



Janhvi's preference
Actor Janhvi Kapoor, during a song launch of her upcoming movie, reveals about the qualities her partner should have

LEISURE | P2



Slovak PM attacked
In an attempted assassination, Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico receives multiple gunshots after a political event, Wednesday

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Trade deficit widens
India's trade deficit widens to a four-month high of USD 19.1 billion in April, according to government data

BUSINESS | P11



Sunrisers face Titans
Sunrisers Hyderabad will look to secure their place in the IPL playoffs when they lock horns with Gujarat Titans today

SPORTS | P12

CAA: 14 people get citizenship certs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The first set of citizenship certificates under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) was issued Wednesday to 14 people, nearly two months after rules under the contentious law were notified to grant Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from three neighbouring countries.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah termed it a "historic day", saying the decades-long wait of those who faced religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan is over.

Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla handed over the certificates to the 14 people after their applications were processed online through a designated portal, an official spokesperson said.

This comes in the midst of the general elections which started April 19. The CAA was enacted in December 2019 for granting Indian nationality to persecuted Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian migrants from the three countries who came to India on or before December 31, 2014.

After the enactment, the CAA got the President's assent but

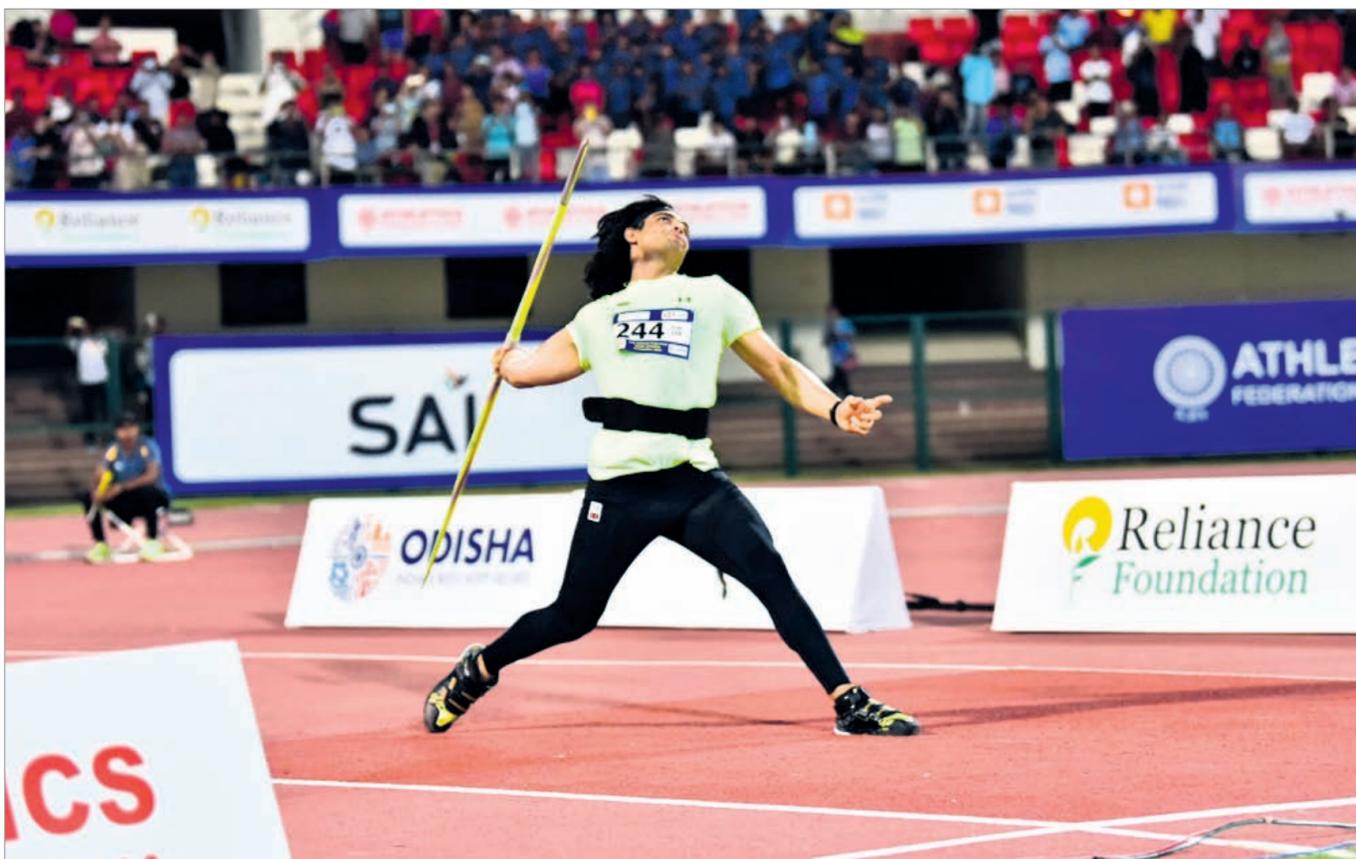
the rules under which the Indian citizenship was granted were issued March 11 this year after over a delay of four years.

While granting citizenship certificates, the Home secretary congratulated the 14 applicants and highlighted the salient features of CAA Rules, 2024.

Shah said the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian brothers and sisters who fled religious persecution in the three countries have started getting Indian citizenship and PM Narendra Modi has fulfilled the promise made at the time of the country's independence.

The CAA rules envisage the manner of application form, procedure for processing applications by the District Level Committee, scrutiny and grant of citizenship by State Level Empowered Committee.

"In pursuance of these rules, applications have been received from persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who have entered into India up to December 31, 2014 on account of persecution on grounds of religion or fear of such persecution," the spokesperson said.



GOLDEN SPEAR: Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra throws his spear into the balmy evening sky of Bhubaneswar to win the gold medal in the men's javelin throw event of the Federation Cup which concluded in the Capital city, Wednesday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

Monsoon to reach Kerala by May 31

NEW DELHI: Southwest Monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala around May 31, setting the stage for the four-month rainfall season crucial for India's farm-based economy. "This year, the Southwest Monsoon is likely to set over Kerala May 31 with a model error of four days," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Wednesday. "This is not early; it's close to the normal date," IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said. The date of monsoon onset over Kerala has varied widely over the last 150 years, the earliest being May 11, 1918, and the most delayed being June 18, 1972, according to the IMD data.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



What a cheat! We voted for him all our lives, thinking he hates other religions. Now, he claims to be secular

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VALUE	VIATION
SENSEX	72987.00	↓ 117.58
NIFTY	22200.00	↓ 17.30
DOLLAR	83.89	↓ ₹0.07
EURO	91.00	↑ ₹0.00
GOLD	₹72,956	↑ ₹659
SILVER	₹86,420	↑ ₹1003

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	37.2°C	37.0°C
Min Temp	26.1°C	26.1°C
Humidity	74%	83%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST	PARTLY CLOUDY SKY	

SC clicks reject button

The Supreme Court terming the arrest of NewsClick founder Prabir Purkayastha, accused of receiving huge amount of funds from China 'to disrupt the sovereignty of India', 'invalid in the eyes of law' and ordering his release from custody expose the Delhi Police's procedural flaws. Delhi Police, which functions under the Union govt, failed to inform Purkayastha the grounds of his arrest before taking him into custody, prompting the top court to quash the order issued by the Delhi High Court. The bench led by Justice BR Gavai said the right to be informed about the grounds of arrest flows from Article 22(1) of the Constitution and any infringement of this fundamental right would vitiate the process of arrest and remand

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 15: More than seven months after he was arrested under anti-terror law - Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) - for allegedly spreading Chinese propaganda, the Supreme Court Wednesday declared as "invalid" the arrest of NewsClick founder and editor-in-chief Prabir Purkayastha and ordered his release.

Purkayastha, who was arrested October 3, 2023 by the Special Cell of Delhi Police, was released from Tihar Jail here Wednesday.

Observing that the right to



life and personal liberty was the "most sacrosanct" fundamental right guaranteed under Articles 20, 21 and 22 of the Constitution, the apex court said any person arrested over allegations of commission of offences under UAPA or other offences has a fundamental and a statutory right to be informed about the grounds of arrest in

NEWSCLICK FOUNDER'S ARREST

writing. A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta said a copy of such written grounds of arrest has to be furnished to the arrested person as a "matter of course and without exception at the earliest".

"From the detailed analysis made above, there is no hesitation in the mind of the court to arrive at a conclusion that the copy of the remand application in the purported exercise of communication of the grounds of arrest in writing was not provided to the accused appellant (Purkayastha) or his counsel be-

fore passing of the order of remand dated October 4, 2023 which vitiates the arrest and subsequent remand of the appellant," the bench said.

The SC delivered its verdict on Purkayastha's plea challenging the Delhi High Court's October 13, 2023 order dismissing his petition against arrest and subsequent police remand.

The bench said, "Accordingly, the arrest of the appellant followed by remand order dated October 4, 2023 and so also the impugned order passed by the High Court of Delhi dated October 13, 2023 are hereby declared to be invalid in the eyes of law and are quashed and set aside."

"Mere fact that a chargesheet has been filed in the matter, would not validate the illegality and the unconstitutionality committed at the time of arresting the accused and the grant of initial police custody remand to the accused," it observed.

