



SENSIBLE BHUMI

Actor Bhumi Pednekar says she supports same-sex marriage which has been a major conversation in the country now

LEISURE P2



3 TOP MILITANTS KILLED

Israel kills three senior commanders of militant Islamic Jihad group in targeted airstrikes

INTERNATIONAL P10



CSK TAKE ON DELHI

Chennai Super Kings look to beat back the challenge of a resurgent Delhi Capitals and get closer to a playoffs berth

SPORTS P12

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PIC: RAJKISHORE MOHANTY

KEEPING FRESH: As daytime temperature soars, a roadside vendor sprinkles water on his litchi stock to keep it fresh in Jobra area of Cuttack, Tuesday

SHORT TAKES

JHARSUGUDA BYPOLL TODAY

Bhubaneswar: Altogether 2,21,070 voters will decide the fate of nine candidates in the fray for Jharsuguda byelection scheduled for Wednesday as preparations for the high-octane fight have been completed. Polling will begin at 7am in 253 booths and continue till 6pm. Votes will be counted May 13. Though nine candidates are in fray, the contest is mainly between BJD, BJP and Congress. BJD has fielded Naba Das's daughter Deepali, while BJP has nominated Tankadhar Tripathy. Congress has fielded Tarun Pandey. **P3**

3 MAOISTS GUNNED DOWN IN KALAHANDI

Bhawanipatna: At least three Maoists were killed and a policeman was injured during a gunbattle in a forest in Kalahandi district Tuesday. The incident took place in the morning when a combing operation was underway near Tapareng-Ludenghar reserve forest. "Three Maoists have been killed and a DSP rank officer has suffered injuries in the exchange of fire," DGP Sunil Kumar Bansal said.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



After chanting the name of Bajrang Bali, I just couldn't vote for a lying, corrupt & divisive party

24 killed as bus falls off MP bridge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Khargone/Bhopal, May 9: At least 24 people were killed and more than 40 others injured when a speeding private bus packed with passengers plunged into a dry riverbed after breaking through railings of a bridge in Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh (MP) Tuesday, Agriculture Minister Kamal Patel said.

As many as 41 passengers were injured in the accident and undergoing treatment in various hospitals at Khargone and Indore, Patel, who is also minister in-charge of the district, told reporters.

Patel said Khargone district's Assistant Regional Transport Officer was suspended after it came to light that the ill-fated bus was overloaded at the time of the accident. There

were around 70 passengers in the bus which had capacity to accommodate only 37 people.

Officials said 18 seriously injured were referred to Indore for further treatment, while 23 were admitted at the Khargone district hospital.

PM Narendra Modi and MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced ex-gratia for the victims.

Naveen, Nitish rule out alliance talks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar, who called on the BJD supremo and held a discussion for around an hour at Naveen Niwas here, claimed that no discussion on any political alliance between the JD(U) and BJD for the Lok Sabha elections next year was held in the meeting Tuesday.

Patnaik and Kumar had lunch at Naveen Niwas and then jointly addressed the media, stating they share a very old relationship. "No discussion was held on any alliance today. I am delighted that Nitish ji came to Bhubaneswar. We are old friends and colleagues ever since we served in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's cabinet," Patnaik told reporters.

Patnaik said the Odisha government will provide 1.5 acres of land to Bihar government free of cost in Puri for building facilities for tourists coming for darshan of Lord Jagannath.

Patnaik shared some photographs from the meeting, and tweeted, "Glad to meet #Bihar Chief Minister Shri @NitishKumar in #Bhubaneswar. #Odisha shares a special bond with Bihar and the people of the neighbouring state. Hope he had a pleasant and fruitful stay in Odisha."



Bihar CM Nitish Kumar meets his Odisha counterpart at Naveen Niwas, Tuesday

Kumar said, "Our relation with Naveen ji and his father Biju Babu is very old. Due to the COVID pandemic, we could not meet. No political discussions were held. We have good relations and there is no need to discuss any politics."

The denial of both leaders of discussing politics comes amid talks of unity among non-BJP parties ahead of next year's polls. Earlier in the day, Kumar was welcomed at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here by minister Ashok Chandra Panda and BJD vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra. **Contd...P4**

Imran arrested

Khan, the former Pakistan PM, was appearing in Islamabad High Court to face corruption charges when Rangers took him into custody

AGENCIES

Islamabad/Lahore, May 9: A few hours after he took on the country's powerful army for allegedly hatching a plot to kill him, Pakistan's former prime minister (PM) Imran Khan was arrested Tuesday as he appeared in the Islamabad High Court to face corruption charges, with scores of security forces in riot gear dragging the high-profile politician into an armoured vehicle.

The arrest of the 70-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician comes a day after the powerful army accused Khan of levelling baseless allegations against a senior officer of the spy agency ISI.

The chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), who travelled from Lahore to the federal capital Islamabad, was undergoing a biometric process at the court when the Rangers broke open the glass window and arrested him after beating lawyers and Khan's security staff, according to senior party leader Shireen Mazari.

TV footage showed the Rangers grabbing Khan from the collar and bundling him into a prison van. The Rangers, which operate under the Interior Ministry, are usually commanded by officers on secondment from the army.



"Khan has been arrested in a land transfer case to property tycoon Malik Riaz and is being handed over to National Accountability Bureau (NAB)," a NAB official confirmed to PTI.

PROTESTS BREAK OUT ACROSS PAKISTAN

He said that Khan has been arrested in the Al-Qadir Trust case which is about the setting up of Al-Qadir University for Sufism in 2019 Sohawa area of Jhelum district of Punjab.

Khan's arrest warrant, issued May 1, said that he was accused of corruption and corrupt practice.

As the news of Khan's arrest spread, massive protests broke out in several cities across Pakistan. Protesters at several places turned violent and burned police vehicles and damaged public property.

For the first time, Khan's sup-

porters smashed the main gate of the army's sprawling headquarters in Rawalpindi, where troops exercised restraint. The protesters chanted slogans against the establishment.

In Lahore, a large number of PTI workers stormed into the Corps Commander Lahore residence and smashed the gate and window-panes. The army personnel present on duty there, however, did not try to stop the enraged protesters who surrounded them and chanted slogans against the 'handlers' of the PML-N led government in the military establishment.

The protesters held a demonstration in the Cantonment area.

Lahore was virtually cut off from the rest of the province because of the protest on main roads including the entry and exit points.

The caretaker Punjab government called the Rangers to control the law-and-order situation in the province and imposed section 144 under which not more than five people can gather at one point. The Punjab government also requested the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority to suspend Internet and mobile services in the areas of the province where violent protests took place.

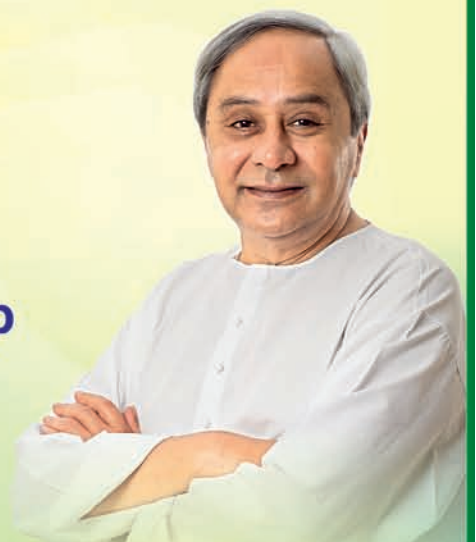
Contd...P4

DSPL-36



Govt. of Odisha

**A little precaution can keep
Heat Stroke away
Take Care, Stay Safe**



- Avoid exposure to sun and heavy work in hot weather from 11 AM to 3 PM.
- Drink enough water and, take umbrella & water bottle with you while moving out.
- Children, pregnant women, elderly people, and persons with high blood pressure or diabetes should be more careful.
- Stay away from alcohol, cigarette, tobacco and other intoxicants.
- In case of sudden illness due to heat wave, go to a nearby hospital immediately.
- Free treatment is provided for heat stroke patients in all Government Hospitals.

For more information please call **104 Health Helpline**

Healthy Odisha
Happy Odisha

Health & Family Welfare Department

facebook.com/HFWOdisha
@HFWOdisha
http://www.health.odisha.gov.in

OIPR-10003/13/0020/2324

Humans inherited taller nose from Neanderthals

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 9: A particular gene in humans leading to a taller nose from top to bottom was inherited from Neanderthals, an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans who lived in Eurasia until about 40,000 years ago, researchers from the University College London (UCL) in UK said.

This may have been the product of natural selection as ancient humans adapted to colder climates after leaving Africa, they pointed out.

Having been passed down for thousands of generations, the researchers said in the study, they found that some DNA inherited from Neanderthals influenced the shape of our faces and that it could have been helpful to our ancestors.

In the last 15 years, since the Neanderthal genome has been se-



A reconstruction of a male Neanderthal

quenced, scientists have learnt that our ancestors apparently interbred with Neanderthals, leaving us with little bits of their DNA.

The scientists from UCL have published their international study in the

journal Communications Biology.

Comparing genetic information from the participants to photographs of their faces, specifically looking at distances between points on their faces, such as the tip of the nose or the edge of the lips, the researchers saw how different facial traits were associated with the presence of different genetic markers.

The study used data from more than 6,000 volunteers across Latin America, of mixed European, Native American and African ancestry, who are part of the UCL-led CANDELA study, which recruited from Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Peru.

The researchers newly identified 33 genome regions associated with face shape, 26 of which they were able to replicate in comparisons with data from other ethnicities using participants in east Asia, Europe, or Africa. **Contd...P4**



JONATHAN FACES ASSAULT CHARGES WITH CAREER HANGING IN BALANCE

Actor Jonathan Majors is expected to appear virtually in court May 10 to face charges of assault and harassment. So, the career of the 33-year-old actor hangs in the balance after domestic violence allegations by his girlfriend surfaced in March 2023.

TEIGEN MISSES THE 'DANGER AND DESTRUCTION' OF TWITTER

Model Chrissy Teigen has likened Twitter to 'a full nicotine vape'. The celebrity, who took a break from social media in 2020, wrote on Twitter: "Twitter is a full nicotine vape. I miss the danger and destruction of Twitter but I know it's better for me."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Career decisions and money matters will keep you busy today. And after all the work, you will want to spend some leisure time and take it easy. A leisure trip may materialise, which will put you in high spirits. Ganesha says indulging in group projects will help you make new friends.

TAURUS

You have a hectic day ahead, says Ganesha. You will be immersed in your work all day long and will love doing so. A lot will get done by the end of the day. Make sure you do not stretch your neck or take unnecessary risks. That will be bad for business. Stick to basics. Do not be innovative or speculative.

GEMINI

An extremely productive and fulfilling day awaits you. Along with your daily routine, you will also concentrate on your household issues. You will feel the need to have someone to call your own. You may find yourself in two minds over things like marriage and partnership. It is a good day to sell something, says Ganesha.

CANCER

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

LEO

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

VIRGO

It is not the time to rest on your past laurels, and you will have to carry on with your work unabated. You will have to keep your focus steady and remain organised to get the same level of success that you had in the recent past.

LIBRA

Ganesha says that today you shall make your competitors and enemies envious of your success in business. Beware, as they shall try to hurt or put down your reputation in varied ways. Instead of having a fight with them you should try to be politically correct and take care of matters using your intelligence.

SCORPIO

You are in a dilemma and feel like standing at a crossroads of life. Some important decisions of life need time and that's what you want right now. However, keep personal life and work separate to avoid confusion and disturbance. As per Ganesha's advice, it's all right if decision making takes some time, but avoid taking hasty decisions.

SAGITTARIUS

The pressing needs of your loved ones call for extra attention today. You may have a few family friends over for lunch or dinner, and end up chatting a good deal with them. Ganesha says an intimate tête-à-tête with your better half would fare you well.

CAPRICORN

The day will sail smooth, but your mind will wreak havoc by forcing you to act on the spur of the moment, says Ganesha. However, this will not ruin your reputation with bosses and peers. You may also see some of your dreams come true, but don't fly too high; you may climb up the ladder of success but with every step you leave behind there is always one more to go.

AQUARIUS

Your dream house or car may well be on its way! The stars proclaim that it's a good time to acquire new assets. So bring out those attractive brochures and check out your loan prospects. A perfect way to end an exciting day will be an evening at a quiet temple, says Ganesha.

PISCES

A good day awaits you. You will finish your work and beat your deadlines by miles on account of the luck favouring you. There are chances that a family holiday, which has been in the planning for a long time, will eventually come to fruition today, says Ganesha.

Lisa Ray revisits Afreen Afreen

Mumbai: Actress Lisa Ray reveals that she is not too fond of *Afreen Afreen*, the song from the 90s that is one of her first famous works.

She revealed in a new Instagram post that she "inwardly" cringes each time the song sung by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is played, but manages a polite smile.

Afreen Afreen was among the biggest pop hits in the 90s and was written by Javed Akhtar. Nusrat composed the song and Lisa was featured in the 10-minute-long video alongside Himanshu Malik.

Sharing a short clip from the music video, Lisa wrote in a long post, "I have to confess I have felt uncomfortable

sharing or celebrating the #AfreenAfreen breakthrough video of the 90s and iconic song by maestro #nusrat-fateh-likhan because I was so strongly identified with it. The song still often plays on cue for events where I am invited to speak of other aspects of my life experience and I inwardly cringe while offering a polite smile."

In her note, Lisa said that she now realises how youth may connect with the song even today, while she is nothing close to what she was at that time.

IAN S

Bhumi supports marriage equality

Mumbai: Bhumi Pednekar has been hitting all the right notes when it comes to her film choices ranging from *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* to *Bala*, *Pati Patni Aur Woh* to *Badhaai Do*. The actress recently won her third Filmfare Award for her performance as Sumi in *Badhaai Do*, wherein she played a lesbian character.

Talking about

the win and the support she has got from the LGBTQIA+ community, the actress said, "Winning the Filmfare is more like a personal victory but the love the film got as a whole is a victory for the community. The success and love the film has received makes you realise that our country is changing and our cinema is a part of the changing narrative like in so many of my other films in the past."

Bhumi further elaborated, "I just

feel that love is love and as individuals, we should all have equality in every aspect of life. I feel God made us from the same thread and it is not up to us to have biases and pass judgements on what somebody's life deserves to be. I'm an ally of the community." Bhumi also acknowledged that she supports same-sex marriage, which has been a major conversation in the country right now.

AGENCIES

Shraddha nails French, British & American accents

Mumbai: Actress Shraddha Kapoor recently made a remarkable comeback on the big screen with her performance in Luv Ranjan's film, *Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar* alongside Ranbir Kapoor. As a part of the promotional activities for the film's release on Netflix, the marketing team shot some fun videos with Shraddha. In one of these videos, they tested her talent for accents by asking her if she could pull off any accent, to which she responded with an impressive display of her skills, leaving everyone impressed.

She said in French, "It's so true that I feel like when I used to stand in front of a

mirror, I would do accents but only I would be clapping because there would be no audience. Sometimes it would be French; sometimes it would suddenly be

British." She switched to a British accent.

She added later, "And then I would be like okay, I think hopefully it's not going to red now." The actress later switched to an American accent and said, "You are asking for an American now. That's really what you wanted. You could have just really said that." "Please tell me to keep quiet guys," she concluded.

Shraddha is slated to be featured in *Stree 2*, one of the most highly anticipated films.

AGENCIES

Parineeti, Raghav to get engaged May 13



Mumbai: Actress Parineeti Chopra and Aam Aadmi Party's Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chandha are all set to get engaged

Saturday, May 13.

"It (the engagement) is happening. She is getting engaged on Saturday, 13th.

The engagement preps are on. Parineeti has already left for Delhi," a source revealed.

The couple was recently spotted leaving a restaurant after their dinner date. A video was shared by celebrity paparazzi Viral Bhayani on Instagram, where Parineeti can be seen in an all-black outfit, while the AAP leader looks casual



in a grey shirt paired with black pants. Dating rumours between Raghav and Parineeti began last month when the two were pictured together in London and then in Mumbai. The two have often been pictured together at Mumbai and New Delhi airports.

From picking up from the airport to going to restaurants together, Parineeti and Raghav have been seen together several times. However, the

two have never declined or accepted their relationship.

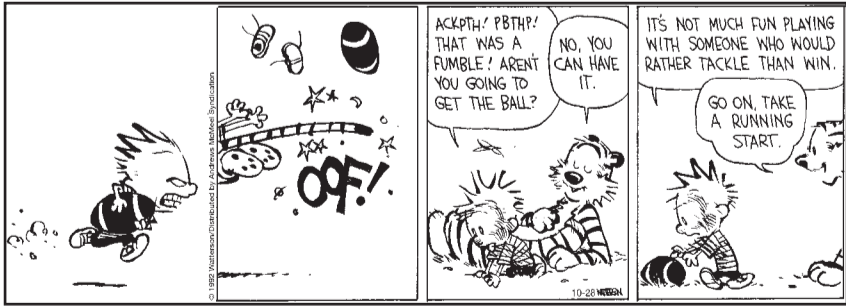
Meanwhile, on the work front, Parineeti will be seen sharing the screen with Diljit Dosanjh in the Imtiaz Ali directorial *Chamkila*. The film is said to be inspired by Punjabi singer Amar Singh Chamkila.

