $5 billion, after marquee investors such as SoftBank and Fidelity pumped in hundreds of millions of dollars.

They aimed to ride a boom in India's tech startups, which raised a record $35 billion in new funds in 2021, but the tide has since turned, as corporate governance concerns loom large for investors facing a new uncertainty in global markets.

"We haven't seen a slowdown like this in at least five to six years. It is going to be brutal," said Anand Lunia of venture capital firm India Quotient, an investor in more than 70 startups since 2012.

"I expect to see a lot of zombie unicorns. Companies which became unicorns but have no business models have stopped hiring - they are not dying, but will become irrelevant." Now Meesho is trying to raise debt and cut expenses after efforts to raise fresh funds of $1 billion floundered, making investors wary of its monthly cash burn of $45 million and stiff competition, two people familiar with the talks told Reuters. But its struggles are among the first signs of a painful future awaiting many Indian startups.

Plummeting Indian tech stocks



are a worry, but investors spooked by fears over corporate governance are stepping up scrutiny during due diligence efforts, which delays funding rounds, two venture capital executives said.

And there are concerns that valuations in India are already too high, even when startups' business models are being led by discounts and there is a bleak outlook for revenue, they added.

That could slam the brakes on the unprecedented growth and dull the lure of Indian startups.

Eight venture capital and startup executives said fears were growing that a funding crunch would lower valuations, leaving less cash to achieve growth and bring job cuts.

Lunia said he had told companies in which his firm has invested to ensure they hold liquid cash sufficient for at least 18 months, reduce spending and headcount, if necessary. Just last week, BharatPe, an Indian payments startup backed by Sequoia Capital, said it would overhaul governance practices following an internal review.

Another startup Vedantu, which offers online tutoring courses and is backed by Tiger Global with a valuation of $1 billion, laid off nearly 600 staff this month in a "load rebalancing" move it said was based on growth expectations.

Typically, Tiger has targeted bigger Indian startups, but it has now told bankers it will only consider deals involving those with a valuation of less than $200 million, in a bid to reduce risk, said two executives with direct knowledge of the matter.

De Kock ton lifts LSG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Navi Mumbai, May 18: Quinton de Kock (140 n o, 70b, 10x4, 10x6) struck a sensational hundred and shared a record opening stand with skipper KL Rahul (68 n o, 51b, 3x4, 4x6) as Lucknow Super Giants pipped Kolkata Knight Riders by two runs in a last-ball IPL thriller to seal their playoff spot here Wednesday.

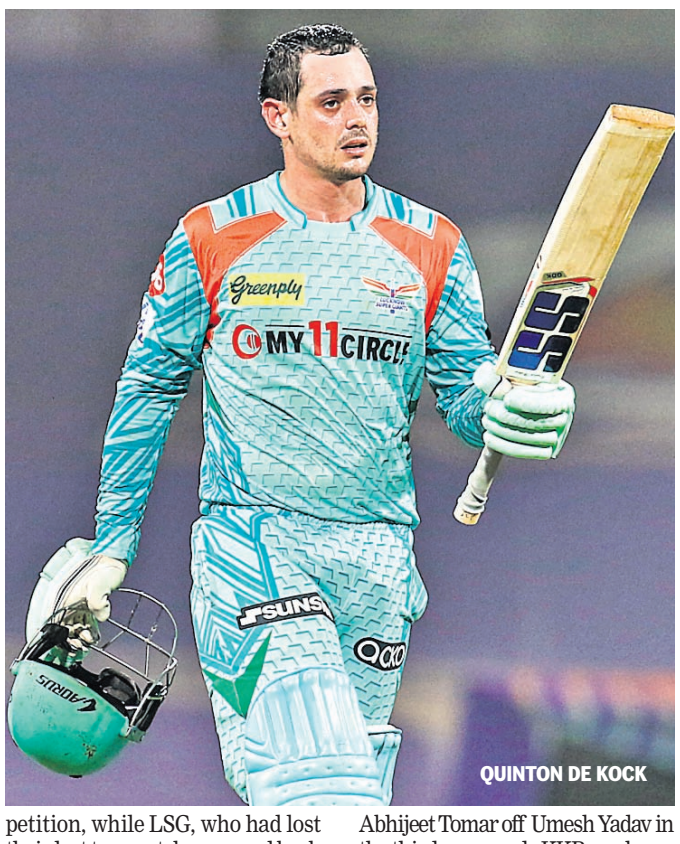
De Kock gave a batting masterclass as he and Rahul powered LSG to 210 for no loss, the highest opening stand in IPL history.

