



TAAPSEE'S LIMITATION

Actor Taapsee Pannu says she can't perform something drastically different in every frame of every movie

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UNDERSEA NUKE TEST

North Korea tests new underwater nuclear weapon capable of spawning a 'radioactive tsunami'

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SHOCKER FROM WA

World Athletics bans transgender women from competing in elite female competitions among other restrictions

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Rahul disqualified from LS

CONGRESS SAYS WILL FIGHT LEGALLY AND POLITICALLY; BJP TERMS ACTION 'LAWFUL'

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi was Friday disqualified from Lok Sabha following his conviction by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case, an action the party termed an attempt to 'silence' his voice as it vowed to fight the battle legally and politically.

The BJP dismissed the charges and termed the disqualification 'lawful'.

The disqualification, which will bar 52-year-old Gandhi from contesting polls for eight years unless stayed by a higher court, saw a shift in the dynamics of Opposition ranks with Trinamool Congress and Aam Aadmi Party also expressing strong support for the embattled leader, along with several other Opposition parties. Announcing his disqualification, the Lok Sabha Secretariat in a notification said that it was effective from March 23, the day of his conviction.

"Consequent upon his conviction by the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat...Rahul Gandhi, Member of Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction i.e. 23 March, 2023," the notification read.

This was Gandhi's fourth Lok Sabha term. First elected to Lok Sabha in 2004 from Amethi, he represented that constituency for two

'Fighting for India, will pay any price'

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Friday said he is fighting for the voice of India and is ready to pay any price, hours after he was disqualified from Lok Sabha. In a tweet in Hindi, the 52-year-old former Congress president said, "I am fighting for the voice of India. I am ready to pay any price."

more terms. In 2019, he lost the Amethi seat to Smriti Irani but managed to win from Wayanad.

The court in Surat sentenced Thursday Gandhi to two years in jail in a defamation case, filed on a complaint by BJP MLA Purnesh Modi for his alleged remark, "How come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?"

Hours before the notification was issued, Gandhi attended Lok Sabha proceedings in the morning session. Before the proceedings commenced, he also participated in a meeting of party MPs in the Parliament complex.

Incidentally, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, in 2013, had attempted to circumvent a Supreme Court ruling to set aside an RP Act provision under which a person sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more shall be disqualified "from the date of such conviction" and remain disqualified for another six years after serving time.

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MORE P7



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi leaves from Parliament House complex in New Delhi, Friday

PTI PHOTO

Deadline extended for Aadhaar, voter ID linking

KULDEEP SINGH, OP

New Delhi, March 24: The Union government has extended the deadline for voluntary linking of Aadhaar with voter identity card upto March 31, 2024. Earlier, the deadline was April 1, 2023.

Significantly, the Election Commission of India (ECI) vide its instruction dated July 4, 2022, had launched the programme to collect the Aadhaar numbers of existing and prospective electors on a voluntary basis from August 1 last year in all states and Union Territories.

"It is voluntary to link Aadhaar with voter ID and consent is obtained from the elector for Aadhaar authentication in Form 6B. Though, there is no provision for withdrawing the consent," Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju had told the Lok Sabha in December last year.

The linking of Aadhaar with voter cards was authorised following the passing of the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill in the Parliament in December 2021. Rijiju



had said that the move was made with the intention to ensure that the electoral roll in the country remained genuine.

The decision received widespread criticism from the Opposition parties questioning the constitutionality of linking Aadhaar, which is still not seen as a proof of citizenship, with the voter ID. The Opposition raised apprehensions that the interlinking of Aadhaar with the voter ID card would leave out many eligible voters from the electoral roll.

'Ashirbad' cover for 50,952 kids who lost parent during Covid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: The state government has identified 50,952 children aged below 18 years who have lost either their mother or father or both parents due to Covid-19 and other reasons in Odisha during the pandemic so far.

During Covid, the state government has launched the Ashirbad scheme, under which financial assistance is being provided to these children, said Women and Child Development Minister Basanti Hembram in Assembly Friday.

In a written reply to a question by Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati, the Minister said the government is providing ₹2,500 per month to a child who has lost both parents while a child who has lost a parent who was also the breadwinner for the family is receiving ₹1,500 per month. Besides, ₹1000 per month is being provided to each orphan child, who resides in any child care institution, she said, adding, the assistance will continue till the child attains 18 years of age.

RAHUL RUCKUS IN HOUSE

CLP leader Narasingha Mishra says party's Cuttack MLA was convicted in a case, but he did not lose membership because of the liberal attitude of state government

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 24: The disqualification of Rahul Gandhi's membership from Lok Sabha had its reverberations in Odisha Assembly Friday with Congress lawmakers creating a din leading to several adjournments.

The Congress members trooped into the well of the House as soon as it assembled for the post lunch session at 4 pm. They shouted anti-BJP slogans and demanded justice for Gandhi, who was disqualified from Lok Sabha on being convicted in a defamation case.

Unable to run the House due to the ruckus, Speaker BK Arukha first adjourned the proceedings for 20 minutes and thrice again for 30 minutes each as protests continued every time it re-assembled.

Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra told reporters outside the House that Rahul Gandhi was a "victim of a deep rooted conspiracy"



"There is no democracy in the country now," he said adding that Rahul Gandhi will move the higher court for relief.

Congress chief whip Taraprasad Bahinipati said Rahul Gandhi is targeted as he exposed the BJP government. "He is kept out of Parliament as BJP fears that he will expose them more," Bahinipati said.

Opposing the comments, Leader of Opposition Jaynarayan Mishra of BJP said Gandhi was convicted in a court of law. "There is provision in law that anyone getting convicted with an imprisonment term for two or more years will

RK MISRA, OP

Ahmedabad, March 24: The genesis of the Surat defamation case, that has the potential to overturn Indian politics, lies in a 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign rally addressed by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in Kolar, Karnataka April 13, 2019.

In course of the speech Gandhi had said "Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Narendra Modi...how come they all have Modi as common surname? How come all the thieves have Modi as the common surname?" Three days later April 16, BJP MLA from Surat (West) Purnesh Modi filed a criminal defamation case against Gandhi for the remarks. The case was filed under Indian Penal Code, Section 499 (whoever, by words spoken or intended to be read, or by signs or by visible representations, makes or publishes any imputation concerning any person intending to harm, or knowing or having reason to believe that such imputation will harm, the reputation of such a person, is said to defame that person), Section 500 (whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both) and Section 504.

The Court in its order stated, that "the present case is not only based on electronic evidence, but the statements given by witnesses and the documentary evidence has



been clearly established." The BJP MLA took the plea that the complaint had been lodged not only because the 'Modi' community had been defamed but because he was distressed as well. He said, the accused could well have stopped at calling Narendra Modi a thief and equating him with economic offenders but he went beyond it to question 'why do all thieves have the name Modi?'

Chief Judicial Magistrate HH Verma in his order stated that the minimum jail term was to stress the gravity of the defamation offence. "If the accused is given less punishment, it sends a wrong message to public and the purpose of defamation offence is not served."

Interestingly, the criminal case filed in Surat by Purnesh Modi in April 2019 was not the only one. In the same month, the Ahmedabad District Cooperative Bank and its chairman Ajay Patel filed a criminal defamation case against Rahul and his party spokesperson alleging that they (the bank and its chairman) had been defamed as they were projected as being involved in a scam. A month later, a BJP municipal councillor of Ahmedabad had filed another defamation case against Rahul for calling then BJP president Amit Shah a 'murder accused' at an election rally in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh April 23, 2019 even though he had been acquitted in the case.

7-yr-old dies after teacher's assault

Patna: A seven-year-old boy died in Bihar's Saharsa district Friday after a brutal assault by his teacher. The victim, Aditya Kumar, was an LKG student at a private school. He had been living in a hostel for the last 10 days. According to police, the school administration informed Aditya's parents that he became unconscious and was admitted to a private hospital. By the time his parents arrived, the victim died. Police lodged an FIR in this connection.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Thank God! I have just murder cases against me, but no defamation case

Alien comet's strange acceleration explained

THE ANTI-GRAVITATIONAL BEHAVIOUR OF 'OUMUAMUA, THE COMET THAT FIRST MADE ITS APPEARANCE IN 2017, PERPLEXED SCIENTISTS AND PUBLIC ALIKE

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: Hydrogen gas releasing, as the ice present on the comet 'Oumuamua's surface changed its form from amorphous to crystal, could be the reason behind the strange acceleration of the comet while going away from the Sun, according to scientists.

The argument has been put forth by a University of California (UC), Berkeley, astrochemist and a Cornell University astronomer, both from the US, and the conclusions appear in the journal Nature.

The behaviour of 'Oumuamua, the comet that first made its appearance in 2017, perplexed scientists and public alike.

The first known visitor from outside our solar system and having a peculiar shape, the comet 'Oumuamua was unusual in that it



had no bright coma - a luminous cloud of particles - or a dust tail and it was small in size akin to an asteroid.

The behaviour in question was the comet firing up and accelerating

away from the Sun in a way that astronomers could not explain. Some even suggested that it was an alien spaceship.

Further, because the comet was so small, its gravitational deflection

around the sun was slightly altered by the unusual acceleration.

Comets, which are icy rocks left over when the solar system formed 4.5 billion years ago, can tell astronomers about the conditions that existed when our solar system was formed.

Interstellar comets, present between or among stars, also can carry information about other stars surrounded by planet-forming disks. "Comets preserve a snapshot of what the solar system looked like when it was in the stage of evolution that protoplanetary disks are now," Jennifer Bergner, a UC Berkeley assistant professor of chemistry.

However, unlike other comets, astronomers did not detect a coma, or outgassed molecules or dust around 'Oumuamua, which is Hawai'ian for "a messenger from

afar arriving first."

So, what caused the acceleration? "A comet traveling through the interstellar medium basically is getting cooked by cosmic radiation, forming hydrogen as a result. Our thought was: If this was happening, could you actually trap it in the body, so that when it entered the solar system and it was warmed up, it would outgas that hydrogen?" Bergner said.

"Could that quantitatively produce the force that you need to explain the non-gravitational acceleration?" said Bergner.

From past experiments, Bergner found that high-energy electrons, protons and heavier atoms are capable of converting water ice into molecular hydrogen, which would be trapped in bubbles within the ice by the fluffy, snowball structure of the comet.

Contd...P4



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Flow with the tide today. This is Ganesh's tip pertaining to your relationships. You are assertive as a general rule but you can save it for later. Today is the day to be generous and accede to the wishes of your beloved.

TAURUS

This day appears to be earmarked for a long shopping spree. Ganesh sees you doing the rounds of malls, markets, dollar stores and bargain counters. You are likely to be happily busy in haggling over prices, trying to get the best deals for your purchases. Before you are done you would have bought tons of stuff.

GEMINI

A progressive day awaits you. However, you need to keep yourself in check when enjoying yourself. You will spend time with your friends and family and bond emotionally. Do not neglect your family members in the group activities that you take up, says Ganesh.

CANCER

Today looks set to be a day full of extremes, especially when it comes to your shifty moods. However, you will need to keep reminding yourself of not getting overly emotional or impractical. Otherwise you may end up being in complicated situations, warns Ganesh.

LEO

Today there is a chance that you will meet that special someone that you have been waiting for all your life. You may possibly give your partner a beautiful gift. You will be more inclined towards the arts and will be able to exhibit this new-found appreciation to the max, says Ganesh.

VIRGO

It is more than likely that you will reap financial profits from foreign contacts, predicts Ganesh. You will excel in all the activities that you undertake today. Your dream of establishing a mammoth business enterprise in a foreign country will take flight today.

LIBRA

Ganesh says you will be more conscious about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor or by purchasing expensive cosmetics. To enhance your appearance and personality you may also go on a shopping spree for clothes. Ganesh says you will gain benefits for your money today.

SCORPIO

You may expect the day to be as dull and mundane as those boring repeat telecasts of sitcoms. But remember, it's not always going to be grey! The dance of planets will usher in new change for a better tomorrow. Keep hoping and who knows you may stumble upon something very interesting, says Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS

Those around you will be impressed by the leader in you. You are the general and others will rally at your call to arms. And all the while, you swing your sword and make your way to the top, defying all odds. Do not forget to let people have their own time and space.

CAPRICORN

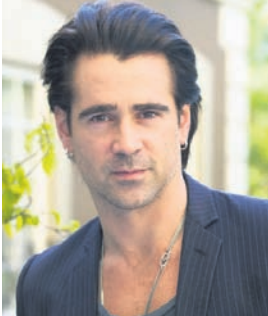
Confidence is the key to unlock the doors of success. Today, with your positive attitude you will mark your presence and come one step closer to success, says Ganesh. You're not a carefree person. You value your achievements and make every decision wisely.

AQUARIUS

You are a workaholic. With a lot of hard work you have achieved your targets. You are not somebody who will fail to differentiate between a pit stop and the final destination. Your success will motivate you to plan for bigger and longstanding goals. But, don't take everything so seriously that you fail to enjoy and celebrate your success, advises Ganesh.

PISCES

Your patience and capabilities will be on trial today and will be put to test with every work you undertake. Even simple tasks and common goals will seem hard to achieve and will require a considerable amount of effort to complete.



FARRELL SPLITS FROM GIRLFRIEND DUE TO HECTIC WORK SCHEDULES

Colin Farrell has split from his partner of five years. The Irish actor and his girlfriend, Kelly MacNamara are said to have gone their separate ways due to the Hollywood star's packed work schedule, including his recent filming for hit film *The Banshees of Inisherin*, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

RIHANNA'S LOS ANGELES HOME GETS INVADED

A California based man reportedly tried to sneak into Rihanna's home to ask her hand in marriage Thursday. This unidentified man was immediately stopped by Rihanna's security team and soon the cops were called. The man was arrested for trespassing.



TAAPSEE TALKS ABOUT HER LIMITATION

Mumbai: Taapsee Pannu is known for playing a variety of characters in films ranging from a femme fatale in *Haseen Dilruba* to a damsel in distress in *Loop Lapeta*. However, the pressure to deliver something out-of-the-

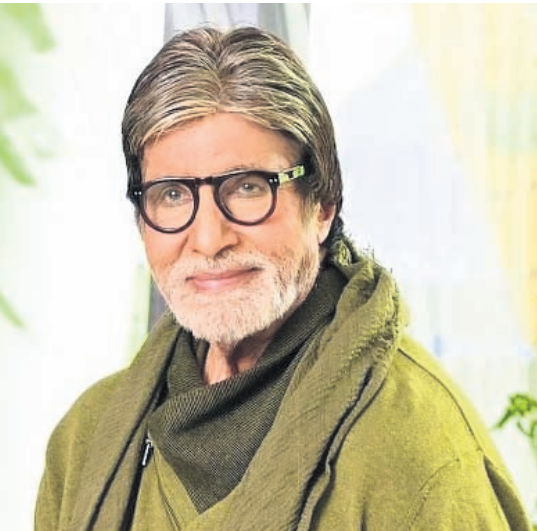
box in every film can be overwhelming for the actor. She believes that if the audience watches her work without any preconceived notions or judgements, they will see variety and uniqueness in each film she does.

Explaining her apprehension, she says, "I appreciate that people have a certain perception of me and that they expect me to do something unconventional and different from the norm. But looking at my work solely through that lens and anticipating something drastically different in every frame of every movie can be harsh, unfair, and brutal. While I can experiment with my character, the story, and the world around it, there are certain limitations as it's the same human being performing all of those roles. I do feel the pressure sometimes."

Pannu has an exciting lineup of movies, including *Phir Se Aayi Haseen Dilruba* (a thriller), *Wo Ladki Hai Kahaan* (a comedy), and a comedy-drama with Shah Rukh Khan, *Dunki*.

AGENCIES

NO BETTER PASTIME THAN WORK: BIG B



Mumbai: Amitabh Bachchan is still recovering from his rib and toe injuries but is ready to hit the field. He had sustained serious injuries on the sets of his film with Prabhas, *Project K*. The 80-year-old revealed in his latest blog post that, though discomfort exists, his work schedule is ready.

Amitabh wrote in his blog Thursday night, "So despite the inconvenience of a damaged body. There must be desire and effort to repair; which is being done with care and comfort of the 'Extended Family' and well wishers, and for which there is repeated gratitude and love."

He further wrote about how he was drawing inspiration from the stories of other famous personalities. "Watching the inspirational stories of the greats of the world gives an afterthought of a want to follow, imitate, and conduct oneself in a similar manner, which does impact lesser mortals like me. But endeavour shall be made, and the will to complete its function, we hope, shall prevail," he wrote.

The Nag Ashwin film, starring Prabhas and Deepika Padukone, is set to hit theatres January 12 of next year.

AGENCIES

Kareena claims of starting a new trend

Mumbai: Actress Kareena Kapoor was one of the first few of current leading actresses who took the lime-light with her celebrity marriage, when she tied the knot with Saif Ali Khan. The actress said that she got married at a time when no actress was getting married to secure their careers, and she did so out of her own choice.

The *Omkar* actress got married to Saif in October 2012, and she did not take any break from work after her marriage. Elaborating further on the topic, she said, "When I wanted to get married, I did, and it was when no actress was getting married. Today, so many actresses are get-

ting married! It is suddenly cool to be married and working. Earlier, it was about not having children. Then suddenly, it was like, okay you can have a child as well and still be working. I have always done things that I love and believe in."

Last year, Kareena featured in Aamir Khan's film *Laal Singh Chaddha*. Kareena has three interesting projects lined up next - *The Crew*, *The Buckingham Murders* and *The Devotion of Suspect X*.