IAN S

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

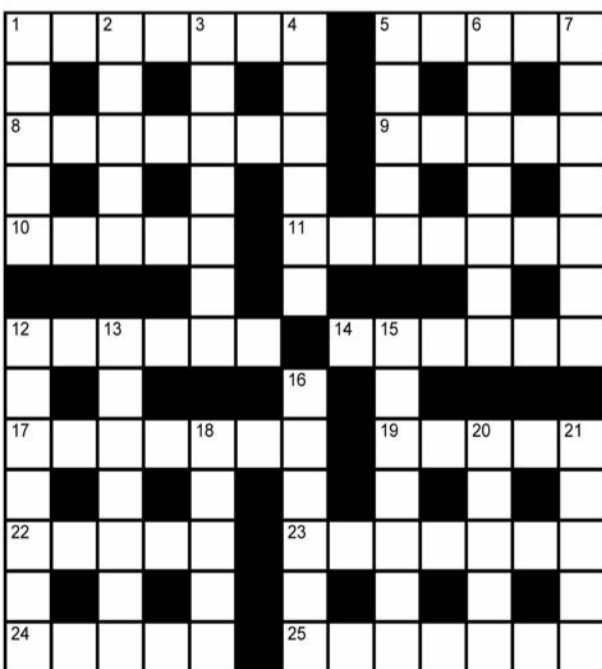


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- Approximately
- Florida, USA
- Chest of drawers
- Deserve
- Cowboy exhibition
- Repulsive
- Forever
- Fraud
- Disorder
- Aroma

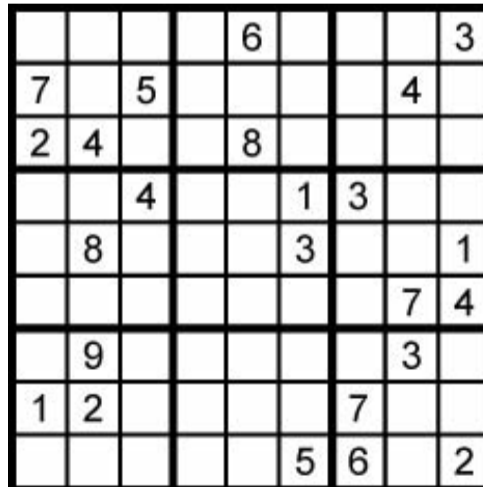
Down

- Passenger
- Overturn
- Chronicle
- Strong-scented
- Eurasian herb
- Clocks

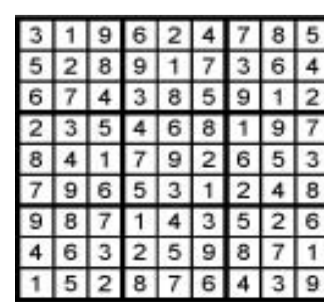
- French mime
- Popular design style of the 1930's (3,4)
- Desert
- Unforced
- Sign of the zodiac
- Cultural
- Acclaim
- Indian
- Vertical part of a stair

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS

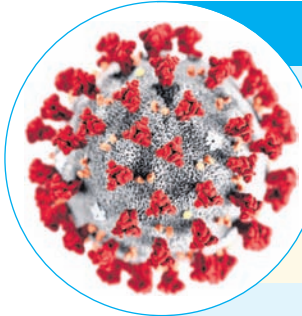


CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



REGALING POSE

Artistes of a cultural outfit 'Mayur' perform Odissi at Chandana Chakada as part of Chandan Yatra in Puri, Tuesday



COVID-19 TRACKER

	INFECTED	RECOVERED	DEAD
World	68,79,55,436	66,03,72,022	68,71,853
India	4,49,72,800	4,44,18,351	5,31,707
Odisha	13,36,304	13,26,915	9,204

DoT disconnects 51,260 fake SIM cards in state

The move will help in curbing major criminal activities including cybercrimes such as OTP fraud, sextortion, identity theft, phishing and financial app fraud, says Inspector General of Police, Jai Narayan Pankaj

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Bhubaneswar, May 9: In a major crackdown against cyber criminals, at least 51,260 fake mobile connections were disconnected in Odisha by various telecom operators, the Union ministry of Communications said.

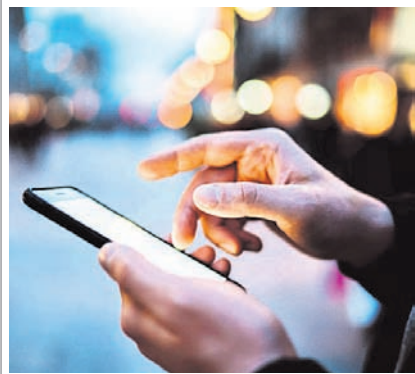
Artificial intelligence and facial recognition powered Solution for Telecom SIM Subscriber Verification (ASTR), an AI-based tool, had identified 52,088 suspected mobile connections issued by different telecom operators in the state, the ministry said. These suspected mobile connections were re-verified by the telecom operators concerned following the directions of Dept of Telecom (DoT), Odisha following which 51,260 connections were found non-bona fide and hence disconnected.

At least 2,417 point of sales (PoSs)/SIM sellers were also black-listed for their alleged involvement in fraudulent activities. Further, police complaints have been lodged for proper investigation and taking necessary action against the culprits, the ministry said.

The DoT has conceptualised and implemented ASTR for Telecom SIM Subscriber Verification with a vision to analyse, identify and weed out fake/forged, non-bona fide mobile connections for curbing the menace of cybercrime.

"It analyses the combined subscriber database of all the telecom service providers (TSPs) and detects non-bona fide mobile connections.

AI TOOL COMES IN HANDY



AT LEAST 2,417 POINT OF SALES/SIM SELLERS WERE BLACKLISTED FOR THEIR ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN FRAUDULENT ACTIVITIES

POLICE COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN LODGED FOR PROPER INVESTIGATION AND TAKING NECESSARY ACTION AGAINST THE CULPRITS

The system uses subscriber images and compares the same with other subscriber images and the output is generated in groups of similar images with different names of the same person," the ministry said.

"The disconnection of such a huge number of fake SIM cards will help in curbing various major criminal activities including cyber-crime cases such as OTP fraud, sextortion, identity theft, phishing scam and financial app fraud. Most of the criminals use fake SIM cards to conceal their identity and circumvent surveillance by law enforcing agencies. We have also written a letter to the DoT a few days back requesting for deactivation of fake SIM cards," Inspector General Jai Narayan Pankaj said.

"This will definitely reduce almost 90 per cent of the cybercrime

cases. The fraudsters can never use genuine SIM cards as they have to submit their personal details to fetch the cards. Maximum number of cyber fraud rackets operates in India from four places including Jamtara of Jharkhand, Mewat of Haryana, Bharatpur of Rajasthan and Mathura of Uttar Pradesh. As per a report by the Jharkhand police, the cyber criminals fetch more than 90 per cent of fake SIM cards used in criminal activities from Odisha and West Bengal," cyber expert Prasant Sahu told Orissa Post.

Notably, Odisha police has unearthed several fake SIM card rackets in the past. The Crime Branch sleuths also arrested three cyber-criminals, including the main accused Dushmanta Sahu, from Dhenkanal district and seized 19,641 fake SIM cards in May 2022.

Pradhan's missive to Reddy for Kapileswar temple preservation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has urged Union Tourism and Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy to preserve and develop the 7th century Kapileswar temple located on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar.

In a letter to Reddy, Pradhan said that Kapileswar temple is one of the oldest and most revered temples of Odisha which is believed to have been built in 7th century by rulers of Somavanshi dynasty.

The temple is associated with Lord Shiva and is famous for its beautiful architecture, sculptures and paintings. It is also a popular pilgrimage site for devotees who flock to the temple during Shiv Ratri and other festivals, he said.

However, the temple is facing serious threats from urbanisation, pollution and negligence. The temple complex is surrounded by encroachments, garbage dumps and sewage outlets, Pradhan added.

The Union Education minister further said the temple structure is crumbling due to lack of maintenance and conservation. The temple art and heritage are fading away due to vandalism and weathering.

The atmosphere is losing its sanctity and serenity due to noise and disturbance.

He requested Reddy to intervene in this matter and direct the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to adopt Kapileswar temple under its protection and development scheme.

Stating that ASI has the expertise, resources and authority to restore and enhance the glory of the temple, Pradhan said it could also help in creating awareness and appreciation among the public for this ancient and sacred monument.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



'State got ₹30,285cr food subsidy in 4 yrs'

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, May 9: The Union government has released Rs 30,285.92 crore as food subsidy to Odisha during the last four years, the Union ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said, Tuesday.

The Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) stated that the Centre has been regularly releasing the admissible food subsidy to the Odisha government as per an MoU signed with it. Recently, an amount of Rs 2,084.90 crore has been released to the state, it said, adding that DFPD reimburses expenditure of state government incurred on distribution of food grains under targeted public distribution system and other welfare scheme, up to 95 per cent of variable cost and up to 100 per cent of fixed cost.



The food subsidy is released after deducting the inferior quantity of food grains, as indicated by the inspection team of DFPD/FCI, the ministry said.

For the transparency in the process, all the states have been updating their distribution data for the last four years on Annavitran portal and accordingly submitting their subsidy claims duly reconciled with the portal's data, the ministry said. The DFPD has withheld certain amounts temporarily due

to difference in distribution figures claimed by state government vis a vis as available on Annavitran Portal, non-submission of audited accounts for finalisation thereof, quality related matters etc, the ministry said.

"To meet the fund requirements of the state government for implementation of the scheme, DFPD releases food subsidies to states. For this purpose, specific MoUs are signed with respective state governments and the states are required to adhere to the conditions laid down in the MoU. The entitled amount of food subsidy is calculated on the basis of extant guidelines, provisional cost sheets, opening and closing balance of stocks, procurement, allocation and distribution of food grains under NFSA & other welfare schemes, FCI reconciliation, utilisation certificates, etc" the ministry said.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX		VARIATION
SENSEX	61761.33	↓ 2.92
NIFTY	18265.95	↑ 1.55
DOLLAR	81.72	↓ ₹0.58
EURO	89.96	↓ ₹0.01
GOLD	₹61,190	↑ ₹263
SILVER	₹77,070	↓ ₹9

WEATHER		
	BHUB	CTK
TEMP MAX	38.7°C	40.0°C
TEMP MIN	26.8°C	27.4°C
Humidity	79%	73%
Rainfall	0.0mm	0.0mm
Forecast	Light to moderate rain	

CS: Awareness key to development of PwDs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Inaugurating the Eastern India Consultation on 'Status of people with disabilities and road to inclusive development' here Tuesday, Chief Secretary PK Jena stressed on government efforts to create awareness at grassroots level for inclusive development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

The consultation, organised by the non-profit outfit Swabhiman with support from National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP), was held with an aim to understand the status of PwDs in the Eastern Region across the areas of education, employment, health and accessibility, specifically in the context of gender and sustainable development goals realisation. There were 86 participants in the consultation including 44 PwDs from Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

The Chief Secretary said that sensitisation and awareness are key tools for inclusive development. "Merely providing special educators won't solve the larger problem. It is a must for the government to spread awareness at the grassroots level," he added. SSEPD director Bratati Harichandan said that Odisha has seen significant growth in the issuance of Unique Disability IDs.



LEARNING CURVE: Kids of Rupakar servitors learn the basics of chariot works at Rath Yard in Puri, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

Over 4.5mn women, babies die every yr during pregnancy: UN

The Covid pandemic, rising poverty, and worsening humanitarian crises have intensified pressures on stretched health systems

More than 4.5 million women and babies die every year during pregnancy, childbirth or the first weeks after birth – equivalent to one death happening every 7 seconds – mostly from preventable or treatable causes, according to a new report from the United Nations Tuesday.

The report, improving maternal and newborn health and survival and reducing stillbirth, shows that global progress in reducing deaths of pregnant women, mothers and babies has flatlined for eight years since 2015, due to decreasing investments in maternal and newborn health.

Since 2015, there have been

around 2,90,000 maternal deaths each year; 1.9 million stillbirths – babies who die after 28 weeks of pregnancy – and a staggering 2.3 million newborn deaths, which are deaths in the first month of life.

"Pregnant women and newborns continue to die at unacceptably high rates worldwide, and the Covid-19 pandemic has created further setbacks to providing them with the healthcare they need," said Anshu Banerjee, Director of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing at the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"If we wish to see different results, we must do things differ-



ently. More and smarter investments in primary healthcare are needed now so that every woman and baby – no matter where they

live – has the best chance of health and survival," she added.

The Covid pandemic, rising poverty, and worsening humani-

tarian crises have intensified pressures on stretched health systems. Just one in 10 countries (of more than 100 surveyed) report having sufficient funds to implement their current plans.

Moreover, according to the latest WHO survey on the pandemic's impacts on essential health services, around a quarter of countries still report ongoing disruptions to vital pregnancy and post-natal care and services for sick children.

"Since Covid-19 pandemic, babies, children and women who were already exposed to threats to their well-being, especially those living in fragile countries and emergencies, are facing the heaviest consequences of decreased spending and efforts on providing quality and accessible healthcare," said

Steven Lauwerier, Unicef Director of Health.

Funding shortfalls and under-investment in primary healthcare can devastate survival prospects. For instance, while prematurity is now the leading cause of all under-five deaths globally, less than a third of countries report having sufficient newborn care units to treat small and sick babies.

To increase survival rates, women and babies must have quality, affordable healthcare before, during and after childbirth, as well as access to family planning services.

More skilled and motivated health workers, especially midwives, are needed, alongside essential medicines and supplies, safe water, and reliable electricity, suggested the report, launched at a global conference held in Cape Town, South Africa.

Funding shortfalls and underinvestment in primary healthcare can devastate survival prospects

Lopar likely to intensify into cyclonic storm today: IMD

The storm is expected to move initially north-northwestwards till May 12 morning and later towards Bangladesh-Myanmar coasts, India Meteorological Department said Tuesday



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Kolkata, May 9: A well-marked low-pressure area lies over the southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andaman Sea is likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm Wednesday, the Met department said.

The system is expected to move initially north-northwestwards till May 12 morning and later towards Bangladesh-Myanmar coasts, India Meteorological

intensify into a depression by Tuesday evening and subsequently into a cyclonic storm over south-east Bay of Bengal and adjoining areas of east-central Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea on May 10," the IMD said in a bulletin.

Light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy precipitation at isolated places is likely over Andaman and Nicobar islands from Tuesday to Thursday, the Met department said.

In Kolkata the discomfort level persisted Tuesday.

An IMD statement said the city experienced maximum 38.5 degrees celsius and a minimum of 29.5 degrees. The temperature in south Bengal districts hovered round 38-40 degrees celsius and will remain so in the next 24 hours.

The maximum humidity was 84 per cent in the city and its neighbourhood.

IMD, Deputy Director, East, Sanjib Banerjee said the temperature is expected to rise further Wednesday before the system moves forward and rains begin.



RAZING DOWN: An excavator engaged by BDA pulling down an unauthorised structure near Kalinga Studio Square in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday

OP PHOTO

State signs MoU for better health services

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: The Health and Family Welfare department Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the health system transformation platform (HSTP) to further enhance the quality of healthcare services in the state with innovative health systems design and proper use of resources.

The MoU was signed by Public Health director Niranjana Mishra on behalf of the state government and HSTP chief executive officer Rajiv Sadanandan, in presence of Health and Family Welfare secretary Shalini Pandit.

Speaking to the media, Pandit said, "Odisha is making rapid advances in providing universal health coverage to its entire population. HSTP, a not-for-profit organisation that aims to be an enabler of system changes in health sector, will collaborate with the department to augment the health



outcomes of the state's people."

As per sources, the primary contours of collaboration will involve strengthening the implementation of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana, improving competency of public healthcare providers, enhancing access to medicines at primary health facilities, leadership development programmes, developing long-term

The agreement will enhance access to medicines at primary health facilities, initiate leadership development programmes and develop long-term investment plans for the health sector

Focus will be on innovations in health systems design, strategy, research and optimal utilisation of resources

investment plans for the health sector, digital and other areas. Focus will be on health systems design, strategy, research, and optimising utilisation of resources.

"This partnership will create evidence synthesis, and develop conceptual prototypes/models, documentation of learnings from the best practices and innovations," said a department official.

The outcome can lead to scalable and sustainable models for Odisha and other states in the country as HSTP also works in other states.

Continued from P1

Naveen, Nitish...

Both Kumar and Patnaik lead their respective parties and it was expected that they would discuss politics ahead of the 2024 polls and work towards unity among regional parties.

Kumar is opposed to the BJP, while Patnaik's party has claimed that it maintains an equal distance from both the Congress and the saffron party.

The Bihar CM, who is trying to unite anti-BJP politicians, have so far met leaders of various parties including his West Bengal counterpart and Trinamool Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal with the aim to form an opposition front. Banerjee had met Patnaik in March this year.

Odisha BJP general secretary Prithviraj Harichandan said the meeting between Patnaik and Kumar will not have any impact on the saffron party.

"Naveen Patnaik always does whatever is in his interest. If he thinks that joining the third front will help him, he might do so and if he thinks it won't help, he will not join," he said.

BJD MLA Soumya Ranjan Patnaik said, "Kumar wants a reformative and alternative front in the country. He may discuss the matter with Naveen Patnaik. But the CM has already cleared that the BJD will maintain equidistance from both the Congress and the BJP."

Imran arrested

A large number of PTI workers also pelted stones at the residence of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah in Faisalabad city. Similarly protests were held in Multan, Jhang, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Khanewal, Vehari, Gujranwala, Hafizabad and Gujrat cities.

Interior Minister Sanaullah said that Khan failed to appear before the court despite being issued several notices. "The arrest has been conducted by the National Accountability Bureau for causing losses to the national treasury," he said.

He asserted that Khan was not tortured.

In a pre-recorded video issued by the party after his arrest, Khan said, "Till the time these words of mine reach you, I will be arrested in a baseless case. This shows that fundamental rights and democracy in Pakistan have been buried."

"All this is being done because they want me to accept the corrupt, imported government that has been forcefully imposed on us," Khan said.

He said if someone has a warrant, they should directly bring it to me. "Bring the warrant, my lawyer will be there. I'm ready to go to jail myself," Khan said.