It was a steep chase but KKR stayed in the game through Nitish Rana (42, 22b, 9x4) and captain Shreyas Iyer (50, 29b, 4x4, 3x6) but it was too big a task for the lower-order. Their innings ended 208 for eight in 20 overs.

Just when it looked KKR were down and out, Sunil Narine (21 n o, 7b, 3x6) and Rinku Singh (40, 15b, 2x4, 4x6) started smashing the LSG bowlers around the ground to reignite hopes of the dugout.

KKR needed 38 runs off the last two overs and they both brought the equation down to 21 off the final over. Rinku came up with couple of sixes and a four to make it five off the last three balls but he fell to a special one handed catch from Evin Lewis to bring LSG back into the game.

With three needed off the final ball, Marcus Stoinis landed a yorker to dismiss Umesh Yadav and help his team win a humdinger. The loss knocked KKR out of the competition, while LSG, who had lost their last two matches, moved back into the top-two with the win.


QUINTON DE KOCK

Earlier, Rahul and de Kock got the measure of the wicket in the powerplay, reaching 44 for no loss, before flaunting their wide range of strokes on way to the third highest stand in tournament history.

De Kock, who was dropped by Abhijeet Tomar off Umesh Yadav in the third over, made KKR pay heavily by getting the highest score of the season. His memorable innings was also third highest individual score in tournament history.

The South African was in his elements smashing the spinners and pacers with equal disdain. He used the pull shot against the faster bowlers and was at his innovative best against the seasoned spin duo of Sunil Narine and off coloured Varun Chakaravarthy.

Out of the sixes he hit, De Kock's reverse sweep off Narine stood out. Anything short from the pacers, de Kock was happy to put it away over deep square leg region.

De Kock cruised to his hundred in the 18th over with a cut shot off Russell and the innings meant a lot to him, something that was visibly by his down on knees celebration.

The southpaw was in no mood to stop even after reaching three figures. Tim Southee was poor in the death overs as he fed balls after balls in the slot for de Kock to deposit it into the stands. His 19th over yielded as many as 27 runs with De Kock finding the boundary at will.

Rahul watched De Kock's breathtaking knock from the best seat in the house. The skipper did not have much to do in the slog overs but he too played some sublime strokes on way to his third half century of the season.

Rahul also completed 500 runs in the tournament for the fifth season in a row. KKR bowlers leaked 88 runs in the last five overs with Southee and Russell proving to be the most expensive bowlers.

BRIEF SCORES: LSG 210 for no loss (Quinton de Kock 140 n o, KL Rahul 68 n o; Sunil Narine 0/27) beat KKR 208/8 (Shreyas Iyer 50, Nitish Rana 42, Rinku Singh 40, Sam Billings 36; Mohsin Khan 3/20, Marcus Stoinis 3/23) by 2 runs.

Titans challenge awaits RCB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 18: Runaway leaders Gujarat Titans would look to continue their winning momentum ahead of the playoffs while Royal Challengers Bangalore need a big victory to keep their last-four stage hopes alive when the two teams face each other in their final IPL league match here Thursday.

Newcomers GT have so far had a dream opening season as they are already assured of a top spot in the standings with 20 points from 13 games.

RCB, on the other hand, have had a mixed bag this season, registering seven wins and six losses to occupy the fifth spot with 14 points from 13 matches.