AGENCIES

3 iconic plays to celebrate World Theatre Day in City

Bhubaneswar: World Theatre Day has always been an important occasion in the cultural calendar of Odisha as a series of activities including plays, workshops, symposiums and rallies are held every year across the state.

This year Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with the Odia language, literature, and culture department will organise a three-day theatre event at Rabindra Mandap here, starting from Saturday, to celebrate the day.

On the first evening, City-based theatre troupe Parampara will present *Jane Raja Thile*, a famous



play written by late Bijay Mishra about 50 years ago. It is directed by veteran theatre personality Prasanna Mishra.

The viewers will be treated with *Suna Sujane* on the second evening of the event. Written by eminent playwright late Bishwajit Das,

the play presented by Dynamic Platform, will be directed by Debabrata Pattanayak.

The curtain will be closed with Satabdira Kalakara's *Chari Chhaka*. Written by Natyarashmi Prafulla Rath, the play will be directed by Dhira Mallick.

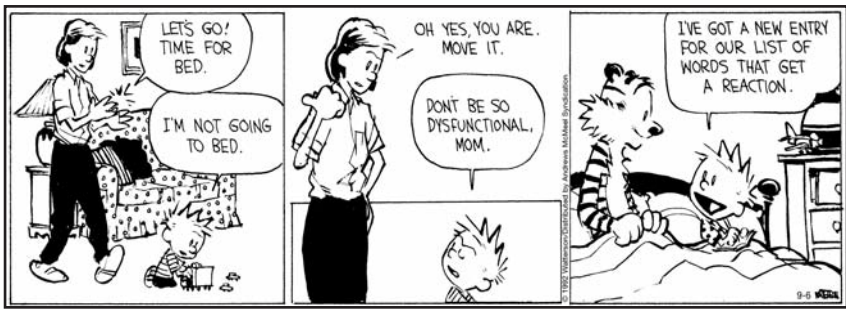
Among the dignitaries, Additional chief secretary Satyabrata Sahu, Culture Director Ranjan Kumar Das, OSNA president Padma Shri Aruna Mohanty and vice-president Manmath Satpathy will grace the occasion, informed OSNA secretary Prabodh Rath.

PNN

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

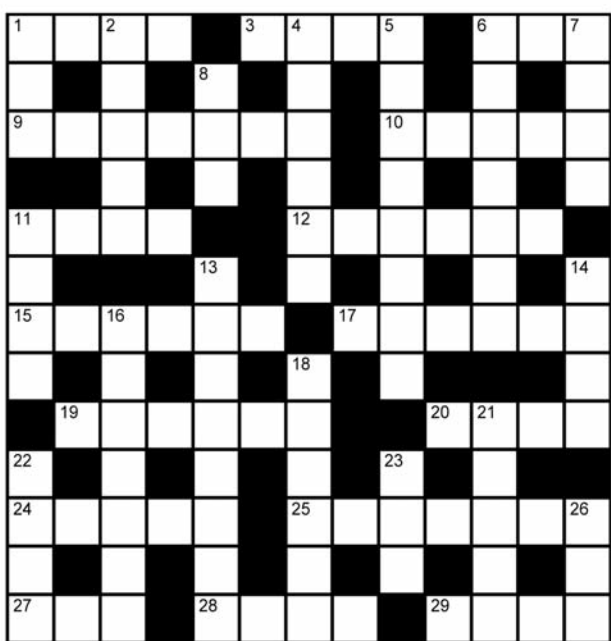


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- Wither
- Blemish
- Scottish cap
- Chefs' formulas
- Alpaca relative
- Hades river
- Inhabit
- Good turn
- Artist's workplace
- Rifle attachments, briefly

- Dyke
- Bamboo eater
- A place to take off
- Exclaim loudly
- Oast
- Rough terrain vehicle

- Jungle predators
- Ensnared
- Castle trench
- Secret agent
- Cushy
- Baleen whale
- Tart
- Hotel sign
- Attack
- Wear away

Down

- Chinchilla stole
- Duck hunter's lure
- Portuguese port

- Larger-than-life
- Globe
- Knock lightly

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

G	U	M	D	R	O	P	S		H	A	R	P
O	E	A	A	A	Z	N	N	U				
A	L	L	O	W	E	D		E	X	C	E	L
T	H	E	D		D	U		H	L			
S	I	E	V	E		L	I	S	S	O	M	E
			A	E				V	T			
C	A	J	O	L	E		S	A	Y	Y	E	S
A	O					U	N					
S	E	C	T	I	O	N		A	R	O	M	A
P	K		O		E	L	R		U			
I	N	E	R	T				V	O	Y	A	G
A	Y		A	E		S	A					
N	E	S	T		A	N	T	E	N	N	A	S

SUDOKU

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

downtown

21 states hit Delhi streets over DMD



Parents of DMD-hit children stage a demonstration at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, Friday

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 24: Over 500 parents of children affected by rare genetic disorder Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) from 21 states, including Odisha, took out a rally at Jantar Mantar here Friday to press for immediate treatment and assistance.

Odisha DMD Association (ODMDA) president Bishnu Charan Panigrahi, who led the delegation of at least 16 parents from the state, said research should be carried out for its medicine in the country.

"As long as the medicine is not available, the government should provide assistance to the parents of DMD-affected children. Despite challenges posed by the disease, the children are studying hard to become financially independent. However, they are not receiving any support from the government," Panigrahi, who hails from Odisha's Jajpur, said.

About DMD, Ratan Kumar Pradhan, a resident of Odisha's Keonjhar and father of Arpita, 14, diagnosed with the disease, said it is a rare genetic disorder that causes progressive muscle loss in children.

"The child starts showing symptoms at the age of 6-7 years when it walks on the toes. The disease, in the form of a defective dystrophin gene, which hinders the production of very vital dystrophin protein, has been present since birth. Growing rapidly, soon it engulfs every muscle of the body including the heart and lungs. Subsequently, the child becomes wheelchair-bound. Most of them don't live beyond their 20s, which is of serious concern. We

are seeing our children dying every day," Pradhan pointed out.

He demanded that the government should focus on creating awareness about the disease by introducing lessons in the school curriculum. "A subject on various types of muscular dystrophy should also be introduced in the curriculum. When my daughter was diagnosed with it, I was totally in the dark. I didn't know about the disease. Massive awareness needs to be created on this. The cost of physiotherapy for the children is over ₹1 lakh annually, while the cost of treatment is over ₹15 crore which is available abroad. I urge Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to initiate research on the disease. The government should constitute expert committees," Pradhan suggested.

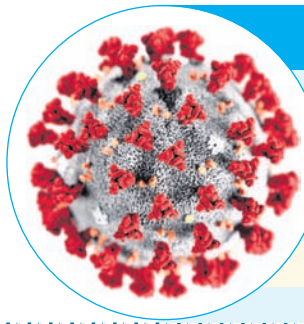
Sangramjit Dash, a resident of Odisha's Cuttack whose son Satamanyu is diagnosed with the disease, said there is no treatment for DMD in the country. "While companies like Pfizer and Sarepta have been at an advanced stage of their research. It is yet to take place in India. I have travelled all over the country but couldn't find a cure. The government needs to do research and development on the disease. The children as well as parents face a lot of problems. The children need round-the-clock assistance from parents. This has been spreading fast in India also and research is needed to find out its causes," Dash said.

The parents have also submitted a memorandum to the Union Health Ministry on the disease.



NO FAULT IN OUR STARS

People cherished a stunning sight as Venus approached a crescent Moon in the Bhubaneswar sky, Friday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,31,13,933	65,60,28,398	68,24,670
India	4,47,00,667	4,41,61,922	5,30,818
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

Quality edu, school infra singe Assembly

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: Opposition BJP and Congress MLAs Friday attacked the state government in the Assembly alleging that it has failed to provide quality education to the students.

Participating in a debate on the admissibility of an adjournment motion, Opposition chief whip Mohan Majhi alleged that the future of the students is pushed to the dark in the name of transformation of schools under 5T initiatives.

The BJP legislator said as many as 11,710 schools in the state are without electricity, 11,665 schools do not have playgrounds, 6,781 do not have the required classrooms and 27,319 are managing with one classroom each. There is a requirement of about 1.5 lakh teaching posts. In the academic year 2021-22, the dropout rate at secondary level stood at 27.26 per cent, which is the highest in the entire country, Majhi said.

Participating in the debate, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra said economic and social development will

be impossible until education is not developed, and poverty alleviation cannot happen without education.

Despite 23 years of stable government, education has not received importance as required, he added.

The state government has recruited the teachers in different categories. Dissatisfaction is rising among the teachers due to the salary structure. They are protesting on the streets without imparting education in schools, Mishra said. Replying to the motion, School and Mass Education Minister Samir Ranjan Dash blamed the central government for the lack of the required infrastructure in the schools.

The central government is paying ₹1,258 crore for 92,337 teachers, which is only ₹11,000 per teacher. But the state government is paying a minimum salary of ₹33,000 to a teacher.



IN THE HOUSE

LoP targets govt over malnutrition

Leaders of Opposition (LoP) Jayanarayan Mishra Friday targeted the state government in the Assembly over alleged rising malnutrition among children and demanded a statement from the Women and Child Development Minister on the issue.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, Mishra said that the picture of Kalinganagar industrial town is much worse than Nagada, which is known for child malnutrition.

Not only Nagada and

Kalinganagar, about 19 per cent of newborn children in Odisha are malnourished, he said, adding, about 31 per cent of all the children of Odisha are suffering from malnutrition while 64 per cent children are having Anemia. "Is this 5T? Is this development of Odisha?" questioned the BJP leader. Mishra urged the Speaker to ask the Women and Child Development Minister to make a statement in the House on the issue.

Speaking to reporters outside the House, senior Congress legislator Tara Prasad Bahinipati said, "If the picture of malnutrition in coastal areas is this, one can assume what

would be the ground situation in remote places of Kalahandi and Koraput."

Though the state government is earning crores of rupees through mining in the mineral-rich areas, the children are not able to get proper food in those areas, he alleged.

Bahinipati urged the state government to take necessary steps immediately to ensure that no child should die due to malnutrition.

Reacting on this issue, BJD legislator Amar Prasad Satpathy advised the LoP to visit Nagada to witness the present scenario there. Who has given him the right to blame Sukinda along with Nagada? he asked.

At least six task forces have been formed to monitor 5T schools in the state, the Minister said.

He said the dropout rate in the state in 2022-23 stands at 16.4 percent, which is better compared to other states.

Dash further replied that the

dropout that the Opposition is talking about is from the time of Covid-19. The minister said the government has planned to introduce School Clubs in all secondary schools from the academic year 2023-24. The clubs will supplement the newly-introduced aspirational

curriculum of the state government and help students in providing personalized learning experience. The introduction of the club system will also offer a platform for students to pursue their interests and hobbies beyond the classroom, he said.

Cong for House panel probe into 'atrocities on tribals'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 24: Opposition Congress Friday demanded formation of a House Committee to inquire the alleged atrocities on tribals during anti-Maoist operations by security forces in Nuapada district.

The issue was raised by Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Narasingha Mishra during Zero Hour discussion in the Assembly.

He expressed concerns over the miseries caused to people of Patghar village in Bheden area of Nuapada district.

"The villagers are leaving their houses after being sand-

wiched between the security forces and Maoists," Mishra said.

He alleged that the atrocities on the tribals compounded after the killing of three CRPF jawans in Nuapada district June 21 last year.

Mishra said some villagers were taken to Kolkata by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for questioning into the jawans' killing.

"But they could not say anything as the villagers were ignorant about the incident. Still police tortured them in the name of an anti-Maoist operation," he said.

The Congress leader said locals had March 18 held a

rally protesting the police atrocities.

"The state government and the police are silent over the issue. But, we the Assembly, cannot remain mute spectators to the torture on the people in the name of an anti-Maoist operation," he said, while asking the Speaker to sent a House Committee to the affected village.

He suggested that since Saturday and Sunday are holidays, the House Committee could make a visit to the place.

Speaker BK Arukha said he heard the CLP leader and would soon issue a ruling on the matter.

MPs flay Finance Bill passage amid impasse

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 24: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress MPs Friday expressed anguish over passing of the Bills in the Lok Sabha without discussion.

The Lok Sabha Friday passed the Finance Bill 2023 with 64 official amendments without any discussion. The Lower House had Thursday passed the Demands for Grants for Budget 2023-24 and the Appropriation Bill without discussion.

Congress MP Saptagiri Ulaka called it the death of democracy. He expressed displeasure over the passing of Bills without discussion and also over the continuous disruption of

the House proceedings. Ulaka said there were several listings on his name this week during the Question Hour and Zero Hour. He had decided to raise several issues of his constituency during demands of grants for the Ministry of Railways, Tribal Affairs, Tourism and Rural Development among others.

"Thursday, the government passed the budget without discussion. They were not even accepting the laying of the demands of grants. The government is supposed to run the House. But it is disrupting the proceedings of the House. I had a question from the Ministry of Railways on Gunupur-Teruvali rail-

way line, a Zero Hour mentioning where I had to raise the issue of setting up of a refinery plant at Kansariguda in Kashiapur block. But due to the disruptions, I could not raise the issues," Ulaka said.

BJD member Chandrasekhar Sahu also expressed anguish over the passage of Bills without discussion. He said that he was asked by the party to speak on demands for grants for the Ministry of Railways and Rural Development but he could not.

BJP MP Basanta Panda, however, said it was important to pass the budget and the government was left with no other option than passing it without discussion.



MATTER OF FAITH: People from Muslim community eat together on the first day of Ramadan at a mosque in Unit-IV area of Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	57527.10	↓ 398.86
NIFTY	16945.05	↓ 131.10
DOLLAR	82.62	↓ ₹0.02
EURO	88.53	↓ ₹0.52
GOLD	₹59,797	↑ ₹232
SILVER	₹71,057	↑ ₹845

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP	MAX 35.2°C	35.2°C
	MIN 21.7°C	22.5°C
Humidity	75%	76%
Rainfall	4.5mm	0.0mm
		Light rain very likely

ଢେଲି ମାନ୍ୟ

ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରୀୟ ଢେଲି-ମାନ୍ୟିକ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ଢେଲି-ମାନ୍ୟ ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ ପରାମର୍ଶ ସେବାଗୁଡ଼ିକ

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ଆତ୍ମହତ୍ୟା ଭଳି ବିଚାର ମନରୁ ଦୂର କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପରାମର୍ଶ

ବିଦ୍ୟାର୍ଥୀଙ୍କର ଶାରୀରିକ, ସାମାଜିକ ଓ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଜନିତ ମାନ୍ୟିକ ସମସ୍ୟା ପାଇଁ ପରାମର୍ଶ

କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାର ମାନ୍ୟିକ ଆତ୍ମାତ, ବିଷାଦ ଓ ମନବଶା ଦୂରୀକରଣ ପାଇଁ ପରାମର୍ଶ

ନିଦ୍ରାହୀନତା ଓ ତତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧିତ ସମସ୍ୟା ପାଇଁ ପରାମର୍ଶ

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Disaster mgmt training to prepare skilled manpower



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: In line with the mandate for increased community preparedness and to create a cadre of skilled manpower for disaster and pandemic management in urban parts of the state, Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) organised a three day capacity-building-cum-orientation programme in collaboration with State Urban Development Agency (SUDA) at the SUDA conference hall Friday.

A team of 43 master-trainers, consisting of state mission man-

agers, city mission managers & community organizers from various urban local bodies, participating in the programme.

The programme kicked off March 22 to a purposive start with address by key officials including, OSDMA executive director Gyana Das, Municipal Administration director Sangramjit Nayak, additional secretary Pravat Mohapatra, SUDA project director Sarada Panda, OSDMA CGM Sabyasachi Hota deliberated to build clarity and understanding on the need and relevance of the training.

In addition to building clarity on a whole range of topics relating

The objective was to create a cadre of professionals who will create awareness at the community level about strategies to address various disaster related situations

to disaster management, resource persons from OSDMA, UNICEF, and other agencies interacted and made effort to help the participants visualize a disaster situation and how to go about addressing it. In addition, participants were taken on an interesting visit to OSDMA control room to get an understanding on how "early warning system" works and the information gets disseminated downwards the grassroots level.

The primary objective of the programme is to create a cadre of professionals who can play a critical role in creating a massive base of awareness at the community level to address various disaster related situation that might come up in future.



MOCK DRILL: A fire safety awareness programme conducted in MCH building of Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

CONTINUED FROM P1

Rahul...

Gandhi himself had opposed the ordinance at that time and tore the ordinance in a press conference as a token of protest. Reacting to Gandhi's disqualification, the Congress said it was "a black day for Indian democracy" and asserted that the battle will be fought both "legally and politically". Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the BJP made all efforts to get him disqualified as he was speaking the truth. "He has been removed from the House for speaking the truth, fighting for the Constitution and for people's rights," Kharge alleged.

Alien comet's...

Under the heat of the Sun, the study said, the ice anneals, changing its form from an amorphous one to a crystallised one, thereby, forcing the bubbles out and releasing the hydrogen gas. Bergner and Seligman also calculated in the study that the ice at the surface of a comet could emit enough gas to impact the orbit of a small comet like 'Oumuamua. "The main takeaway is that a standard interstellar comet that just experienced heavy processing," Bergner said.

CLASSIFIED

LOST

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ସ୍ବାକ୍ଷର

CIPET provides jobs to 30 unemployed youths



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24:To encourage the Skill India Mission of the government of India, Rourkela and Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology: Centre For Skillling And Technical Support (CIPET: CSTS), Bhubaneswar, successfully launched a placement linked skill development programme .The training programme was exclusively for poor and needy unemployed youths and was sponsored by NTPC-SAIL Power Company Ltd.(NSPCL) Rourkela.