His arrest came a day after the powerful Pakistan Army Monday slammed Khan for 'highly irresponsible and baseless' allegations by him against a serving ISI officer without any evidence.

Islamabad police released a brief statement quoting Inspector General (IG) Akbar Nasir Khan as saying that Khan had been arrested in relation to the case which concerns allegations that Bahria

Town allotted land worth Rs 530 million to Al-Qadir Trust, owned by the PTI chairman and his wife Bushra Bibi.

The police chief also said that the situation in Islamabad was 'normal'. He added that Section 144 had been imposed in the federal capital and action would be taken against violators.

It was said that Khan was shifted to NAB office in Rawalpindi where a medical checkup was carried out. However, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry claimed that Khan was shifted to an unknown location.

Geo News reported that Khan's medical examination was performed but the report was not released so far. The channel also said that the NAB was preparing to present him before an anti-corruption court Wednesday and secure physical removal to further probe in the case.

It also reported that a special room has been prepared by NAB's office in Rawalpindi and Khan will be kept there during the night. It is the same room of NAB where former premier Shahid Khagan Abbasi was kept when arrested during the government of Imran Khan.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court reserved its judgment in the case about the arrest of Khan from the court premises.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq took notice of the arrest by Rangers when Khan was present to mark his biometric attendance before the start of hearing of another case.

The court summoned various officials and heard arguments on the merit of arrest and if it was legal to arrest someone present inside the court.

Govt leveraging women SHGs to revive millet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: In line with the United Nations' declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets, the Chief Minister launched Odisha Millets Mission in 2017 to revive millets in farms and plates. Millets are small-seeded cereals which are a powerhouse of nutrition and are highly farmer and environment-friendly as their cultivation demands little attention and minimal water.

Millets are rich in iron, zinc, calcium and with their high fibre content they can play an important role in addressing lifestyle diseases.

The 'Odisha Millet Mission' was launched in 2017 and the state government has taken several initiatives, going out of its way to promote the consumption and



production of millets in the state. Odisha is harnessing the power of women's self-help groups (WSHGs) to revive millet in households under the purview of the Mission Shakti department. Through the Millet Shakti initiative, it is taking diverse millet dishes to consumers in urban and rural areas.

The inauguration of the Millet Shakti outlet and Millet Shakti cafe on the collectorate premises of the Ganjam district is the most re-

cent achievement. Ten additional such cafes, as well as six millet-based food trucks are operational and run by women's self-help groups and farmer producer organisations (FPOs). Through this, the government aims to promote gender equity among its citizens. The government is also collaborating with various renowned chefs and restaurants to provide training for the WSHGs.

The state government announced on Odisha Millet Day last year, that the millets mission would be implemented in all 30 districts of the state and that more farmers and organisations will be a part of it.

The state government also provides an assured market through Ragi procurement. It celebrated diversity by recognising and supporting custodian farmers from the tribal community.

AACCI Odisha chapter launched

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 9: Asian-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AACCI), an international chamber, was launched in Odisha Tuesday at an event in the presence of Governor Ganeshi Lal.

Lita Mohapatra as the state president of the chamber said the international chamber will help support economic growth, business association and develop new avenues of growth & opportunities in Asian & African countries and in the state. This would inspire future leadership to invest in and cultivate economic growth across borders.

The theme of the AACCI forum is to find ways to counter the slowdown that has prevailed world over due to the pandemic and explore new avenues for future growth.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

By an affidavit I, Pitta Girija Patro, W/o- Pitta Sankar Patro of Boipariguda, Dist.: Koraput to state that my name is mentioned as Malla Girija in my Board of Secondary Education Certificate and Berhampur University Certificate. Whereas my name is mentioned as Pitta Girija Patro in my Aadhaar card after my marriage. That both the names pitta Girija Patro and Malla Girija belongs to one and same person i.e. myself.

Sd./- Pitta Girija Patro

Humans inherited taller nose from...

In one genome region in particular, called ATF3, the researchers found that many people in their study with Native American ancestry, as well as others with east Asian ancestry from another cohort, had genetic material in this gene that was inherited from the Neanderthals, contributing to increased nasal height.

They also found that this gene region had signs of natural selection, suggesting that it conferred an advantage for those carrying the genetic material.

"It has long been speculated that the shape of our noses is determined by natural selection; as our noses can help us to regulate the temperature and humidity of the air we breathe in, different shaped noses may be better suited to dif-

ferent climates that our ancestors lived in. The gene we have identified here may have been inherited from Neanderthals to help humans adapt to colder climates as our ancestors moved out of Africa," said first author Dr Qing Li, Fudan University, China.

"Most genetic studies of human diversity have investigated the genes of Europeans; our study's diverse sample of Latin American participants broadens the reach of genetic study findings, helping us to better understand the genetics of all humans," said co-corresponding author Andres Ruiz-Linares, UCL.

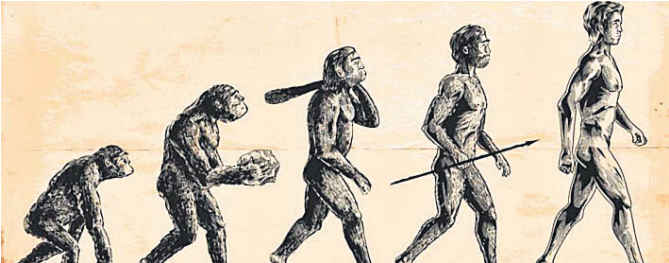
The study involved researchers based in the UK, China, France, Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Germany and Brazil.

'Removal of Darwin's theory worrisome'

Experts have voiced their concern that the decision to remove Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution from 10th-grade textbooks may help propagate superstitious beliefs and irrational practices among children as they grow up.

The Theory of Evolution, proposed by the English naturalist, explains that all living beings evolved through natural selection, which favours inherited traits that improve an individual's ability to compete, survive and reproduce.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) recently decided to remove the Theory of Biological Evolution from the Class X curriculum. This move was met with opposition from over 1,800 scientists, science teachers, and educators from renowned institutes such as Tata Institute of



Fundamental Research (TIFR), Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), and Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), who have written an open letter raising their concerns regarding the matter.

"We are concerned with the exclusion of the teaching of Darwinian evolution from the 10th standard curriculum, as seen in the information," the letter reads.

Calling the decision a "travesty", evolutionary biologists believe the theory is so fundamental and basic

that one cannot understand any aspect of the natural sciences without calling forth the concepts of the Theory of Evolution.

"The very existence of life in diverse forms, ecological interactions within and between groups, the relationship between living organisms and their immediate surroundings can't be explained without invoking evolution," Amitabh Joshi, Professor & Chair, Evolutionary and Organismal Biology Unit, Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific

Research, Bengaluru, told PTI.

"Sir Peter Medawar, the Nobel Prize-winning immunologist, is famous for having said in his 1977 book, 'The Life Science, that for a biologist, the alternative to thinking in evolutionary terms is not to think at all!" Joshi recalled.

Unlike anatomy or biochemistry, which branch out of biology, evolution is a perspective that renders sense to all factual information gleaned from biological research, added LS Shashidhara, Director, National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru and Professor, Biology, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune. "Evolutionary theory provides that logical framework for understanding biological diversity and dynamics and elevates them beyond just being a collection of interesting facts about species generally," Shashidhara said.

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Green Mahanadi Mission remains a non-starter

Lack of mangrove forests and destruction of existing ones are leading to rapid soil erosion in many parts of Kendrapara district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, May 9: Since Odisha experiences cyclones on a regular basis, the state government had finalised a plan to create mangrove forests on the coastlines of the most frequently-hit districts. However, years have gone by, but the plan remains on pen and paper only.

This district is one of the worst sufferers due to cyclones. The year 2021 was particularly bad for this district. Amid the Covid-19 wave, Kendrapara district was ravaged by three cyclones in the same year – namely ‘Yaas’ (in May), ‘Gulab’ (in September) and ‘Jawad’ (in December). Earlier, the district had been impacted by cyclonic storms ‘Phailin’, ‘Hudhud’, ‘Titili’, ‘Fani’ and ‘Amphan’. However, to some extent, the damage was not extravagant, due to the presence of mangrove forests on the district’s coastline.

Realising the importance of man-

grove forest in limiting the damage caused by cyclones, the Forest, Environment and Climate Change department decided to create one on 400 hectare of land along the coastline. A decision to plant 3,500 saplings was taken after cyclonic storm ‘Yaas’. It should be stated here that mangroves are also helpful in preventing soil erosion.

The Odisha government even launched the ‘Green Mahanadi Mission’ in 2018. The project aimed at plantation of mangrove saplings along the banks of the rivers in the Mahanadi basin. However, except for putting the plans on paper, nothing concrete has materialised so far.

As a result, tidal waves continue to erode the coastlines at a fast rate. Some of the islands like Nasi, Havelikhati, Babubali and Ekakula are on the verge of extinction due to erosion. The geo-synthetic tube wall built on Penthia coast to check coastal erosion has also not been successful.

Environmentalists like Hemant Kumar Rout and Ashok Kumar Swain pointed out that cyclonic storms have become a regular occurrence every year. They said that the way the district administration carries out relief work it should show the same promptness in creating mangrove forests along the coastline. Only then calamities like cyclones can be prevented and damages limited.

The environmentalists pointed out that Kendrapara district has a lengthy coastline and is home to several rivers and so it is always vulnerable to natural calamities. They added that nothing has been done to create mangrove forests along the coastline.

The Green Mahanadi Mission was launched for plantation of over five crore saplings in 41,000 spots along the Mahanadi, Ib and Tel river banks. The environmentalists said five years have elapsed since the launch of the project but the district administration is yet to identify land for the purpose. Locals also pointed out that mushrooming of illegal prawn gheris and encroachments have led to destruction of some of the existing mangrove forests.

When contacted, ADM Pitambar Samal said the district administration along with Forest and Panchayatiraj departments is laying stress on plantation of mangrove saplings and are trying to expedite the process.

state



ON A HIGH: Students pose with their degrees and certificates at the 5th convocation ceremony of the Odisha State Open University held at Tapaswini Auditorium in Sambalpur, Tuesday

Clash over audio messages, 5 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 9: A group clash took place in this city over audio messages, leading to arrest of five people, police said, Tuesday. The incident had happened in Kumbharpada locality under the jurisdiction of Dhanupali police station here late Sunday night.



A man residing at Kumbharpada locality sent abusive audio messages to a neighbour on Facebook messenger. The latter then blocked the sender. When the receiver came out of his house, which is only 100 metres from that of the sender, the latter, who was with three-four friends, again passed comments about his family, leading to a brawl which escalated into a group clash, a police officer said.

Sambalpur SP B Gangadhar said that the situation was brought under control and cases were registered from both sides Monday, following which five people were arrested. The sender of the messages and his associates are yet to be arrested and a manhunt has been launched to nab them, he added.

Congress bandh hits normal life in Koraput



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput, May 9: Normal life was severely hit Tuesday by the 12-hour bandh called by the Congress in Koraput district. The grand old party called for the bandh due to the negligent attitude of state and Union governments towards the district.

The bandh call was given by the district Congress unit president, Minakshi Bahinipati. The strike was supported by the Koraput Traders Association, various bus and truck owners associations and the district unit of CPI, Jeypore MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati said.

Officials said that protesters were seen picketing and staging road blocks at the main traffic intersection of this town, the Ambaguda and Gandhi Square on National Highway-26 which passes through Jeypore town. All private and government offices, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed. Vehicular movement came to a grinding halt with hundreds of vehicles left stranded on the road. However, emergency services were

kept out of the bandh purview while students were allowed to attend their examination centres.

The Congress observed the bandh demanding establishment of a Kendriya Vidyalaya in Jeypore and job opportunities for educated youths of Koraput district. The party also demanded appointment of CT, BEd and DIET trained students on priority basis as teachers in Koraput district, filling up vacant posts of teachers in Koraput B.Ed College and establishment of a Central Driving Training School. Congress also demanded jobs for trained ANM and B.Sc nursing candidates. Party leaders said that demands were brought to the notice of both the Odisha government and the Centre in the past, but to no avail.

Congress leaders said that the bandh was successful in Koraput town, Semiliguda and Sunabeda. Among others, Koraput Municipality chairman Narendra Mohanty, youth Congress president in the district Sukant Pattanaik, CPI cadres and members of various associations participated in the strike.

Lightning kills 3

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, May 9: At least three persons including a woman were killed Tuesday in separate incidents of lightning strikes during a thunderstorm under Godipada police outpost limit in this district. One person also suffered serious injuries and is currently fighting for his life at the Godipada health centre.

The deceased were identified as Dhaneshwar Parida, 65, of Bhaladihi Upar Sahi village, Padmabati Pradhan, 60, of Jakeda village under Haridabandha panchayat and Jeetendra Dora, 21, of



Badaput Mahulia village under Arada panchayat. On being informed, Sarankul police personnel reached the spot and sent the bodies for post-mortem to the district headquarters hospital.

Good news for women farmers

4 COLD STORAGE COMING UP IN STEEL CITY AS PART OF UNDP PROJECT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 9: There is good news for 5,000 women farmers engaged in vegetable cultivation in four blocks of Sundargarh district. They will not have to engage in distress sale anymore as four cold storages, each with a capacity of 30 tonne, are being constructed in this city. These cold storages will have a double function. On one hand, farmers can store there produces in the cold storage, while residents of this city can avail of fresh vegetables all through the year. This information was given by deputy commissioner of Rourkela Municipal Corporation (RMC), Sudhanshu Bhoi here Tuesday.

The cold storages are being constructed at an expense of ₹8 crore. The amount has been sanctioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) after Rourkela



found a place in the list of 15 best cities in the ‘International Bloomberg Mayor Challenge Contest’ in 2021. The results were announced in 2022. The move is aimed at ushering in financial and social growth for the local vegetable farmers and women self-help groups in Sundargarh district.

When completed, the cold storages will be of great help to women farmers of Lathikata, Kuanrunda, Nuagaon and Bisra

blocks. The women farmers from these blocks travel daily to this city to sale their harvested vegetables. However, they often have to resort to distress sale or throw away the leftover stock due to lack of cold storages. Now they will have the chance to store their produces.

The construction of the cold storage at Traffic Gate Market locality in this city has been completed while construction of another one at Chhend is underway. The construction of two more cold storages at Ambabagan and Panposh Market will start soon, Bhoi informed.

Assistant director Dushmanti Behera of Rourkela Horticulture department said that all the four cold storages will be of great benefit to the women farmers. Now they will get a fair price for their produces and not worry about selling those at dirt cheap rates.

Elderly siblings held for fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, May 9: Nimakhandi police in the Silk City arrested two siblings Tuesday on charges of fraudulent sale of land. The accused had used fake documents for selling the land to two brothers. The accused were identified as Dillip Kumar Mishra, 72, and his younger brother Ashok, 62, of Brahmanagar locality in this city. Both the accused are from the teaching profession. Dillip is a retired professor of a college while Ashok is a teacher, police said. A case was registered in this con-

nection and the accused were produced in court, police said.

Police informed that Sarat Kumar Mishra and his younger brother Salil are residents of Siddharth Nagar locality. The younger among the two, Salil, works as a director of a private bank abroad.

The accused brothers had sold six plots of land at Gurunthi mouza to Sarat and Salil in FY 2010-11 by using fake documents. The fraud was detected when Salil returned home few months back.

Sarat and Salil decided to construct a wall around their plots and visited Gurunthi mouza. There



a person opposed their construction work claiming some of the land as his own.

The victims verified the land records and related documents and

found that three out of the six plots are registered in the name of another person. They met Dillip and Ashok and confronted them on the issue. The accused duo assured to return ₹15 lakh to Sarat and Salil on a particular date and signed an agreement in this regard. However, they failed to return the money on the designated date.

The accused even threatened Sarat and Salil when the two urged the accused to return the amount. Left with no option, the victims lodged a police complaint, following which Dillip and Ashok were arrested.

Man dies during OBC survey in Balasore district



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, May 9: An elderly man breathed his last Tuesday afternoon while attending an Other Backward Class (OBC) survey at the Sobharampur school premises in this district.

The deceased was identified as Brahmananda Khanda, 62, a resident of Angaragadia locality under Industrial police station in this town. Sources informed that the survey was being conducted to assess the social and economic condition of OBC people. Khanda, who had gone to attend the survey, suddenly collapsed and became unconscious.

Locals rushed him to the district headquarters hospital here where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival. Police have registered a case of unnatural death and have sent the body for post-mortem, officials informed. They added that Khanda’s family members have also been informed. Sources meanwhile said that Khanda may have died due to a heatstroke.

Nabarangpur ginger farmers suffer due to lack of support

HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT BLAMED FOR FAILING TO CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT THE PRODUCT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Umerkote, May 9: Ginger cultivation by some Keralite and Kannada farmers over a thousand-acre land on the fringes of Umerkote in Nabarangpur district has become a source of envy for locals. The Keralite and Kannada farmers are transporting the harvested ginger to Chennai and Bangalore and earning huge amounts of money while their Odia counterparts are not being able to do much. This has happened due to lack of awareness about the crop among local farmers and absence of support from the Horticulture department.

The climate in Umerkote is conducive for ginger cultivation. However, local farmers have not been able to take advantage of the situation. The Keralite and Kannada farmers also buy the ginger grown by the locals at a very cheap rate and then make huge profits out of it by sending the product to Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Apart from Umerkote, farmers in Raighar and Jharigaon blocks in the district have also done ginger cultivation on small patches of lands and reaped good harvests. However, others are not interested in it as they fear losses and also because the support from the



Horticulture department is not forthcoming. They pointed out that if the department backed

them they would go for ginger cultivation.