Save Constitution, Rahul tells voters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bolangir, May 15: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Wednesday alleged that BJP wants to "destroy" the Constitution and scrap the reservation provided to tribals, Dalits, and backward classes.

Addressing an election rally here, Rahul claimed that if BJP wins this election, it will privatise the public sector entities and the country will be run by 22 billionaires. "BJP wants to tear this book, but we in Congress and the people of India will not allow it," he said pointing to the Constitution in his hand.

Gandhi said that whatever the country's poor, Dalits, tribals, minorities, farmers and labourers have received till now, it is due to the Constitution.

"If BJP wins, the reservation will be scrapped, the public sector will be privatised, and the country will be run by 22 billionaires. That's why the peo-



ple's government should be formed," he added.

Gandhi claimed that loans worth ₹16 lakh crore of 22 billionaires were waived off under the BJP-led government, and the amount was equivalent to MGNREGA wages of 24 years.

"They have not given anything to the people. They have not waived off the loans of farmers and students. Forget waiver, they even did not provide loans to small businesses," he claimed.

The Congress leader said that the money collected through GST from the common people of the country was going to only

two-three persons. Gandhi said that if the Congress is voted to power it will conduct a caste census to provide proper representation to Dalits, tribals and backward classes.

"After the census, a revolutionary democracy or people's rule will begin in the country," he said. Gandhi said that handing over airports to industrialists and giving defence contracts to private entities were being showcased as development by the saffron party.

"While they have worked for 22 billionaires, we are going to create crores of 'lakhpatitis'," Gandhi said amid a loud cheer from the people.

Claiming that the INDIA bloc would form the government June 4, Gandhi said, "Soon after, we will make a list of all poor families of the country and a woman of each of these families will be provided with an assistance of ₹8,500 per month."

6 KILLED IN KEONJHAR ROAD MISHAP

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar/Joda/Champua, May 15: Six persons including two women were killed after the car they were travelling in got crushed between two trucks on National Highway 520 near Rimuli under Champua police limits in Keonjhar district Wednesday evening. Sources said family members of Hiralal Palei of Bhadrasahi area in the

district were returning to Barbil after attending a marriage function at Taramakanta on a Breeza car (OD 02-AY-7860) when their vehicle was stuck in traffic jam near Rimuli.

Meanwhile, a speeding truck coming from the rear rammed the car which collided with another stationary truck in front of it. The impact was so severe that all the occupants of the car died on the spot.

Free power for 90% people: Pandian

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's close aide Kartik Pandian Wednesday claimed that Patnaik will take oath for the sixth time June 9, 2024 and his first order will be free power supply for 90 per cent population of Odisha.

Sharing a short video of his conversation with the CM during their visit to Deogarh district, Pandian said, "With blessings of 'Mahaprabhu' (Lord Jagannath) and you (people), our favourite Chief Minister Naveen Babu will again take oath June 9 and his first order will be free power supply for 90 per cent population of Odisha and extension of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojna (BSKY) for all including government servants."

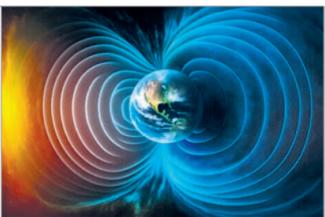
After Pandian said this, Patnaik then continued, "Naveen Patnaik's Bijli (power) guarantee and Conch symbol's guarantee." This short video came after state BJP leader Samir Mohanty sought clarification from the BJD on its free power supply promise. The BJD in its election manifesto has promised to provide free electricity to all domestic households consuming less than 100 units per month.

Moving magnetic poles set alarm bells ringing

AGENCIES

London, May 15: Just imagine a situation when Earth's magnetic field would disappear and what would happen to all the living beings and the technology existing on this planet. Earth's magnetic poles, located near the geographic poles, are essential to life and technology on our planet. Generated by movements within the molten iron core, the magnetic field they create shields Earth from harmful solar radiation and cosmic particles. This geomagnetic field also enables navigation for both hu-

- ▶ Earth's magnetic field plays a crucial role in sustaining life and protecting technological systems
- ▶ This invisible shield extends from the Earth's interior out into space, forming a protective bubble and shielding the planet from solar wind
- ▶ If this vital magnetic field disappears, the consequences would be profound, affecting everything from the environment to human health and technology



mans and migratory animals, such as birds and sea turtles, who rely on it to traverse long distances. But the Earth's magnetic field, with a North and South Pole, is not stable. According to

BBC Science Focus, the poles are gradually drifting.

According to the report quoted by 'NDTV', till 1990s, the North Pole moved at about 15 km per year. But in years after that, the

rate has sped up to 55 km per year towards Siberia.

This movement could lead to a 'magnetic reversal' in which the north and south poles change locations. This has happened 183 times in the past 83 million years, according to NASA. Research done on the Earth's magnetic field based on satellite observations has revealed that the current change is happening due to 'blobs' of unusually intense magnetic fields deep inside the planet. But experts have been unable to explain why the activity has increased.

When such reversals happen, there comes a time when the

magnetic shield shrinks to zero before growing again with the opposite polarity. The Earth's magnetic field plays a crucial role in sustaining life and protecting technological systems.

This invisible shield extends from the Earth's interior out into space, forming a protective bubble and shielding the planet from solar wind, a stream of charged particles emanating from the Sun. But what if this vital magnetic field were to disappear?

The consequences would be profound, affecting everything from the environment to human health and technology.

leisure



ASHLEY JUDD DIAGNOSED WITH 'SLEEP DISORDER'

Hollywood actress Ashley Judd has spoken about how she has been diagnosed with a 'sleepiness sleep disorder' after a long health battle. It took a long time to for the *Double Jeopardy* actress to recover after she fractured her leg in a freak accident right after her mother's death in 2022.

KIM MOCKED FOR LOOKING LIKE 'ROBOT WITH NO HUMAN ASPECT'

Hitting out at Kim Kardashian's comedy efforts, stand-up Andrew Schula has mocked her for looking like a 'robot with no human aspect' during Tom Brady's Netflix roast. Kim was heckled by the crowd during the show in California when she took to the stage.



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ARIES
If you have children, it's likely you'll spoil them today. After all, it's for days like these that you work hard, says Ganesha. You will also complete pending assignments and it's a productive day for those in medical professions and public services.

TAURUS
You may feel frustrated and stranded in family matters today, says Ganesha. Show your warmth and care to make up for past mistakes. Your spouse will be supportive and lend you a helping hand to regain your mental composure. Reciprocate with intimacy and go with the flow, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today, a strong emotional link with someone special may get established, predicts Ganesha. So you will remain delighted and elated for most part of the day. Still, some petty problems may spoil your happy mood later in the day. Diffuse tension with a light-hearted approach.

CANCER
Today, you will realise that in this materialistic world, everything is judged by its appearance, and what is unseen counts for nothing. You will work hard to be seen and will crave for attention. Though Ganesha strongly suggests that this will only bring you grief as the most beautiful of flowers shrivel and your appearance will not help you beyond a point, you are not likely to follow his advice. However, there is not denying that outward appearance does have its advantages.

LEO
Though God is benevolent, it is but necessary that we reciprocate the magnanimity of the Almighty through our actions. So wake up today with a little prayer on your lips. Make it a point to visit a temple for some peace of mind. The other alternative is to do a small puja at home. Connect with your spiritual side through meditation and find peace with yourself, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
If curiosity killed the cat, it is going to inspire you to go to exotic places and meet new people, says Ganesha. Enriching experiences enter enthusiastically today. But hold on, don't unpack, as you may set off on yet another adventure. Ganesha sees you being crack ductile and malleable.

LIBRA
Lady Luck offers you a mixed bag today, so expect anything and everything. You may also develop a knack for pointing out others' mistakes, while turning a blind eye to your own shortcomings. Ganesha disapproves of this. Look forward to a delightful evening, for, you will have fun in the company of friends.

SCORPIO
You've been keeping things within for too long now, and today may just be the day when you vent it all out, says Ganesha. This overwhelming pressure may have an effect on your health. Ganesha counsels you to spend quality time with your loved ones to ease up a bit.

SAGITTARIUS
Skilled at multi-tasking as you are, today you may just take things one by one. Instincts will rule the roost for most of the time. And govern your actions too. But as peculiar as the day may be, you shall find yourself back to being your own assured self.

CAPRICORN
If trouble happens to knock at your door today, your guardian angel will come to your rescue, foresees Ganesha. Unlike many others who waste life running after impossible goals, you will be content with your achievements. But that does not, by any means, imply that you aren't ambitious. Just like yourself, your ambitions will be simple in nature, to the extent that it may elicit awe among people.

AQUARIUS
You will seek spirituality as you feel thoroughly dejected by your present situation. Ganesha says that even struggling courageously with circumstances requires a spiritual endeavour. These trying times give you the patience to deal intelligently with challenges and setbacks.

PISCES
Your spiritual and religious streak comes to the fore. You will likely visit a place of worship to soothe your troubled soul. Meditative techniques may also be resorted to in your quest for peace and calm, says Ganesha.

Janhvi spills beans on perfect partner

Mumbai: Actress Janhvi Kapoor, who has a busy year before her, spoke about the qualities that her partner should have. The actress attended the song launch of *Dekhha Tenu* from her upcoming film *Mr & Mrs Mahi* Wednesday, at a multiplex in Juhu, Mumbai.