According to the information, 279 unemployed youths from nearby areas of Rourkela were trained and provided placement for sustainable livelihoods after successful completion of their skill development training at CIPET Bhubaneswar. In view of success of this programme, CIPET,

Bhubaneswar and Rourkela decided to train 30 candidates and the training programme was also completed Thursday.

A valedictory function was held Wednesday where CIPET's Director and Head BP Patro briefed about the objective of training programme to generate employability to make them stand on their own feet.

From NSPCL head of HR Mahesh Ku Suthar was chief guest in the inaugural function at CIPET.

Suthar thanked CIPET for empowering the youth with sustainable livelihood. He interacted with the trainees and wished them a bright future. On this occasion, all the students were awarded with NSQF approved certificate and given placement offer letter. On behalf of CIPET, Administrative Officer Jayant Kumar Das conducted the programme and thanked everyone.

Postcard campaign to combat malnutrition

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: In the culminating event of the postcard campaign, thousands of people conducted mass rallies in 88 blocks of 15 districts of the state Friday and submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on the issue of malnutrition in

adolescent girls. Atmashakti Trust and its allies Odisha Shramajeebee Manch and Mahila Shramajeebee Manch had launched the postcard campaign in which 10,000 postcards from 15 tribal dominated districts have been sent to the Chief Minister in the past month seeking his intervention on this issue.

40,000 adolescent girls from over

10,000 villages in these districts have signed over the postcards.

"Under this campaign, adolescent girls and their parents turned out in large numbers to send postcards to the Chief Minister in the hope that their voices will be heard and the Chief Minister would take prompt action to improve adolescent nutritional status in the state,"

said Chandrama Bindhani, who organised the block-level rally in Kotagada block in Kandhamal.

"Under the Odisha government's Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG), which converged with POSHAN 2.0 in 2021, adolescent girls in the age group of 14 to 18 years should receive 4 kg of chhatua, 25 pieces of badam, rasasi, chikki, and 16

boiled eggs to address their nutritional needs. But unfortunately, this isn't implemented properly. So, the campaign aimed to highlight the issue through public awareness and sought the government's attention to address malnutrition among adolescent girls," said executive trustee of Atmashakti Trust Ruchi Kashyap.

Odisha Parba begins in New Delhi

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 24: Odisha Parba, which showcases the rich and diverse culture of Odisha, kick-started Friday in New Delhi after a gap of three years.

Odisha Parba 2023 is being organised at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here for three days, from March 24 to 26.

The grand evening commenced with the historic play, 'Ahe Nilashaila' that beautifully depicted the valour and legacy of Gajapati Maharaj Ramachandra Dev.

Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs and Jal Shakti

Bisweshwar Tudu, who hails from Odisha, inaugurated the programme by lighting the ceremonial lamp with vedic chanting.

It was followed by Odisha's anthem 'Bande Utkal Janani' in the presence of Sidhartha Pradhan President, Odia Samaj, Prakash Sahu and Sandeep Mohapatra, Trustee, Odia Samaj.

The event began with full enthusiasm with Bisweshwar Tudu addressing the audience with his inaugural speech.

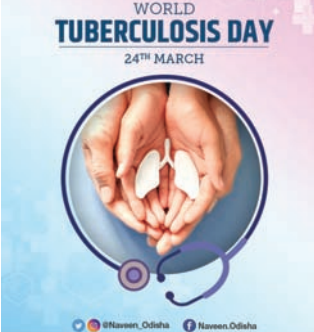
The people of Delhi will once again witness Odisha's unique art, culture, heritage, tradition and taste its delectable cuisine.

CM vows to end TB suffering & deaths

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 24: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik took to Twitter on the occasion of World TB Day Friday and expressed strong commitment to further scale up effort to end tuberculosis (TB) suffering and deaths.

"Tuberculosis is a curable disease and Odisha has emerged as leading state in TB-elimination in the country with timely diagnosis, quality care and awareness drives. On World TB Day, reaffirm commitment to further scale up effort to end TB suffering and deaths," Naveen tweeted.



Earlier, ahead of the World TB Day, Public Health department director Niranjana Mishra had informed that as a part of the "TB

Tuberculosis is a curable disease and Odisha has emerged as leading state in TB-elimination with timely diagnosis, quality care and awareness drives

NAVEEN PATNAIK | CHIEF MINISTER

Harega Desh Jeetega" campaign, National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) is being implemented in the state with the objective to eliminate the pulmonary disease by the year 2025.

Mishra said, "Testing and good quality drugs are provided free of cost to diagnose TB cases in all

health facilities in the state up to the level of sub-centre health and wellness centres. TB cases are detected through hospitals, house visits and active search by Asha workers, Multi Purpose Health Workers (MPHW) and through screening of high risk groups".

In TB elimination activity in the country, Odisha had secured 2nd and 3rd place in 2020 and 2021 respectively. In the year 2021, three districts (Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Bargarh) had qualified for bronze certificate in TB elimination efforts. In 2022, 13 districts and State as a whole is competing for sub-national certification.

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MILLETS FOR NUTRITION: A district level cooking competition was held among ASHAs to mark 'International Year of Millets' in Sundargarh, Friday

OP PHOTO

Man sentenced to life for killing wife

AGENCIES

Balasore, March 24: Balasore Additional Sessions Judge Biswajit Das Friday convicted a man on the charge of killing his wife and sentenced him to life imprisonment along with a penalty of ₹6,000. In default of the penalty the convict would further undergo another one-year jail term, the judge ordered.

Bijay Das, a resident of Koilisahi under Basta police station, was found guilty by the court of killing his wife. The court pronounced the judgment after examining 16 witnesses and 20 exhibits. Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Panda said.

The police took action against the accused based on the FIR filed by the sister of the deceased who alleged that her sister Minati Das was regularly tortured physically as well as mentally by the accused even after 8 years of their marriage for non-fulfilment of dowry demands. She said the accused killed her sister the previous night and absconded. The accused was booked under several sections of IPC including 498-A, 304(B), and 302, Panda said.

State Midwifery Training Unit launched at MKCG

Berhampur: To reduce the child mortality rate and to improve maternity care, the state has introduced a unique training programme with the inauguration of the midwife-led care unit (MLCU) and State Midwifery Training Unit (SMTU) on the premises of the College of Nursing at Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Medical College and Hospitals here. Midwife-led care is a high-certainty, evidence-based strategy to improve maternity care. Department of Health & Family Welfare Commissioner Cum Secretary Shalini Pandit joined virtually and presided over the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest. The training has been started from Friday and it will continue for one and half years.

HEALTHCARE IN SHAMBLES

Ayurvedic hospitals battle for survival in undivided Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sunabeda/Semiliguda/Nandapur, March 24: The state government has established 67 ayurvedic hospitals in undivided Koraput district but lack of infrastructure, manpower and proper medicines has hit their functioning and treatment of visiting patients, a report said Friday.

There was a time when ayurvedic treatment was given utmost importance as it was very cost-effective, organic and free from side effects. However, with passage of time and advent of allopathic medicines, the traditional form of treatment has lost its popularity to a great extent.

As a result, 67 ayurvedic hospitals established in the undivided Koraput district are in a dilapidated condition much to the discomfort and resentment of visiting patients and their attendants.

The damaged infrastructure of a Government Ayurvedic Hospital at Hataguda village under Panthalung panchayat of Nandapur block in Koraput district is a case in this point. The residents of 23 panchayats under Nandapur block are dependent on this ayurvedic hospital for health-care. However, with the walls and asbestos roof beginning to crumble, patients are slowly turning away from this hospital.

A doctor Shibaram Murmu said that patients having various ailments are visiting the hospital on a daily basis. However, the unavailability of proper medicines has hit their treatment. Moreover, shortage of manpower is another roadblock in the treatment of patients. "I have been appointed at Hataguda hospital but also have to visit Debgandhana hospital under Lamtaput block owing to inadequate number of doctors. As a result, I have to work in these two hospitals on a rotation basis," he added.



AS MANY AS 67 AYURVEDIC HOSPITALS ESTABLISHED IN THE UNDIVIDED KORAPUT DISTRICT ARE IN A DILAPIDATED CONDITION

THERE ARE 18 AYURVEDIC HOSPITALS IN KORAPUT, 22 IN NABARANGPUR, 7 IN MALKANGIRI AND 20 IN RAYAGADA

ALL THE HOSPITALS ARE VERY OLD AND LACK PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE, DOCTORS AND MANPOWER

sult, I have to work in these two hospitals on a rotation basis," he added.

Sarpanch Puja Khil of Panthalung panchayat alleged that staff of these two hospitals double up as doctor and treat the patients by consulting with the doctor over phone when there is no doctor in their hospital. She demanded the state government's intervention to improve the infrastructure and staff strength in Hataguda Ayurvedic hospital.

When contacted, AYUSH director Kashi Biswanath Soren confirmed the development. He said that issues like absence of proper infrastructure, doctor and manpower shortage are not only limited to Nandapur block but the situation is the same all over the undivided Koraput district.

Soren said there are 67 ayurvedic hospitals in undivided Koraput - 18 hospitals for 14 blocks of Koraput, 22 in

Nabarangpur, seven in Malkangiri and 20 in Rayagada district.

All the hospitals are very old and lack proper infrastructure, doctors and manpower. He said there are nine doctors, 11 assistants, two peons in 18 hospitals of Koraput; 10 doctors, eight assistants and five peons for 22 hospitals in Nabarangpur, and two doctors, three assistants and three peons in seven hospitals of Malkangiri district. Similarly, there are six doctors, 13 assistants and four peons in 20 hospitals of Rayagada district.

The situation has become dire as 15 doctors on the alibi of studying in PG course have been posted in the hospitals in Puri, Khurda and Cuttack districts while the attention of the departmental authorities has been drawn to appoint more doctors and staff in these hospitals, he added.

Chatriptut-Maliguda rly line gets nod for train movement

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 24: The 6.95 km-long broad gauge railway line section between Chatriptut and Maliguda stations in Koraput district under the Waltair Railway Division of the East Coast Railway (ECOR), has received authorisation for the operation of train movement.

Commissioner Railway

Safety (CRS)/South Eastern (SE) Circle AM Chowdhary inspected this railway section and gave his consent for train operations, Wednesday. General Manager Manoj Sharma congratulated the team engaged in the construction of this project.

ECOR sources here said 237 km out of a total 445 km of doubling work currently underway in the Kottavalasa-Koraput-Kirandul (KK) Rail

Line has been commissioned so far. The KK line is located in remote tribal areas of three states and is a point of focus of Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for the development of the region through the railway network.

The Ministry of Railways has sanctioned ₹248.75 crores for the Jagadalpur-Koraput critical doubling project this year, while ₹70 crore will be

spent on doubling works between Chatriptut and Jeyore. ₹170 crore has also been sanctioned for this project in 2023-24 FY.

This important mineral transportation route has been facing delays in train movements due to traffic problems in single-line railway sections. Once the doubling works are completed, train traffic will be easier and hassle-free.

Pond restoration, awareness drive by Vedanta Aluminium

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, March 24: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, observed World Water Day 2023 by undertaking water conservation and awareness initiatives in Jharsuguda. The company also undertook pond restoration and cleaning activities in Baghiamal pond, Jharsuguda with the active participation of employee volunteers and professional experts.

On the occasion, the company also conducted the ground-breaking ceremony for a new sewage treatment plant (STP) at its operations. With a processing capacity of 440 kilo litres per day (KLD), the STP will reduce freshwa-



ter consumption of the plant by around 15 crore litres per year, taking a significant step towards becoming 'Net Water Positive' by leveraging advanced technologies for efficient water utilisation. Encouraging community members to work towards water conservation in their individual capacities, the company organised 'Nukkad Natak' - street play sessions at local educational institu-

tions and Maa Samleshwari Nagar, reaching out to more than 800 students and community members. Further, to create awareness on the importance of freshwater and biodiversity conservation, the company arranged a birdwatching and nature photography session for employees and their family members at Singhabaga, the wetlands of Jharsuguda. Speaking on the company's

commitment towards water conservation, Sunil Gupta, CEO, Vedanta Jharsuguda, said, "At Vedanta Aluminium, we firmly believe that our business growth must go hand in hand with environmental sustainability and that a sustainable future depends on responsible water management. Our aim is to increase water reutilisation, reduce freshwater consumption, and strengthen community water infrastructure. As we celebrate World Water Day, we recommit to our mission of becoming net water positive and making more water available for local communities and biodiversity, ensuring positive ecological footprint and excellence in ESG."

Woman, lover arrested over husband's murder



THE MURDER TOOK PLACE IN ANGARGAON VILLAGE IN BEGUNIPADA AREA JANUARY 28

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, March 24: A 30-year-old woman and her 42-year-old lover were arrested in connection with the murder of her 37-year-old husband in Ganjam district, police said Friday.

The deceased, identified as Gariba Das, was the driver of prime accused Santosh Das's tractor.

He had allegedly killed Gariba by pushing him into a well in his field and throwing a huge rock at him, while the woman, Sudeshna Das, had hatched a conspiracy to kill her husband and had a long

conversation over the phone with Santosh before the incident, a police officer said.

The incident took place in Angargaon village in Beguniapada area January 28. The body was found the next day and a probe was launched.

During the investigation, it was found that Sudeshna and Gariba always quarrelled as he suspected that she was having an affair with Santosh.

As per their murder plan, Santosh had asked Gariba to come over to his field on the pretext of guarding his crops from wild animals. After both consumed liquor, he pushed Gariba into the well and threw a large stone at him, seriously injuring his head and killing him on the spot. Purna Chandra Pradhan, inspector in-charge of Beguniapada police station, said. Further investigation proved the involvement of Santosh and Sudeshna and they were arrested Thursday, he added.

Neighbour held for rape of disabled minor

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, March 24: Rajkanika police have arrested a married man for raping a disabled minor girl Wednesday.

Police sources Friday said the physically disabled girl went to her neighbour's house with a bottle guard, Wednesday afternoon. The accused man identified as Kalandi Malik, finding her alone, raped the girl. The minor was rescued by her elder sister when she heard her sister screaming.

The father of the victim girl lodged an FIR with Rajkanika police station in this regard. Acting on the FIR, Rajkanika police registered a case under Section 209, 322, 376(2)(1), 376(A), 376(b) of IPC, Section 6 of POCSO Act and arrested accused Kalandi Malik.

Kalindi was produced before the court Thursday which remanded him into jail custody, IIC of Rajkanika police station Bilwamangal Sethy said.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

e-Tender Notice No.: ECoRMDCHBBS/BMWD-SI-03, Dated: 21.03.2023

NAME OF WORK : COLLECTION, TRANSPORTATION AND DISPOSAL OF HOSPITAL BIO-MEDICAL WASTE FROM THE RAILWAY CENTRAL HOSPITAL/EAST COAST RAILWAY/MANCHESWAR/BHUBANESWAR FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS (1096 days) WITH BARCODE BASED MANAGEMENT.

Approx. Cost of the Work : ₹ 22,63,596/-, EMD : ₹ 45,260/-, Cost of Tender Document : ₹ 2,000/-, Completion Period of the Work : 03 years (1096 days).

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1100 Hrs. of 12.04.2023.

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration. Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website : <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering.

Medical Director/Central Hospital/PR-1106/N/22-23 MCS/Bhubaneswar

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
14TH FLOOR, CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING,
SAHEED BHAGAT SINGH MARG, FORT, MUMBAI - 4000001

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

The State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha has accorded the Environmental Clearance to "RBI Greenfield Data Centre and Enterprise Level Training Institute at IDCO Plot No. S5-H-05, EMC Park, Infovalley II, Janla, Bhubaneswar over an area 18.55 Acres, Khordha, Odisha" vide Environmental Clearance File No. 418440/507-INFRA2/02-2023 dated March 20, 2023.

The copies of above Environmental Clearance letters are available with State Pollution Control Board, Odisha and may also be seen on the website of the SEIAA, Odisha (<http://www.orissaseiaa.gov.in>).

Place: Mumbai Chief General Manager In-Charge

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India
REGIONAL OFFICE: BALASORE
3rd Floor, Asis Plaza, OT Road, Bhaskarganj, Balasore-756001

POSSESSION NOTICE
(For Immovable Property)

[RULE 8(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES - 2002]

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Union Bank of India, Baripada Branch-3** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Second) Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor in loan A/c mentioned below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest thereon within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Union Bank of India, Baripada Branch-3** for an amount mentioned below with interest thereon. **The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to the Borrower to redeem the secured assets.**

BARIPADA BRANCH-3/ Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor	Liabilities due as per Notice (in ₹)	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession	Description of Property
Borrower: Mousumi Sahu / Guarantor: Subodh Chandra Sahu, Both are At: Ward No.: 8, P.S.: Baripada, Odisha-757001	₹ 4,21,268/- as on 30.11.2022 + interest thereon	30.11.2022 / 24.03.2023	All that piece and parcel of Land and Building at Khata No.: 301/ 262, Plot No.: 543, Measuring Area: Ac.0.010Dec., Mouza:
Baripada Unit No.: 8 Sahar Sahi, P.S.: Baripada No.: 96, belonging to Subodh Chandra Sahu Place: Balasore, Date: 24.03.2023 Sd/- Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India			

UTKAL GRAMEEN BANK
(Sponsored by State Bank of India)
Regional Business Office: Region-V,
Bhawaniapatna-766001, Dist.: Kalahandi

POSSESSION NOTICE
(For Immovable Property)
[See Rule-8-(1)]

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Utkal Grameen Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Sarfasei) Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act. calling upon the Borrowers and Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest and expenses thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealing with the said properties will be subject to the charge of the Utkal Grameen Bank for the amount stated below with interest, cost and incidental expenses thereon.

BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrowers / Guarantors	Description of the Security Interest taken over possession	Liabilities due on the specified date as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice / Possession Notice
BHAWANIPATNA BRANCH / Borrower: M/s. Bhubaneswari Traders, Prop.: Umesh Chandra Pattajoshi, S/o: Late Prem Prakash Pattajoshi, At: Telipalas, P.O.: Tambachhada, Dist.: Kalahandi, PIN - 766015	All that Part & Parcel of the Property consisting of Mouza: Telipalas, Khata No.: 159, Plot No.: 837, Area: Ac.0.10 Dec, Plot No.: 838/1408, Area: Ac.0.06 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, standing in the name of Prem Prakash Pattajoshi	₹ 12,97,599/- as on 22.03.2023 and further interest, cost, etc. thereon	06.09.2018 / 23.03.2023
DHARAMGARH BRANCH / Borrower: Smt Deepanjali Pattajoshi, W/o: Sri Prabira Pattajoshi, At/P.O.: Tambachhada, Dist.: Kalahandi / Guarantor: Sri Paramananda Naik, S/o: Late Gouranga Naik, At: Kebidi, P.O.: Dharamgarh, Dist.: Kalahandi	All that Part & Parcel of the Property consisting of Kebidi, Khata No.: 28, Plot No.: 917, Area: Ac.0.80 Dec, KISSAM: Atta (used for non agriculture purpose), standing in the name of Sri Paramananda Naik	₹ 11,96,291/- as on 22.03.2023 and further interest, cost, etc. thereon	26.03.2019 / 23.03.2023
DHODRA BRANCH / Borrower: Sri Ramakrishna Singha, S/o: Rajendranath Singha, At: Purla, P.O.: Bokadabeda, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764073 / Guarantors: 1) Sri Jyotish Mandal, S/o: Jagendra Mandal, At: Purla, P.O.: Bokadabeda, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764072, 2) Sri Satya Ranjan Mandal, S/o: Mahendra Mandal, At: Mahuli, P.O.: Dhodra, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764073	All that Part & Parcel of the Property consisting of Mouza: Purla, Khata No.: 59/165, Plot No.: 125/ 140, Area: Ac.0.10 Dec, Plot No.: 125/145, Area: Ac.0.14 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, standing in the name of Ramakrishna Singha	₹ 2,18,716/- as on 21.03.2023 and further interest, cost, etc. thereon	04.11.2017 / 22.03.2023
SINDHIGUDA BRANCH / Borrower: Sri Francis Khura, S/o: Pampilus Khura, At: Podalguda, P.O.: Majhiguda, Dist.: Nabarangpur / Guarantors: 1) Sri Subash Chandra Nag, S/o: Dayananda Nag, 2) Sri Dhana Naik, S/o: Hari Naik, Both are At: Podalguda, P.O.: Majhiguda, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764059	All that Part & Parcel of the Property consisting of Mouza: Podalguda, Khata No.: 647, Plot No.: 1841, Area: Ac.0.04 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, standing in the name of Sri Francis Khura	₹ 3,04,139/- as on 20.03.2023 and further interest, cost, etc. thereon	23.07.2019 / 21.03.2023
UMERKOTE BRANCH / Borrower: Smt T Umadevi Subudhi, W/o: T Parameswar Subudhi, At: Jhariaoga Road, P.O.: Umerkote, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764073 / Guarantors: 1) Sri T Parameswar Subudhi, S/o: Sri T Bhimaraju Subudhi, 2) Sri Sandeep Kumar Santra, S/o: Sri Lambodhar Santra, Both are At: Jhariaoga Road, P.O.: Umerkote, Dist.: Nabarangpur, PIN - 764073	All that Part & Parcel of the Property consisting of Mouza: Umerkote, Khata No.: 87/1065, Plot No.: 238/824/1732, Area: Ac.0.12 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, standing in the name of T Parameswar Subudhi, S/o: T. Bhimaraju Subudhi	₹ 7,51,630/- as on 21.03.2023 and further interest, cost, etc. thereon	16.10.2019 / 22.03.2023
Place: Bhawaniapatna, Date: 24.03.2023 Sd/- Authorised Officer, Utkal Grameen Bank			

“ ‘Live according to Nature’ runs the maxim of the West. But according to what nature, the nature of the body or the nature which exceeds the body? We ought to determine this first. **SRI AUROBINDO** ”

Misplaced Priorities

In a move that has raised eyebrows, the Maharashtra government has decided to shift the Marine Drive police station to make way for luxury apartments for senior babus and police officers. Sources have informed DKB that the state government is facing a shortage of official quarters, with over two dozen retired bureaucrats being posted on various government commissions and organisations. This shortage led to the decision to build Yashodhan-2, a seven-storey building with 24 apartments in the Churchgate area. The decision has been criticised, as Yashodhan is one of the most sought-after government residences by IAS and IPS officers. The new apartments will be allocated to officers above the rank of principal secretary and inspector-general of police. While the Shinde government claims that the apartments are necessary to address the housing needs of senior officers, many feel that this is a blatant misuse of public funds. While most agree that there is a need for more apartments, it is important that these are allocated based on merit and not simply handed out to senior officials. Shifting the Marine Drive police station to make way for luxury apartments is particularly concerning, as it suggests that the government is more interested in catering to the needs of its officials than in serving the public. Senior officials at the state Home Department and the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) are trying to ensure that the issue is swiftly dealt with before it escalates and embroils the state leadership.

Centre's surprising move at LIC The Modi government's decision to appoint Siddhartha Mohanty as interim chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has raised several questions. The move comes as a surprise, especially since it was widely expected incumbent chairman Mangalam Ramasubramanian Kumar to receive another extension. Kumar had already been given two extensions, including one that has now ended. So why did the government pull the plug on him? According to sources, there are several possible reasons, one of which is the less-than-stellar performance of LIC's IPO, which may have contributed to the decision. Another is the revelation of LIC's investments in the beleaguered Adani Group, which may have added to concerns about the insurance giant's management. Mohanty's appointment as interim chairman also raises questions about the proposed revamp of the LIC board. The amended LIC Act 1956 requires abolishing the post of executive chairman in three years and transitioning to a CEO and four MDs. It is expected that the government will rope in private-sector individuals for these roles to bring new ideas and perspectives. But with the sudden naming of an interim chairman, it's not clear how the revamp will proceed now. On the whole, the decision to appoint Mohanty as interim chairman is a bold move that suggests that the government is keen to shake up things at LIC.

US prods MEA on China The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is usually guarded in its pronouncements, so naturally, it is apprehensive about the United States identifying the McMahon Line as the international border between Arunachal Pradesh and China in a recent bipartisan Senate resolution. The resolution went further and denounced Chinese aggression and provocations, including China trying to use force to alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The US take on India's feud with China came after senior US State Department officials spoke similarly. It appears that the US is trying to nudge the MEA and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar into raising the ante on China's belligerent actions along the border. The MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi did not respond to the US move, claiming that the ministry had not 'heard about the resolution yet'. Still, the US is taking a deep interest in the issue as part of its broader policy to contain China. Barely days after the Senate resolution, it finally announced its new ambassador to India. Eric Garcetti, a former Los Angeles mayor, got the job over two-and-a-half years after his name was first nominated for the post. A Joe Biden loyalist, he is expected to work closely with Jaishankar on dealing with China, among his other tasks. But will the MEA diplomats led by Foreign Secretary Vinay Kumar Kwatra take a more proactive stance to protect India's territorial integrity and strategic interests, given their concerns about the potential consequences of an escalation?

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WISDOM CORNER When a man is in doubt what to do, he goes wherever he happens to be first called. **BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE** Every post is honorable in which a man can serve his country **GEORGE WASHINGTON** Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world **NELSON MANDELA**

WORDSWORTH **Apricate** It is unlikely this word — meaning bask in the sun — will be part of your everyday vocabulary, or even be recognised, as it is unknown outside books about defunct words — I can find only a couple even of those that include it. It derives from the Latin verb *apricari*, to bask in the sun or to sun oneself, which is related to *apricus*, of a sunny place. If it brings to mind that delicious distillation of raw sunlight, the apricot, that's a false trail. However, it has been suggested that the fruit's name may have been partly influenced by *apricus* during its journey from Latin *praecox*, early-ripening, to Greek, Arabic and Spanish and on to French and English. *Apricate* first appeared in English around 1690 in an anecdote by the British antiquarian John Aubrey about Sir John Danvers: "His lordship was wont to recreate himself in this place, to *apricate* and contemplate, with his little dog with him." Aubrey sent a copy of the manuscript to his friend John Ray, who replied in September 1691 that he wasn't critic enough to censure another man's writings but went on, "Some words I have noted, that do not sound well to my ears," among which he included *apricate* as a new-coined word to be avoided. Although Aubrey's text was published in 1697, the year of his death, with *apricate* in it, most people have since taken that advice. As long ago as 1847, James Halliwell-Phillipps included it in his Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words. One of the few to use it, in a figurative sense, was James Russell Lowell, in a satirical piece that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in February 1863.

LOL **An insurance company** Insurance form question and answer about a recent accident: A man collided with a cow and completed the requested form as follows: Q: What warning did you give the other party before the collision? A: Horn Q: What warning was given by the other party? A: Moo

FOCUS FINANCE

FIX FOR BANKING



Traditional banks are crucial for the financial system because they create value by making loans. They monitor whether households that apply for mortgages are solvent, and whether business loans will be used for profitable investments

When they cannot use households' savings to finance risky investments or rely on government bailouts, their risk-taking will be sharply reduced. A CBDC would bring market discipline to the banking sector. Traditional banks would be forced to focus on picking profitable loans, and they would close most of their network of retail branches. Likewise, the credit-card oligopoly that hijacks our credit-less payment system would melt like snow in the sun. In its place, we would get a fluid payment system operated by a network of competitors offering access to your CBDC account. In today's economy, households would receive 3% on deposits that are safely shielded from bank runs. A CBDC is not imminent, though. Central bankers are scared to slaughter the cash cow of the traditional banks, under the pretext that doing so will lead to the collapse of the banking sector. The private bank lobby will strongly oppose digital innovation and seek to maintain its dominant position at the cost of the stability of the financial system. Still, we may see CBDCs introduced sooner than anticipated. If one major economy takes the plunge, others will be forced to follow suit or risk seeing their currencies be eclipsed. That is why the Canadian central bank has already signaled its readiness to introduce a CBDC if the US decides to launch its own. If China tries to dominate international transactions with its digital renminbi, other central banks certainly will be prompted to follow suit. Whoever takes the first major step in disrupting the banking sector; it cannot come soon enough. We already have the tools to end bank runs and ensure financial stability. All we need is the will to use them.

The writer is Professor of Economics at Universitat Pompeu Fabra

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SPECTRUM INDO-JAPAN TIES

Discerning Japan PM's priorities

The Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida dashed to Delhi for two days, last Monday and Tuesday, precisely for 27 hours. Media is abuzz with interpretations of his sudden and short visit; it is quite apparent that he was here to unveil his project on Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) which he had announced to do in the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore last June. His visit coincided with that of Xi Jinping to Moscow to show solidarity with Putin at war with Ukraine. Note that Kishida flew from here to Kiev to express his support for Zelenskyy. So the predominant purpose of his visit to Delhi was obviously to discuss the war with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he (Kishida) holds the G-7 Summit in Hiroshima in May, and he would like to mobilise support from major countries, including India against 'Russian aggression' in Ukraine. Tokyo and New Delhi have divergent responses to the Ukrainian war. Japan has joined the US-led allies in the war in imposing sanctions against Russia and selling arms to Ukraine whereas India's reaction is muted; New Delhi has not called out Russia as an aggressor. While India and Japan's relations are quite close, it is anyone's guess if New Delhi will shift its position for the G-7 Summit or G-20 in September, which India is presiding over. Interestingly, while Xi Jinping is perhaps nudging Putin to go for a solution to the conflict, Kishida is persuading India to take a position against both China and Russia. In fact, containing China for the stability and security in the India-Pacific region is another main purpose, equally important for Japan, for Kishida's visit. In concrete terms, Tokyo has formulated the strategy called FOIP which dovetails with Japan's National Security Strategy adopted last December. Among other things, the strategy suggests deployment of cruise missiles to strengthen their strike-back capability as Japan faces continual missile threats from North Korea, an ally of China. It also advocates using development aid more strategically in support of like-minded countries. The FOIP flows from this strategy. Kishida announced and outlined the FOIP in the Sapru House lecture delivered in Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA). It is estimated that FOIP is a whopping 75 billion USD project to check China's growing influence and assertiveness across the region. It consists of providing patrol vessels, enhancing maritime law enforcement and capabilities, maintaining cyber security, digital and green initiatives and economic security. In order to do so, FOIP suggests enhancement of human resources for maritime security, rule of law and governance in at least 20 countries by training 2300 personnel. Japan has committed in FOIP two-billion USD for maritime security equipment, enhancement of transport infrastructure needed for freedom of navigation and rule-based order in the region. Tokyo maintains that India is an indispensable partner and should play a big role in this project because of its geo-political location and New Delhi's risks with Beijing. Japan and India's security interests converge as Beijing has been nibbling away India's territories by making incredible and illegitimate claims on Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Likewise, Japan is deeply concerned as Beijing claims territories in the East China Sea including Senkaku Islands belonging to Japan and the entire South China Sea. Such claims have rattled Beijing's smaller neighbours including Japan. FOIP, therefore, is clearly aimed at countering China's egregious expansionism. Another purpose of Kishida's visit was to somewhat align the G-20 agenda with that of G-7. G-20 has industrial and emerging market countries, which is referred to as Global South. India seems to be representing the voice of Global South in current global politics which reflects the 'active non-alignment', a strategy initiated by Latin America. India-Japan ties are the key to the stability in the region as both countries risk territorial belligerence from Beijing. In recent periods they have developed strong bilateralism. They share special partnership and strong economic ties. Trade between the two was worth USD 20.55 billion in fiscal year 2021-2022. In fact, India-Japan partnership covers various sectors – security, defence, trade and investment, science and technology, education and health care, critical and emerging technologies. Discussions are on to conduct joint projects in three countries in the region. FOIP may provide that opportunity. There is a good deal of warmth between the Indian Prime Minister and his Japanese counterpart. The bonhomie between top leadership has been conducive to building seamlessly the bilateral partnership. Kishida's visit should have, as usual, contributed to strengthening the special partnership between two countries. However, the moot point is how the two friendly countries converge their responses to the war in Ukraine and consolidate their alliance vis-à-vis China.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarih Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Prevent fire tragedies Sir, The recent Swapnalok complex inferno in Hyderabad that claimed six young lives is deplorable and shocking. There were no signs of refurbishment of the old building. The same Swapnalok had caught fire in 2011; people were saved from losing lives. Heavy rain and wind leading to short circuits in the electric panel or air conditioner is blamed for the massive fire. It is reported that the complex did not possess proper firefighting equipment. Corridor on the fifth floor was dumped with combustible materials like cardboard. Fire personnel have said that the electric ducts had wooden doors against the prescribed fire norm. The external staircase was filled with waste, and the area between the building and the compound wall was cramped with vehicles despite an advice against it by the fire personnel because that would hinder quick access. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

Diabetic foot care Sir, Most people with diabetes can prevent serious foot complications. Regular care at home and going to all doctor's appointments are your best bet for preventing foot problems. This will help in stopping small problems from becoming serious ones. Wash your feet every day in warm (not hot) water. Don't soak your feet. Dry your feet completely and apply lotion to the top and bottom—but not between your toes, which could lead to infection. Never go barefoot. When you check your feet every day, you can catch problems early and get them treated right away. Early treatment greatly reduces your risk of amputation. Check your feet every day for cuts, redness, swelling, sores, blisters, corns, calluses, or any other change to the skin or nails. Use a mirror if you can't see the bottom of your feet, or ask a family member to help. Remember: Diabetes-related foot problems can worsen very quickly and are difficult to treat, so it's important to seek prompt medical attention. **CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI**

Remembering Pash Sir, Avtar Singh Sandhu, aka Pash, was born September 9, 1950, at Talwandi Salem in Jalandhar, Punjab. Pash's poetry has always had political overtones. Pash was opposed to religious fanaticism and harshly criticised the state's authoritarian nature. He was assassinated in New Delhi by Khalistani militants March 25, 1988. Decades after his death Pash's ideas still reverberate to the contemporary socio-political milieu. With the country's communal tensions on the rise, it's a good time to remember Pash's revolutionary spirit. **Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR**



We will go all over country as Rahul Gandhi was deliberately disqualified for raising his voice against the Modi government on the Adani issue, on the government's foreign policy and the clean chit given to China for incursions at the border. The BJP is rattled with the success of the Bharat Jodo Yatra
JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS LEADER

BISWA BANDHU SEN ELECTED TRIPURA SPEAKER

BJP MLA Biswa Bandhu Sen was elected the Speaker of the Tripura Assembly Friday. Sen received 32 votes, while opposition CPI(M)-Congress candidate Gopal Chandra Roy got 14 votes



OPPOSITION RALLIES AROUND RAHUL

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: Leaders of almost all opposition parties Friday rallied around Rahul Gandhi, after he was disqualified from the Lok Sabha following his conviction by a Gujarat court, and accused the BJP of doing "vindictive politics."