Local farmers said that they are

missing out on good profits as prices of ginger has gone up from ₹80 per kilogram to ₹150/kg in the wholesale market. Currently, ginger traders at Semiliguda in Koraput district are selling it at ₹148 per kilogram. Local traders pointed out that soon ginger may hit the ₹200/kg-mark.

Sources said that the ginger cultivated in Semiliguda is transported to Nabarangpur and Umerkote for sale in local markets due to shortage in production. This has resulted in ginger prices going up considerably.

When contacted, junior Horticulture department offi-

cer, Saroj Kumar Senapati said that the government is always ready to support farmers. However, he pointed out that turmeric seeds were provided to farmer in 2012-13, but at that time they did not show any interest. Senapati however, stated that if farmers are interested, the department will provide them with turmeric and ginger seeds at subsidised rates.

Farmers on the other hand, alleged that they are suffering due to the absence of a proper Horticulture department office and an officer who can guide them accordingly.



COVID-19 Tamed

The world finally heaved a sigh of relief after the World Health Organization (WHO) announced last week that COVID-19 is no longer a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). The Director General of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, made public the recommendation by the organization's COVID-19 emergency committee not to treat the virus as a matter of international public health emergency. The committee arrived at this conclusion after it found decreasing trend in deaths and hospitalisations and high levels of population immunity. The COVID-19 PHEIC was declared on January 30, 2020. The decision forced countries to start reporting cases to the WHO to create worldwide surveillance.

In the three years that have passed since the PHEIC was first announced, countries reported 7 million deaths to the WHO. This is but a conservative estimate since figures have from time to time been fudged by governments to hide their failure to tackle the pandemic and make adequate arrangements for hospitalisation, testing and providing free vaccinations. It is believed the actual figures of death could be two to three times higher.

However, the PHEIC has led to the governments strengthening healthcare systems and rolling out vaccination drives. In India, more than 90% of people above the age of 12 years have received their two primary doses. Since many were infected and vaccinated, the population has developed a 'hybrid immunity' that has been shown to offer better protection against future severe disease. It appears the health systems are no longer stressed as they were at the height of the pandemic. The focus is now back on non-Covid conditions that were neglected during 2020 and 2021. In that sense the latest WHO announcement will hopefully help governments to rearrange their health priorities.

At the same time this is not yet time for celebration that the world is at last free from the grip of the deadly virus. True, advancement of science and technology since the last pandemic that ravaged the world a century ago has enabled the world to recover from the catastrophe in a relatively short period of time. But, Tedros has sounded a cautious note. It is time, he has pointed out, for countries to transition from emergency mode to managing COVID-19 alongside other infectious diseases.

As for India, it experienced three distinct waves of COVID-19 infections. The first wave, from mid-2020 to around September, 2020 was caused by the original variant. In those early days doctors were not sure of the treatment to be administered and the guidelines changed frequently. Testing was virtually non-existent. Death toll jumped every day devastating homes after homes. Hospitals could not provide even oxygen and patients afflicted with COVID-19 died without getting treatment. Some governments tried to hush up the extent of the disaster by dumping bodies into rivers like Uttar Pradesh did in the 'holy' Ganga.

The second wave in April-May 2021 saw a large number of cases and deaths over a short period. The surge was caused by the Delta variant. As a result, hospitals were overflowing with people in need of oxygen and ventilator support. The third wave, driven by the Omicron variant, was smaller in terms of number of cases and hospitalisations and deaths. At the peak of the pandemic in mid-January, 2022 about 2.1 million cases were reported in a week, but the number of deaths were only about 7,800.

However, with more testing facilities and vaccination coverage the situation has improved and the case load during April was reported to be about 12,000 a day. The numbers have, however, started going down again — only 3,611 new cases were reported across the country late last week.

For some time the people have been behaving as if COVID-19 is a thing of the past and constantly lowering the guard. The USA has already announced that its COVID-19 health emergency will end on 11 May. That means US residents will lose access to free COVID-19 testing, vaccines and treatment. This is a trap the world should not fall into. It is said eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. The maxim applies to the fight against coronavirus too.

WISDOM CORNER

- Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tunes without the words - and never stops at all. EMILY DICKINSON
- He who seeks does not find, but he who does not seek will be found. FRANZ KAFKA
- The cleverest of all, in my opinion, is the man who calls himself a fool at least once a month. FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

WORDSWORTH

Hoosegow

It's a fine old American slang term for a jail, still widely known today. Most people would connect it with the nineteenth-century cowboys of the Wild West. It's very likely that they knew the word, but it didn't start to be written down until the early twentieth century. The first known example was penned by Harry Fisher, better known as Bud, in one of his early Mutt & Jeff cartoons, of 1908: "Mutt ... may be released from the hooze gow." The word is from Mexican Spanish juzgado, a jail, which came from juzgado for a tribunal or courtroom. It shifted to mean a jail because the two were often in the same building (and the path from the one to the other was often swift and certain). In sense and language origin it's a relative of calaboose, which is also a prison (from calabozo, a dungeon, via the French of Louisiana). Hoosegow is now the standard spelling, though in its early days it was written half a dozen different ways. We link it in our minds with cowboys largely because so much of their lingo was taken from Spanish and then mangled to fit English ideas of the way to say it. That included buckaroo(Spanish vaquero), bronco (from a word that meant rough or rude), lasso(lazo), lariat (la reata), chaps (chaparreras), hackamore bridles (jáquima), mustang (mesteña), cinch (cincha), as well as the direct borrowings of corral and rodeo.

LOL

Stolen car

After shopping for most of the day, a couple returns to find their car has been stolen. They go to the police station to make a full report. Then, a detective drives them back to the parking lot to see if any evidence can be found at the scene of the crime. To their amazement, the car has been returned. There is an envelope on the windshield with a note of apology and two tickets to a music concert. The note reads, "I apologize for taking your car, but my wife was having a baby and I had to hot-wire your ignition to rush her to the hospital. Please forgive the inconvenience. Here are two tickets for tonight's concert of Garth



Brooks, the country-and-western music star."

Their faith in humanity restored, the couple attend the concert and return home late. They find their house has been robbed. Valuable goods have been taken from throughout the house, from basement to attic. And, there is a note on the door reading, "Well, you still have your car. I have to put my newly born kid through college somehow, don't I?"

FOCUS EMERGING MARKETS

THE DOLLAR RELIEF

The US Federal Reserve's decision to raise interest rates by 475 basis points over the course of 12 months, in a bid to curb inflation, was bound to be perilous. As should have been expected, it precipitated a dramatic shift in yield curves and exposed vulnerable financial institutions to interest-rate risks.

The collapse of the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), which was particularly exposed, with around 94 per cent of its deposits uninsured, revealed the threat posed by the Fed's strategy. But it also highlighted another major tension in the Fed's monetary-tightening campaign, one of the most aggressive it has waged since the Volcker era: the trade-off between price stability and financial stability.

For months, the Fed's dramatic rate increases elicited two primary concerns: how to bring inflation to heel without causing a recession, and the implications for fiscal and debt sustainability in emerging-market and developing economies (EMDEs), which are always among the first victims when major central banks tighten monetary policy.

Last year was especially difficult for EMDEs. Initially plagued by sharp capital-flow reversals as investors sought higher yields in the United States, these countries are now also contending with increased debt-servicing costs following the dollar's dramatic appreciation.

The "original sin" of denominating external debt in foreign currency (usually dollars) is all too common in low-income countries, which lack developed bond markets. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the foreign-currency share of these countries' debt is between 70 per cent and 85 per cent making them extremely vulnerable to exchange-rate volatility.

Yet there could be an unlikely silver lining to the US financial system's cloudy outlook. Recent interconnected developments – the collapse of SVB and other regional banks, the Fed's forecast of slower US GDP, and last month's precipitous drop in the Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index (indicating a possible recession) – may lead to a rebalancing of US monetary policy, triggering a depreciation of the dollar. This, in turn, would greatly reduce the pressure on low-income countries' depleted foreign-exchange reserves, creating the fiscal space they need to boost investment and economic growth.

The stronger dollar has resulted in interest-rate spikes, higher import costs, and anaemic growth in these countries. In fact, a recent study found that a 10 per cent dollar appreciation leads to a real GDP decline of about 1.5 per cent relative to trend in emerging economies. Moreover, the exchange-rate pass-through has magnified already high inflation and further eroded households' purchasing power, increasing the incidence of poverty and exacerbating the sharp deterioration in living standards caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tighter financial conditions have also raised refinancing risks in EMDEs, most of which were slapped with large credit-ratings downgrades at the height of the pandemic. Coupled with steep currency depreciations – the Egyptian pound, for example, lost more than half its value last year – this has left many EMDEs on the verge of debt distress and without access to international capital markets.

According to the Institute of International Finance, emerging-market net issuance of hard-currency debt was negative in 2022. As more and more EMDEs were shut out of the global financial system, bond issuance collapsed, and the few that could still access capital markets were forced to offer far higher risk premiums.

Even more dramatic was the impact of the dollar's appreciation on the beneficiaries of the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), under which governments could defer payments on external debt for two years to free up fiscal space for pandemic-related spending. Among the 45 DSSI beneficiaries, comprising the world's poorest countries, \$12.9 billion of debt service was suspended in 2020 and 2021.

But the dollar's appreciation against these countries' currencies, which averaged a whopping 22.5 per cent, increased their debt burden in domestic-currency terms by more than \$34 billion. For example, in Zambia, which moved from the DSSI to the G20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments after defaulting in 2020, the depreciation of the kwacha raised the debt burden to \$1.7 billion, more than double the \$700 million in temporary relief it received under the DSSI.

The operating environment in vulnerable countries, however, could become more favourable following SVB's collapse. The dollar's depreciation will continue and perhaps even accelerate later this year as the downward shift in US Treasury yields takes hold. The Fed's resumption of a more incremental approach since its March meeting – when it raised rates by 25 basis points, compared to the 75-basis-point increases of late 2022 – may mark a turning point in its monetary policy.

In a departure from the status quo under Fed Chair Jerome Powell, market expectations and the Fed's interest-rate trajectory are converging. The market is pricing in a policy pivot, based on the belief that the Fed will cut rates later this year. And in their latest dot plot, most Fed officials indicated that a target federal funds rate between 4 per cent and 4.75 per cent would be appropriate for 2023 and saw rates falling to 3-4 per cent in 2024.

In that case, the dollar's depreciation would act as a fiscally neutral stimulus to EMDEs. For most, especially low-income countries, it will reduce the costs of servicing external debt, increase their fiscal space, and alleviate pressure on foreign-exchange reserves. Moreover, a weakening dollar and the Fed's policy pivot could also bolster demand for developing-country assets, which could enable more sovereign and corporate borrowers to return to international capital markets.

To be sure, another geopolitical shock could spark a new bout of inflation, which might lead the Fed to revert to interest-rate hikes. But in the immediate future, the global outlook points to deceleration, with the threat of a credit crunch intensifying downward pressure on US prices, ultimately to the benefit of the world economy.

To the extent that it has rebalanced the Fed's policy objectives, the SVB debacle may have set the stage for an alignment of interests between the Global North and the Global South. For EMDEs, the potential fiscal relief cannot come soon enough.

The writer is Chief Economist and Director of Research at the African Export-Import Bank.

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IN JEST THIS

It's time for India to organise the Saree Games

A 43-year-old woman named Madhusmita Jena recently completed the Manchester Marathon in England in four hours and 50 minutes.

Just finishing a 42.2 km race is impressive to me. (I've never run more than 8 km.) But even more impressive to me is that Jena completed the marathon while wearing a traditional Sambalpuri saree. (I've never worn a saree, let alone run in one.)

A special needs teacher whose parents are from Odisha, Jena told iGlobal that she began running at age 29 and has completed 37 full marathons so far. But this year's Manchester Marathon was the first one in which she wore a saree.

"I wanted to showcase Indian culture, specifically Odia, as that's my roots," she said. "And it's also to show my friends who aren't allowed to wear shorts that you can run in anything – in sarees, salwar suits or any attire really. I want to encourage more people to go out and run."

Yes, you can run in any attire --



Melvin Durai

YES, YOU CAN RUN IN ANY ATTIRE -- AND YOU CAN RUN VERY FAST

and you can run very fast. If you don't believe me, just watch the videos online of people wearing traditional clothes and running at Olympic speeds when a tiger enters their village.

A short video of Jena running in her red saree and orange running shoes was widely shared online. She appears to be running with ease, but it was quite challenging, she said.

"It was very windy. I was holding the pleats in my hand, so I didn't trip," she said. "That slowed me down a lot, but it was definitely worth it."

Yes, it was worth it. She heard lots of cheers along the marathon route and received plenty of attention online and from Indian media. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik even congratulated her in a video conference call.

One Twitter user wrote, "Nice, hopefully, we can see people wearing patta saree playing the US Open, and wearing Tashar silk saree competing in a triathlon some day."

The Olympic triathlon involves swimming for 1.5 km, cycling for 40 km and running for 10 km. Anyone who completes it in a saree deserves a gold medal and a congratulatory call from the Prime Minister.

I'm excited about the possibility of watching more saree-wearing athletes. In fact, I'd like to nominate Madhusmita Jena as the official torch-bearer for the 2026 Saree Games. These games would be held in India, of course, perhaps in Bhubaneswar. All the competitors would be required to wear sarees, and for competitive reasons, there'd be a separate division for anyone who isn't female.

My favourite events to watch at the Saree Games would be the 100-metre hurdles, the pole vault and the high jump.

Finding saree-clad women to compete in certain events, such as weight-lifting and football, will not be hard, as some already do so.

Several videos of women lifting weights while wearing sarees can be found online.

You may have also heard of the recent football tournament in Madhya Pradesh in which the top scorer was wearing a saree. The best goalkeeper was also wearing a saree, as were all the other players.

The tournament, called "Goal in Saree," was held in March in the Gwalior district of Madhya Pradesh. Women from outside the district have shown interest in participating in the annual tournament, and organisers hope to eventually make it a state-level event.

What's clear to me is this: so many women who wear sarees have been reluctant to participate in athletics, partly because their attire puts them at a competitive disadvantage.

Like the "Goal in Saree" tournament, the Saree Games would level the playing field, allowing saree-clad athletes to compete against other saree-clad athletes.

If the Saree Games are successful, we can start planning the 2028 Salwar Kameez Games.

Audacious move

Sir, West Bengal has taken the lead in banning the controversial movie "The Kerala Story" across the state. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused the BJP of causing communal tension and declared that her state's goal was to prevent any occurrences of hatred and violence. Didi denounced the saffron party, pointing out, "First it was Kashmir Files, then it was the Kerala Story, and now they are exploring Bengal Files." She asserted that the film aims to discredit Kerala with false information. Could Didi's audacious move inspire other non-BJP states to do the same?

NJ Ravi Chander, BANGALORE

Gender equity

Sir, At a time when Indian women are breaking new ground in every sector, it is critical to pay them their due with dignity. Women's increased participation in the armed forces in recent years reflects their empowered standing in a democracy. Without a doubt, due to the political leadership's disinterest in this regard, the country's top court has occasionally played a beneficial role in this regard. In this sequence, the good news is that several contingents will be led by women in the Republic Day Parade in 2024. The tableau of women's empowerment on the route of duty will be preferred. According to reports, all troops and band units participating in the ceremonial event on the Kartavya Path may be female. The Ministry of Defence had submitted an official memorandum to the three services, as well as several ministries and departments, addressing the parade's planning for next year. Undoubtedly the recent move of the administration and the Ministry of Defence is symbolic. However, real progress in women's life will happen only when the rights granted to them become a reality. The current scenario of some international women wrestlers marching to the streets to protest the top executives of the sports organisation should not be seen in the country's many sectors and services. To defend women's rights and dignity, all agencies should implement a fair and transparent system. Governments should create a clear framework to provide half of the globe their rights and to make working conditions dignified. Compared with China and other developed countries, the role of women in India's workforce has been seriously neglected. It is necessary to reflect on the reasons why the female labour force is not optimally utilised in the development of the country.

Abhijit Roy, JAMSHEDPUR

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

Congress party is peddling a divisive policy to weaken India. They hate (Narendra) Modi ji because a humble man has been chosen as Prime Minister of India who also has emerged as the most popular global leader. But why should they hate India? After all, INC was in power for 6 decades

KIREN RIJUJI | UNION LAW MINISTER

The recently released movie 'The Kerala Story' is very important and based on contemporary social issues. The movie has already been declared tax-free in several states including Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh etc

GIRIRAJ SINGH | UNION MINISTER

We do not attach any importance if someone is writing about whether we create new leadership or not. It is their prerogative (to write), but we ignore it. We know what we are doing, and we are satisfied with it

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

16 held for 'links' with radical outfit HUT

Bhopal: The Madhya Pradesh police's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) Tuesday arrested 11 persons from two cities in the state, while five others were nabbed from Hyderabad for their suspected links with the Hizb-Ut-Tahrir (HUT), a radical outfit, a source said. With these arrests, police authorities claimed to have busted a module of the fundamentalist organisation. The MP ATS arrested 11 persons, including a gym trainer, software engineer and teacher, and booked them under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and other relevant provisions of the IPC, an official said.

Senior mining official shot dead

Hazaribag: A senior official of a mining developer-cum-operator (MDO) firm engaged by power utility NTPC was shot dead in Jharkhand's Hazaribag district Tuesday, police said. Two gunmen fired at Sharad Kumar, a senior vice president of the MDO, from close range near Barkagaon Forest Guest House in the Maoist-hit district when he was on the way to the site office of the Chhatti Bariatu coal mine in an SUV, they said. His bodyguard was also injured in the attack, Superintendent of Police Manoj Ratan Chotho said.

NEET aspirant dies

Kota: A 22-year-old NEET aspirant from Bangalore died after falling from the 10th floor of a multi-storey building in Kota in Rajasthan, police said Tuesday, suspecting it to be a case of suicide. Mohammed Nasid died on the spot around 11 pm Monday. The body has been kept at the MBS hospital mortuary and a postmortem examination will be done after his parents arrive from Bangalore.