But what could hurt RCB is their net run rate of -0.323. A win against GT would move them to 16 points but that might not be enough as they also need a few favourable results going their way.

Delhi Capitals, who are currently at fourth spot, can also secure 16 points if they beat Mumbai Indians in their last match and they have a much better net run rate than RCB at +0.255.

With back-to-back wins, RCB had the momentum going their way but that fizzled out after a big 54-run loss to Punjab Kings in their last match.

Virat Kohli's woeful run continued as he managed just 20 in the last match but the stage is set for the former India captain to play an impact knock to make a turnaround in his form and the fortunes of RCB.

Skipper Faf du Plessis, Mahipal Lomror and Dinesh Karthik would also be looking to play a big knock after their bats remained silent in the last few games. Glenn Maxwell and Rajat Patidar have been getting starts but failed to convert them into big scores.

On the bowling front, Harshal Patel and Wanindu Hasaranga have been brilliant for RCB. In fact, when all other bowlers were taken to task by Punjab batters in their last match, the duo bowled decent spells and in the process picked up four and two wickets respectively.

RCB, however, would be concerned over the form of Josh Hazzlewood and Mohammed Siraj as they leaked runs against Punjab. But du Plessis would be hoping for one complete performance from his side to keep RCB in the hunt.

GT, on the other hand, are the side to beat in this IPL. Even if they lose on Thursday, the Hardik Pandya-led side will finish at the top, which means it will get two chances to reach the final.

For GT, the key to success in their inaugural season has been the team effort. GT's batting department has witnessed some inspirational performances from the likes of Wriddhiman Saha, Shubman Gill, David Miller, skipper Pandya and Rahul Tewatia.

The batting unit has been complemented superbly by a lethal bowling attack led by experienced Mohammed Shami and has the likes of young Yash Dayal, Lockie Fergusson and Alzarri Joseph.

GT's spin department is being led by none other than Afghan star Rashid Khan, who has got much-needed support from R Sai Kishore.

TODAY'S MATCH

GT V RCB

Time: 07:30 pm

TELECAST

Star Sports channels & Hotstar

Nikhat in final, two others bag bronze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Nikhat Zareen (52kg) was the lone Indian to enter the final, while two others signed off with bronze medals in the Women's World Boxing Championships in Istanbul Wednesday.

Nikhat made short work of Brazil's Caroline De Almeida to notch up a dominant 5-0 win. However, Manisha Moun (57kg) and debutant Parveen Hooda (63kg) settled for bronze medals.

While Manisha lost to Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Irma Testa of Italy by 0-5 unanimous decision, Parveen went down by a 1-4 split verdict to European championship bronze medallist Amy Broadhurst.

Zareen, who is a former junior world champion, stayed calm and completely dominated her rival for a 5-0 win by unanimous decision in the last-four bout of the 52kg competition.

The 2019 Asian Championships bronze medallist Manisha, competing in her second world championship, tried hard to outdo her technically superior opponent with her power punches but Testa defended superbly.

Six-time champion MC Mary Kom, Sarita Devi, Jenny RL and Lekha C are the only Indian women boxers who have won the world title and now Hyderabad-based Zareen has the opportunity to join the elite list. India's best performance in the event came in 2006 when the country snared eight medals, including four gold, one silver and three bronze.

In the last edition, four Indian boxers returned home with medals — Manju Rani clinched the silver, while Mary Kom bagged an unparalleled eighth world medal in the form of a bronze.

Even biggest of players can struggle: Ishan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 18: Ishan Kishan has failed to live up to the most expensive player tag in this IPL but the Mumbai Indians wicket-keeper batter is not unduly worried about his form, saying even the best of cricketers "struggle" at some point.

The 23-year-old was bought by MI for a whopping Rs 15.25 crore at the IPL auction earlier this year. He scored 370 runs from 13 matches at an average of 30.83, with the help of three half-centuries.