During the event she was asked about the qualities of a 'perfect partner'. Responding to the same, the actress said: "The person should consider my dreams as his own, and be my solid support system through thick and thin."

As the actress listed the qualities of her

partner, the media took her rumoured boyfriend Shikhar Pahariya's name as they collectively said: "Shikhu Shikhu." Janhvi had earlier had a Freudian slip as she dropped Shikhar's name saying 'Shikhu' during the last season of the chat show *Koffee With Karan*.

Looking at the reaction from the media, Janhvi couldn't help but blush as she helplessly looked at her co-star Rajkumar Rao and her film's director Sharan Sharma, and smiled at the media.

Janhvi will be seen essaying the role of a cricketer opposite Rajkumar Rao in the film which is produced by her mentor

Karan Johar. *Mr. & Mrs. Mahi* is set to release May 31.

Kajol shares 'Wednesday Wisdom'

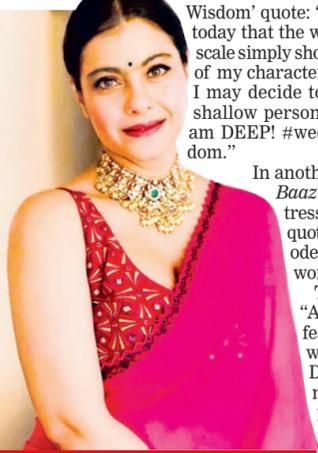
Mumbai: Actress Kajol Wednesday shared a wisdom quote about being 'deep', saying she has decided that the weight on her scale simply shows the depth of her character.

An avid social media user, Kajol, who has 16.9 million followers on Instagram, took to the Stories section and shared a 'Wednesday Wisdom' quote: "I've decided today that the weight on my scale simply shows the depth of my character! Tomorrow I may decide to be a super shallow person but today I am DEEP! #wednesdaywisdom."

In another Story, the *Baazigar* fame actress re-shared a quote which is an ode to a fearless woman.

The post read: "An Ode to a fearless woman: Defined by no man, you are your own story. Blazing through the world, turning history into her-story. And when they dare to tell you about all the things you cannot be, you smile and tell them 'I am both war and woman and you cannot stop me' - Nikita Gill."

On the work front, Kajol was last seen as Devyani in *Lust Stories 2*, and Noyonika Sengupta in the web series *The Trial*. She next has *Sarzameen*, *Do Patti*, and *Maa* in her kitty.



Padma's strict parenting

Los Angeles: India-born super-model, TV host, producer, cookbook author and actor Padma Lakshmi spoke about being a mother to teenage daughter Krishna, and confessed that she is strict about certain things.

It's on social media where Padma has been easing her 14-year-old daughter into the public spotlight.

"I think any parent will be able to identify with what we're doing," Padma told people.com at the Gold Gala.

The *Boom* actress said that she is sometimes surprised by Krishna's candid answers.

"She has so many opinions... I don't think she's unlike most teenagers; she may be a little more precocious, perhaps."

"I'm strict about some things and I'm not that strict about other things that I probably should be stricter about like bedtime (as she's 14)," Lakshmi admitted.

"But I was very strict about making sure she ate a very good diet the first four,

five years of her life, and I will not abide by her being disrespectful to adults," she added.

"She's not (disrespectful), but that's where our Asian culture shows itself — respecting our traditions like taking your shoes off before you come in the house, and calling elders uncle and auntie," concluded Lakshmi.



Sheeran explains about his quirky album names

Mumbai: The Grammy-winning American pop star Ed Sheeran has opened up on the real reason behind the quirky names of his albums in the new episode of *The Great Indian Kapil Show*.

Amidst all the fun and banter, host Kapil Sharma was curious about the names of Ed's albums like - *Plus*, *Subtract*, *Divide*, *Multiply* and *Equals* corresponding to his tour name which is *Mathematics*.

Responding to this, Ed, the first international celebrity on the show revealed: "I released some independ-



ent records when I was 17 or 18 years of age. I released five of them and 'Plus' was an addition to them. 'Multiply' was meant to make everything bigger and take it worldwide. 'Divide' was a double column. 'Subtract' stripped everything back. And 'Equal' was the sum of all the parts. When I was 18, I made a plan that I would release five albums."

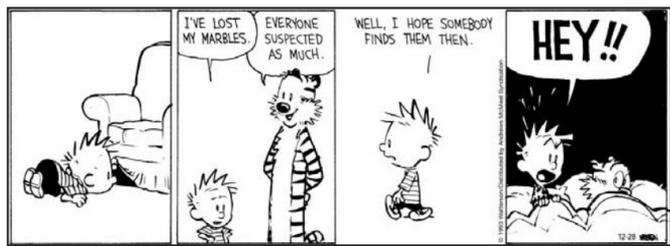
Sheeran's debut album *Plus* was released in September 2011 and topped the UK Albums Chart. His second studio album *Multiply* released in June 2014, *Divide* was released in March 2017, *Equals* released in 2021, while *Subtract* in May 2023.

The episode will air Saturday at 8pm on Netflix.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

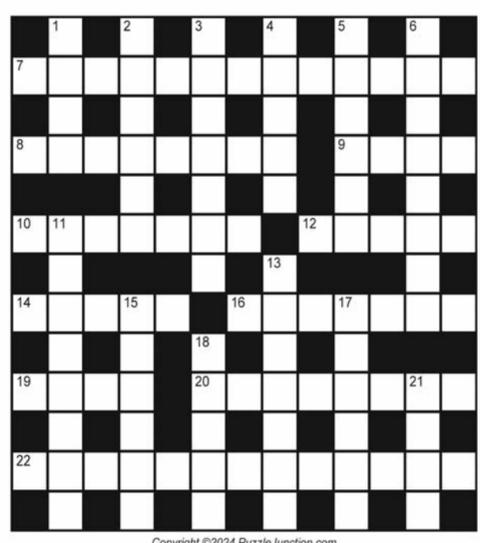


BREVITY



FUN post

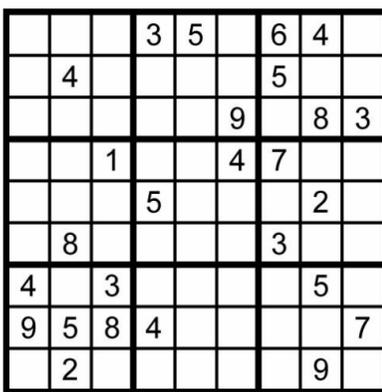
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Like some decisions (3-10)
 - 8 Scottish maple
 - 9 Lots
 - 10 Type of cell
 - 12 Old anesthetic
 - 14 Combine
 - 16 Reprimand
 - 19 Peter, for one
 - 20 Conduct business
 - 22 Shame
- Down**
- 1 Clever tactic
 - 2 Cooling-off period? (3,3)
 - 3 Form of pool
 - 4 Takes to the trail
 - 5 Allow
 - 6 Greenland caribou
 - 11 Wanting company
 - 13 Backslide
 - 15 Menace
 - 17 Oil source
 - 18 Maze word
 - 21 Word after pine or ice cream

SUDOKU

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

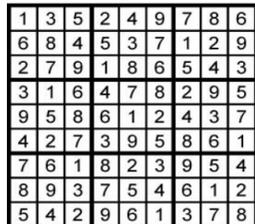


SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

CEO MOVED

A BJD delegation, comprising MPs Sulata Deo and Sasmit Patra, moves CEO against BJP, in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday



PHASE I POLLS

Nabarangpur LS seat sees highest turnout



AGENCIES

■ Nabarangpur was followed by Kalahandi (77.90%), Koraput (77.53%) and Berhampur (65.41%)
■ Among the Assembly segments, Nabarangpur registered the highest polling percentage at 85.61, followed by Dabugaon (85.20%), Jharigaon (84.22%) and Umerkote (83.05%)
■ Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituency also witnessed a notable rise in voter participation, with 82.16% turnout compared to 79.52% in 2019

Bhubaneswar/Koraput, May 15: Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Nikunja Bihari Dhal Wednesday said the voter turnout in the first phase of polling in four Lok Sabha seats and 28 Assembly segments in the state May 13 was 75.68 per cent, with the highest polling of 82.16 per cent being recorded in Nabarangpur LS constituency.

The CEO said the voter turnout may further increase after receipt of postal votes.

Dhal said Nabarangpur (82.16 per cent) was followed by Kalahandi (77.90 per cent), Koraput (77.53 per cent) and Berhampur (65.41 per cent).

Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are being held simultaneously in Odisha.

Meanwhile, a report said the tribal dominated Nabarangpur district with four Assembly segments under the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat said the district recorded an impressive voter turnout of over 84.57 per cent, surpassing its previous record of approximately 80 per cent set in 2019.

District Election Officer-cum-Collector (Nabarangpur) Kamal Lochan Mishra attributed this high voter turnout to extensive voter awareness campaigns conducted under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative. "Several voter awareness pro-

grammes were undertaken to enhance the voting percentage in the district and it's good to notice that the district recorded nearly 85 per cent of polling," said Mishra.

Among the Assembly segments, Nabarangpur registered the highest polling percentage at 85.20 per cent, Jharigaon 84.22 per cent, and Umerkote 83.05 per cent.