The Congress said it will fight the battle legally and politically for its former president. It was supported in its protest by parties such as TMC, AAP, Samajwadi Party, DMK, and BRS, which had earlier said they would maintain equal distance from both the BJP and the Congress.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat Friday disqualified Rahul Gandhi as MP from Wayanad in Kerala, a day after a Surat court convicted him in a 2019 criminal defamation case for his remark "How come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?"

According to disqualification rules, he would not be able to contest elections for eight



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders Sonia Gandhi and others during a meeting at AICC headquarters, in New Delhi after Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from Lok Sabha

PTI PHOTO

years unless a higher court stays his conviction and sentence. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, whose party, TMC, has been at

odds with the Congress over remarks made by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, and has been absent in opposition marches held over the last few weeks, too

reacted strongly against Rahul Gandhi's disqualification. "Today, we have witnessed a new low for our constitutional democracy," she said.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders, while criticising Rahul Gandhi over his remarks allegedly against the OBC community, stuck to the explanation that his disqualification was a result of a court order and not a political call. The party suggested that a conspiracy within the Congress might have played a role in its leaders' not approaching a higher court for relief for Rahul Gandhi after his conviction as it had done so in the case of Pawan Khera within hours of the Assam Police arresting him.

Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Anurag Thakur also hit out at the Congress, saying the Nehru-Gandhi family suffers from "feudal mindset" and a "sense of entitlement" as its members believe in a separate set of laws and

democratic system for themselves. Union Minister of State for Law and Justice S P S Baghel termed the disqualification "lawful" as he too asserted that everyone is equal before the law.

Support for Rahul Gandhi came from parties which have stood by the Congress through the last few weeks as the party led the opposition on the Adani issue. Voices of anger, shock and disbelief came from parties such as the RJD, JMM, CPI, CPI-M, Shiv Sena, DMK, and NCP, among others.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal described Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as shocking and called on the public to rise against the BJP's "arrogant" power.

The Congress said it was "a black day for Indian democracy" and alleged that the action was driven by "political vendetta." Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav called for "fighting on the street" against the BJP.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin termed Rahul Gandhi's disqualification a "death knell" for democracy as he accused BJP of being vengeful in its politics. Uddhav Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena (UBT) party, dubbed Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as "murder" of democracy and said this is the beginning of the end of "dictatorship."

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said, "It's condemnable that the BJP is now using the criminal defamation route to target opposition leaders and disqualify them as done with @RahulGandhi now."

Disqualification has many ramifications



Security personnel outside the residence of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi

PTI PHOTO

New Delhi: From being barred from contesting elections for eight years to losing his official bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha has several possible ramifications.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat Friday notified Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lower House of Parliament within a day after a court in Surat convicted him in a 2019 criminal defamation case and awarded two years of imprisonment to him.

"Consequent upon his conviction by the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat...Rahul Gandhi, Member of Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction i.e. 23 March, 2023," the notification read.

The case filed against the Congress leader was on a complaint by BJP MLA Purnesh Modi for his alleged remark, "How come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?" during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Unless a higher court stays Rahul Gandhi's conviction, experts said, he will continue to remain disqualified from the

Lok Sabha and also barred from contesting any election for a total of eight years, two years of jail term and another six years from the date of his release from prison, according to Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

As the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat in Kerala turns vacant following disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from the Lower House, the Election Commission can "technically" hold a bypoll to fill the seat as more than one year is left for conducting general elections in 2024.

The term of the present Lok Sabha expires sometime in June. An expert, who did not wish to be named, felt that the Election Commission is likely to wait for the 30-day period granted by the court to allow Rahul Gandhi file an appeal against the conviction.

With his disqualification from the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi may also have to vacate his official bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi within a month if he doesn't get a relief from a higher court, officials said.

The former Congress president has been living in an official bungalow, located on 12, Tughlaq Lane, since it was allotted to him following his victory in 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Amethi constituency in Uttar Pradesh.



Police detain Congress party workers during a protest march against the disqualification of party leader Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha, in Lucknow

PTI PHOTO

In PM (Narendra) Modi's New India, opposition leaders have become the prime target of BJP! While BJP leaders with criminal antecedents are inducted into the Cabinet, opposition leaders are disqualified for their speeches



MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

The expulsion of Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha is shocking. The country is passing through very difficult times. They have kept the whole country scared. 130 crore people will have to unite against their arrogant power



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | DELHI CM

The person who has alleged defamation should actually accuse those of it who betrayed their country and fled abroad, causing harm to their name and fame



The disqualification of Rahul Gandhi is a 'Black day' in the history of Indian democracy and shows the height of Narendra Modi's arrogance and dictatorship



K CHANDRASHEKAR RAO | TELANGANA CM

The disqualification of Lok Sabha membership of Shri @RahulGandhiji demonstrates how political differences are now vendetta battles for ruling Central Government. In today's Amrit Kaal Opposition leaders are unilateral targets of BJP, being coerced and silenced using every tool of power



This is the murder of democracy. All agencies are under pressure. This is the beginning of the end of the dictatorship ... the battle only needs a direction (now)



UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

AFSPA extended in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The Union home ministry Friday extended for six months the "disturbed area" status in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under the

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

According to two separate notifications, the decisions have been taken after review of the law-and-order situation in both the states. The AFSPA gives armed forces

personnel, operating in disturbed areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for "maintenance of public order".

The home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai and Mahadevpur police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam as 'disturbed area' on September 30, 2022. One more police station area has been brought under the ambit of the AFSPA through the fresh notification.



Workers remove snow from Kedarnath walkway in Rudraprayag

PTI PHOTO

GOVT HIKES DA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The Union Cabinet Friday increased the dearness allowance and dearness relief by 4% to 42% to benefit 47.58 lakh central government employees and 69.76 lakh pensioners. The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief will be Rs 12,815.60 crore per annum, I&B Minister Anurag Thakur said after the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. The release of the additional instalment of dearness allowance to employees and dearness relief to pensioners will be effective from January 01, 2023.

Mere membership of banned outfits offence under UAPA: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: In a significant verdict having wider ramifications, the Supreme Court Friday held that mere membership of a banned organisation is an offence liable to be punished with imprisonment under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The top court said its three verdicts of 2011 pronounced by two-judge benches, which held that mere membership of a banned organisation will not incriminate a person unless he resorts to violence or incites peo-

ple to violence and does an act intended to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resorting to violence, "is not a good law".

It restored Section 3(5) of the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967, which made the membership of a banned outfit an offence, liable to be punished with two years imprisonment along with fine. A bench of Justice M R Shah, Justice C T Ravikumar and Justice Sanjay Karol allowed the petitions filed by the Centre and the Assam government seeking



a review of the three 2011 verdicts of the apex court on the ground that it will impact the

sovereignty and integrity of the country. "We hold that the view taken by

this Court in the cases of State of Kerala versus Raneef, Arup Bhuyan versus Union of India and Indra Das versus State of Assam (all 2011 verdicts) taking the view that under Section 3(5) of Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967... and reading down the said provisions to mean that over and above the membership of a banned organisation there must be an overt act and/or further criminal activities and adding the element of mens rea are held to be not a good law", it said.

The bench held that "when an association is declared unlawful by notification issued under Section 3 which has become effective of sub-section 3 of that Section, a person who is and continues to be a member of such association is liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, and shall also be liable to fine under Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967".

The top court said any other decisions of the High Court taking a contrary view are held to be "not a good law" and are specifically overruled by this judgment.

PM launches initiatives to eradicate TB

ADDRESSING THE ‘ONE WORLD TB SUMMIT’ ON WORLD TB DAY, MODI SAID THE COUNTRY IS WORKING TO ELIMINATE TUBERCULOSIS BY 2025 AS AGAINST THE GLOBAL TARGET OF 2030

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Varanasi (UP), March 24: India's ideology of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam" is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday as he launched a series of initiatives to eliminate tuberculosis.

"India's image reflects in its ideology of 'Vasudev Kutumbkam' (whole world one family). This old thought is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions," he said. As G20 president, India chose the theme of 'One Family, One World, One Future' based on such beliefs, Modi said. India is forwarding the vision of 'One Earth, One Health' in the world, he said while underlining that India is realising the resolutions of global good with the 'One World TB Summit'.

The Prime Minister asserted that the thought and approach with which India worked against tuberculosis after 2014 is "incredible". "This effort of India should be known to the whole world today because this is a new model in the global fight against TB. In nine years, India has united in this fight against TB on many fronts such as public participation, special campaigns for nutrition, new strategies for treatment, intensive use of



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak during the One World TB Summit on World Tuberculosis Day in Varanasi

technology and promoting good health though campaigns like Khelo India and Yoga," he said. Another major resolution of India is to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025 as against the global target of 2030, Modi said.

Referring to the capacity and health infrastructure enhancement during the Covid pandemic, Modi underlined the high use of trace, test, track, treat and technology in the fight against the disease. There is massive global potential in this local approach of India, said the prime minister.

Noting that 80 per cent of tuberculosis medicines are made in India, he said, "I would like that more and more countries get the benefit of all such campaigns, innovations and modern technology of India." Modi said the country launched a unique campaign to fight the disease.

The Prime Minister said since 2018, about ₹2,000 crore has been sent directly to the bank accounts of tuberculosis patients and about 75 lakh patients have benefited from it. "It is difficult to get new results

by following the old approach. Started working on a new strategy to ensure that no TB patient is left out of treatment. For testing TB patients, the number of labs has been increased and special plans are made for those where TB patients are more," he said.

The Pime Minister said it is a matter of pride that the summit is being organised in Varanasi, which he represents in the Lok Sabha.

No matter the obstacle, Kashi has always proved that new ways are created with 'Sabka Prayas (everyone's effort)', he said while expressing confidence that Kashi will usher new energy towards global resolutions in the fight against a disease like tuberculosis.

The Prime Minister also awarded select states, Union Territories and districts for their progress towards ending tuberculosis. The recipients of the awards were Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir at the state and Union Territory levels and the Nilgiris, Pulwama and Anantnag at the district level. He also said the government is starting a three-months programme for the prevention of tuberculosis instead of a six-month course.

Earlier, patients had to take medicines every day for six months but now, in the new system, they will have to take medicine only once a week.

30% teachers' post lying vacant in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 24: Nearly 30 per cent posts of teachers and principals in state government-aided minority schools are lying vacant in Uttar Pradesh.

This has been revealed in a recent report of the state education directorate. According to the report, which has been sent to the Chief Minister, the state has 7,795 posts of principals and teachers sanctioned in more than 300 government-aided high schools and inter-colleges being run by minority societies of Muslims, Christians, Jains, and Bengalis, among others across the 75 districts of the state.

Of these 7,795 positions, 2,312 posts are lying vacant. After the formation of the government led by chief minister Yogi Adityanath in the state in 2017, recruitment in these institutions was stopped in an effort to introduce a transparent recruitment policy for staff of these institutions.

The government did introduce the promised guidelines for recruitment of teachers but no recruitments have taken place since and as a result, academic activities in these institutions are deteriorating, said a member of the management committee of one such institution.



For conducting the written examination of teachers' recruitment as mandated in the new guidelines, the process of agency selection has been going on at the government level since August 2022.

On the basis of this, after making a panel of top five candidates in merit list, appointments were to be made in minority institutions only from among the selected candidates. However, no such development has taken place even after eight months. The details of vacant posts of these institutions are not sent to the UP Secondary Education Service Selection Board. Officials also conceded that there is a shortage of non-teaching staff. Around 42 out of 201 posts of head clerks, 221 out of 653 posts of assistant clerks and 1,299 out of 3,285 posts of attendants are lying vacant.

600 cameras for traffic management to be installed in Jammu; trial begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 24: Total 600 cameras will be installed as a part of the intelligent traffic management and surveillance system to monitor vehicular traffic and its violations here in Jammu and Kashmir.

ITMSS was made operational in the winter capital during its first phase to conduct efficiency trials. Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on March 13 inaugurated Integrated Command & Control Centre (ICCC) as a nerve centre of civic operations and traffic management.

"Six hundred cameras are being installed, mostly PTZ cameras and traffic management cameras for monitoring and managing vehicular traffic and recording traffic violations", Jammu Smart city CEO Rahul Yadav told PTI. He said so far cameras have been installed at 37 junctions.



"The trials have begun. We are receiving feed of traffic flow from 33 junctions. They are operational. On 12 junctions, analytics are fully functioning, under which we can detect any traffic violations", Yadav said. Initiated in November 2022, the project will have a chain of 600 cameras mostly pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) cameras watching traffic movement in the city.

The smart system will detect automatic vehicle number plate identification, red light violations, stolen vehicle identification and use of mobile phones while driving among other things, the officials said.

ITMSS, which has been made operational in Jammu partially, is a step that would help authorities better manage the vehicular flow and catch violators, they said.

According to officials, this intelligent traffic management system project is being implemented by a "master systems integrator" firm along with artificial intelligence software providers like Vebant Technologies that provide solutions to make roads safer.

Traditional drumbeaters ready to wake people up for Sehri during Ramzan



vides for our families for the entire year," he said.

Mohammad Mehboob Khatana, who has been coming to Srinagar for the last 20 years during Ramzan, said he is hopeful of getting a good reward from the almighty for waking people for the pre-dawn meal. "We wake people up for fasting. We do this for a living with hopes of getting rewarded," Khatana said.

Another traditional drummer, Ghulam Rasool Payar, said "I have been doing this work for the past 50 years. We do not press anyone for payments. We accept whatever people donate to us out of their free will."

Asked if the modern gadgets had diminished the significance of Seharkhwaan, Payar said it has not affected their work.

"Ramzan has started and so have our preparations. This is a month of blessings from the almighty," Maulana Mahmood, an Imam, said, adding that he will pray for peace in Kashmir and everywhere in the world.



MATTER OF FAITH: Muslims offer 'namaz' at Washi Ullah mosque on the first Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 24: Hundreds of men from remote areas of Kashmir come to towns and cities like Srinagar to don the role of a 'Seharkhwaan', a drum beater; who goes around a town to wake up people for the pre-drawn meal, Sehri.

Mohammad Rafiq Kataria from Kupwara's Kalaros, who has been a drummer for the last 25 years, wakes up early in the morning to start his work at 3 am. "We wait 11 months for Ramzan to come as whatever people donate to us at the end of the holy month, it pro-

Missing sarus found



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 24: Uttar Pradesh forest officials claim to have found the sarus that had gone missing after being relocated to the Samaspur bird sanctuary in Rae Bareilly.

The sarus had gone missing on Wednesday evening. Officials said that they had spotted the sarus at the other end of the sanctuary and the bird was safe.

However, they admitted that the bird was probably having problems adjusting to the new surroundings.

Chief Wildlife Warden Sunil Chaudhary said that the priority of the department at present is to ensure proper treatment and care of the bird. Conservator, Endangered Species, Manoj Sonkar said that a team has been constituted to watch the behaviour of the sarus for some time and the team will prepare a report which will be handed over to the chief wildlife warden, who would then decide where to keep the bird. Officials said that the sarus may be shifted to a zoo because it is domesticated and may be unfit for survival in the wild.

OVER 9L UP FARMERS GET COMPENSATION

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 24: The Centre has released ₹462 crore to be given as compensation to as many as 9,03,336 farmers in Uttar Pradesh who faced crop losses during the natural calamities last year. A total compensation of ₹1,260 crore was

released by Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar for six states through the crop insurance portal. The amount has been calculated on the basis of yield through crop cutting experiments.

State Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi said that an amount of ₹134.25 crore have already been

paid by insurance companies to 2.18 lakh farmers as partial compensation in the mid-term.

Thus, a total amount of ₹597.05 crore have been given directly to the farmers as compensation for the kharif 2022 season. The amount has been paid through DBT.

Shahi said that in the event of a

disaster, the information about personal damage to farmers should be given within 72 hours. There is a provision to give compensation in gram panchayat if the sowing is reduced to 60 per cent. Hence more farmers will get benefit and credibility in the scheme will increase, Shahi said.

UP plans to increase millet production

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, March 24: In order to promote production and consumption of millets, the Uttar Pradesh government is planning to replace around 17 per cent of the area under paddy (rice) cultivation with millets and oilseeds in the coming years.

According to official sources, the change would be brought through concerted and extensive campaigns among farmers. Experts say that millets are most suited for water deficit and drought conditions. It consumes at least 70 per cent less water than other crops and requires minimum inputs and almost no pesticide.

"For farmers, millets are low risk crops resilient to climate change," a senior official said. With 11 lakh hectares of land under millets, UP also happens to be the second largest producer of coarse grain (50 lakh MT).

Sources said that the government is planning to organise cluster demonstrations, area expansion through distribution of



common seed and free seed mini-kit.

The government also plans to increase area under oilseeds from the existing 22 lakh hectares to around 27 lakh hectares to meet the target of producing 100 lakh tonnes of oilseeds by 2030-31. For this, the productivity will have to be increased from 11 to 12.5 quintals per hectare.

Officials said that the state government was also planning to promote 'exotic' varieties of rice which could have higher returns.

The data available with the agriculture department shows that only seven districts (Bijnor, Kushinagar, Pilibhit, Chandauli, Baghpat, Varanasi and Ambedkar Nagar) have high productivity (over 2,500 kg/hectare).

As many as 55 districts have medium (2000-2500 kg/hectare) or medium-low productivity (1,500-2,000 kg/hectare). Five and three districts have low and very low productivity, respectively. Rice production has been registering

downward fluctuation in the wake of lesser rainfall.