"Even the biggest of players (can struggle), I have seen the likes of Chris Gayle taking time (to start hitting)," Kishan said at the post-match conference after MI lost by three runs to Sunrisers Hyderabad Tuesday night.

"Every day is a new day, every match is new. Someday, you get a good start, some day, opposition bowlers come prepared and they bowl the balls at good areas. The planning inside the dressing room may be different from what the outside people want."

He said his role was not about hitting straightaway without analysing the situation of the game. "In cricket, it can never be sure that you have just one role and I will just go out and hit the ball. If you think about the team, it is more important to understand about your role," Kishan said.

"If the opposition bowlers are bowling well you need to give respect to them and if you can save wicket it makes easier for the batters coming later.

"There cannot be just one situation. Someday, you need to go all out when you are chasing a big total, some day, you need to analyse the strength of opposition team whether they have good bowlers to bowl at the death or not, or whether we have to save wickets or not."

Kishan also said that MI could have won the match had Tim David, who had smashed 46 off just 18 balls down the order, was there till the end. "Unfortunately, Tim David was run out. If he was till the end, he could have finished the game."

Gurinder to lead India in inaugural FIH Hockey 5s

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 18: Defender Gurinder Singh will lead a nine-member Indian men's hockey team at the inaugural edition of the FIH Hockey 5s, to be held in Lausanne, Switzerland next month.

The Indian men's team will play Malaysia, Pakistan, Poland and hosts Switzerland in the event, which will be held June 5 and 6.

Midfielder Sumit, who was a member of the Tokyo Olympics bronze medal winning team, will be Gurinder's deputy in the two-day event. The team is a mix of players from the Olympic bronze medal winning squad as well as the FIH Junior World Cup held last year.

This includes goalkeeper Pawan, defenders Sanjay, Mandeep Mor and Gurinder Singh. Midfielders Sumit and Rabichandra Singh have been called up along with forwards Dilpreet Singh, Mohd Raheel Mouseen and Gursahibjit Singh.

Among the nine-member squad, Pawan, Sanjay and Rabichandra were part of the silver medal winning Indian team at the Youth Olympic Games in 2018 where Hockey 5s format was played. They were also part of the Junior Men's World Cup in Bhubaneswar, Odisha last year.

Besides Sumit, forward Dilpreet Singh was part of the Olympic bronze medal-winning side. Prashant Kumar Chauhan, Boby Singh Dhami and Sudeep Chirmako have been named as standbys. The Indian team is scheduled to leave from Bangalore June 1.

THE SQUAD

Pawan, Sanjay, Mandeep Mor, Gurinder Singh (C), Sumit (vc), Rabichandra Singh, Dilpreet Singh, Mohd Raheel Mouseen, Gursahibjit Singh; **Standbys:** Prashant Kumar Chauhan, Boby Singh Dhami, Sudeep Chirmako.

Thailand Open: Sindhu, Srikanth advance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 18: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu huffed and puffed her way to the women's singles second round while Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy, the protagonists of India's historic Thomas Cup triumph, suffered contrasting fates in the opening round of Thailand Open here Wednesday.

Sindhu, seeded sixth and ranked seventh in the world, staved off a spirited challenge from world number 62, USA's Lauren Lam 21-19, 19-21, 21-18 to set up a clash with Sim Yu Jin, who had played a pivotal role in Korea's Uber Cup win.

Fresh from playing a major role in the Thomas Cup victory, Srikanth, seeded eighth, produced a gritty show to get the better of Brice Leverdez of France 18-21, 21-10, 21-16 in 49 minutes.

The World No.11 Indian will next face Ireland's Nhat Nguyen, who defeated Hans-Kristian Solberg Vittinghus of Denmark 21-12, 23-21 in the first round.

Prannoy, who won the decisive third singles during the quarterfinals and semifinals of Thomas Cup, went down fighting 17-21, 21-15, 15-21 to Daren Liew of Malaysia.

Among other Indians in the fray, Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam beat Thailand's Kittipak Dubthuk and Prinda Pattanawaritthipan 21-12, 21-17 to enter the second round.

Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto got a walkover from USA's Mathew Fogarty and Isabel Zhong to also advance to the second round.

London Olympic bronze medallist Saina Nehwal battled hard for 50 minutes before losing 21-11, 15-21, 17-21 to Korean Kim Ga Eun in the women's singles first round.

Indian qualifier Ashmita Chaliha lost to seventh seeded Ratchanok Intanon of Thaliand 10-21, 15-21 in a first round match that lasted 29 minutes. Compatriot and another qualifier, Aakarshi Kashyap lost to Michelle Li of Canada 13-21, 18-21 to bow out of the tournament in the first round. Malvika Bansod battled her way into the second round with a fighting 17-21, 21-15, 21-11 win over Ukraine's Maria Ultina. She will next face Line Christopherson of Denmark.

The mixed doubles pair of B Sumeeth Reddy and Ashwini Ponnappa also suffered a first round exit, losing to the eighth-seeded Japanese duo of Yuki Kaneko and Misaki Matsutomo 17-21, 17-21 in 34 minutes.

It was also curtains for B Sai Preneeth and Sourabh Verma in the men's singles opening round. While Praneeth lost 12-21, 13-21 to Kantaphon Wangcharoen of Thailand, Sourabh was shown the door by Toma Junior Popov of France 20-22, 12-21.

SPORTS ODISHA PUT 6 PAST HANS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 18: Sports Odisha completed a comprehensive 6-0 victory over Hans Women FC to climb to fifth spot in the Indian Women's League here Wednesday. For Sports Odisha, Supriya Rountray produced a hat-trick, while Kiranbala Devi scored four goals for Kickstart in another high-scoring game.

In another match, PIFA Sports FC secured a narrow 1-0 win over Odisha Police at the Kalinga Stadium, courtesy Nisilia Majaw (63').

At the 7th Battalion Ground, Odisha took the early lead after Anita turned a rebound into her own net and thereafter, the hosts kept on creating chances with waves of attack as the Hans defence continued to come under pressure. Finally, Subhadra Sahoo nodded in a cross from Satyabati Khadia, to double the lead in the 39th minute.

Supriya Rountray (No.6 in red)

After the breather, Sports Odisha seemed far better as they found the net at the edge of the hour mark with Supriya Rountray smashing it in from a tight angle on the 53rd minute to score the third of the day.

The flood gates opened up after the hour mark as Sports Odisha scored two consecutive goals to make it 5-0. Supriya found the net once again in the 82nd minute to make it half a dozen for Sports Odisha, and a hat-trick for herself.

Men archers eye gold, eves bag bronze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gwangju (South Korea), May 18: The Indian men's compound archery team produced stunning performances to shock World No.1 USA and powerhouse South Korea in the quarterfinals and semifinals respectively, and assure itself a silver medal at the World Cup Stage 2 here Wednesday.

Abhishek Verma, Aman Saini and Rajat Chauhan rose above expectations to shock USA 234-228 in the quarterfinals before getting the better of South Korea in the shoot-off to seal their place in the title clash, where they will take on World No.4 France.

Later, the women's compound team of Avneet Kaur, Muskan Kirar and Priya Gurjar suffered a two-point defeat against South Korea in the semifinals but managed to claim a bronze, defeating Turkey 232-231.

The biggest shocker came earlier in the day in the men's compound team event when the Indian trio of Abhishek, Aman and Rajat defeated USA in a one-sided quarterfinal.

Continuing their giant-killing run, the Indians then bounced back from a two-point deficit at the halfway mark to oust the Korean trio of Kim Jongho, Choi Yonghee and Yang Jaewon in a shoot-off 233-233 (29-26) to advance into the final. India had begun their campaign with a 235-229 win over Italy in the round of 16 in the men's compound section.

In the women's compound team event, the Indians, who got a bye into the quarterfinals, started off defeating Chinese Taipei 228-226. But in the semifinal, they lost to Korea 228-230.

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