The Nabarangpur Lok Sabha constituency also witnessed a notable rise in voter participation, with 82.16 per cent turnout compared to 79.52 per cent in 2019, making it the highest among the four Lok Sabha seats that went to poll May 13.

Candidates from various political parties expressed optimism regarding the impact of the high voter turnout on their campaigns.

"The high turnout of voters speaks volumes of people's anger towards the BJD in the state and BJP in the Centre. I am confident that the people have voted for Congress," said Bhujabal Majhi of Congress for Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat.

Pradeep Majhi BJD candidate for the Nabarangpur Lok Sabha seat attributed the high voter turnout to the regional party's effective governance under the Nabarangpur Parliamentary segment.



VOTER CONVENIENCE IN MIND: CEO Nikunja Bihari Dhal and Khurda Collector Chanchal Rana among officials launch the 'Mo Booth' mobile app in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

'Mo Booth' mobile app launched

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Nikunja Bihari Dhal Wednesday launched 'Mo Booth' mobile application

through which voters can easily find the name and route to their polling stations.

"Using the app, voters of Khurda district including Bhubaneswar City can know about their booth, its loca-

tion and direction," Dhal added.

The app now offers a feature enabling citizens to check the current queue size in real-time.

"The booth-level officer will

periodically update the number of voters in the queue, which will be instantly accessible to citizens and other officials. This data will be refreshed every 15 minutes to ensure accurate information availability," he added.

Man gets life imprisonment for 2017 Nayapalli murder

DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 15: A local court here Wednesday awarded life imprisonment to a man after holding him guilty of killing a woman under Nayapalli police limits in the City in 2017.

Additional Sessions Judge Sasmita Parhi also slapped a penalty of ₹20,000 on the convict, Dambarudhar Das. Failure to pay the penalty would entail one year of rigorous imprisonment (RI), Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) Pradipta Kumar Mishra said.

According to the prosecution, Dambarudhar was having a one-



sided love affair with Puspanjali Mohapatra, a resident of Tarini slum under Nayapalli police limits in the City.

"On many occasions, Dambarudhar forced Puspanjali, a mother of two children, to elope with him so as to start a new life. However, she declined,"

the APP said. Mishra said the incident took place July 7, 2017.

"On fateful day, an infuriated Dambarudhar barged into Puspanjali's house and found her in the washroom and her children playing nearby. After sending the kids to play in the courtyard, Dambarudhar poured petrol on Puspanjali and set her on fire," Mishra said, adding that Dambarudhar managed to flee the scene.

Soon, Puspanjali was rushed to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, where she succumbed to burns five days later, Mishra said.

Nod to DM course at Cuttack's AHPGIC

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The National Medical Commission (NMC) has approved the proposal to start Doctorate of Medicine (DM) course at the Department of Medical Oncology (two seats) of Acharya Harihar Post Graduate Institute of Cancer (AHPGIC) in Cuttack, an official said, Wednesday.

According to the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) department, the new course will start from the 2024-25 academic session and would strengthen the medical education in Odisha.

The NMC had May 7 approved the proposal to start post grad-

uate (PG) courses in the Department of Anaesthesiology (three seats) and Department of Ophthalmology (three seats) in Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) and the Capital Hospital here from 2024-25 academic year.

Notably, it was April 24, 1984 when the Regional Cancer Centre for Research and Treatment in SCB, Cuttack was declared an autonomous institution and named Acharya Harihar Regional Cancer Centre after the great social worker Acharya Harihara, a disciple of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, founder of the Bhoodan movement.

Veteran Cong leader Dambarudhar Ulaka passes away at 86

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Veteran Congress leader and former minister Dambarudhar Ulaka died of old age-related ailments, family sources said Wednesday. He was 86.

Ulaka breathed his last while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the Capital City Tuesday night.

Family sources said Ulaka's funeral will be held at his birthplace — Bankili in Rayagada district. He was elected to Assembly five times on Congress ticket from Bissam Cuttack seat in Rayagada district. He represented the seat in 1974, 1977, 1995, 2004 and 2009.

The veteran leader's son Nilamadhab Ulaka is contesting the elections from the Bissam Cuttack



Assembly segment as an Independent after being denied ticket by the Congress. People from various walks of life, including President Droupadi Murmu, condoled the veteran leader's demise.

"Taking to X, the President wrote, "Saddened to know about the demise of Shri Dambarudhar Ulaka who served as minister in Odisha government. Shri Ulaka worked for the welfare of people, especially the deprived and underprivileged. I extend my condolences to his family members and followers."

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) chief Sarat Pattanayak also took to X and said, "Saddened to hear about the passing of former Congress MLA Dambarudhar Ulaka. As a five-time MLA from Bissam Cuttack AC, his dedicated service and contributions to the community will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones during this difficult time."



AT LORD'S SERVICE: Maharana servitors build chariots for the Rath Yatra of Srimandir deities in Puri, Wednesday

PICT: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

Tight security for Neeraj in City

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra's presence prompted the organisers of the Federation Cup to tighten security around the Kalinga Stadium, which was buzzing with activity as fans waited in anticipation ahead of his event Wednesday.

The security arrangements put in place have rarely been seen for an athletics event in India.

This is Chopra's first competitive event on Indian soil in three years.

Chopra is featuring in the men's javelin throw final of the National Federation Cup Athletics Competition after he last competed in India in the 2021 edition of the same tournament.

Before Chopra reached the warm-up track of the stadium



■ Chopra is featuring in the men's javelin throw final of the National Federation Cup Athletics Competition at Kalinga Stadium

■ This is Chopra's first competitive event on Indian soil in three years

two hours before the final, security personnel were seen at the entry area, directing journalists to enter from another gate though they had entered the area through the same gate on previous occasions.

The scribes were given a particular area to station themselves, while in earlier days they were allowed to move around. In the past, many athletes used

to do warm-up at the track but not Wednesday. Volunteers were placed to stop people from entering the track area. The grass area was kept protected.

To be fair to the organisers, that made the warm-up more orderly and less crowded. Kishore Jena later joined Chopra and they warmed up at the adjacent state-of-art indoor stadium for a while.

'Super fluffy' planet bigger than Jupiter discovered

Researchers have discovered a 'super fluffy' exoplanet, 50 per cent larger than Jupiter and weighing only a seventh of it, giving it a 'cotton candy'-like density.

The new, 'super fluffy' planet has been named 'WASP-193b' and was found to be located about 1,200 light years away from Earth, roughly equivalent to 10,800 trillion kilometres. Exoplanets exist outside the solar system and help us understand a bit more about how the universe works.

"The planet is so light that it's difficult to think of an analogous, solid-state material," said study co-author Julien de Wit, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US.

"The reason why it's close to cotton candy is because both are pretty much air. The planet is basically super fluffy," he said.

The international team of researchers said that the exoplanet is the second least dense planet



An artist's illustration showing the formation of a planet beyond our solar system. (File pic: Reuters/NASA)

discovered and its extremely low density makes it a 'real anomaly' among the more than five thousand exoplanets discovered to date.

"This extremely low density cannot be reproduced by standard models of irradiated gas giants, even under the unrealistic assumption of a coreless struc-

ture," said Khalid Barkaoui, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Liège, Belgium, and first author of the study published in the journal Nature Astronomy.

The exoplanet was initially spotted by the Wide Angle Search for Planets (WASP), an international collaboration of aca-

dem institutions. Dips in light or 'periodic transits' had been detected from the star WASP-193 in the data taken between 2006 and 2008, and again from 2011 to 2012.

Astronomers had determined that the star's periodic dips in brightness were consistent with a planet passing in front of it every 6.25 days. They estimated the planet's size by measuring the light from the star it blocked each time it passed in front of it.

In this study, the researchers used data from observatories based in the Atacama Desert, Chile, to measure the planet's weight.

Their calculations revealed an 'extremely low density' for the planet - 0.059 grams per cubic centimetre.

The substance closest in density according to the researchers - the cotton candy - has a density of about 0.05 grams per cubic centimetre, they said. Water is known to have a density of 1

gram per cubic centimetre.

Providing more context, the researchers said that while Jupiter has a density of about 1.33 grams per cubic centimetre, Earth is a more substantial 5.51 grams per cubic centimetre.

The researchers suspected

the fluffy planet to be made largely of hydrogen and helium gases, similar to most other gas giant planets in the Milky Way galaxy. The planet's mass and size were also calculated to be about 0.14 and 1.5 that of Jupiter, respectively.

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REQUIREMENT OF PREMISES
Detailed notification inviting offers for premises for our Zonal Audit Office, Bhubaneswar having Carpet Area 1000-1200 sq.ft. in suitable places at IRC Village, Chandrasekharpur & Patia Area & ARB Bhubaneswar having Carpet Area 1800-2000 sq.ft. at CDA Area, Cuttack (in urgent basis) are available in our website www.bankofindia.co.in. Prescribed format for submission of offer may be obtained up to 2.00 P.M. of 29.05.2024 from our office at above address. Alternatively, the format can be downloaded from our website. Last date for submission of offer is up to 5.00 P.M. on 29.05.2024 at Zonal Office, Bhubaneswar.
Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone



BRAINSTORMING SESSION: Sri Sri University in Cuttack hosted an interactive session, with UGC member professor Sachidananda Mohanty at the university campus, on the birth anniversary of varsity's founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Arrest not necessary in all GST cases: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The Supreme Court Wednesday told the Centre that there is no need for making arrests in all Goods and Services Tax (GST) cases and that it can be done only if there is credible evidence and tangible material to prove culpability.