Last year, rice production came down nationally from 111 million MT in 2021 to around 105 million MT in 2022. The state reported to have received 42 per cent less rainfall last year and recorded acreage under rice going down by around 2.5 lakh hectares.

According to experts, the plan falls in line with the state government's concerted efforts to promote millets which has been the focus of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre. The year 2023 is also being observed as the International Year of Millets.

Quranic manuscripts on display in Srinagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 24: The SPS Museum in Srinagar on Thursday opened a week-long exhibition of rare Quranic manuscripts, some which date back to the 18th century, to coincide with the first day of Muslim fasting month of Ramzan.

"This is the first time we are holding the exhibition of the manuscripts as the manuscript section is still closed. Since it is the beginning of the holy month of Ramzan, we wanted to make people aware about these manuscripts so that it increases their knowledge," the museum's curator Rabia Qureshi told PTI. Qureshi said while the museum has manuscripts on diverse subjects, this exhibition was limited to Quranic manuscripts.

"One of the manuscripts is more than 230 years old and written on Kashmiri paper using pure gold and black ink. No chemicals were used," she said.

The other manuscripts on display include Tafseer Kabear, famous by

the name of Tafseer Razi, which was written in 1209 Hijri (1795 AD), Qaseed-e-Burde Shareef 1316 Hijri (written in 1905 AD), and Imam Al Basri's manuscript.

The curator said 'Dalailo Khairaat', a manuscript in praise of Prophet Muhammad, has also been displayed in addition to the Quranic manuscripts. "This is a very good step that the Department of Archeology and Archives has taken to organise week-long Quranic manuscript exhibition. This department is doing these kinds of exhibitions on different occasions, which is encouraging. Calligraphy art has declined during the last 30 years but now new generation is taking up this art again," Athar Samoon, a Calligraphy student, said. Shahid Ahmad, a young visitor, said, "We are seeing old manuscripts here which were written by hand."

"At present, computer prints may have errors but these manuscripts don't have any. Through these exhibitions, we come to know about our history," Ahmad said.



All your (government's) efforts to create a chilling effect, a throttling effect, strangulating effect on open, fearless speech relating to public interest will not stop either Rahul Gandhi or the Congress party

ABHISHEK SINGHVI | CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON

I do not have the exact number of cases or complaints related to 'love jihad'. It is a term coined in Kerala. There are certain challenges to formulate a law against it. If (religious) conversion takes place, Indian Penal Code (IPC) section 420 (that deals with cheating) is invoked. But the definition of that section is not defined for religious conversions. Therefore, we need to make new laws for the same

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CM

The government is duty-bound to ensure the progress of the state and the prosperity of its people. The day is not far away when Punjab will emerge as a front runner state due to the concerted efforts of the government

BHAGWANT MANI | PUNJAB CM

SHORT TAKES

16 Naxalites surrender

Raipur: Sixteen Naxalites surrendered in Sukma and eight ultras were arrested in Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh police officials said Friday. Of the 16 who have laid down arms, four, including a woman, carried collective reward of ₹15 lakh on their heads, they added. These four are woman ultra Kawasi Pale alias Jogi, Padam Soma, Neelam Kawasi alias Neela and Padam Deva, Sukma Superintendent of Police Sunil Sharma said.

Terrorist killed

Srinagar: One terrorist was killed after an infiltration bid was foiled at the Line of Control (LoC) in the Tangdhar sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, sources said on Friday. Army sources said that a search operation is underway in the area. Further details were awaited. There has been a significant drop in ceasefire violations by Pakistan since a renewed ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan in 2021.

Minister acquitted

Muzaffarnagar: The special MP/MLA court in Muzaffarnagar has acquitted Uttar Pradesh Minister Kapil Dev Agarwal in a case related to violation of model code of conduct, which was filed against him for taking out a procession with drums without permission of the authorities concerned in the 2017 Assembly elections.



I express my serious concerns at the attempts to curtail fundamental rights, freedom of speech and democratic expression in the country. The repeated attempts to suppress the voice of political parties, leaders and citizens of India is a matter of grave concern

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP SUPREMO

Oppn holds protest march, 40 MPs detained

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 24: Forty opposition MPs, including those from the Congress, were detained Friday as they took out a protest march from Parliament House, alleging that democracy is in "danger" and demanding a JPC probe into the Adani issue.

Prominent leaders, including K C Venugopal, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, K Suresh, Manickam Tagore, Imran Pratapgarhi and Mohammed Javed, were stopped by the police and detained at Vijay Chowk here for violating prohibitory orders, the opposition said.

"Forty MPs and four others from opposition parties had to be detained for violation of Section 144 (prohibitory orders). They were detained and taken in a bus to the new police lines in Kingsway Camp in GTB Nagar. Hours later, they were released," a senior police officer said.

Earlier addressing the media at Vijay Chowk, several leaders, in-



SC TO HEAR PLEA APRIL 5

New Delhi: As many as 14 political parties Friday approached the Supreme Court alleging the misuse of central agencies – Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) – by the BJP-led-Union government and sought pre-arrest guidelines. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the opposition parties such as the DMK, RJD, Bharat Rashtra Samiti, Trinamool Congress, NCP, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, JD(U), CPI(M), Communist Party of India, Samajwadi Party and J&K National Conference, and said the plea would be taken up for hearing on April 5.

The plea alleged there is an alarming rise in the use of coercive criminal processes against opposition political leaders and other citizens exercising their fundamental right to dissent.

cluding Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, also raised

the issue of Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a 2019 criminal defama-

We're fighting for JPC into Adani issue for months. They have a majority but the BJP is scared as there's something fishy. We'll keep fighting unitedly for it

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

RENUKA TO FILE DEFAMATION CASE AGAINST PM

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 24: After a Surat court held Rahul Gandhi guilty in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surname, Congress leader Renuka Chowdhury announced that she would file a defamation case against Modi since the latter supposedly linked her laughter to 'Surupanakha', a demoness in Hindu mythology in a House proceeding.



Taking to Twitter, Chowdhury on Friday said that Modi insulted her by his remark made in Parliament in 2018. She also posted a video of the House proceedings. She added: "This classless megalomaniac referred to me as Surupanakha on the floor of the House. I will file a defamation case against him. Let's see how fast courts will act now."

In the video, Modi while addressing the Chairman said: "I request you not to say anything to Renuka ji. I am fortunate to hear such laughter today, after the Ramayana serial." The Chairman had asked Chowdhury to be silent after her laughter was heard during Modi's address.



Farm workers inspect wheat crop flattened by strong winds and rains in Jalandhar

PTI PHOTO

Amritpal tried to radicalise Sikhs: Officials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 24: Khalistan sympathiser Amritpal Singh, before escaping a Punjab Police crackdown on his outfit and supporters, attended five events in 10 days, and in these, he tried to radicalise Sikhs, coaxing 800-1,000 individuals to remain prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, officials said.

The radical preacher's brazen activities evinced his methodical efforts to undermine the fabric of society, they claimed and added that he during his speeches and sermons alleged that the government was leaving no stone unturned in its quest to disarm Sikhs by revoking their weapons licences.

Amritpal Singh, who took over as 'Waris Punjab De' chief after its founder actor-activist Deep Sindhu's

death last year, is on the run after police launched a massive crackdown on March 18 in the state and arrested several of his supporters.

It began weeks after the preacher and his supporters stormed the Ajnala police station near Amritsar on February 23 to secure the release of an arrested associate.

The episode raised fears over the possibility of the return of Khalistani militancy to Punjab that borders Pakistan.

The officials said the preacher allegedly implored youngsters to unify for securing "Khalsa rule" for the coming generations of Punjab, proclaiming that the division within the Sikh Panth made them "vulnerable to the enemy's onslaught".

The Ajnala incident had reignited fears of a resurgence of Khalistani



militancy in the state, they said and pointed out that Amritpal Singh had ulterior motives to sully the peaceful ambience of Punjab, and this was exemplified by the abduction and assault on Barinder Singh.

Barinder Singh, in his complaint, had told police that Amritpal Singh's associates had abducted him from Ajnala and took him to an un-

NIA charge-sheets Bishnoi, Goldy Brar



The prosecution complaint has been filed against these gangsters who, the federal anti-terror agency said, had 'links' with the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International and several other pro-Khalistan terrorist outfits

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Friday filed a fresh charge sheet against jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar, the alleged masterminds in the murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, and a dozen others, charging them with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of high-profile people.

The prosecution complaint has been filed against these gangsters who, the federal anti-terror agency said, had "links" with the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and several other pro-Khalistan terrorist outfits.

The charge sheet came in the second of the three terror-gangster nexus cases that are being investigated by the NIA. "All the 14 accused have been charged with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of well-known social and religious leaders, movie stars, singers and businessmen."

"Besides having links with conspirators in Pakistan, the accused were also in contact with pro-Khalistan elements based in Canada, Nepal and other countries," the NIA said. Apart from Bishnoi and Brar (alias

Satwinderjeet Singh), the other accused who were charge-sheeted were Jagdeep Singh alias Jaggu Bhagwanpuriya, Sachin Thapan alias Sachin Bishnoi, Anmol Bishnoi alias Bhanu, Vikramjeet Singh alias Vikram Brar, Sandeep Jhanjariya alias Kala Jatheri, Virender Pratap Singh alias Kala Rana, Joginder Singh, Rajesh Kumar alias Raju Mota, Raj Kumar alias Raju/Raju Basodi, Anil alias Chippi, Naresh Yadav alias Seth, and Shahbaaz Ansari alias Shahbaaz.

Bishnoi, who continues to remain in jail after his arrest in 2015, has been operating his terror-crime syndicate from prisons in different states, along with Canada-based Goldy Brar, who is an accused in the killing of 'Dera Sacha Sauda' follower Pradeep Kumar at Faridkot (Punjab) in November, 2022.

"The Lawrence Bishnoi terror-crime-extortion syndicate was also responsible for providing killers for the RPG attack case on Punjab state intelligence headquarters at Mohali, which was carried out on directions of Harwinder Singh alias Rinda, a Pakistan-based BKI terrorist," the NIA said.

Brar was found to have "direct links" with Lakhbir Singh alias Landa, another BKI operative working closely with Rinda, it said. Landa is also an accused in the Mohali RPG attack, as well as the December, 2022 RPG attack on police station Sirhali in the Tarn Taran district of Punjab.

The NIA has earlier carried out raids in this case and seized a huge cache of nine illegal and sophisticated weapons, 14 magazines, 298 rounds of ammunition and 183 digital devices and other "incriminating" material at 74 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chandigarh and Delhi.

Court reserves order on Sisodia's bail plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: A Delhi court Friday said it will pronounce its order on former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia's bail plea on March 31 in the excise policy case lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Special Judge M K Nagpal reserved his order on the Aam Aadmi Party leader's plea seeking regular bail in the case after the CBI handed over a short note regarding its contention in the case.

"A brief written submission on



behalf of CBI has been filed in opposition to the regular bail application of the accused. Copy thereof as well as case law has been given to the counsel of accused. Copy of part of case diary and statements of some witnesses have been also made available," the special judge said.

On March 21, the judge had deferred the hearing on Sisodia's bail plea till March 24 for any further clarification and submissions. The CBI, so far, has quizzed Sisodia in its custody for seven days.

The agency on February 26 arrested Sisodia in connection with alleged corruption in the formulation and implementation of the now-scrapped Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. The Enforcement Directorate arrested Sisodia on March 9 evening in Tihar jail, where he was lodged in connection with the case being probed by the CBI.

4-yr-long Iran ordeal ends; 5 Indian sailors return home

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Mumbai, March 24: In a heart-warming development, five Indian sailors - who were stranded in Iran from June 2019 - finally returned home Thursday afternoon after surviving a nightmarish ordeal of nearly four years.

The five are: Aniket S. Yenpure, 31 and Mandar M. Worlikar, 28 (both of Mumbai), Pranav A. Tiwari, 23 (Patna), Naveen M. Singh (New Delhi), and Thamizh R. Selvan, 33, (Chennai). They landed from an Iran Air Tehran-Mumbai flight Friday afternoon, bowed and touched the Indian soil, and were welcomed, kissed, hugged and lifted in the air with tears and cheers by their ecstatic relatives.

"Our joy is boundless... We were away and separated from our families for almost 45 months, but the long nightmare has ended now. The next one month we shall rest and interact with all our family members," Yenpure said.

They expressed gratitude to the Indian Embassy in Tehran which arranged for their emergency travel papers and tickets till Mumbai and also some Iranian lawyers for labouring more than six months to ensure their smooth 'ghar-wapsi'.

However, their passports and CDC were not handed over, and now the five youths plan to apply for fresh passports, said Worlikar. Presently, Yenpure and Worlikar will host their friends Tiwari, Singh, and Selvan (Tamil Nadu) at their Worli

home till they can arrange funds from their families to return to their respective home towns by this weekend.

The plight of the five-some was first highlighted by IANS (July 4, 2021), how they were sailing in the high seas off Oman in February 2020 but were unwittingly trapped into a treacherous maritime narcotics smuggling racket allegedly perpetrated by their ship's captain.

For this, they were arrested, jailed, acquitted, and then grounded, moved around different cities in Iran, fighting legal battles, at times hiding, occasionally doing small menial jobs in exchange for a meal, or surviving on the food and clothes doled out by sympathetic villagers



in remote areas, Yenpure's father, Sham Yenpure, said.

"We had approached Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar; former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, his ex-Minister son Aditya Thackeray, Iran diplomats in India and Indian diplo-

mats in Iran, top Iran leaders, and others for help," said Yenpure, a milkman, in an emotion-choked voice, while undertaking his annual foot-march to the Shri Saibaba Temple in Shirdi Friday morning.

Initially, everything was hunky-dory for the five youths - till February 20, 2020, when they unknowingly fell

into a sinister trap of their ship captain in the high seas around 140 km from Muscat. Sensing something amiss at the illegal mid-sea cargo transfer, Worlikar and his co-crew quietly recorded it on their mobile phones - as evidence for the Customs and Iran Police authorities at the next port.

Unexpectedly, the next morning (February 21, 2020), an Iran Navy ship intercepted in the high seas, arrested them all, and transferred them to the naval ship. As events unfolded after February 2020, little did the boys realize that not only their dreams would be shattered, but they would also be imprisoned and kept away from their families for almost four years in India - till their return.

of the day quote

With the rise in climate-related health emergencies in Africa, it's clear that more needs to be done to bolster preparedness for climatic hazards so that communities can better cope with the impacts of the devastating natural disasters

MATSHIDISO MOETI | WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA

A political solution is the only way forward for Syria. We may not be able to reach that in one step. But I believe we can progress toward it gradually

GEIR PEDERSEN | UN SPECIAL ENVOY FOR SYRIA

The Russian economy withstood Western sanctions in 2022 and is now back on a growth trajectory

MIKHAIL MISHUSTIN | RUSSIAN PRIME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Corcoran appears before grand jury

Washington: A lawyer for Donald Trump was back in court Friday after being ordered to answer questions before a grand jury investigating the possible mishandling of classified documents at the former president's Florida estate. M. Evan Corcoran entered federal court in the District of Columbia early on Friday morning, one week after a federal judge ruled in favour of the Justice Department in forcing Corcoran to answer additional questions before a grand jury that has been hearing testimony for months. He did not make any comments as he arrived at the building. The interest by prosecutors in Corcoran's testimony underscores the legal peril confronting Trump, making clear the department's continued focus on whether Trump obstructed government efforts to recover hundreds of classified documents taken from the White House to Mar-a-Lago at the end of his term.

Nepal's population reaches 29.1 million

Kathmandu: Nepal's total population has reached more than 29.1 million, according to the latest census published Friday, registering a growth of 0.92 per cent in a decade. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda", launching the National Report of the National Census 2022 here, said that the census data have emerged as tools for promoting good governance and measuring the nation's progress towards the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

China rolls over \$2bn deposits to Pakistan

Islamabad: China has granted a rollover of \$2 billion State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) deposits to Pakistan for one year, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed. It was one of the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for getting the rollover of Chinese SAFE deposits for meeting external financing needs in order to move towards striking the much-awaited staff-level agreement, The News reported.

Big relief for Imran

Lahore: A top Pakistani court Friday extended till March 27 the protective bail granted to former prime minister Imran Khan in five cases related to terrorism after he appeared before a two-member bench here. The Lahore High Court (LHC) granted the extension of anticipatory bail to Khan after the 70-year-old chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) appeared before it amidst tight security.



2023 must be a year of transformation, not tinkering. It's time to end the relentless -- and senseless -- war on nature, and deliver the sustainable future that our climate needs and our children and grandchildren deserve

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

HK TO PROBE CAUSE OF WAREHOUSE FIRE

Hong Kong firefighters will investigate the cause of a blaze that broke out Friday at a warehouse and forced 3,600 people, including students, to evacuate, authorities said



N Korea tests under sea drone, warns of 'radioactive tsunami'



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says is an underwater blast of test warhead loaded to an unmanned underwater nuclear attack craft "Haeil" during an exercise around Hongwon Bay in waters off North Korea's eastern coast Thursday

PTI PHOTO

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul (South Korea), March 24: North Korea claimed Friday to have tested a nuclear-capable underwater drone designed to generate a gigantic "radioactive tsunami" that would destroy naval strike groups and ports.

Analysts were skeptical that the device presents a major new threat, but the test underlines the North's commitment to raising nuclear threats.

Pyeongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the new weapon, which can be deployed from the coast or towed by surface ships, is built to "stealthily infiltrate into operational waters and make a super-scale radioactive tsunami through an underwater explosion" to destroy enemy naval strike groups and ports.