MANIPUR VIOLENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata/Imphal, May 9: Heart-wrenching scenes were witnessed at the Imphal airport which is overcrowded with passengers young and old, many of them ailing and wailing, eager to flee from Manipur which has been shaken by violence since last week.

Patients with catheters just out of ICU, newborn and premature babies with mothers, women with advanced pregnancy, bed-ridden cancer patients, besides people with worry writ large on their faces – all thronged the airport in the past few days to take flights for places outside the state as soon as possible, officials said Tuesday.

India, Israel firm up mobility pact

In an address at a business forum, Eli Cohen said India, Israel and the Arab countries can together boost regional connectivity and railway networks in the Gulf region and would be carrying Indian shipments to the Israeli port of Haifa in the future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: India and Israel Tuesday firmed up a mobility pact and vowed to expand ties in a range of areas such as trade, regional connectivity, and defence as Israeli foreign minister Eli Cohen held talks with the Indian leadership. Cohen called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and held wide-ranging talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on ways to further expand overall ties.

The Israeli foreign minister arrived this morning on a three-day visit but announced his decision to cut short the trip in view of Tel

Prez confers eight Kirti Chakras, 29 Shaurya Chakras

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: President Droupadi Murmu Tuesday conferred eight Kirti Chakras, including five posthumously, to personnel of the Army and paramilitary and police forces for displaying indomitable courage and extraordinary valour in the line of duty.

Kirti Chakra is India's second-highest peacetime gallantry award. President Murmu, who is the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, also presented 29 Shaurya Chakras, including five posthumously, to the personnel of the armed forces, Central Armed Police Forces and state/Union Territory police during a defence investiture ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, the defence ministry said in a statement.



Sudip Sarkar, Constable/GD, in the Border Security Force, Rohit Kumar, Sg. Constable, J&K Police, and three others – one sub-inspector and two head constables, Chhattisgarh government, have been conferred the Kirti Chakra posthumously, it said.

Three personnel, including one of a Major-rank, from the Army's Rashtriya Rifles, have been conferred the Kirti Chakra, the ministry said. The Rashtrapati Bhavan later also shared pictures from the ceremony on its official Twitter handle.

Newborn and elderly patients waiting for evacuation



Some of these passengers with bullet injuries have also been seen in the airport. "You would feel like crying if you see the scene at

the Imphal airport," an AAI official told PTI over the phone from Imphal Tuesday. Close to 2,000 passengers are

Aviv's operation against a militant group in the Gaza Strip. The two sides inked an agreement that will allow 42,000 Indian workers to work in the Jewish state in the fields of construction and nursing, an Israeli read-out said. In an address at a business forum, Cohen said India, Israel and the Arab countries can together boost regional connectivity and railway networks in the Gulf region and would be carrying Indian shipments to the Israeli port of Haifa

Cohen called on PM Modi and held wide-ranging talks with Jaishankar, Rajnath Singh and Ajit Doval on ways to further expand overall ties



LET'S VISIT TAJ: Tourists use umbrellas to shield themselves from the hot summer sun during their visit to the Taj Mahal, in Agra

SAME SEX MARRIAGE

Have to be alive that concept of marriage has evolved, says SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: The Supreme Court said Tuesday it has to be alive to the fact that the concept of marriage has evolved and must accept the basic proposition that marriage itself is entitled to constitutional protection as it is not just a matter of statutory recognition.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, while hearing arguments on a batch of pleas seeking legal validation for same-sex marriage, said it would be "far-fetched" to argue that there is no right to marry under the Constitution, which itself is a "tradition breaker". Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for Madhya Pradesh, argued heterosexual couples have a right to marry in accordance with custom, personal law and religion. This has been continuing and that is the foundation of their right, he said, while repeatedly urging the court to leave the issue of according legal sanctity to same-sex marriage to the legislature.

"There cannot be any denial of the fact that State has a legitimate interest in regulating the marriage. Undoubtedly, That's how the state regulates the forms in which you can enter into a marriage," said the bench, which also comprised Justices S K Kaul, SR Bhat, P S Narasimha and Hima Kohli.

"The state has various other interests so it regulates facets of a mar-

riage. But we must accept the basic proposition that marriage itself is something which is entitled to constitutional protection and it is not just a matter of statutory recognition," the bench observed, in the course of the hearing that continued on the eighth day. Deliberating on the issue whether a person has a right to marry, the bench observed it has to start with

stranded at the premises of the airport, the terminal building of which can handle only 750 passengers - 250 for arrival and 500 for departure - at a time. Airline companies have put in additional flights to take the passengers, with their queue getting longer gradually as the ethnic violence broke out a few days ago and army

men have to be deployed. Doctors of the airport, employees of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and staff of different airlines have been working hand in hand round the clock to make the distressed people a bit comfortable. The AAI has been providing all stranded people with food and water.

The situation across violence-hit Manipur is improving, with no fresh reports of any untoward incident, while curfew has been relaxed in all the 11 districts where it was clamped, officials said Tuesday. Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh had Monday said that 60 people were killed, 231 injured and 1,700 houses including religious places burnt in the ethnic violence that rocked the northeastern state for the past few days.

The people of BJP, however, indulged in corruption and looted the budget that came to the municipal bodies. BJP has ruined everything. That's why the public is angry with the BJP

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY PRESIDENT

PAID HOLIDAY ON POLL DAY

The BJP government in Goa has declared May 10 as a paid holiday, which will also cover private establishments and industrial workers, in view of voting for the Assembly polls scheduled in neighbouring Karnataka

Seems Gehlot's leader is Raje not Sonia: Pilot



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, May 9: In a no-holds-barred attack on Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, his former deputy Sachin Pilot Tuesday said the recent speech by the Congress veteran indicated that his real leader is BJP's Vasundhara Raje Scindia and not his own party's Sonia Gandhi.

Mounting pressure on Gehlot and the party's central leadership in the run-up to the assembly polls, Pilot also announced a "Jan Sangharsh Yatra" over "corruption" and the recent cases of leaking of papers for state government recruitment exams.

The 125-km 'Jan Sangharsh Yatra' will begin from Ajmer, where the state's Public Service Commission (RPSC) is located, May 11 and end five days later in Jaipur. Pilot held a one-day fast last month in Jaipur over "inaction" by own party's government on alleged corruption during the previous BJP tenure in the state.

In the continuing tussle between the two leaders, Gehlot had on Sunday recalled the rebellion against him by Pilot and 18 other Congress MLAs in 2020.

The CM said he survived because BJP leaders Vasundhara Raje and Kailash Meghwal refused to support a conspiracy to topple an elected government through money power.

Pilot rejected the charge that the dissidents – whom he had led – took any money from the BJP.

The Congress leader also reminded that he is the one asking Gehlot to probe charges of "corruption" during Raje's tenure as the Rajasthan chief minister.



Pilot's sharp rejoinder to Gehlot's remarks this time comes a day before polling in the Karnataka Assembly elections, in which the Congress is being seen as a strong contender

He pointed at the "contradiction" in what Gehlot is claiming - that the BJP had conspired to topple his government and at the same time Raje helped save it. "This is a contradiction and it should be explained what you want to say exactly," he said.

"After listening to the CM's speech in Dholpur, it appears that his leader is not Sonia Gandhi, his leader is Vasundhara Raje Scindia," he told reporters.

His press conference took place the day former Congress president Rahul Gandhi visited the state, attending a training camp for party workers in Mount Abu.

A Rajasthan minister, Pratap Singh Khachariyawas, also appeared to contradict Gehlot Tuesday, saying the government survived because 102 Congress MLAs in Rajasthan had faith in Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi.

Targeting Gehlot over the claim of money changing hands during the 2020 revolt, Pilot said it is wrong to make allegations against leaders from one's own party. "It is condemnable. I deny the false and baseless allegations." The Congress leader said if there was any evidence, action should have already been taken by the CM.

PFI CONSPIRACY CASE

5 more held as NIA carries out searches in TN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested five people and carried out searches at six locations in Tamil Nadu Tuesday in connection with a case related to unlawful activities of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI) in the southern state, an official said.

The raids were conducted in Chennai, Madurai, Dindigul and Theni districts. With the latest arrests, the total number of people arrested in the criminal conspiracy case registered last year in the state to 15, a spokesperson of the NIA said. The official identified the accused arrested Tuesday as Abdul Razzak (47) of Chennai, Advocate Mohamed Yusuf (35) and Advocate M Mohamed Abbas (45) of Madurai, Kyzer A (45) of Dindigul and Sathik Ali (39) of Theni.

The searched place included properties of the accused, mostly houses and farmhouses. The searches led to the recovery of a host of incriminating material, including sharp-edged weapons, digital devices and documents, the spokesperson said. "Investigations had revealed that the accused had conspired and planned to eliminate their 'perceived enemies' who were not aligned to the PFI ideology and were opposed to its plans to establish an Islamic State in India by 2047," the NIA said.

In pursuance of the conspiracy, the spokesperson said, the accused persons had radicalized a large number of PFI cadres, especially the youth handpicked by the outfit's leadership, and had also trained them in the use of different kinds of weapons to assault, maim and kill their adversaries.

Delhi Lt Guv seeks report on Maken's claim

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Lt Governor V K Saxena has sought a detailed report from the chief secretary after Congress leader Ajay Maken sent a letter to him demanding a probe into the "extravagant" expenditure in the renovation of Delhi Chief Minister's residence.

In the letter to the LG, the Congress' senior spokesperson Ajay Maken claimed that the amount spent on Arvind Kejriwal's residence was not Rs 45 crore but Rs 171 crore and that too during the time of the Covid pandemic when people were running around for hospital beds and the lack of oxygen.

Maken had also expressed his deep concern and disappointment regarding the "extravagant" expenditure, environmental damage, and violation of heritage protection and zonal plans in the construction of the chief minister's residence in Delhi.

"The construction of the new CM house has cost the exchequer around Rs 171 crore, with 15 out of 22 officers' houses adjacent to CM's house at Flagstaff Road being demolished or got vacated. The rest have been asked to not re-allot with time. This figure (Rs 171 crore) includes around Rs 126 crore spent on purchasing 21 new Type 5 flats in the CWG Village to compensate for the housing shortage," the former Delhi Congress chief had



molished or got vacated. The rest have been asked to not re-allot with time. This figure (Rs 171 crore) includes around Rs 126 crore spent on purchasing 21 new Type 5 flats in the CWG Village to compensate for the housing shortage," the former Delhi Congress chief had

■ In the letter to the LG, the Congress' senior spokesperson Ajay Maken claimed that the amount spent on Arvind Kejriwal's residence was not Rs 45 crore but Rs 171 crore

■ Maken had also expressed his deep concern and disappointment regarding the 'extravagant' expenditure, environmental damage, and violation of heritage protection and zonal plans in the construction of the Chief Minister's residence in Delhi

claimed in the letter.

"I thus request you to conduct an inquiry into the matter. And if found guilty, grant sanction for prosecution of the principal beneficiary, the chief minister and the principal perpetrator the PWD minister of GNCTD," Maken had said.

After receiving the letter, the LG in a communication to the chief secretary directed that a report be submitted to him within seven days.

"Hon'ble LG has desired that a detailed report on each of the issues raised in the aforesaid representation be furnished within seven days," the communication read. Claiming that the renovation of the chief minister's house has violated the Master Plan Delhi (MPD) 2021, Maken had alleged that it has been constructed in the Civil Lines Old Bungalow Zone, an area protected under MPD 2021.

The AAP has maintained that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's official residence was built in 1942 and the roof had collapsed thrice. Following the roof collapse incidents, the Public Works Department suggested a new house be built, the party had said.

'The Kerala Story' declared tax-free



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, May 9: "The Kerala Story" will be tax free in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced Tuesday, prompting the opposition Samajwadi Party to say the state government should not use cinema and literature to impose "poisonous agenda on nation".

The announcement comes days after the Madhya Pradesh government said it will give tax-free status to the film, while West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ordered an immediate ban on its screening.

"The Kerala Story" to be made tax free in Uttar Pradesh," Adityanath said from his official Twitter handle. According to Director of Information Shishir, the UP chief minister will attend a special screening of the film in Lucknow on Friday.

"The Kerala Story" will be made tax free in UP. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will watch the special screening of the movie with his cabinet on May 12 in Lucknow," he said. Reacting to the decision without naming anyone, Samajwadi Party National General Secretary Shivpal Singh Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi, "Leave entertainment for entertainment" and don't use cinema

and literature to impose your poisonous agenda on the nation."

"Any art that stems from the womb of hatred will be destructive for the nation and the society," he added in his tweet. Directed by Sudipto Sen, "The Kerala Story" depicts how women from Kerala were forced to convert to Islam and recruited by the terror group Islamic State (IS). The film, which was released on May 5, has kicked up a political storm.

On the day of the film's release, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had credited the movie for bringing out terror conspiracies and used it to attack the Congress during an election rally in poll-bound Karnataka. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday announced tax-free status to the film in the state.

UP BJP secretary Abhijat Mishra on Saturday organised the screening of the controversial film for about 100 college girls in the city. The BJP leader booked a theatre and said the movie should be shown to young women to prevent them from 'love jihad'.

'Love jihad' is a term often used by right-wing activists to allege a ploy by Muslim men to lure Hindu women into religious conversion through marriage. Mishra had said the movie is based on true events and shows how gullible girls are manipulated and then converted.

Delhi University to send notice to Rahul



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: The Delhi University will issue a notice to Rahul Gandhi cautioning him against making any "unauthorised" visit to the campus in future, a senior official said Tuesday, days after the Congress leader met students at a hostel.

The notice will be sent either Tuesday or Wednesday, Delhi University Registrar Vikas Gupta said. He said the university will tell the leader that this kind of visit "jeopardise" the safety of students and that proper protocol needs to be followed for any such interaction.

Rahul Gandhi visited a Post-Graduate Men's Hostel of the university on Friday, interacted with

some students and had lunch with them. "It was an unauthorised visit. Many students were having lunch when he barged in. We cannot tolerate this on our campus. We will send a notice to Rahul Gandhi, telling him that he should not repeat such action and should not jeopardise the safety of students," the registrar said.

Meanwhile, the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the student wing of the Congress, has alleged that the administration was under pressure to take action against Rahul Gandhi. The registrar refuted the allegation and said, "There is no such pressure. It is a matter of discipline."

A day after Rahul Gandhi's visit, the Delhi University issued a sharp statement, saying the "sudden and unauthorised" entry raised serious security concerns for the hostel inmates and the leader. "University authorities will take necessary steps to avoid such incidents of this trespassing and will ensure that this does not happen in future again," it had said.



Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani during a roadshow in support of BJP candidate Deepti Mittal ahead of the second phase of UP local body elections in Bulandshahr

Unseasonal rain brings down power demand

Compared to the corresponding days of May last year, Delhi's peak power demand this year has been lower by up to 40 per cent, a discom official said



"Last May, Delhi's peak power demand crossed 6,000 MW on 20 days, 5,000 MW on 7 days, and 7,000 MW once. Even in 2019, the demand throughout the month ranged between 4,277 MW and 6,461 MW," he added.

Comparing the peak demands of April in both years, the official pointed out that the city recorded a peak demand between 4,170 MW and 6,197 MW in 2022 while it tapered off in 2023, with a range of 3,388 MW to 5,422 MW. The demand crossed the 5,000 MW mark only on three occasions.

In contrast to April this year, the peak power demand was higher on all the corresponding days in 2022, with a difference of up to 37 per cent, the official said. He, however, said the demand is likely to shoot up in the second half of May this year as the maximum temperature rises in the city.

Delhi clocked a record peak power demand of 7,695 MW in 2022 and it is expected to cross 8,000 MW by June or July this year, Delhi Power Department officials said. The city's peak power demand touched 7,323 MW in 2021, they added.

New initiative to check school dropouts

IN UTTAR PRADESH, THE SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL IS 2.75 PER CENT WHICH IS NEARLY THE SAME AS THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 2.96 PER CENT

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 9: Uttar Pradesh will now adopt the early warning system (EWS), a mechanism to alert schools about children who are at the risk of discontinuing studies.

The 15-member team led by Basic Education Minister Sandeep Singh that visited The Netherlands last month to study their innovative approaches to check school dropouts, will soon submit its reports to Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath. The team was accompanied by UNICEF officials.

Education specialist, UNICEF, Ritwik Patra, said, "While Uttar Pradesh has already introduced EWS in 150 schools of the Devi Patan division, there are some good practices in The Netherlands that can be adopted to enhance the programme."

"Any child not attending school is a serious issue there. The country strictly follows legislative commitment of not leaving any child

behind and both schools and parents are equally responsible for it. There is virtually no dropouts at the elementary level," Patra added.

Another member said: "The job market there is highly formal. Students are provided maximum flexibility to continue their education with many choices mixed with academic and vocational studies. Students are regularly counselled towards selecting the most appropriate choice of their education.

The counsellors work closely with schools, students and parents to ensure that all students have the most suitable opportunities and receive the minimum level of certification necessary for job market."

In Uttar Pradesh, the school dropout rate at elementary level is 2.75 per cent which is nearly the same as the national average of 2.96 per cent. Special efforts are made to ensure that children acquire the skills to fit into the job market. The team also learned about system of leave approval.

According to a UNICEF member, "The Netherlands has the system of excused and unexcused leaves. Children are supposed to take leaves from schools and schools only grant leaves as per government-authorised excused leaves." "Unexcused leaves are considered as absence from schools. Schools are penalised if excused leaves are granted for reasons not authorised by the state. For excused leaves, schools must inform authorities."

Sewer workers to have insurance cover in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Lucknow, May 9: Workers deputed for cleaning of sewer lines or septic tanks in Uttar Pradesh will now be covered under life insurance scheme.