A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna, MM Sundresh and Bela M Trivedi, which reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity and interpretation of provisions relating to the Customs Act and Goods and Services Tax Act, said the power of arrest is different from necessity of arrest.

strict interpretation of commission of offence.

On May 9, the top court had told the Centre that any arrest under the GST Act should not be on mere suspicion but based on cogent material and in adherence to proper procedure.

"The legislation does not say that for completion of investigation you need to be arrested. It is not the object of the legislation. It is not necessary for you to arrest in each and every case of GST. It has to be based on some credible evidence and tangible material," the bench told Additional Solicitor General SV Raju.

"Adjudication must precede arrest," the bench said, adding that it will examine the question of 'reason to believe' and 'grounds of arrest' under the Customs Act and the GST Act.

It had said the material upon which an arrest is made should be verifiable by a magistrate.

The bench, which posed several questions to Raju on provisions of arrest under the GST law, said the legislation has itself kept liberty on a high pedestal and it should not be diluted.

The petitioners who have challenged various provisions of the Customs Act and the GST Act have alleged gross misuse of arrest provisions under both the laws. They have claimed that they are being threatened and coerced to pay liability without following the due procedure under the laws.

The court had earlier directed the Centre to not use "threat and coercion" during search and seizure operations against traders for recovery of GST and instead persuade them to clear the dues voluntarily.

Raju said arrests are mostly made during the investigation as there can be no arrest after the probe in a case has been completed.

Section 69 of the GST Act deals with the powers of arrest, while section 104 of the Customs Act of 1962 allows an officer to arrest someone if they have reason to believe the person has committed an offence.

On May 2, the top court had asked the Centre to furnish details about the issuance of notices and arrests effected under the provisions of the GST Act, saying it may interpret the law and lay down appropriate guidelines to avoid harassment of citizens by depriving them of their liberty.

"The arrest is not based on mere suspicion but when there are reasons to believe indicating commission of some grave offence," he said, adding that reasons to believe cannot be on

It voiced concern over the 'ambiguity' in section 69 of the GST Act that deals with the powers of arrest.

The top court had said it would interpret the law to 'strengthen' the concept of liberty.

Blessed to be part of 4.5cr family: Naveen

SUSTAINABLE HABITS AND AWARENESS IN FAMILIES CAN BE CRITICAL FOR MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE CLIMATE ACTION

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 15: On the occasion of 'International Day of Families', Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik taking to 'X' said, "Family is where life begins. Families play a significant role in shaping our personality, instilling values in us and give a strong foundation to build a better society. I am blessed

to be part of this 4.5 crore loving family of Odisha."

The 'International Day of Families' is observed May 15 every year to celebrate the importance of families and their roles in society.

The United Nations adopted it as a resolution in 1994 to raise awareness about the significance of families, highlight the challenges they face, promote the ideals of togetherness, and showcase the efforts that strengthen family units worldwide.

This year, the theme 'Families and Climate Change' is aimed at empowering families through education, changing consumption habits, and advocacy that can be critical for meaningful and effective climate action. Families pass values across gen-

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES



erations, so instilling sustainable habits and climate awareness in families from an early age is important.

Environmentalist SN Patro said, "The celebration aims to raise awareness of how climate

change impacts families and the role families that can play in safeguarding climate. Climate change negatively affects family health and well-being through increased pollution, extreme weather events that displace people, disruptions to agriculture and food systems, and economic impacts. Families contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions through electricity usage, transportation choices, food consumption, and overall consumption patterns."

Ambitious climate action is urgently needed by governments, businesses, and citizens to cut emissions and advance climate justice, Patro added. He also emphasised the need to focus on reducing household CO2 emissions.

ODISHA SET FOR 'INDIA SKILLS'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Sixty four skilled individuals from the state are gearing up to demonstrate their talents at a national competition titled 'India Skills 2023-24'. The three-day event will feature over 1,500 enthusiastic participants across the country.

The competition will commence May 15 with the opening ceremony and orientation session. The competitions will take place May 16 onwards, concluding the felicitation ceremony May 19.



Representing a diverse array of skills, participants from the state will exhibit their expertise and skills at the event facilitated by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). The winners will proudly represent India at 'World Skills 2024' which will be held at Lyon, France.

Esteemed panels of judges and experts will assess the live performances of the participants at multiple venues. NSDC has coordinated the logistics at the venues to ensure seamless execution of these competitions.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I Smt. Milina Padhi, W/o - Late Shiba Prasad Dash, Resident of Arasa, Baghabuda, Rajkanika, Kendrapara do hear by declare and notify that Milina Dash and I are one Person originally. I am known as Milina Padhi.

Delhi HC: Litigants can't make contemptuous allegations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: A litigant can exercise his legal remedies but does not have the liberty to make contemptuous allegations and undermine a court's authority, the Delhi High Court has said.

The court made the observation while taking exception to a lawyer's "patently contemptuous" comments in the chat box of the virtual platform being used for holding a hybrid hearing earlier this month.

The court issued a show-cause notice to the lawyer, who was aggrieved by the court allegedly not hearing his personal case, and asked him to state why a notice for contempt should not be issued and contempt proceedings initiated against him.

Justice Anoop Kumar

Mendiratta noted that the lawyer, who was expected to maintain decorum, has not expressed any remorse and chosen to stand by his comments which seek to 'undermine' the authority of the court in public perception.

The judge said the comments were placed in public domain with the intention to "scandalise the court", are "patently contemptuous" and interfere with due course of judicial proceedings, therefore falling within the ambit of criminal contempt under Section 14 of the Contempt of Courts Act. "This Court is of the considered opinion that petitioner can always exercise the remedies available to him in accordance with law but the same does not give liberty to make contemptuous allegations and undermine the authority of the Court," the judge stated in an order passed May 9.

Independents may play spoilsport

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 15: The first phase of elections in Odisha is done and dusted. A total of four Lok Sabha constituencies - Kalahandi, Nabarangpur, Berhampur and Koraput - and 28 Assembly segments went to the polls in the first phase May 13. The second phase will be conducted May 20.

Even though the electoral fight is limited to three parties - namely the BJD, the BJP and the Congress in Odisha, there are many Independent candidates that may act as spoilsport. These candidates may not emerge victorious, but may garner enough votes to upset the appellation of the favourite from a particular constituency, analysts have pointed out.

Among these lesser-known candidates are tea stall owners, farmers, plumbers and a lawyer. They lack the resources, but are trying to make a statement fighting the might of highly



resourceful candidates from the BJD, the BJP and the Congress. They feel that if they manage to win, then some of the renowned parties may induct them and they can become a part of mainstream politics.

are Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, Anubhav Patnaik, Kharbela Swain, Sanjib Biswal and Premananda Nayak. Since all have their own band of loyal supporters, they have the potential to turn into giant-killers.

This apart there are some senior leaders of the 'Big Three' who have missed out on nomination. Many of them have thrown their hats into the fray as Independents. Among them

Soumya Ranjan has filed his nomination from the Ghasipura Assembly segment. Similarly, Anubhav is contesting from Khandapada, Sanjib from Erasema-Balikuda and

Kharbela from the Balasore Assembly segment.

The ruling BJD has managed to control rebel candidates by offering them plum posts in the party. However, the Congress and the BJP have not been so lucky. Many of their party members have turned rebels and have decided to contest as Independents after being denied nomination.

Political analyst Sudarshan Chhotoray said that in at least 30 Assembly constituencies Independent candidates may act as spoilsports for heavyweights of different political parties.

"Leaders who are popular and concerned with problems of the people can always contest elections without banking on support from any political party," said Prabhakalyan Mohapatra, a senior political expert. "They can have an impact if there is a hung Assembly. Then all political parties will look to them for their support," he added.

Climate change leading to extreme heatwaves

Annu Mishra kept her food stall shut as temperatures in Bhubaneswar remained above 40 degrees Celsius for 17 consecutive days in April. This streak was the longest since 1969, severely impacting health and livelihoods.

"The crippling heat made it extremely difficult to stand near the gas stove," said 51-year-old Mishra, noting that the only time her food stall remained shut for such a long duration was after Cyclone Fani in 2019.

Similar heatwaves could occur once every 30 years and they have already become about 45 times more likely due to climate change, scientists said Wednesday, citing historical weather data. The scientists belonging to the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group em-

phasised that heatwaves intensified by climate change are making life very tough for people living in poverty across Asia.

Amid a prevailing but weakening El Nino and the increasing concentration of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, millions of people in South Asia endured brutal heat in April.

Record-smashing maximum temperatures were logged in many parts of India, prompting health warnings from government agencies and some states to suspend in-person

classes in schools across the country.

The oppressive heat also shattered temperature records in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar. In West Asia, including Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine and Jordan, heatwaves with temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius in April have become more frequent due to climate change.

As global average temperatures have risen by 1.2 degrees Celsius compared to the cooler pre-industrial climate, scientists predict that West Asia is expected to experience similar heatwaves about once every 10 years. If warming reaches two degrees

According to WHO, more than 1,66,000 people have died as a result of heatwave between 1998 and 2017



Celsius, similar heatwaves will occur about once every five years. Such heatwaves can be deadly for the elderly and kids.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), more than 1,66,000 people have died as a result of heatwave between 1998 and 2017.