The report came hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged to make North Korea pay for its "reckless provocations" as he attended a remembrance service honouring 55 South Korean troops killed during major clashes with the North near their western sea border in past years. The testing of the purported "nuclear underwater attack drone" was part of a three-day exercise that simulated nuclear attacks on unspecified South Korean targets, which also included cruise missile launches Wednesday.

KCNA said the North's latest tests were aimed at alerting the United States and South Korea of a brewing "nuclear crisis" as they continue with their "intentional, persistent and provocative war drills." It said the tests were supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who vowed

to make his rivals "plunge into despair."

The US and South Korea completed an 11-day exercise on Thursday that included their biggest field training in years, and are preparing another round of joint naval drills that will reportedly involve a US aircraft carrier.

Hours after the North Korean report, South Korea's air force released details of a five-day joint aerial drill with the United States that began Monday and concluded Friday above waters off South Korea's western coast, which included live-fire demonstrations of air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons.

The air force said the exercise, which involved various South Korean fighter jets and at least one US A-10 attack plane, was aimed at verifying precision strike capabilities and reaffirming the credibility of Seoul's "three-axis" strategy against North Korean nuclear threats — preemptively striking sources of attacks, intercepting incoming missiles and neutralizing the North's leadership and key military facilities.

The North Korean drone is named "Haeil," a Korean word meaning tidal waves or tsunamis. The North's Rodong Sinmun newspaper published photos of Kim smiling next to a large, torpedo-shaped object at an unspecified indoor facility, but didn't identify it.

North Korea is believed to have dozens of nuclear warheads and may be capable of fitting them on older weapons systems, such as Scuds or Rodong missiles. However, there are different assessments on how far it has advanced in engineering those warheads to fit on the new weapons it has developed at a rapid pace, which might require further technological upgrades and nuclear tests.

US conducts airstrikes in Syria

A DRONE, ALLEGEDLY OF IRANIAN ORIGIN, STRUCK A FACILITY IN SYRIA — KILLING A US CONTRACTOR AND PROMPTING A COUNTERATTACK

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beirut, March 24: A strike Thursday by a suspected Iranian-made drone killed a US contractor and wounded five American troops and another contractor in northeast Syria, the Pentagon said.

American forces said they retaliated soon after with "precision airstrikes" in Syria targeting facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, with activist groups saying the US bombing killed at least four people.

The attack and the US response threaten to upend recent efforts to deescalate tensions across the wider Middle East, whose rival powers have made steps toward détente in recent days after years of turmoil.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement that the American intelligence community had determined the drone was of Iranian origin, but offered no other immediate evidence to support the claim. "The airstrikes were conducted in response to today's attack as well as a series of recent attacks



against coalition forces in Syria" by groups affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard, Austin said.

Iran relies on a network of proxy forces through the Mideast to counter the US and Israel, its arch regional enemy.

The Pentagon said two of the wounded service members were treated on-site, while three others and the injured contractor were transported to medical facilities in Iraq. Overnight, videos on social media purported to show explo-

Airstrikes target facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

sions in Syria's Deir el-Zour, a strategic province that borders Iraq and contains oil fields. Iran-backed militia groups and Syrian forces control the area, which also has seen suspected airstrikes by

Israel in recent months allegedly targeting Iranian supply routes.

Iran and Syria did not immediately acknowledge the strikes, nor did their officials at the United Nations in New York respond to requests for comment from *The Associated Press*.

The activist group Deir Ezzor 24 put the death toll from the American strikes at four people. Deir Ezzor 24, which covers news in Deir el-Zour province, said the strikes hit the city of Deir el-Zour as well as militiamen posts near Mayadeen and Boukamal. It said the strikes also wounded people, including Iraqis.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, reported that the American strikes killed six Iranian-backed fighters at an arms depot in the Harabesh neighbourhood in the city of Deir el-Zour.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of local contacts in Syria, said US bombing at a post near the town of Mayadeen killed two fighters.

Russian strikes in Ukraine kill 10

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kyiv, March 24: Russian long-range strikes killed at least 10 civilians and wounded 20 others in several areas of Ukraine Friday, Ukraine's presidential office said, as a senior Moscow official warned that the Kremlin's forces were prepared for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive in the coming weeks.

Five people died in Kostiantynivka, a town in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province, when a Russian missile hit an aid station. Ukrainian authorities last year established hundreds of so-called "points of invincibility", where residents hard-pressed by the war could warm up, charge their cell-phones and get snacks.

Local prosecutors said the Russians attacked Kostyantynivka with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. The civilians who died were refugees, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko.



A Ukrainian serviceman holds an unmanned aerial vehicle at a position near a frontline, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine

REUTERS

Netanyahu meets Sunak amid protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, March 24: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak held talks with Benjamin Netanyahu in London Friday as protesters shouting "Shame!" in Hebrew demonstrated against the Israeli leader's right-wing policies and his plans to overhaul the country's judiciary.

Sunak also raised Netanyahu's controversial judicial reforms, which have sparked mass protests in Israel and beyond. One placard in London read: "We are Israelis and Jews living in the UK demonstrating against Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is leading a judicial coup turn-



ing Israel into a dictatorship." Some women protesting outside Downing Street wore red robes and white caps inspired by "The

Handmaid's Tale," a novel and TV series set in a dystopian future. Similarly clad demonstrators have become fixtures of the mass protests roiling Israel. Sunak "stressed the importance of upholding the democratic values that underpin our relationship, including in the proposed judicial reforms in Israel," the British leader's office said in an official readout of the meeting.

Netanyahu's proposals would give his government more control over judicial appointments, weaken the Supreme Court by limiting judicial review of legislation and allow Parliament to overturn court decisions with a simple majority vote.

He arrived in London as protesters in Israel blocked roads and clashed with police. The planned judicial system overhaul have ignited the biggest protests in the country's history amid rare dissent from people throughout Israeli society, including military reservists, navy veterans, high-tech businesspeople and former officials. Netanyahu's right-wing government has also been criticised for its hard-line policy toward Palestinians, including recent comments by a government minister who denied the existence of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

King Charles' visit to France postponed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, March 24: King Charles III's first state visit as monarch was scaled back Friday, dashing hopes for a triumphal tour to win hearts and minds abroad just as his mother did so successfully during her 70 years on the throne.

The visit by Charles and his wife, Camilla, to France was postponed amid mass protests in the country over President Emmanuel Macron's plans to reform the pension system.

The German leg of the trip will take place as planned.

Charles' initial plan to visit France and Germany, the two biggest countries in the European Union, was meant to rebuild ties with Britain's closest neighbours after six years of squabbling over Brexit. But French domestic troubles put paid to that.

"The king and queen consort's State Visit to France has been postponed," the British prime minister's Downing Street office said in a statement. "This decision was



taken with the consent of all parties, after the president of France asked the British government to postpone the visit."

Buckingham Palace said another date would be found. "Their Majesties greatly look forward to the opportunity to visit France as soon as dates can be found," the

palace said in a statement.

French labour unions have called for a day of nationwide protests and strikes Tuesday in protest at Macron's proposal to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. That is the day when the king had been due to travel to the western city of Bordeaux, with much security and

DEMONSTRATORS HAD DEMANDED THAT CHARLES CANCEL HIS TRIP, WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO START SUNDAY

MACRON SAID "COMMON SENSE AND FRIENDSHIP" REQUIRED DELAYING THE KING'S VISIT

ceremony, and the protests would have complicated his travel.

Charles and Camilla will now start their first state visit Wednesday in Germany, where they will be welcomed with military honours by President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate. On Thursday, the British king is set to give a speech to the Bundestag, meet German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and talk to Ukrainian refugees and military.

He goes to Hamburg on Friday, where he will visit the Kindertransport memorial for Jewish children who fled from Germany to Britain during the Third Reich, and attend a green energy event before returning to the UK in the evening.

SEA DISPUTES

Philippines confronts Chinese diplomats

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Manila, March 24: Filipino diplomats issued a slew of protests over China's aggressive behaviour in the South China Sea, including targeting a Philippine coast guard ship with a military laser, when they met Chinese officials Friday, an official said.

Territorial disputes in the busy waterway have long loomed as a potential flashpoint in Asia and have become a sensitive front in the regional rivalry between China and the United States. Washington lays no claims in the contested waters but has challenged Beijing's extensive claims including by deploying its warships and fighter jets and repeatedly warning that it would help defend the Philippines — a treaty ally — if Philippine forces, ships and aircraft are attacked. Vietnam,

Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims in the sea, which sits atop vast deposits of oil and gas. A Chinese delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong held two days of talks starting Thursday with Philippine counterparts led by Foreign Undersecretary Theresa Lazaro and reviewed overall relations.

The two sides focused on their territorial disputes Friday, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said. The talks opened with both sides citing an agreement between Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who made a state visit to China in early January, to manage the territorial conflicts amicably while enhancing economic ties and other aspects of a nearly half-century of diplomatic relations.

of the day quote

The market is there, the volume is there, the engineering talent is there. And then you take that leap of faith. So the time has come now. Now is the time for these companies to look at planting their feet on the ground in India

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

The government has given approval to 45 companies/JVs operating in defence sector with foreign OEMs

AJAY BHATT | MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE

We have completed the two million mark for the Nexa. The first million came in four years, the next million has come in three years, despite the fact that we have had in the last three years, a little bit of a disturbance in the business environment because of the COVID-19

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER (MARKETING AND SALES), MARUTI SUZUKI

SHORT TAKES

GPS-based toll system soon

New Delhi: The government will introduce new technologies including GPS-based toll collection systems in the next 6 months to replace existing highway toll plazas in the country, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said Friday. The move is aimed at reducing traffic congestion and charging motorists for the exact distance travelled on the highways, Gadkari said. Addressing an event organised by industry body CII, Gadkari further said state-owned NHAI's toll revenue is currently ₹40,000 crore and it is going to soar to ₹1.40 lakh crore 2-3 years.

BYJU's not merging with Unacademy

New Delhi: Edtech major BYJU's Friday denied reports that it is considering a merger of rival Gaurav Munjal-run Unacademy into Aakash Educational Services. Reacting to a Money Control report which said, citing sources, that SoftBank-backed Unacademy is in talks for a potential merger with BYJU's-owned Aakash, the company denied any such move. BYJU's is also likely to close a \$250 million equity funding deal in April at a \$22 billion valuation, sources aware of the development said. The company had last raised \$250 million in October at the same valuation.

Ambani adopts familiar playbook in cola battle vs Coke, Pepsi

Asia's richest person has famously disrupted India's telecoms market seven years ago with cut-throat pricing to make Reliance the leading player in that industry. And he's applying some of that same strategy in his soft drinks venture

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 24: Indian industrial giant Reliance is reviving a historic local cola brand with plans to use its vast retail network, slash prices and tap nationalist sentiment to challenge US beverage giants PepsiCo and Coca-Cola in a key market.

Controlled by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, Reliance this month launched revamped Campa drinks, sugary sodas popular in India in the 1970's and 1980's before disappearing from shelves as the US giants expanded rapidly in a liberalising economy.

At first glance it may seem that Ambani will find it tough to loosen Pepsi's and Coca-Cola's stranglehold

Forex kitty jumps to \$572.8 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 24: India's forex kitty rose by \$12.798 billion to \$572.801 billion in the week ended March 17, the Reserve Bank said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the reserves had dropped by \$2.39 billion to a three-month low of \$560.003 billion.

It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion.

The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

For the week ended March 17, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$10.485 billion to \$505.348 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI Friday.



Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves jumped by \$2.187 billion to \$44.109 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$98 million to \$18.219 billion, the apex bank said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was also up by \$29 million to \$5.125 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank showed.

Markets fall nearly 1%; Nifty slides below 17K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 24: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the second straight session to settle nearly 1 per cent lower Friday as investors pared exposure to the metal, energy and realty stocks amid a bearish trend in Asian and European markets.

Besides, a depreciating rupee against the US dollar and fresh that foreign fund outflows also hit investor sentiments, traders said.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 398.18 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 57,527.10, with 24 of its constituents posting losses. During the day, the index witnessed a high of 58,066.40 and a low of 57,422.98.

The broader NSE Nifty fell 131.85 points or 0.77 per cent to slip below the psychological level of 17,000. The index settled at 16,945.05, with 41 of its scrips ending in the red.

On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark fell 462.8 points or 0.79 per cent, while the Nifty slipped 155 points or 0.90 per cent.



“Every year, we import 1,200 tonnes of lithium. Now, in Jammu and Kashmir, we got lithium. (If) we can use this lithium ion, we will be the number one automobile manufacturing country in the world

NTIN GADKARI | UNION ROAD, TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY MINISTER

LS passes Finance Bill 2023

Lok Sabha, which had Thursday approved ₹45 lakh-crore Budget for 2023-24 fiscal in just 9 minutes, passed the Finance Bill amid placards holding Opposition MPs shouting slogans from the well of the House

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The Lok Sabha Friday approved The Finance Bill 2023 with 64 official amendments including providing tax relief to some taxpayers opting for new tax regime, and removing long-term tax benefit for debt mutual funds to bring them at par with other interest earning instruments.

The Finance Bill, which includes tax proposals for the fiscal year beginning April 1, was passed without a discussion as parliament continued to remain stalled over demands for a probe into allegations against the Adani group.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the Bill and the 64 amendments which were all approved by voice vote. These will now go to Rajya Sabha and will become law once the President gives assent.

From April 1, investments in debt mutual funds will be taxed as short-term capital gains, stripping investors of the long-term tax benefits that made such investments popular.

Currently, investors in debt funds pay income tax on capital gains according to the income tax slab for a holding period of three years. After three years these funds pay either 20 per cent with indexation benefits or 10 per cent without indexation.

After the amendment, such gains from transfer of units of specified mutual funds will be treated as short term and taxed at slab rates. This is in addition to taxation of market linked debenture

KEY TAKEAWAYS	
■ 64 official amendments introduced	■ Credit card payments for foreign tours to be brought under LRS
■ Tax benefits for debt mutual funds removed	■ Proposals to raise STT on selling options to 0.0625% from 0.05%
Govt to set up panel headed by finance secretary to improve NPS	
LS approves setting up of GST Appellate Tribunal	

proposed in the original bill.

Specified mutual funds have been defined to include funds where not more than 35 per cent of proceeds is invested in shares of domestic companies. This may include debt mutual funds and gold ETFs where investment in domestic companies is less than 35 per cent of proceeds of the fund.

The move will bring taxation of such mutual funds on par with bank deposits which are taxed at slab rates.

The government in 2014 had changed the taxation of debt mutual funds (period of holding for short term gains was increased to 3 years and tax rates were increased to 20 per cent).

Also, credit card payments for foreign travel will be brought under the purview of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the Reserve Bank to ensure that such expenses do not escape TCS (Tax Collection at Source).

The Union Budget 2023 proposed a TCS for foreign outward remit-

tance under LRS other than for education and medical purposes of 20 per cent applicable from July 1, 2023. Before this proposal, the TCS of 5 per cent was applicable on foreign outward remittances above ₹7 lakh.

Tax Collected at Source (TCS) is an income tax, collected by the seller of specified goods, from the buyer.

TCS is a concept where a person selling specific items is liable to collect tax from a buyer at a prescribed rate and deposit the same with the government.

The LRS, introduced in 2004, initially permitted outflow of \$25,000. The LRS limit has been revised in stages consistent with prevailing macro and micro economic conditions. LRS permits Indians to freely remit up to \$250,000 (about ₹2.05 crore) per financial year for current or capital account transactions or a combination of both. Any remittance exceeding this limit requires prior permission from the RBI.

The ministry also clarified that the securities transaction tax on selling options in the derivatives

NSE to roll back 6% hike in transaction charges from April

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The National Stock Exchange has decided to roll back the 6 per cent hike in transaction charges in the cash equities market and equity derivatives segments from April 1.

The higher charges were introduced from January 1, 2021, to partly augment NSE Investor Protection Fund Trust (NSE IPFT) corpus in view of certain market exigencies due to broker defaults at that point in time.

In a statement Friday, the bourse said its board of directors, at their meeting Thursday, decided to roll back the increase of 6 per cent in transaction charges.

With the objective to systematically augment the corpus of NSE IPFT, the exchange would also recalculate the contribution to NSE IPFT from ₹0.01 per crore to ₹10 per crore in the cash equities market and equity futures segments and ₹0.01 per crore to ₹50 per crore in equity options segment.



Bajaj Finserv was the biggest loser among the Sensex constituents, sliding 3.81 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, RIL, HCL Tech, SBI, Larsen & Toubro and Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank and Titan.

Falling for the second day in a row, index major Reliance Industries witnessed an intense sell-off and declined 1.96 per cent. On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Asian Paints and Wipro were the gainers.

Meanwhile, the rupee depreciated by 20 paise to close at 82.40 (provisional) against the US dollar. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 1.73 per cent to \$74.60 per barrel.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers Thursday as they sold equities worth ₹995 crore.

POST ADANI SHARE ROUT

LIC plans investment exposure caps THE CAPS, ONCE APPROVED BY THE LIC BOARD, WOULD FURTHER LIMIT THE INSURER'S EXPOSURE

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 24: The Life Insurance Corp of India (LIC) is planning to impose caps on its debt and equity exposure to companies, two sources said, in a bid to lower concentration of risk following criticism of its investment in Adani group companies.

After the Adani group lost over \$100 billion in valuation post scathing allegations by US-based Hindenburg Research, state-run LIC was criticized for having over \$4 billion exposure to companies from the group.