Directives have been issued to urban local bodies and Jal Nigam to ensure that contractual and outsourced workers deputed for the job should have a life cover of at least Rs 10 lakh.

Executive officers, heading the ULBs and municipal commissioners, have been asked to ensure that contractors and private agencies engaged for cleaning of sewer lines should provide documents related to life insurance cover of the manpower.

"Safety gears also need to be provided to workers who are deputed for the job by the agencies or the



ULBs," said an officer from the directorate of ULBs.

It is estimated that in UP, 121 people lost their lives since 1993 while cleaning sewers. Urban development department and panchayati raj department have to ensure that the kin of individuals who have died in the past in urban and rural areas get their dues and Rs 10 lakh is awarded to their family as compensation.

Delhi govt taking steps to boost tourism

The tourism department has also placed its magazines mentioning tourist places across the city in hotels and the department is in the process of getting brochures printed, a senior official said

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: The Delhi government has taken a host of initiatives to boost tourism in the city such as roping in social media influencers, upgrading the tourism department website, and teaming up with the archaeology department and cab aggregators among others.

The tourism department has



also placed its magazines mentioning tourist places across the city in hotels and the department is in the process of getting brochures printed, a senior official said. The official added the

government has decided to team up with a cab aggregator popular among foreigners and place the brochures in those cabs.

It has also decided to revamp the Coffee Home in Connaught

Place to make it more appealing and people-friendly, she said. "We are planning to revamp Coffee Home located on Baba Kharak Singh Marg. It is famous among tourists. We are trying to develop it and give it a better look by installing a digital screen where people can see the menu," the official said.

The Coffee Home is operated by the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC). The government has been offering guided tours of historical sites under the Heritage Walks banner. To promote these, the tourism department has organised walks for influencers, who in turn posted videos about these tours on social media, giving visibility to the initiatives.

"Inviting social media influencers was a part of giving a boost to tourism in the city," the official said. Over the last few years, the tourism department has made its

website 'Dekho Meri Dilli' more user-friendly. "Through the website, people can check out the places they can visit, the nearest metro stations and the routes they should take. Moreover, we offer tickets to several of these places," she said.

The department is also tying up with the departments of archaeological and art and culture to organise activities. "We are thinking of tying up with the archaeological as well as the art and culture department because most of the historical places are under them. We can make a plan on how they intend the places to be explored," she said.

"We can organise programmes together like the Haunted Walk that we have started. We have also started the promotion activities of these places. We recently organised the walk for social media influencers and asked them to promote these sites," the official said.

of the day quote

Those who were responsible for riots and curfews in Kanpur and played with people's faith in the past are today the candidates of the Samajwadi Party. The kind of remarks they have made on women and the holy epic 'Ramayan' are not hidden from anyone

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

We are not going towards Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for which a national consensus is required, and the Centre will take the initiative on that

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | ASSAM CM

India shares deep ties with Bangladesh. Our culture, religion, customs and lifestyle have been intertwined for thousands of years. No one can ever break our ties with Bangladesh. India has played a key role in Bangladesh's history. The BSF has played a major role in the Liberation War of 1971

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

Two get 20 yrs in jail for gangrape

Muzaffarnagar (UP): A district court here Tuesday sentenced two men to 20 years in prison for gang-raping a woman during the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots. Additional District Sessions judge A K Singh also imposed a fine of Rs 15,000 each on convicts Maheshvir and Sikander. The two, who had raped the Muslim woman during the riots, were convicted under section 376(2)(g) (punishment for committing rape during communal or sectarian violence), 376D (gang-rape) and 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district in 2013 had resulted in the death of over 60 people, while more than 50,000 people were displaced.

CBI to probe Kerala Secretariat fire case

Thiruvananthapuram: The Crime Branch wing of the Kerala police will conduct a probe into the fire which broke out at the 'North Sandwich Block' of the Secretariat complex here Tuesday morning. The fire erupted near the office of Industries Minister P Rajeeve, located on the third floor, police said. DGP Anil Kant issued an order entrusting Crime Branch to investigate the fire incident, an official statement said.

Fire at Army Base Hospital

New Delhi: A fire broke out at the Army Base Hospital in the Delhi Cantonment area in the southwestern part of the city early Tuesday but no one was injured in the incident, officials said. Information about the fire was received around 3.50 am following which 11 fire tenders were rushed to the spot, they said. According to fire officials, the fire, which had spread to the operation theatre, intensive care unit (ICU) and the store room of the hospital, was brought under control around 5.30 am.

2 LeT terrorist associates held

Srinagar: Two terrorist associates linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT were arrested by a joint security team in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district Tuesday and incriminating materials, IED and arms and ammunition recovered from their possession, police said.

3rd cheetah dies in Kuno

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, May 9: India's Project Cheetah received yet another jolt as one more cheetah died at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park (KNP) Tuesday - the third to die in just over a month.

'Daksha' is the second female and the second South African cheetah to die at the KNP after male cheetah 'Uday' last month. It died just a fortnight after six-year-old Uday died of a heart attack, according to a post-mortem report.

"Daksha was found in injured condition in the morning by a monitoring team of the KNP. She was immediately given necessary medication and treatment but she died around 12 noon," a Forest Department official told IANS.

It was released in enclosure number one and two male cheetahs, Vayu and Agni, were released from boma 7 (enclosure) for mating, but it appears that the male cheetahs turned violent during the process - which is "a normal thing", according to the official. The female cheetah may have got injured due to a "violent interaction" during mating with the adult males,



Madhya Pradesh's Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, JS Chouhan said. "Daksha was immediately given necessary medication and treatment but she died around 12 noon," he added. A total of 20 cheetahs, translocated from Namibia and South Africa, were moved to Kuno National Park in September and February, respectively, in the initial phase of a plan to revive the species that disappeared from the country 70 years ago.

Earlier, female Sasha (Namibian) and Uday (South African) died March 27 and April 23, respectively. Last week, a senior member of the National Tigers Conservation Authority (NTCA) had told IANS had maintained that 'Project Cheetah' is long project and the death of few cheetahs would not affect it.

However, the NTCA member had said that a team would visit to KNP to review the condition of cheetahs. Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the first batch of eight spotted felines - five females and three males - from Namibia into a quarantine enclosure at Kuno on his 72nd birthday September 17 last year.

SHRADDHA MURDER CASE

Delhi court frames charges against Aaftab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Setting the stage for trial, a court here Tuesday framed charges of murder and disappearance of evidence against Aaftab Amin Poonawala, accused of strangling his live-in partner Shraddha Walkar to death and chopping her body into pieces.

Additional Sessions Judge Manisha Khurana Kakkar said the prosecution had placed on record "sufficient material" and prima facie a case was made out against the accused.

The court, however, said whether Poonawala could be convicted for both offences was a matter of trial and could not be decided at the present stage. "Sufficient material has been placed on record by the prosecution which warrants trial of the accused for both the offences. From the aforesaid material placed on record by the prosecution, a prima facie case for the offences under sections 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence) of the Indian Penal Code is made out against the accused," the judge said.

Other evidence included blood stains in the fridge and kitchen shelves, DNA profiling report, voice recording on Dr Practo app, previous complaint given by the deceased in Mumbai, postmortem report, call detail records and statements of several witnesses, the judge noted. Poonawala allegedly strangled Walkar May 18 last year, sawed her body into pieces and kept them in a fridge for almost three weeks at his residence in south Delhi's Mehrauli.



AGENCIES

Bangalore, May 9: After a high voltage campaign, it is now time for the mega battle of ballots in Karnataka, with the state all set to elect its representatives to the 224-member Legislative Assembly Wednesday.

With the stakes being high in this election, the major political parties in contention - the BJP, Congress and JD(S) - and their candidates have made a strong pitch seeking to boost their prospects at the hustings.

The voting will take place from 7 am to 6 pm. A total of 5,31,33,054 electors are eligible to cast their votes in 58,545 polling stations across the state, where 2,615 candidates are in the fray. Among the electors, 2,67,28,053 are male, 2,64,00,074 female and 4,927 "others", while among the candidates 2,430 are male, 184 female and one from third gender.

As many as 11,71,558 are young



Do the laws apply to Prime Minister or not and if ECI has the capacity and willingness to enforce such mandate or remain a helpless bystander? Truly a litmus test for ECI

RANDEEP SURJEWALA | CONG GENERAL SECY IN CHARGE OF K'TAKA

SIGNIFICANT MOVE

The Army has decided to go for a common uniform for the officers of the brigadier rank and above from August 1 irrespective of their parent cadre or regiment, military sources said Tuesday



STRICT VIGIL: Rapid Action Force (RAF) and police personnel patrol along the site of the second blast at the Heritage Street in Amritsar. A second blast in 36 hours rocked the area around the Sikh holy site of the Golden Temple

PTI PHOTO

KERALA BOAT TRAGEDY

HC initiates suo motu PIL; Police slaps murder charges against owner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi/Malappuram, May 9: The Kerala High Court Tuesday swung into action by initiating a PIL on its own to probe into the violation of rules that led to the Tanur boat accident, while the state police has invoked murder charges against the owner of the vessel that capsized.

Twenty two people, including women and children, were killed when a houseboat carrying over 30 passengers overturned and sank near the Tuvalthiram beach in Tanur area of Malappuram district Sunday.

Under attack from various quarters, including the opposition, the Kerala government also strengthened the investigation into the accident by booking the owner of the boat for murder. Initiating the PIL, the High Court directed the District Collector, Malappuram, to file a report into the incident that occurred near an estuary in the Tanur area of Malappuram district.

A vacation bench of Justices Devan Ramachandran and Shoba Annamma Eapen termed the boat accident "shocking" and "haunting" and said their "heart was bleeding" and they "underwent sleepless nights" after seeing the lifeless

bodies of the children. Taking a serious note of the Tanur tragedy, the court said such accidents have been happening in the state since 1924 with "frightening regularity" solely due to "the deadly cocktail of callousness, greed, and official apathy." It also arraigned the Kerala government, the District Tourism Promotion Council of Malappuram, the police chief and collector of that district, Tanur Municipality, the Port Officer, Alappuzha, and the senior Port Conservator, Beypore, as initial respondents in the PIL, which is slated to be heard next May 12. The bench said many more such incidents may happen "unless we put our foot firmly down" as the "patently visible" causal factors - overloading, blatant violation of statutory law, and skipping of essential safety requirements - were being repeated with impunity and "without fear, care, or caution". Prima facie, had the officials and authorities who were duty bound to monitor such boating operations done so, "this mishap-like the several earlier ones - would have never happened," the court observed.

The court said that every such tragedy "triggers" a routine investigation followed by recommendations that go "unheeded" thereafter.



INDIAN WHATSAPP USERS FLOODED WITH SPAM CALLS

These spam calls with international numbers, mostly from African and Southeast Asian countries, along with fake messages from unknown users, have flooded WhatsApp and Indians have nowhere to go but Twitter to share their ordeal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, May 9: Millions of WhatsApp users in India have been left baffled at the amount of international spam calls they have been receiving in the last couple of days, leaving many at the risk of financial loss.

These spam calls with international numbers, mostly from African

and Southeast Asian countries, along with fake messages from unknown users, have flooded WhatsApp and Indians have nowhere to go but Twitter to share their ordeal.

Meta-owned WhatsApp has close to 500 million users in India. "What is happening with WhatsApp? So much spam. So much," Gaurav Munjal, Founder, Unacademy Group, posted Tuesday. "WhatsApp



Business was a big blunder. Brian Acton (WhatsApp Co-founder) has

been proved right," tweeted Sourabh Mathur, an entrepreneur.

Although the mobile numbers show country codes of Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Ethiopia, it is not necessary that these calls are actually coming from these countries

neur. Although the mobile numbers show country codes of Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Ethiopia, it is not necessary that these calls are actually coming from these countries. Most of these calls start with +251 (Ethiopia), +62 (Indonesia), +254 (Kenya), +84 (Vietnam) and other countries. Ray Stings @Purba_Ray tweeted: "I keep getting missed calls on WhatsApp from unknown num-

bers from different parts of the world every single day. It's so bad, I have to keep my phone on silent".

WhatsApp was yet to comment on the growing fake spam calls on its platform.

"Same here. Seems to be an epidemic. @whatsapp needs to allow us to choose to get calls from contacts only," posted Shivam Vij, New Delhi-based independent journalist. Another affected WhatsApp user said: "I get that (scam calls) at 5 in the morning. Almost my daily morning alarms now". "That's JAMTARA GLOBAL, for you," posted another. Another scam that is being reported in India is that of receiving job offers via WhatsApp messages.

of the day quote

Moderation in economic activity is being reflected in the government's books, while the country is facing challenges ahead, including the cost of living, the impact of recent extreme weather and the uncertain global economy

GRANT ROBERTSON | NEW ZEALAND FINANCE MINISTER

The federal budget for 2023-24 will feature an expected first surplus in over a decade

JIM CHALMERS | AUSTRALIA'S TREASURER

It is important for the EU to keep its promise toward prospective members such as the Western Balkans countries, while ensuring they undertake the necessary reforms to be able to join the bloc

OLAF SCHOLZ | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

SHORT TAKES

Nepal's tourism industry recovering

Kathmandu: Nepal's tourism industry is recovering faster in the post-Covid era, with 3,26,528 tourist arrivals by air from January to April this year, of which around 28 per cent were Indians. "Tourist arrivals in the country have increased a lot in the recent period, which is very positive and encouraging," said Nandini Lahe-Thapa, senior director of PR and Publicity, at Nepal Tourism Board. The tourism board estimated that around 1.2 million tourist arrivals, an equivalent to the arrivals the Himalayan nation achieved in 2020, were expected this year.

Novavax to chop workforce

Washington: Novavax is cutting about a quarter of its workforce as the COVID-19 vaccine maker seeks to slash expenses while dealing with uncertain future revenue. The company said Tuesday that it expects to trim next year's costs for research and development as well as selling, general and administrative expenses by about 40% to 50 per cent compared to 2022. The company had 1,992 full-time employees as of February 21, according to Securities and Exchange Commission filings. The job cuts announced on Tuesday would equate to 498 employees.

Mountaineer to be flown to Delhi

Kathmandu: The family of injured Indian mountaineer Anurag Maloo is planning to fly him to New Delhi from Nepal for further treatment as the infection is spreading in his body, a relative and an official of an expedition company said here Tuesday. Anurag, 34, a resident of Kishangarh in Rajasthan, went missing in mid-April after he fell from around 6,000 meters while descending from Camp III. Mount Annapurna is the 10th highest mountain in the world. He was found alive in a deep crevasse at some 5800-metre altitude on April 20 after three days of continuous search by a team of rescuers.

Dozens injured

Berlin: A highway collision between a long-distance Polish bus and a truck injured dozens of people in eastern Germany, police in Poland and German news agency dpa reported. The crash happened Tuesday on the A 12 highway in the state of Brandenburg between the towns of Storkow and Fredersdorf. German police said 35 people were hurt, including six with severe injuries, dpa said.



Iran's nuclear activities are 'peaceful' and the country is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and committed to the safeguards agreements

NASSER KANAANI | IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN

UN REPORT

Some Afghan women employed by the United Nations have been detained, harassed and had restrictions placed on their movements since being banned by the Taliban from working for the world body, the UN said Tuesday



Russia targets Kyiv on Victory Day

REUTERS

Kyiv, May 9: Russia fired cruise missiles at Kyiv Tuesday and paraded troops across Red Square for its annual celebration of victory in World War Two, pared back amid shortages of manpower and weaponry at the front after a failed winter campaign in Ukraine.

In a fiery 10-minute speech in front of the Kremlin walls, President Vladimir Putin thundered against "Western global elites" and said civilisations was at "a decisive turning point". "A real war has been unleashed against our homeland," said the Russian leader, who last year ordered what the West calls an unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, destroying cities and killing thousands of civilians. The holiday commemorating the Soviet victory in World War Two is the most important day in the calendar in Russia under Putin, who casts his invasion of Ukraine as analogous to Russia's fight against the Nazis. Ukraine, which suffered proportionally greater losses than Russia in World War Two, calls that an abuse of shared history to justify aggression. The parade was full of traditional pomp but unmistakably



A Russian Yars intercontinental ballistic missile system drives in Red Square during a military parade on Victory Day, which marks the 78th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in World War Two, in central Moscow, Russia

REUTERS

scaled down from previous years. In place of phalanxes of modern battle tanks, a single World War Two-vintage T-34 tank rolled across the square. The usual fighter jet fly-over was cancelled.

Putin's message was also undermined by a new profanity-laced tirade from the boss of Russia's Wagner private army directed at Moscow's generals for failing to

give his forces enough weapons. "A combat order came yesterday which clearly stated that if we leave our positions (in Bakhmut), it will be regarded as treason against the motherland," Yevgeny Prigozhin said in an audio message. "(But) if there is no ammunition, then we will leave our positions and be the ones asking who is really betraying the Motherland."

- Russia marks Victory Day with new air strikes on Ukraine
- Putin says West has unleashed war on Russia
- EU executive leader visits Ukraine for Europe Day
- Kyiv says most Russian missiles shot down

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Moscow had failed to capture Bakhmut despite a self-imposed deadline to give Putin a battlefield trophy in time for the holiday. Ukraine said its air defences had shot down 23 of 25 Russian cruise missiles fired chiefly at the capital Kyiv overnight, and there were no reported casualties. It was the second night in a row of major Russian air strikes and fifth so far this month.

The day provided Zelenskyy an opportunity to demonstrate Ukraine's clear break from Moscow by hosting EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "Our efforts for a united Europe, for security and peace, need to be as strong as Russia's desire to destroy our security, our freedom, our Europe," Zelenskyy said at their joint news conference.