In Bhubaneswar, Mishra suffered losses to the tune ₹20,000 as

she was forced to close her stall due to the heatwave. "Many street vendors kept their shops open from 6.00am to 10.00am and then again for the same time frame in the evening. But that was not enough and they suffered huge losses," Mishra, who is also a member of the local street hawkers' association, said. He added that many of the shop

owners had suffered heat strokes.

Experts suggest that the population aged above 65 years and below 15 years needs special attention in terms of preparedness to reduce the impact of extreme heat on health.

"Cities in India need to identify vulnerable populations and prepare heat action plans accordingly," said Vishwas Chitale, Senior Programme Lead at the Council on Energy Environment and Water.

The WWA emphasised that some countries, such as India, have comprehensive heat action plans in place. Yet, to protect some of the most vulnerable people, these plans must be expanded with mandatory regulations, such as workplace interventions for all workers to address heat stress, it added.

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No revival hope for Keonjhar tea garden

5 held for murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 15: The Taramakanta tea garden in this district was once famous not only in Odisha, but all over the country and even outside India's boundaries. However, now for close to two decades, it has remained shut much to the disappointment of people living in its vicinity.

Locals blamed the Odisha government for the closure of the garden. The residents of Banspal block led by chairperson Manas Dehuri, all sarpanchs and samiti members had submitted a memorandum to ST chairman Kartik Pandian for reopening of the garden a few months back. However, till now no steps have been taken for the revival of the garden, Taramakanta panchayat samiti member Ajit Kumar Nayak said. He added that chances of reopening the garden appear very slim.

Incidentally, the garden, once managed by the Odisha Tea



Plantation Ltd, was the lone one in the state. The tea leaves were in great demand for their superior quality. The leaves were sent to different parts of India and also exported to countries like Japan, France, Germany, Great Britain, USA, Russia and Canada.

Sources said the tea garden was set up at Taramakanta under the joint collaboration of state-run Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Ltd (IPICOL) and industrialist Basant Kumar Dubey in 1982. The promoters took a

loan of ₹2.24 crore from United Bank of India to set up the garden on 896.54 hectares of land. It was named Odisha Tea Plantation Ltd as it was a joint venture between IPICOL and Dubey. Soon, the garden became a name to reckon with because of the su-

perior quality of its product.

The tea garden which became operational in 1983 was doing brisk business till 2002. It was also beneficial for the men and women of the Bhuyan and Juang communities. Many of their members were employed in the garden and were earning a decent livelihood. Since inception the garden was earning substantial profits.

However, bad times hit the garden in 2003. Production diminished as demand for tea leaves from the garden decreased. Employees and labourers started leaving for better opportunities elsewhere. It was completely shut down in 2004. Many members of the tribal Juang and Bhuyan communities who worked in the garden are yet to receive their dues till now, sources said.

Locals feel that the garden could still be profitable if the state government takes the initiative to reopen it and run it in a professional manner. As of now, the garden wears a haunted look.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, May 15: Police arrested Wednesday five persons including a woman and two minors for their alleged role in the murder of Bijay Jal, 41, a resident of Vishnu Mandirpada locality under Burla police limits in this district. Officials alleged that the victim was murdered by the five, Monday night. The adults involved in the crime have been identified as Kajal Kumari alias Kajli, 22, Chandan Kumbhar, 20 and Mohammed Shakib Ershad, 19.

Officials of the Burla police station informed Wednesday that argument over cash stolen from Bijay's house led to his death. The victim suspected that some youths of the locality were involved in the theft. When he questioned them a heated argument broke out. The youths along with Kajal attacked Bijay with sharp weapons killing him on the spot.

Residents of the locality then informed the Burla police station about the gruesome murder. Cops arrived on the spot



and sent the body for post-mortem before registering a case (No- 234/2024) under Sections 302 and 34 of IPC at the Burla police station.

Police launched a search for all the accused and arrested them Wednesday and produced them in court. The three adults were sent to judicial custody after their bail pleas were rejected. The two minors have been sent to a juvenile home. Police have also seized the weapons used in the heinous crime and are interrogating the three adults accused for murder.

Miscreants loot teacher's house

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, May 15: Eight masked miscreants allegedly broke into a house and looted valuables worth ₹7 lakh at gunpoint at Dangarbheja village under Sadar police limits in this district in the wee hours of Wednesday. The portion which was burgled had been rented out by the owner of the house Sunil Sahu, to lady teacher Kumudini Behera and her husband Rohit Behera. The two were residing as tenants along with their son for last six months.

As per the FIR lodged by Rohit at the Dangarbheja police outpost, eight miscreants broke the lock and entered the house early Wednesday. Six of them were carrying guns while two had swords. They threatened to kill all the three inhabitants and looted gold ornaments and other valuables worth ₹7 lakh before escaping.

Later in the day, a police team led by Nabarangpur police station IIC, Sambit Kumar Behera and sub-inspector Sabir Ahmed reached the spot and launched an investigation. The owner of the house has also been questioned, they said.

Bridge construction resumes as admin provides police cover



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 15: Work for construction of a bridge-cum-barrage over Deo river, which had been stalled for some time now, has resumed again under security cover. Due to threats issued by the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI), the company engaged in construction of the bridge had deserted the site earlier this year.

Initially work for the bridge, being built at a cost of ₹44 crore, started in April, 2022. A company

from Chhattisgarh had been entrusted with the responsibility of building the bridge. Once the entire facility is completed it will be hugely beneficial to commuters as well as farmers, locals informed.

Trouble started on New Year's Day this year when 10-12 PLFI members turned up at the site and demanded money. They threatened the site in-charge and workers with dire consequences if the amount was not paid. PLFI is a dreaded organisation as its activities are quite similar to that

of Maoists.

The armed miscreants again returned to the spot two days later on the night of January 3. They ruthlessly thrashed all those present at the site. The PLFI cadres warned that unless the workers leave the construction site or the company pays up, they will all be killed. In these circumstances, the company withdrew all its temporary and permanent employees from the site. It stated that unless proper security cover is provided, work will not start.

With locals demanding resumption of construction of the bridge-cum-barrage, the district administration has finally decided to provide adequate security personnel at the site. Work for the past few days have been progressing smoothly in presence of armed policemen.

SDPO Biramitrapur, Susant Das said, "We are providing armed security and work is progressing smoothly both during the day and night. I am sure the PLFI cadres will not return as we have got adequate number of policemen guarding the site."

Man arrested for killing wife, hiding body

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 15: Cops arrested a man Wednesday on charges of murdering his wife and concealing the body in a sack at his residence in Sadangi village under Baria police limits in this district. After hiding the body in a sack, the man had kept it in a locked room.

The victim was identified as Barsali Bentkar, wife of accused Pradip Bentkar. Police arrived at the house, seized the body and sent it for post-mortem to the Champua sub-divisional hospital. The incident has sparked tension in the area.

Sources said that Pradip had a heated argument with his allegedly drunk wife, Monday night outside the house. He dragged



his wife back inside the residence where he thrashed her mercilessly. Barsali lost her consciousness due to the beating and subsequently breathed her last. Police informed that to hide his criminal act, Pradip stuffed the body in a sack and hid it in a room which he locked from outside. However, the ghastly crime came to light after Pradip's daughter Sandhya started searching for her mom.

Sandhya found the body of

her mom and informed the other residents of the village. The villagers caught Pradip and tied him to a pole before informing the police.

On getting information, officials from the Baria police station reached the spot and recovered the body concealed in the sack. They freed Pradip who had been tied up and arrested him.

IIC of Baria police station, Hemant Kumar Majhi informed that they have initiated an investigation into the murder. "We are interrogating Pradip to find out why he took such a violent step," stated Majhi. He added that police are waiting for the post-mortem report to ascertain the exact cause behind Barsali's death.

Injured deer rescued; released back in forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 15: An injured wild spotted deer was rescued by Patna forest range officials from Mallarpada village Wednesday. The animal was later released in a nearby forest after it recovered following treatment.

The incident comes a day after another injured deer was rescued by Forest department officials from the backyard of Sushil Mohanta in Belasare village under Saharapada forest division, Tuesday morning. It had taken shelter there after it was bitten by a dog.

However, it died during treatment in the afternoon. Locals pointed that decrease in forest habitats is forcing deer and other animals to stray into human habitats. In the process, many animals are getting injured and dying.

Cops bust IPL betting racket

Rourkela: Four persons were arrested Tuesday evening after police busted a racket involved in online betting during IPL matches in Sundargarh town. It was being operated from a house in Mahadevpada locality under Town police limits. A cybercrime team also helped the cops to track down the culprits. The four arrested were produced in court Wednesday which sent them to judicial custody. The arrested persons have been identified as Mithun Sahu, 33, Sanjay Kumar Sahu, 40, Sanjay Sahu, 40, all belonging to Bhitiripada locality. After interrogating the three, police also arrested Subodh Choudhury (46) of Khamaripada locality in Sundargarh town. Police also seized from their possession ₹5,17,200 in cash, a laptop, six smartphones, three mobile chargers and credit and debit cards of various banks. The cards were in the names of the accused. Town police have registered a case against all the four under Sections 294-A/420, 34, IPC 4 & 5 of Prize Chits and Money Circulation Scheme (Banning) Act 1978. Giving information about the arrests, Sundargarh SDPO, Himanshu Behera said that the four were involved in online betting for quite some time. "We have been tracking them and we took the help of the cybercrime department. Initially it was difficult to earn their trust, but finally one of the cybercrime personnel managed to join the group involved in online betting. It made the job easier for us and we finally managed to nab them," Behera stated. The SDPO also informed that efforts are on to trace people who used to bet during the matches through the accused. "They were running a illegal but profitable business as many people used to place bets on a regular basis," Behera added.