LIC, the country's largest domestic institutional investor with assets under management of about \$539 billion, is planning to cap its debt and equity exposure in individual firms, group companies and companies that are backed by same promoters, one of the sources, with knowledge of the matter, told Reuters.



“LIC is looking to have ‘boundary conditions’ on its investments that would limit its exposure to scrips,” said the source.

Currently, the insurer cannot invest more than 10% of outstanding equity in a company and 10% of the outstanding debt. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) also bars insurers from having more than 15% of their investment funds in equity and debt of companies owned by one corporate or a promoter group.

The move is aimed at strengthening investment strategies, and hence LIC from public criticism of its investment decisions or exposure

to entities like the Adani group, the second source said.

The quantum of the caps would be decided by the insurer's investment committee before it is taken to the board “soon,” the first source said.

“It is now planning to come up with sub-limits for such investments to keep a check on its exposure,” the source said.

LIC had invested ₹301.2 billion in shares of Adani group companies, and has a debt exposure of ₹61.82 billion.

“The (current) overall limits imposed by IRDAI for investment in entities owned by a single group could mean LIC can invest large amounts in group companies as it has a sizeable investible fund,” said Bahroze Kamdin, a partner at Delloitte India. “This could lead to its investment getting impacted due to volatility in the market, and likely erosion of funds owed to policyholders.”

WINDFALL TAX Vedanta cuts \$91mn from Centre's profit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: In signs of protests against the 9-month-old windfall tax, mining mogul Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Ltd has withheld about \$91 million from the share of profit due to government from its oil and gas fields, to make up for the additional tax outgo, according to sources and correspondence on the issue.

India first imposed windfall profit tax July 1, 2022 joining a growing number of nations that tax super normal profits of energy companies. But the levy of Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) on locally produced crude oil was seen by producers as violation of the contract which provides fiscal stability.

The SAED initially was ₹23,250 per tonne (\$40 per barrel) and in fortnightly revisions brought down to ₹3,500 per tonne.

This is in addition to the 10-20 per cent royalty on price of oil

and gas realised and an oil cess of 20 per cent. On top, the government is also entitled to a pre-decided share of profit after expenses are deducted from revenue earned from sale of oil and gas.

Vedanta January 31 and February 20 informed the ministry of petroleum and natural gas that it has made a deduction of \$85.35 million for SAED paid on its prolific Rajasthan block, RJ-ON-90/1, and another \$5.50 million for block CB-OS/2 in Cambay basin.

This was being done with a view to restore economic benefits as mentioned in the signed contracts under which it operates, the correspondence, reviewed by PTI, showed.

The ministry however in a February 22 letter called the “unilateral” deduction as “wrongful” and asked the company to pay the short paid profit along with interest within 7 days. Vedanta has not complied with the direction.



HINDENBURG BLOW TO DORSEY

Former Twitter co-founder and CEO Jack Dorsey was left poorer by \$526 million after short-seller Hindenburg Research revealed that his digital payment company Block facilitates fraud against consumers and the government. After his worst single-day decline, Dorsey is now worth \$4.4 billion

TRANSGENDER WOMEN ATHLETES BANNED



AGENCIES

Manchester, March 24: World Athletics has banned transgender women from competing in elite female competitions and tightened testosterone restrictions for other athletes, the governing body said Friday.

World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said that the decision to exclude transgender women who had gone through male puberty was based “on the overarching need to protect the female category”.

World Athletics’ council also voted to cut the maximum amount of plasma testosterone for athletes with Differences in Sex Development (DSD) in half, to 2.5 nanomoles per litre from five.

DSD athletes will also have to reduce their testosterone levels below the new limit for a minimum of 24 months across all events to compete, double the previous time.

The governing body had previ-



We’re not saying no forever. We don’t know enough, we now need to know more, and that is the journey that we’re on. But we weren’t prepared to risk the female category on that basis

SEBASTIAN COE | PRESIDENT, WORLD ATHLETICS

ously floated the option of transgender athletes being allowed to compete in the female category if they, too, maintained testosterone levels below 2.5 nanomoles per litre for 24 months.

Yet it said that it became apparent there was little support within the sport for that proposal.

Coe announced the formation of a working group, which will be chaired by a transgender athlete, to further study the issue of trans inclusion. “The working group will look at any prevailing or changing or furthering of our understanding in that space,” Coe said.

The tighter testosterone rules will impact DSD athletes such as two-times Olympic 800 metre cham-

pion Caster Semenya, Christine Mboma, the 2020 Olympic silver medalist in the 200m, and Francine Niyonsaba, who finished runner-up to Semenya in the 800 at the 2016 Olympics.

WA regulations around DSD previously required women competing in events between 400 metres and a mile to maintain testosterone levels below five nanomoles per litre.

The governing body also introduced interim provisions for athletes already competing outside the restricted events, who will be required to suppress their testosterone level to 2.5 nanomoles per litre for six months.

This would prevent several

women from competing at the World Athletics Championships in August.

DSD athletes have male testes but do not produce enough of the hormone Dihydrotestosterone (DHT) that is necessary for the formation of male external genitalia.

Coe said the decisions were made in consultation with numerous stakeholders including 40 member federations, coaches, athletes, plus a range of community groups including trans groups, United Nations experts and the International Olympic Committee.

Swimming’s world governing body World Aquatics voted last June to bar transgender women from elite competition if they had experienced any part of male puberty. A scientific panel had found that even after reducing their testosterone levels through medication, transgender women still had a significant advantage. That vote passed with 71% of the national federations in favour.

THE TIGHTER MEASURES AROUND ONE OF THE MOST CONTENTIOUS AND DIVISIVE ISSUES IN SPORT FOLLOW A SIMILAR MOVE BY WORLD AQUATICS IN 2022

MIXED RESPONSE CRITICISM

Transgender athletes have condemned World Athletics’ exclusion of transgender women from elite female competitions, while the decision was welcomed by some sports-women as a win for fairness. Canadian cyclist Kristen Worley, a transitioned athlete who has legally challenged the gender policies of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), said the World Athletics (WA) decision was “disheartening and disappointing”. “What’s happening is the most vulnerable are being excluded from sport more for political reasons and not based on science and research,” Worley told Reuters in an interview. “I’m watching all the news groups put out images on Twitter with no images of transitioned athletes at the elite levels of the World Athletics because there aren’t any,” she said. Ricki Coughlan, one of Australia’s first transgender athletes in professional running, said WA’s ruling would embolden the “forces of hate” against transgender people. “There’s no nice way of putting this,” she told Reuters. “The forces of hate that are out there that don’t want transgender people to exist in our society ... will take this as a win and will then say ‘okay, let’s move onto the next thing.’”

SUPPORT

A number of elite women in track and field welcomed the WA decision, including British runner and Olympian Emily Diamond who tweeted “thank you for following the science”. “A big step for fairness and protecting the female category hopefully this will be the rule across all levels now, not just elite ranking events,” wrote Diamond, who won a 400 metres relay bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Olympian and marathon runner Mara Yamauchi tweeted: “Good news! Odd to celebrate something which is common sense.” Save Women’s Sport Australasia, a group campaigning against transgender athletes in female sport, applauded the decision. “Well, it’s not a ban, it just actually moves to protect the female category to female competitors and it was an excellent decision,” spokeswoman Ro Edge told Reuters.

■ ISSF WORLD CUP 2023

Rudrankksh wins bronze as China extend gold run

China maintained their top position on the medal tally at the end of competition day three with five gold, one silver and two bronze in their kitty. India lay second with three bronze medals to go with a gold and a silver



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, March 24: Reigning world champion Rudrankksh Patil won bronze in the men’s 10m air rifle, his second of the tournament, even as China extended their golden run at the ISSF World Cup 2023 by winning both gold medals on offer for the second consecutive day here.

Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Sheng Lihao of China won gold in the men’s 10m air rifle while compatriot Huang Yuting, a double gold medalist at the Cairo World Championships last year, won the women’s event.

Playing back-to-back matches can never be easy, especially in a home World Cup, but the champion shooter that he is, Rudrankksh delivered yet again, clinching bronze from what at one point seemed a lost cause.

He shot a solid 631.0 in qualification to finish fourth after leading in the initial stages. In the 25-shot top eight ranking round, he was well outside the medal positions till the third five-shot series, before a fantastic fourth series, where he shot the highest score of 53.5, brought him back into contention.

Meanwhile the three Chinese qualifiers – Sheng (who led throughout the ranking round), silver medalist Du Linsu and Yu Haonan -- were on course to make it a Chinese 1-2-3 till the 20th shot.

Rudrankksh went into the fifth series 0.8 behind Yu. He then shot

a strong 52.6 in the series as Yu faltered, posting 51.5 to finish fourth, as the Indian confirmed his second medal in two days and his fourth ISSF World Cup podium overall.

He finished with a score of 262.3 as Sheng and Du moved into the gold medal match with scores of 264.2 and 263.3 respectively.

The All-China gold medal contest was also a close one with Sheng prevailing 17-13 in the end.

Ramita finishes fourth

India had only one top eight finisher in Ramita in the women’s 10m air rifle as she shot 632.3 to finish second among the medal contenders in the 52-strong field. The top eight had two Chinese, two Americans and one shooter each from Romania, Israel and Kazakhstan, besides hosts India.

China’s Huang Yuting was in ominous form, topping the qualifications with a score of 632.8, while Tokyo Olympics silver medalist in the mixed team air rifle, Mary Tucker of the USA, also made it through in seventh place.

In the top eights, Huang was a cut above the rest, finishing on top again with a score of 265.7 as Mary shot 261.2 for a shot at gold.

Kazakhstan’s Alexandra Le pipped India’s Ramita to bronze, shooting 261.2 to the Indian’s 260.5. Huang then maintained her form on the day to defeat Mary 16-4 for China’s fifth gold of the competition.

Asian Kho Kho C’ships: Indian men, women teams emerge winners



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tamulpur, March 24: Indian men and women clinched the titles in the 4th Asian Kho Kho Championships that concluded at Tamulpur, Assam. In both men’s and women’s categories, the third place was shared by Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

In the finals, the Indian men defeated Nepal by six points and an innings while the Indian women got the better of the same opponent by 33 points and an innings in the finals Thursday.

Earlier, in the semifinals, Indian men overcame the Sri Lankan challenges by 45 points. On the other hand, Nepal defeated Bangladesh by 12 points with 1.5 minutes to spare.

In the women’s category, India beat Bangladesh by 49 points and an innings. Nepal didn’t face much difficulty to defeat Sri Lanka by 59 points and an innings.

Team India captain Akshay Bhangre said they are extremely excited and happy to win this championship. “Being an Indian, it feels great to win the game which was initiated in India. At the same time, it is equally exciting to witness the participating countries doing so well in the matches,” he said.

He also thanked the crowd at Tamulpur to support the teams throughout the tournament.

“It was a great atmosphere here. The support of the crowd is always important. It can motivate the players to give their best,” Bhangre added. Altogether 16 teams (both male and female) participated in this event. The participating countries were – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka and the host India.

The event was organised by the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) and was hosted by the Assam Kho Kho Association (AKKA) with support from the BTR Government. The government of Assam also extended their support for the competition.

Sindhu exits, Satwik-Chirag enters Swiss Open quarters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Basel, March 24: Double Olympic medalist PV Sindhu failed to defend her Swiss Open Super 300 badminton title as she was shocked by unseeded Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in a thrilling three-game women’s singles second round match here.

World No 9 Sindhu, seeded fourth here, was stunned 15-21 21-12 18-21 by the 38th ranked Wardani in their first-ever face-off at the international level Thursday night.

But second-seeded men’s pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty kept India’s flag flying by entering the quarterfinals with a hard-fought 12-21 21-17 28-26 win over Taiwanese pair of Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee.

The world No 6 Indian duo will next face Danish pair of Jeppe Bay and Lasse Molhede later Friday.

Earlier Thursday, world No 9 and fifth seed H S Prannoy made a shock second-round exit after losing in straight games against unseeded Christo Popov of France.

Prannoy, favourite coming into the contest, looked a pale shadow of himself in front of world No 40



Popov as he failed to give any fight, losing 8-21 8-21 to bow out of the men’s singles event.

But it was Kidambi Srikanth, who was the first to crash out Thursday, losing to Hong Kong’s Cheuk Yiu Lee.

Going by rankings, there was hardly anything to separate the two as Srikanth is placed 20th in the world as against his rival’s 19th position.

It was a hard-fought match, but Lee kept his composure to emerge 22-20 21-17 winner in the singles pre-quarterfinal contest.

National champion Mithun Manjunath also bowed out in the second round, losing 19-21 10-21 to Chia Hao Lee of Chinese Taipei.

MI beat UP Warriorz to enter WPL final

MUMBAI INDIANS WILL FACE DELHI CAPITALS IN THE FINAL SUNDAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 24: Isabelle Wong (4/15) recorded the first hat-trick of the Women’s Premier League after Nat Sciver-Brunt’s brutal 38-ball 72 as Mumbai Indians stormed into the final with a 72-run drubbing of UP Warriorz in the Eliminator here Friday.

The final of the inaugural WPL will be played between the two best sides that occupied the top two spots of the points table with 12 points each, Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians, Sunday at the Brabourne Stadium.

Having set a daunting 183-run target, Mumbai Indians blew away what had been a resolute top and middle-order of the UP Warriorz, with Wong producing a superb hat-trick in the 13th over to seal the outcome in favour of her side.

After removing the dangerous Alyssa Healy (11) early and getting rid of an on-song Kiran Navgire (43), Wong cleaned up Simran Sheikh (0) and Sophie Ecclestone (0) to take a wicket each on the second, third and the fourth deliveries of her third over to produce a match-winning spell.



UP Warriorz were shot out for a mere 110 in 17.4 overs.

Navgire waged a lone battle for UP Warriorz with an entertaining 27-ball 43 with four fours and three sixes, but none of the other batters troubled the scorers in what turned out to be a one-sided contest.

UP Warriorz were off to a disastrous start, losing openers Healy and Shweta Sehrawat (1) inside the first three overs.

While Saika Ishaque (2.4-1-24-2) produced a wicket- maiden second

over that included the scalp of Sehrawat, Wong got Healy caught by her counterpart Harmanpreet Kaur at mid-off in the third.

Mumbai dealt another severe blow on the UP Warriorz when batting mainstay Tahlia McGrath (7) was run out in the fifth over while trying to steal a single from a packed off-side field.

With their backs pressed firmly against the wall, Navgire took the attack to Mumbai with two fours and a six off Ishaque and Grace

BRIEF SCORES
MUMBAI INDIANS 182/4 IN 20 OVERS (NAT SCIVER-BRUNT 72 NOT OUT; SOPHIE ECCLESTONE 2/39)
UP WARRIORZ 110 ALL OUT IN 17.4 OVERS (KIRAN NAVGIRE 43; ISSY WONG 4/15)

Harris also got a four: The sixth over yielded 20 runs for UP Warriorz, who were 46/3 at the end of the powerplay.

Navgire also got a lifeline when she tried to clear the ropes again, off Amelia Kerr, with Hayley Matthews (1/13) spilling a regulation chance.

Earlier in the first innings, Sciver-Brunt’s blistering unbeaten 72 powered Mumbai Indians to a daunting total.

Sciver-Brunt was at her brutal best with the bat, clobbering nine fours and two sixes to make an unbeaten 72 and certainly made the most of an early lifeline when she was on six, with Sophie Ecclestone (2/39) dropping a regulation catch off Rajeshwari Gayakwad at mid-off.

IN HISTORY BOOKS

Ronaldo becomes most-capped footballer ever

KANE OVERTAKES ROONEY

Harry Kane became England’s all-time record goalscorer, as the Three Lions got their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign off to the perfect start with a 2-1 victory over Italy. The Three Lions skipper struck his 54th international goal, breaking the national record of 53 goals he previously shared with Wayne Rooney, and helped his side claim their first win on Italian soil since 1961. “It means everything. Once it hit the back of the net, there was so much emotion. It’s just a great night. We haven’t won in Italy for so long to score and win the game is special,” Kane said. Italy’s defeat was their first in 41 Euro qualifiers, since losing to France in September 2006.



AGENCIES

Lisbon, March 24: Cristiano Ronaldo became the most-capped player in men’s international football Thursday.

Ronaldo started in Portugal’s European qualifier against Liechtenstein to make his 197th appearance with the national team, breaking a tie with Kuwait’s Bader Al-Mutawa.

Ronaldo had tied Al-Mutawa with 196 caps after coming off the bench in Portugal’s loss to Morocco in the quarterfinals of the World Cup in Qatar last year.

The 38-year-old Ronaldo had become Europe’s most-capped player in 2021 after surpassing Sergio Ramos’ mark of 180 appearances with Spain.

Ronaldo, who is also the all-time scoring leader in men’s soccer with 118 goals, is back with Portugal’s national team after a disappointing

World Cup in which he was benched in the knock-out rounds and left the field in tears after the loss to Morocco.

He said his return to the national team was in doubt after the World Cup, but he eventually decided it was not time “to throw in the towel.”

New Portugal coach Roberto Martinez said he still counts on Ronaldo and made the forward one of his captains entering qualifying for the 2024 European Championship.

Portugal’s qualifying group also includes Luxembourg, Iceland, Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its next match is at Luxembourg Sunday. The top two nations from each of the 10 groups qualify for the final tournament in Germany.



RONALDO, THE ALL-TIME SCORING LEADER, SETS LATEST RECORD FOR MOST INTERNATIONAL APPEARANCES IN MEN’S FOOTBALL