A glimpse from the inaugural ASEAN India Maritime Exercise which successfully culminated in the South China Sea, Monday

PTI PHOTO

SUDAN'S DEATH TOLL RISES

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo, May 9: The death toll from the ongoing clashes in Sudan has risen to 604 people, including civilians, the UN health agency said on Tuesday.

The new figures come as representatives of the warring parties are holding talks in Saudi Arabia.

More than 5,100 people were also wounded in connection with the fighting, World Health Organisation spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic said.

On Monday, the Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate, which tracks only civilian casualties, said that

TALKS CONTINUE

the fatalities had reached 487.

The conflict started on April 15, after months of escalating tensions between the military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and a rival paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo.

The fighting has turned urban areas into battlefields and displaced nearly 700,000 people on top of the 3.7 million who had already been internally displaced within the country before the conflict began, according to the UN migration agency.

TIT-FOR-TAT MOVE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beijing, May 9: China announced the expulsion of a Canadian diplomat Tuesday in retaliation for Ottawa ordering a Chinese consular official to leave the country over alleged threats he made against a Canadian lawmaker and his family.

The Foreign Ministry said China was deploying a "reciprocal countermeasure to Canada's unscrupulous move," which it said it "firmly opposes."

It said Jennifer Lynn Lalonde, the top Canadian diplomat in the business hub of Shanghai, has been asked to leave by May 13 and

that China "reserves the right to take further actions in response."

The Canadian Embassy in Beijing had no immediate comment on the expulsion order.

Canada earlier on Tuesday said that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government is expelling a Chinese diplomat whom Canada's spy agency alleged was involved in a plot to intimidate an opposition lawmaker and his relatives in Hong Kong.

China took control of the former British colony in 1997, and in recent years has effectively ripped up an agreement to maintain its unique political and civil rights

Israel kills 3 Gaza militants, 10 others



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gaza City, May 9: Israel killed three senior commanders of the militant Islamic Jihad group in targeted airstrikes early Tuesday, the military said. Palestinian health officials said 13 people were killed in all, including the commanders, their wives, several of their children and others nearby.

The attacks in densely populated residential areas set the stage for a new round of heavy fighting. They hit the top floor of an apartment building in Gaza City and a house in the southern town of Rafah.

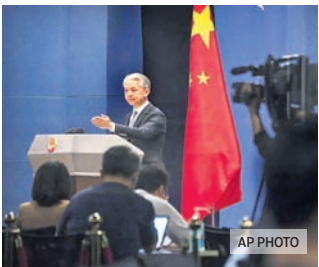
The Palestinian Health Ministry said that along with the three commanders, their wives, several of their children and others nearby were also killed — 13 in all.

The Russian diplomatic delegation in Ramallah, in the West Bank, said that one of the men killed, Jamal Khaswan, was a Russian national, and that his wife and son were also killed in the airstrike. Khaswan was a dentist who lived downstairs from Izzelddeen in Gaza City.

The Israeli airstrikes drew condemnation from Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh, Jordan's foreign ministry and the Egyptian government, which often brokers between Israel and Palestinian militant groups in the Gaza Strip.

Tor Wennesland, the U.N. Envoy to the Mideast, said he was "deeply alarmed" and condemned the civilian deaths, calling on all sides "to exercise maximum restraint."

Dawood Shahab, an Islamic Jihad official, said that there would be a "unified Palestinian response" to the strikes at a time and place of its choosing. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh warned that Israel will "pay the price" for the killings.



Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin

for 50 years by gutting its democratic institutions and free press.

China regularly uses threats against family members to in-

timidate critics in the Chinese diaspora, particularly those from minority groups.

A senior Canadian government official said Toronto-based diplomat Zhao Wei has five days to leave the country. It wasn't immediately clear if Zhao was still in Canada.

Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said in a statement that Canada declared Zhao "persona non grata" and that Canada would "not tolerate any form of foreign interference in our internal affairs."

"Diplomats in Canada have been warned that if they engage in this type of behavior, they will be sent home," she said.

BOOSTING TIES

The CPEC is officially regarded as the flagship project of China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - the pet project of President Xi Jinping

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, May 9: Pakistan, China and Afghanistan have agreed to forge closer economic ties by extending the Beijing-backed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan to fully harness the country's potential as a hub for regional connectivity.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, his Chinese counterpart Qin Gang and Afghanistan's Taliban-appointed acting Foreign Minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi held the 5th China-Afghanistan-Pakistan

Foreign Ministers' Dialogue, where they also underlined the need to prevent any group from using their territories for terror activities against any nation.

The three countries reiterated their resolve to fully harness Afghanistan's potential as a hub for regional connectivity and reaffirmed "their commitment to further the trilateral cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and to jointly extend the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan," according to a joint statement issued on Monday, two days after the meeting here on May 6.

The USD 60 billion CPEC aims to connect Pakistan's Gwadar port in Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province. India has objected to the CPEC as it traverses through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The CPEC is officially regarded as the flagship project of China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - the pet project of President Xi Jinping.



The three foreign ministers stressed the importance of existing projects, including CASA-1000, TAPI, Trans-Afghan Railways etc., to enhance regional connectivity and ensure economic uplift and prosperity for the region's people.

While agreeing to enhance transit trade through Gwadar Port, the three parties emphasised the need to push forward "hard connectivity" in infrastructure and "soft connectivity" in norms and standards while further exploring the facilitating measures for the move-

Pak, China agree to extend CPEC to Afghanistan

ment of people and trade activities between the three countries.

In the statement, they stressed the need to prohibit any individual, group or party, including the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) etc., to use the territories of the three nations to harm and threaten regional security and interests.

They also underscored the need to refrain from intervening in Afghanistan's internal affairs and promote peace, stability and re-

construction there. The three sides asserted the need to tackle security challenges posing a serious threat to regional and global security, directly impacting the entire region's stability and economic prosperity.

The ministers stressed the importance of exploring realistic pathways towards the revival of the Afghan economy, agreeing to consider further supporting its reconstruction and exploring trilateral investment possibilities for industrialisation and job creation.

They also stressed the importance of sustained and urgent humanitarian support to the people of Afghanistan, underlining that it must remain delinked from any political situation. The three sides reaffirmed continued cooperation in areas of mutual interest like economic development, capacity building, and improving livelihoods and agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fields such as agriculture, trade, energy, capacity building, and border management, among other areas.

of the day quote

There is a fertiliser crisis in the world. In such a situation, a subsidy of Rs 2,000-2500 per bag is being given to farmers in our country. Strict action will be taken against those engaged in diversion, be it distributors or users or outlets

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA |
CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS MINISTER

BSNL is gearing up to offer 4G services, and work is on in full swing to bring these services to consumers soon

DEVUSINH CHAUHAN |
MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS

We have raised the issue of unauthorised MBOs in the two-wheeler industry, which are not certified as bona fide dealers and sell unregistered vehicles without any trade certificates or after-sales services

MANISH RAJ SINGHANIA | PRESIDENT, FADA

SHORT TAKES

LinkedIn axes 716

London: Professional networking platform LinkedIn says it's laying off more than 700 workers and shuttering its China jobs app, in the latest round of tech industry downsizing. LinkedIn blamed "shifts in customer behavior and slower revenue growth" for the cuts, which it announced in a blogpost late Monday. Technology companies have resorted to recurring waves of layoffs over the past year, in new phenomenon to hit the industry that reverses more than a decade of mostly unbridled growth.

JAL defaults again

New Delhi: Crisis-hit Jaypee Group's flagship firm Jaiprakash Associates has defaulted on loans worth Rs 3,956 crore, including principal and interest amount. In a regulatory filing, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) informed that the company on April 30 defaulted on repayments of a principal amount of Rs 1,642 crore and interest of Rs 2,314 crore. In September 2018, ICICI Bank filed an insolvency petition against JAL. The country's biggest lender SBI has also moved the NCLT against JAL, claiming a total default of Rs 6,893.15 crore as of September 15, 2022.

Adani to prepay \$130 million debt

New Delhi: Billionaire Gautam Adani's group Tuesday said it will prepay \$130 million of debt as it looks to boost investor confidence post being targeted by a US short-seller. Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, the ports company of the Adani Group, had last month floated a tender to buy back as much as \$130 million of its July 2024 bonds and similar amounts in each of the next four as it looked to regain investor confidence by showing that its liquidity position is comfortable. In a stock exchange filing, APSEZ said an aggregate principal amount of \$412.7 million was validly tendered.

Mitsubishi to set up AC plant in TN

Chennai: Electronic equipment manufacturer Mitsubishi Electric India has signed a memorandum of understanding to set up a new manufacturing unit in Tamil Nadu at an investment of about Rs 1,891 crore and the foundation stone was laid by Chief Minister M K Stalin here Tuesday. The manufacturing facility for room air-conditioners and compressors is expected to come up on a 52 acre land.



Finally. We have sizeable reserves of a natural resource critical for growth in the 21st century. A signal that India has an electrifying future. But the key element in the supply chain is refining, not reserves, where China has a huge lead. We need to step up quickly to install that capacity

ANAND MAHINDRA | CHAIRMAN, MAHINDRA GROUP

INDIA EXTENDS SL CREDIT LINE

India has extended a \$1 billion credit line for Sri Lanka by one year, a Sri Lankan official said, giving the crisis-hit country a backup funds to pay for essential imports. The credit line, part of about \$4 billion in emergency assistance extended by India during the peak of Sri Lanka's financial crisis early last year, was scheduled to end in March



SOVEREIGN RATING

Fitch affirms India at 'BBB-'

ALL THE THREE GLOBAL RATING AGENCY -- FITCH, S&P AND MOODY'S -- HAVE THE LOWEST INVESTMENT GRADE RATING ON INDIA, WITH A STABLE OUTLOOK. THE RATINGS ARE LOOKED AT BY INVESTORS AS A BAROMETER OF A COUNTRY'S CREDIT WORTHINESS AND IMPACTS BORROWING COST

AGENCIES

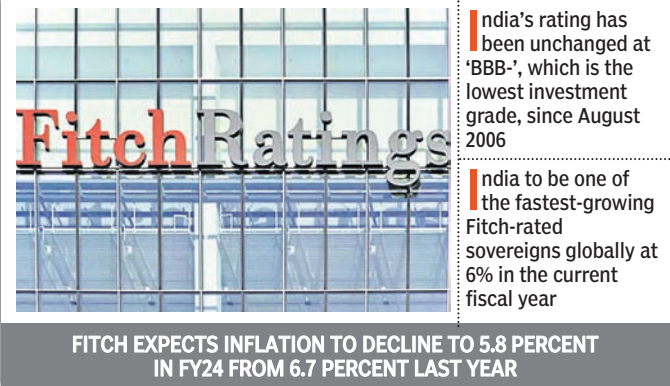
New Delhi, May 9: Fitch Tuesday affirmed India's sovereign rating at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook, on robust growth and resilient external finances, but said weak public finances remain a challenge.

"Fitch Ratings has affirmed India's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB-' with a Stable Outlook," it said in a statement, adding strong growth potential is a key supporting factor for the sovereign rating.

It forecasts India to be one of the fastest-growing sovereigns globally clocking 6 per cent growth in the current fiscal (April 2023-March 2024) supported by resilient investment prospects.

Fitch Ratings has lowered its 2023-24 GDP growth forecast for India to 6% from 6.2%, citing headwinds from elevated inflation and interest rates along with subdued global demand, with the economy expected to rebound to 6.7% in 2024-25 as opposed to 6.9% projected earlier.

"India's rating reflects strengths from a robust growth outlook compared with peers and resilient external finances, which have supported India in navigating the large external shocks over the past year. These are offset by India's weak public finances, illustrated by high



deficits and debt relative to peers, as well as lagging structural indicators, including World Bank governance indicators and GDP per capita," Fitch said.

Fitch said India will face headwinds from elevated inflation, high interest rates and subdued global demand, along with fading pandemic-induced pent-up demand.

Fitch said growth prospects have brightened as the private sector appears poised for stronger investment growth following the improvement of corporate and bank balance sheets in the past few years, supported by the government's infrastructure drive.

Still, risks remain given low labour force participation rates and an uneven reform implementation record.

"India's large domestic market

makes it an attractive destination for foreign firms. However, it is unclear whether India will be able to realise sufficient reforms to allow the economy to benefit substantially from opportunities offered by the deeper integration in global manufacturing supply chains, including China+1 corporate strategies that encourage diversification in investment destinations," Fitch said.

It said service sector exports are likely to remain a bright spot and banks appear well-positioned to support sustained credit growth if capitalisation is well-managed.

Fitch estimates inflation to remain near the upper-end of the Reserve Bank's 2 per cent-6 per cent target band, averaging 5.8 per cent this fiscal, against 6.7 per cent last year. It said that the fiscal consolida-

tion path, under which the centre's fiscal deficit is to be brought down to 4.5 per cent of GDP by 2025-26, remains challenging.

The government has demonstrated a recent commitment to meeting its budget targets. However, we believe it will be challenging to achieve this target, which would require accelerated consolidation of 0.7 pp per year in FY25 and FY26, compared with 0.3 pp in FY23 and 0.5 pp in FY24.

"Future deficit reduction is likely to come mainly from trimming expenditure, in our view," Fitch said.

India's general government debt remains elevated at 82.8 per cent in 2022-23 fiscal relative to the 'BBB' median of 55.4 per cent. Fitch forecasts debt to remain broadly stable at around 83 per cent of GDP in 2027-28.

The lack of sustained debt reduction is likely to increase risks to the rating if India faces a future economic and fiscal shock, Fitch said.

The rating agency further said ample foreign-exchange (FX) reserves continue to provide a cushion to manage external financial volatility.

FX reserves rebounded to \$584.2 billion (7.1 months of current external payments) as 21 April 2023, up from their September 2022 low by about \$52 billion. We expect them to continue to rise modestly in the coming years, Fitch said.

Partha Mazumder takes over as Regional Executive Director, NTPC

Bhubaneswar: Partha Mazumder has assumed the charge of Regional Executive Director (Eastern Region-II) NTPC May 9. He will be heading the Eastern Region II of NTPC and shall look after the power stations and projects situated in Odisha, Jharkhand and Assam. In his career spanning more than 38 years, Mazumder has served NTPC, a Maharatna Company, in various departments like operation & maintenance, fuel management, technical services at different power projects/stations, and also in the corporate business development, consultancy wing and coal mining. Mazumder has held prominent positions as head of coal mining, business development, consultancy wing at corporate centre. He also headed Pakri-Barwadih, Talaiapalli, Chatti-Bariatu and Kerandari coal mining projects. He is also a nominated director in NTPC Mining Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC; CIL-NTPC Urja Private Limited, a 50:50 joint venture company of NTPC with Coal India Ltd and Anushakti Vidhyut Nigam Limited, a JV between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd and NTPC Limited.



Markets end flat; fag-end selling wipes off gains

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 9: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended flat Tuesday, paring their intra-day gains, as investors resorted to profit-taking after the recent upsurge amid weak trends in global equities.

Traders were also awaiting the US inflation data which is expected to remain at March level prompting the Federal Reserve to prolong monetary tightening.

Even after trading with gains for most part of the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex failed to hold on to the momentum and skidded 2.92 points to settle at 61,761.33 due to fag-end volatility. During the day, it hit a high of 62,027.51 and a low of 61,654.94.

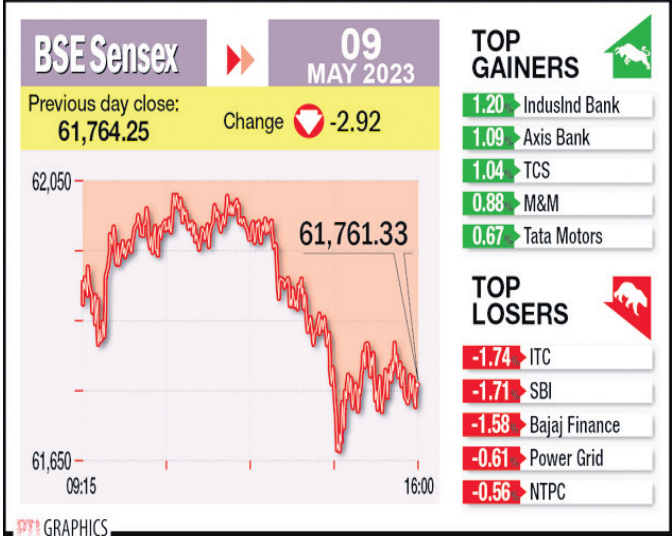
The NSE Nifty ended marginally up by 1.55 points or 0.01 per cent at 18,265.95.

The rupee fell 28 paise to nearly three-week low of 82.06 against the US currency. During the day, the rupee witnessed a high of 81.83

and a low of 82.15 against the greenback.

Among the Sensex firms, ITC, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Power Grid, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and UltraTech Cement were the major laggards. IndusInd Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Axis Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints, Wipro, HDFC and Maruti were among the major gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.35 per cent and midcap index ended marginally up by 0.03 per cent. Among indices, utilities fell by 1.04 per cent, realty went lower by 0.81 per cent, power declined by 0.72 per cent, FMCG (0.44 per cent), consumer durables (0.37 per cent) and financial services (0.24 per cent). Telecommunication jumped 0.94 per cent, teck (0.59 per cent), IT (0.59 per cent), energy (0.34 per cent) and healthcare (0.17 per cent).



Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers Monday as they bought equities worth Rs 2,123.76 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped

GO FIRST CRISIS

Govt bailout unlikely without engine fix



NCLT TO PASS ORDER ON GO FIRST'S INSOLVENCY PLEA TODAY

REUTERS

New Delhi, May 9: India is unlikely to bail out Go Airlines (India) Ltd unless a solution is found to supplying it with engines, a minister said.

The low-cost carrier filed for bankruptcy protection last week, blaming "faulty" Pratt & Whitney engines for the grounding of about half its 54 Airbus A320neos.