Format C-1				
Declaration about Criminal Cases				
(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.) Name and Address of Candidate: Shankar Oram, F-9, Sector - 02, Rourkela - 769006				
Name of Political Party: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)				
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)				
Name of Election: Simultaneously General Election 2024, Odisha				
*Name of Constituency: 10 - Biramitrapur (ST)				
I Shankar Oram (Name of Candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents.				
(A) Pending Criminal Cases				
Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and Dated	Status of Case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	J.M.F.C.-I, Sri U.K. Behera, Rourkela, designated as MP - MLA Court, District of Sundargarh, Odisha	G.R. Case No. 317/2003	Pending	U/s: 341, 332, 294, 506 of IPC
2	J.M.F.C. Rural	G.R. Case No. 83/2010	Pending	U/s: 147, 148, 341, 427, 431, 336, 338, 332, 333, 294, 307, 506, 149 of IPC r/w 3 PDPP Act and 7 Criminal Law Amendment Act.
(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences				
Sl. No.	Name of Court & Date(s) of Order(s)	Description of offence(s) & Punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed	
*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.				

FORMAT C - 2							
(For political party to publish in website, newspapers, TV)							
Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party							
(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.) Name of Political Party : COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)							
*Name of Election : SIMULTANEOUS GENERAL ELECTION, 2024							
Name of State/ODISHA							
1	2	3	4	5			
Sl. No.	Name of Constituency	Name of Candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases	(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences			
			Name of Court	Name of Court & date (s) of order(s)			
			Section of the Acts concerned & brief description of offence(s)	Description of offence (s) & punishment imposed			
				Maximum punishment imposed			
1.	14- BONAI (ST) A.C.	Laxman Munda	G.R No- 489 of 2021, DJM, BONAI.	U/S 147,448,341, 363,149 of IPC Demonstration in front of DDM office, Koida for work employment	NIL	NIL	NIL
2.			G.R No- 488 of 2021, DJM, BONAI.	U/S 188, 269, 234, of IPC Demonstration in front of DDM office, Koida	NIL	NIL	NIL
3.			.RMC case No- 1/2020 of UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S 145, 147, 174-A of RLY Act Demonstration on PUBLIC RLY ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL
4.			.RMC case No- 2/2019 of UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S 145-B, 147 of RLY Act Demonstration on PUBLIC RLY ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL
5.			.RMC case No- 1/2019 of UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S145,147,174-A of RLY Act Demonstration on PUBLIC RLY ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL
6.			.GR No-454 of 2018, SDJM, BONAI	U/S 143, 149, 186, 283, 341 of IPC DEMONSTRATION ON PUBLIC ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL
7.			.GR NO-50 OF 2018, SRI UK BEHERA, JMFC, RKL	U/S143, 448, 341, 294, 427, 186, 353, 506 & 34 OF IPC DEMONSTRATION AT DDM, KOIDA, FOR OPENING CLOSED MINES	NIL	NIL	NIL
8.			.GR NO-49 OF 2018, SDJM, BONAI	U/S143, 448, 341, 294, 427, 186, 353, 506, 149 OF IPC, 3 P.D.P.P ACT, 7Cr LA ACT DEMONSTRATION FOR OPENING CLOSED MINES	NIL	NIL	NIL
9.			.RMC CASE NO-9/2018 OF UK BEHERA, JMFC, RKL	U/S145-B, 147, 147-A OF RAILWAY ACT, DEMONSTRATION ON PUBLIC RLY ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL
10.			.RMC CASE NO-3/2018 OF UK BEHERA, JMFC, RKL	U/S 145A, 147,174-A OF RLY ACT, AGITATION REGARDING PUBLIC RLY ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL
11.			.GR NO-560 OF 2017, SDJM, BONAI	U/S143, 149, 186, 283, 294 & 34 OF IPC DEMONSTRATION AT BHASKAR STEEL AGAINST POLLUTION & FOR EMPLOYMENT	NIL	NIL	NIL
12.			.GR NO 522 OF 2017, SDJM, BONAI	U/S143, 149, 283, 341, OF IPC DEMONSTRATION AT BHASKAR STEEL AGAINST POLLUTION & FOR EMPLOYMENT	NIL	NIL	NIL
13.			.GR NO.91 OF 2017, JMFC (R) RKL	U/S147, 148, 149, 294, 307, 341, 323, 324, 325, 427, 506 & 120-B OF IPC DEMONSTRATION AT BIMALAGARH RLY SIDING FOR EMPLOYMENT	NIL	NIL	NIL
14.			.RMC CASE NO. 8/2017 OF UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S 145, 147, 174-A OF RLY ACT AGITATION AT RLY STATION FOR REPAIRING N.H. 215/520	NIL	NIL	NIL
15.			.RMC CASE NO 5/2017 UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S174-A, 147, 145 OF RLY ACT AGITATION AT ROXY RLY STATION FOR REPAIR OF N.H. 215/520	NIL	NIL	NIL
16.			.RMC CASE NO 4/2017 UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S 174-A, 147, 145 OF RLY ACT AGITATION AT PSJ RLY STATION FOR REPAIRING OF N.H. 215/520	NIL	NIL	NIL
17.			.RMC CASE NO 3/2017 OF UK BEHERA JMFC, RKL	U/S 174-A, 147, 145 OF RLY ACT AGITATION AT PSJ RLY STATION FOR REPAIRING OF N.H. 215/520	NIL	NIL	NIL
18.			.PS CASE NO. 11 OF 2016, BNDM GRPS, DIST-SUNDAR-GARH	U/S 143, 149 & 34 OF IPC & 174 OF IR ACT DEMONSTRATION DEMANDING TALCHER-BIMALAGARH RLY LINE	NIL	NIL	NIL
19.			.PS CASE NO 21 OF 2014 BNDM, GRPS, DIST-SUNDAR-GARH	U/S 143, 341, 283, 149, 146, 147 OF IPC & 174 OF RLY ACT DEMONSTRATION DEMANDING TALCHER-BIMALAGARH RLY LINE	NIL	NIL	NIL
20.			.RMC CASE NO.8/2013 OF UK BEHERA, JMFC, RKL	U/S 174-A OF RLY ACT DEMONSTRATION ON PUBLIC RLY ISSUE	NIL	NIL	NIL

Sd./- Ali Kishor Patnaik, Secretary
Communist Party of India (Marxist Odisha State Committee)

FOCUS JUDICIARY

UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY



If democracy does survive in this sub-continent, posterity will certainly hail these recently pronounced three judgements as the primary reason for its preservation

foundation of democracy, the concomitant of which is ensuring a fair and free election. Kejriwal heads a national party, the Aam Aadmi Party. It is constitutionally recognised as such and is the ruling party in Delhi and Punjab. His absence will give the BJP an undisputed, unfair advantage and will deny the voters an informed choice of an alternative desirable candidate to vote for without an important spokesperson canvassing against the ruling party. Surely, that's at the heart of the matter. If democracy does survive in this sub-continent, posterity will certainly hail these recently pronounced three judgements as the primary reason for its preservation.

We have a robust judiciary, at least at the higher levels, and an inspirational SC when the need demands. Has it always been that way? I don't think so. We've been let down on occasions in the past but as long as every judge must attain the age of retirement and demit office, the bad eggs must go. The institution has the inherent resilience and self-belief to bounce back and roar "we are a democracy." Simply stated, our ancient culture and civilisation are of the fragrance of democracy and uncompromisingly espouse freedom of thought and expression. Surely a judiciary which is a product of the same wholesome cultural influence cannot but be guided by these cherished values in writing their decisions. If ever our judges are momentarily afflicted by laryngitis when a vocal assertion of democracy is called for, have no fear; the Indian citizen has the best throat lozenges to give the judiciary back its voice.

The writer is a senior advocate who practices in the Supreme Court and has espoused causes of public interest. He heads the Mumbai law firm Oasis Counsel and Advisory.

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Will Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal gain electorally with his interim bail? Did Prime Minister Modi take the wrong step with the ill-timed arrest of Arvind Kejriwal? Did the Supreme Court do the right thing in temporarily releasing the Delhi CM? The first two questions will be answered on 4 June 4, when the results of the Lok Sabha elections are out. So, that leaves the third question which is the issue of the SC order granting Kejriwal limited liberty to campaign for his party and poll partners till 1 June, a decision that must be lauded.