The airline, widely known as Go First, which has been flying for nearly two decades, is the first major Indian airline to collapse since 2019, when Jet Airways went under.

India's Deputy Aviation Minister VK Singh told news agency ANI that the government has previously held talks with US-based Pratt & Whitney to resolve the issue at the airline, which until recently was India's fourth-largest by passengers flown.

"The problem with Go Air is that their flights are run on engines of Pratt & Whitney which is facing management issues since after Covid-19...So (engine) manufacturing is not happening at the pace that it should," Singh said Monday.

Pratt & Whitney, part of Raytheon Technologies, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the minister's remarks outside of business hours. It has previously told an arbitrator

that the airline's claim of defective engines causing its demise was "astounding" and without evidence.

"What can be done about a bailout? Where will Pratt & Whitney get (engines)? (A) bailout can only happen when something can be done about this," Singh said in response to a question about the possibility of a government rescue.

The government is moving to protect passengers first with the aviation regulator issuing a notice to Go First late Monday to stop selling new tickets.

Meanwhile, National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) will decide Wednesday on Go Airlines (India) Ltd's bankruptcy request, a notice on the tribunal's website showed, as leasing companies step up pressure to repossess planes following missed rental payments.

Go First, whose market share has fallen to 7.8% at the end of March, from 8.8% in 2022, has also been asked to make cash refunds to passengers for cancelled flights, a government source told Reuters Tuesday.

"The government is not thinking about a bail out as of now".

Go First's fate underscores fierce competition in a sector dominated by IndiGo and the announced merger of Air India and Vistara, even though India's growing industry has bounced back from the Covid-19 pandemic and hit record passenger levels.

On Monday Go First called on India's company law tribunal to urgently grant its request for bankruptcy protection, as more lenders sought to repossess planes.

Stellar debut for Mankind Pharma

Shares of Mankind Pharma made a remarkable debut on the stock exchanges Tuesday and ended with a premium of over 32 per cent against the issue price of Rs 1,080. The stock began the trade at Rs 1,300, up 20.37 per cent on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 32.40 per cent to Rs 1,430. The stock ended at Rs 1,424.05 apiece, a gain of 31.85 per cent. On the NSE, shares made its debut at Rs 1,300 and ended at Rs 1,430, registering a jump of 32.40 per cent. The company commanded a market valuation of Rs 57,045.80 crore. "Mankind Pharma, the biggest IPO of 2023, made its debut in the market at a listing price of Rs 1,300," Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said. The Rs 4,326-crore initial share sale of Mankind Pharma received 15.32 times subscription last month.

Forex kitty at comfortable level due to RBI, \$: Economists

India's forex reserves reached a 10-month-high of \$588.8 billion in the week through April 28, recovering from a drop to \$524.5 billion last October, when the rupee hit a record low against the US dollar

REUTERS

Mumbai, May 9: India's foreign exchange reserves are at a comfortable level currently, benefiting from the Reserve Bank of India's persistent intervention and the



likelihood of less volatile revaluation changes, economists said.

India's forex reserves reached a 10-month-high of \$588.8 billion in the week through April 28, recovering

from a drop to \$524.5 billion last October, when the rupee hit a record low against the US dollar.

Since October 2022, the RBI has been rebuilding the reserves, tak-

The RBI will continue using reserve buildup opportunity to bolster its import cover further

VIVEK KUMAR |
ECONOMIST, QUANTECO RESEARCH

ing advantage of the rupee's recovery. The central bank bought more than \$8 billion in the spot market in November and December, according to its data.

The RBI has been buying dollars in the forward market too. Its net outstanding forward dollar purchases reached \$20.4 billion in February, the latest month for which data is available, after having dwindled to \$241 million in October.

Since October, "comfort on the

level of reserves has improved significantly," said Gaura Sen Gupta, economist at IDFC First Bank.

"Reserves (both spot and forwards) are now equivalent to 10.4 months of import cover, compared with about 8.9% in Oct 2022."

Moreover, said Vivek Kumar, economist at QuantEco Research, "the RBI will continue using reserve buildup opportunity to bolster its import cover further".

In the wake of the RBI's intervention in spot and forwards, the rupee's response to the dollar's decline has been fairly muted.

While the dollar index has lost about 11.5% from its peak in September last year, the rupee has recovered about 1.5% from its record low.

And, given that the RBI will want the rupee "to remain ranged", the local currency will continue to somewhat underperform, said Sakshi Gupta, Principal Economist, HDFC Bank.

Besides the RBI's intervention, the revaluation changes due to the dollar index's decline since October and the fall in US yields have been major contributors to the increase in reserves.

Now, with the Federal Reserve likely to pause its rate-hike cycle and the US dollar's soft outlook, there is expected to be less volatility around revaluation changes, said IDFC's Gaura. And provides an added layer of comfort as far as the adequacy of forex reserves is concerned, he added.

SURYA LIGHTS UP WANKHEDE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 9: Suryakumar Yadav's stunning 35-ball 83 (7x4, 6x6) and Nehal Wadhera's unbeaten 52 (34b, 4x4, 3x6) handed Mumbai Indians a comprehensive six-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL here Tuesday.

A fourth century-stand of the season between Faf du Plessis (65, 41b, 5x4, 3x6) and Glenn Maxwell (68, 33b, 8x4, 4x6) took RCB to 199/5 after Mumbai put them in to bat. Chasing 200, Mumbai Indians maintained their impeccable record of not losing to RCB at the Wankhede Stadium since IPL 2015, racing to victory in 16.3 overs.

The victory lifted Mumbai Indians to the third spot in the points table, as the five-time champions now have 12 points from 11 games. RCB slipped to the seventh spot with 10 points from 11 matches.

Surya added 140 runs for the third wicket in only 66 balls with Wadhera. Promoted at No.4, Wadhera, who was dropped on 16 on a tough return chance by Wanindu Hasaranga (2/53), went on to raise his second fifty of the season.

After their bowlers sparked a comeback of sorts in the first half of the game, Mumbai never looked under any pressure with their reshuffled batting order clicking together, despite Rohit Sharma's ordinary run continuing. However, a brisk start provided by Ishan Kishan (42, 21b, 4x4, 4x6) and a sturdy stand for the third wicket shut RCB out of the game.

RCB were cruising towards a big total at one stage when MI



SURYAKUMAR YADAV & NEHAL WADHERA (INSET)

fought back to apply brakes, and the visitors' failure to put on even 200 came back to hurt them.

RCB were rocked early by Jason Behrendorff (3/36) who struck twice in the powerplay, before Du Plessis and Maxwell teamed up to expose MI's bowling troubles once again while making the most of the perfect batting conditions.

Du Plessis and Maxwell added 120 runs for the fourth wicket off just 62 balls, powering RCB's charge

after Mumbai Indians made early inroads with Virat Kohli (1) and Anuj Rawat (6) falling early.

Maxwell was in his element as he played some outstanding strokes, hitting four sixes and eight fours to record his fourth half century this season.

On the other hand, Du Plessis, dropped by Wadhera in the first over when he was yet to open his account, was equally impressive with his strokeplay, attacking fast bowlers

and spinners alike to get to his sixth half century. Du Plessis also extended his lead at the top of the list for the highest run-getters this year, reaching 576 runs in 11 matches.

But to their credit, MI fought back in the second half to dismiss Maxwell, Mahipal Lomror (1) and Du Plessis in quick succession, which halted RCB's charge as they could not go beyond the 200-run mark, which at one stage looked probable.

RCB slipped from 131/2 after 13 overs to 146/5 in the 15th before Dinesh Karthik (30) did well to banish his ordinary run with the bat.

BRIEF SCORES: RCB 199/5 (Glenn Maxwell 68, Faf du Plessis 65, Dinesh Karthik 30; Jason Behrendorff 3/36) lost to MI 200/4 (Suryakumar Yadav 83, Nehal Wadhera 52 n o, Ishan Kishan 42; Vijay Kumar Vyshak 2/37, Wanindu Hasaranga 2/53) by 6 wickets.

CSK face DC in push for a spot in playoffs



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Chennai, May 9: Chennai Super Kings enter the final lap of the on-going IPL's preliminary phase, looking to beat back the challenge of a resurgent Delhi Capitals here Wednesday and get closer to a play-offs berth.

CSK returned to winning ways with a convincing victory over Mumbai Indians – a bogey team at their fortress Chepauk – and would be hoping to pick up two more points against the Capitals, who have struggled in the tournament for the most part.

The Super Kings trumped MI in a low-scoring game last Saturday with the bowlers, Matheesha Pathirana in particular, doing a good job to restrict the opposition. The chase was wrapped up without much ado, with contributions from Ruturaj Gaikwad, Devon Conway and Shivam Dube.

While the top-order batters (Conway 457 runs, Gaikwad 292 runs and Ajinkya Rahane (245

runs) have been doing a great job, the middle-order hasn't fired as much as the think-tank would have hoped for.

The experienced Ambati Rayudu (95 runs in 11 games) and Ravindra Jadeja (92 in 11 games) haven't got going, making for a floundering middle-order. Skipper MS Dhoni has managed the cameos expected of him whenever he has got in.

The team will be hoping that the middle-order is not put to test in a crunch game. Dhoni and the CSK fans will be praying for the likes of Rayudu, Moeen Ali and Jadeja to rise to the occasion when it matters the most. The big-hitting Shivam Dube has so far collected 290 runs (from 9 innings) and will be eyeing bigger contributions in key games.

Tushar Deshpande with 19 wickets so far has done a fine job but his economy rate of 10.33 and giving away runs at crucial junctures has hurt CSK at times. The captain would like him to be thrifter with the ball.

Jadeja, as always, has struck crucial blows while slinger Pathirana will be keen to continue the good run, like against MI. Pathirana will be one bowler the Capitals, including the aggressive Phil Salt, who shone in the team's last game, would be wary of.

The DC batters have under-performed but Salt has expressed confidence that they can turn it around in the remaining games. Skipper David Warner has not been his usual ebullient self and the batting line-up which includes Mitchell Marsh and Rovman Powell among others has flattered to deceive. As the season winds down, DC managed to keep their chances alive by winning four of their last five matches.

Whether the team can sneak into the top four remains to be seen. They will need to perform very well if they aim to surprise CSK in their den, which is easier said than done.



MI name Jordan as Archer replacement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Struggling with fitness, England pacer Jofra Archer was Tuesday ruled out of the IPL, forcing Mumbai Indians to name fast bowler Chris Jordan as his replacement for the remainder of the T20 event.

Archer, who was picked by five-time champions MI for Rs 8 crore in the auction, has played just five games this season and taken two wickets. He has been out of international cricket for close to two years due to a back injury and didn't feature in IPL last year. Archer's recovery and fitness will be monitored by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) as he returns home to focus on his rehabilitation.

"Archer has been recovering from right elbow surgery. However, pushing through the discomfort whilst recently playing, hoping it will settle, has proven challenging," ECB said in a statement.

"Therefore, it has been agreed for him to return to the UK for a period of rest and rehabilitation to give him



the best opportunity for a full recovery." His replacement, Jordan, made his IPL debut in 2016. He has so far played 28 IPL matches and has 27 wickets against his name. He has played for Royal Challengers Bangalore, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Punjab Kings and Chennai Super Kings in the past.

The 34-year-old, who has represented England in 87 T20Is and has taken 96 wickets, had joined the MI camp in April end. Jordan batted for close to an hour in the nets Monday. Jordan joins MI for Rs 2 crore. Interestingly, he had gone unsold at the auction that was held in December last year.

ROHIT STRUGGLING MENTALLY: VIRU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma is suffering from a "mental block" and there is no technical problem with his batting, said former India opener Virender Sehwag.

Rohit has been struggling for runs this IPL season, having scored just 184 runs at 18.39 and a strike rate of 126.89. In the last two games, he couldn't open his account. In fact, Rohit got his 16th duck, the most in IPL history, during the last match against Chennai Super Kings.

"Rohit Sharma is not battling with the bowlers but with himself. There is a mental block," Sehwag said on Star Sports' Cricket Live.

"There's no problem with his batting technique. Some confusion is going on in his mind. But the day he gets going, we will make up for all the previous matches."

Five-time champions MI are languishing at the seventh spot with 10 points following five losses and as many wins. They suffered a six-wicket loss to CSK in their last



match after a poor start saw them managing just 139 for eight, a target overhauled by their opponents

in 17.4 overs. Opening the innings, Cameron Green and Ishan Kishan scored

just 6 and 7 respectively and former Australia batter Aaron Finch said the Mumbai openers look confused and they should learn from the way CSK's Ruturaj Gaikwad goes about his business.

"MI's opening combination looks confused they are taking a lot of risk. They were looking to hit all the balls. They should learn from Ruturaj Gaikwad, he remains so calm in the middle and hits the loose balls," Finch said.

As Rohit struggles, Virat Kohli is having a stellar run with the bat, having amassed 419 runs so far in the IPL, though his strike rate has been questioned at times. Hailing his consistent run over the years, former South African spinner Imran Tahir said, "Virat Kohli has always had the urge to score runs."

"You can score maximum runs in one season, two or three seasons, but if you are successful in doing this for 15 consecutive seasons, then it can be attributed to the result of your hard work and dedication. What Virat has done in the last 15 years is really commendable."

I had to reset myself: Hardik

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 9: Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist midfielder Hardik Singh says he had to "reset" himself to bounce back after getting into a comfort zone, which led to his omission from the Indian men's hockey team in the past.

Now the team's vice captain, Hardik bagged the Balbir Singh Sr Award for Player of the Year at the 5th Hockey India Annual Awards held in March.

"Currently, I'm really happy how I'm getting better day by day, how I'm improving, and how I'm developing my skills at every session, because, back in 2017-18, I got into my comfort zone which proved to be harmful to me as I was not playing well and was dropped out of the team eventually. So, I had to reset myself to bounce back," he said in a release.

"As a player, you have to work hard every day and have to give your 100% in every training session. You have to step out of your comfort zone and challenge yourself to grow as a player."

Talking about the award, Hardik said: "I never thought that I would ever win this award, but I know for a fact that I was working hard for the last three to four years and my hard work paid off. I think it's an inspiration to receive this award, which also ensures that I am appreciated by the people of India for playing well."

The 24-year-old, who played an important role in India winning the bronze at Tokyo Games, suffered a



setback when he was ruled out of the 2023 Hockey World Cup midway due to an injury.

"The World Cup was really a big chance for me to prove again that I'm a big stage player. I was doing really well in the tournament and then the injury came. So, I was in shock because I was doing everything to give my best performance in the tournament," he said in the latest episode of 'Hockey Te Charcha' podcast.

"After Tokyo Olympics, all my

focus was on the World Cup and I was giving my 100 percent in everything, be it in the gym or training session or pool session. All I was thinking about was that my hard work isn't paying off because I was getting injured and doing nothing about it.

"But I was still cheering for the team from the sidelines and trying to be positive as I didn't want to be a crybaby. It's a team game, if my side is winning, then I am also winning."

Deepak, Nishant storm into World C'ships quarters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tashkent, May 9: Indian boxers Deepak Bhorla (51kg) and Nishant Dev (71kg) notched dominating wins to cruise to the quarterfinals of the men's World Championships here Tuesday.

Continuing his good run in the tournament, Deepak brushed aside China's Zhanghe Jiamao by a 5-0 unanimous verdict in the 51kg round of 16 bout. Nishant hardly broke a sweat as he registered a first-round RSC (referee stops the contest) win against Palestine's Fogaahaa Nidal in his 71kg last 16 contest.

Such was Nishant's domination that he spent less than two minutes in the ring before being declared the winner. The Indian southpaw resorted to body blows before striking Nidal with a powerful right hook that compelled the referee to give the Palestinian his first standing count. A few seconds later Nishant unleashed a combination of left-right-left hooks as Nidal fell on the canvas, forcing the referee to give him his second count before stopping the contest.

The first round of Deepak's match was neck and neck, with the Indian managed to take a 3-2 lead. He ramped up the tempo in the next six minutes. Deepak used his nimble foot to move around the ring, landing a combination of punches while also ducking away from his opponent's attacks rather effortlessly.

MESSI clinches top honour at Laureus Awards

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, May 9: Lionel Messi has won a top accolade as world Sportsman of the Year and picked up another award as a member of the team of the year following Argentina's World Cup soccer victory in 2022.

Jamaican sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce finally broke through to win the Sportswoman of the Year award on her sixth nomination. Fraser-Pryce's 2022 exploits included winning the 100-meter gold at the World Athletics Championships for the fifth time.

The Laureus Sports Awards honoring eight winners were held live in Paris Monday night for the first time since 2020. It was Messi's second individual title after sharing that honor with Formula 1 driver Lewis Hamilton in 2020.

Fraser-Pryce, who has won three Olympic and 10 World Championship gold medals, called her award "one of the greatest honors of my career."

"When athletes have the spotlight, it's important the example we set is the best it can be. We have a responsibility to influence the next generation in a positive way," she said. Spanish tennis player Carlos Alcaraz's victory at the 2022 US Open and his rise to the No.1 ranking saw him take the Breakthrough



of the Year award. Alcaraz, who celebrated his 20th birthday last week, won Sunday's final of the Madrid Open.

Christian Eriksen was the recipient of the Comeback of the Year award after recovering from a cardiac arrest to return to Premier League football with Brentford and then Manchester United.

The world Action Sportsperson of the Year went to American-born Chinese freestyle skier Eileen Gu,

who was 18 during the Winter Olympics in Beijing. She became the first athlete to win three medals in freestyle skiing at a single Olympics – gold in both the half-pipe and big air events, and silver in slopestyle.

Nominees for the Laureus awards are determined by international media and the winners are voted on by the 71 members of the Laureus World Sports Academy – athletes from the past 50 years.