This decision of the SC is a proud moment for the country for the rule of law, and above all, for democracy. Here's why: prior to this ruling, the SC had in two watershed judgements, spoken stridently to uphold our most fundamental value, democracy. The first such ruling may not have been nationally consequential when it struck down and removed the illegally elected BJP mayor of Chandigarh and described the process by which he was surreptitiously elected as a "murder of democracy." This utterance by the Chief Justice of India must resonate in the hearts and minds of everyone who values freedom. And the next judgement by the full bench of the SC was to declare the Electoral Bond Scheme unconstitutional, again thereby upholding the democratic principles of our polity, the fundamental right of Indian citizens to receive information vital to the governance of the country. So why should the temporary bail given to Arvind Kejriwal be bracketed with the earlier two rulings. And have the same degree of significance and importance as the earlier two momentous rulings? It's simply because the foundation of the release order is the same, namely in the interest of "fair and free elections," a principle that's inalienable to our liberty.

Contextually, it's important to grasp the jurisprudence underlying bail. Every crime committed by a person is in theory, a crime against society. The community in which a crime is perpetrated must be protected from a person with such a propensity. But arresting someone suspected of a crime is not the same as proving that the crime has been committed. The accused, however strong the suspicion and however grave the crime, is nevertheless presumed to be innocent until proven guilty at a trial. It's keeping the presumption of his innocence in mind that the law allows him to be released on bail so that he's free to defend himself effectively. Denial of bail irrespective of the nature of the offence is to punish the accused without a trial. Thus, whether an accused is entitled to bail must necessarily depend on a variety of circumstances that the judge in his discretion evaluates to grant or deny bail.

Even in suspected murder cases, bail may be granted where the judge feels that the totality of the material or evidence produced by the prosecution is riddled with contradictions, thus

providing the accused with a probable defence at his trial. There's no straightjacket or formula that governs the exercise of a judge's discretion to grant or refuse bail. If this broad approach is kept in mind, then Arvind Kejriwal ought to have been granted bail earlier till his case was ready for trial, and not just as an interim measure. The charges against the Delhi CM have not yet been crystallised even though the "investigation" has been in progress for two years. He's been arrested ostensibly on the "confession" of a would-be approver of seriously dubious integrity who had given contradictory versions of his "confession" previously.

Then again, Kejriwal is not a flight risk. He cannot possibly tamper with evidence already supposedly gathered by the Enforcement Directorate, or influence witnesses especially if his liberty is vigilantly monitored. All these circumstances are compelling for a judge to set Kejriwal free to function and discharge his duties as the CM of Delhi. But the SC didn't get into these mundane nitty-gritty details and gave Kejriwal his rightful liberty on the solid



Haresh Jagtiani

THERE'S NO STRAJTJACKET OR FORMULA THAT GOVERNS THE EXERCISE OF A JUDGE'S DISCRETION TO GRANT OR REFUSE BAIL



Jayati Ghosh

The vast majority of the world's financial assets, currently valued at roughly \$470 trillion, are privately held. Redirecting just 1 per cent of these resources toward climate and development initiatives would be enough to meet even the highest annual estimates

“Yoga is a generic name for any discipline by which one attempts to pass out of the limits of one's ordinary mental consciousness into a greater spiritual consciousness.”
SRI AUROBINDO

The Financing Gap

The international development sector has become fixated on calculating financing gaps. Hardly a day goes by without new estimates of the funds low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) need to meet their climate targets and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance, for example, estimates that developing and emerging economies (excluding China) need \$2.4 trillion annually by 2030 to close the financing gap for investments in mitigation and adaptation. Achieving the SDGs would require an extra \$3.5 trillion per year. Similarly, the UN's 2023 Trade and Development Report suggests that LMICs need roughly \$4 trillion per year to meet their climate and development goals.

Such estimates can elicit a range of psychological and policy responses. Ideally, they would encourage greater ambition and urgency in crafting and implementing policies at both the national and international levels. But they can also be distracting and demoralising, especially given the current shortfalls in climate and development financing. Consequently, a growing number of commentators argue that governments and multilateral lenders alone cannot meet developing countries' financing needs.

At first glance, this argument is difficult to dispute. The vast majority of the world's financial assets, currently valued at roughly \$470 trillion, are privately held. Redirecting just 1 per cent of these resources toward climate and development initiatives would be enough to meet even the highest annual estimates. This math has helped popularise the "billions to trillions" slogan, which calls for governments and development banks to incentivise and mobilise private-sector investment.

The World Bank has been a leading proponent of this approach, especially under the leadership of President Ajay Banga, who has spent most of his career in the private sector. The Bank's newfound private-sector-oriented strategy focuses on four key priorities: ensuring regulatory certainty, providing insurance against political risks, mitigating foreign-exchange risks, and implementing an originate-to-distribute model, which typically involves securitising loans and selling them to investors.

Some of these priorities are not new. The World Bank has long championed regulatory certainty, which often translates into advocating deregulation. Managing political risks has also always been a priority, though success remains notoriously difficult to measure. It is unclear whether the Bank's solution – providing data on sovereign defaults and recovery rates across countries dating back to 1985 – actually leads to effective risk mitigation.

Likewise, the Bank's endorsement of the originate-to-distribute model is puzzling, given securitisation's track record of triggering financial crises in both developed and developing countries. Unsurprisingly, the various Bank funds established to encourage private investment have had a limited impact so far.

But the problems with the "billions to trillions" approach are not confined to the World Bank. For starters, this strategy's potential impact on the availability of funds for public spending remains unclear. Then there is the challenge of ensuring that "incentivised" private capital actually delivers the promised results.

It is important to remember that international financial institutions, particularly multilateral development banks (MDBs), have been underperforming for years. A 2023 report by the G20's Independent Expert Group highlights the procyclical behaviour of these institutions, which were originally established to counteract such trends.

According to the report, net transfers from the International Monetary Fund to LMICs fell by \$19 billion from 2022 to 2023, while those from the World Bank Group decreased by \$6 billion. Regional development banks also experienced declines. Overall, net resource transfers from MDBs turned negative in 2023, owing partly to a downturn in private financial flows.

Simply put, MDBs reduced lending just when it was most needed. If they allocate more resources to mitigating risks for private investors, available funds for essential public services will shrink even further. Historically, private investors have relied on the public sector to finance infrastructure projects and riskier, less profitable ventures. If governments and international institutions remain resource-constrained, it is highly unlikely that private entities will step in to bridge the gap.

The problem is compounded by the difficulty of ensuring that private entities fulfill their commitments. The prevailing approach involves offering incentives, such as subsidies and risk underwriting, but not at the same time establishing clear conditions, enforcement mechanisms, and regulations to curb monopolistic and anticompetitive behaviour. Countries like China have successfully mobilised significant private investment for their energy transitions by wielding carrots and sticks. By contrast, many LMICs and the international financial institutions that advise them have relied heavily on incentives without making any effort to shape markets through effective regulation and controls.

It is time to move beyond the hollow "billions to trillions" mindset and ensure that the billions we do have are spent wisely. This requires boosting LMICs' public revenues by facilitating sovereign-debt reductions, enhancing cooperation to ensure that multinational companies and the super-rich are properly taxed, and advancing new allocations of special drawing rights (the IMF's reserve asset). Together, these measures are far more likely to generate the trillions of dollars needed to close development- and climate-financing gaps in the developing world.

The writer, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is a member of the Club of Rome's Transformational Economics Commission and Co-Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

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WISDOM CORNER

“Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.”
MARK TWAIN

“It is better to have your head in the clouds, and know where you are... than to breathe the clearer atmosphere below them, and think that you are in paradise.”
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

“Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.”
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

SPECTRUM ELECTIONS

Game of money & criminal power



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CONCEIVE OF DEMOCRACY WITHOUT ELECTIONS, IT IS EQUALLY UNFEASIBLE TO ENVISAGE ELECTIONS WITHOUT FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In a video message for the Election Commission's 'My Vote My Voice' mission for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said: "The Constitution gives us a multitude of rights as citizens but it also expects that each of us performs the duty, which is cast upon us." He has urged citizens not to miss the opportunity to vote in the general elections, saying that it is the "foremost duty" in a constitutional democracy.

We fully endorse his views that one should exercise the right to franchise. However, there is limited option before a voter as elections these days have become a game of money and criminal power. For example, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and National Election Watch analysed the affidavits of 763 sitting MPs out of 776 seats of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in September 2023. While 306 (40%) MPs have declared criminal cases, around 194 (25%) MPs have declared serious criminal cases, including cases related to murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, crimes against women et al.

In the first four phases of the 18th Lok Sabha election, out of

5,879 candidates contesting, 1,106 candidates have criminal backgrounds while the average asset of candidates is around ₹5 crore. An ADR report says that a candidate with a criminal background has more chance of winning elections than a candidate with a clean record.

Perhaps, one of the most detrimental attacks on the virtues of democracy is the helplessness of governments to control the flood of money in politics. While it is impossible to conceive of democracy without elections, it is equally unfeasible to envisage elections without financial resources. That is why, in the increasingly high stakes world of election campaigning, belligerent and vulgar displays of candidate wealth, from cash handouts to alcohol distribution, to big rallies, are becoming more common and more profligate.

According to The Economist, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections are the most expensive polls not just in India's history but in the world. The estimated expenditure is expected to reach an astounding ₹1.35 lakh crore, more than double the ₹60,000 crore spent in 2019, claimed N Bhaskara Rao,

who chairs the Centre for Media Studies, and has been tracking election spending for 35 years. The former Central Vigilance Commissioner N Vittal had stated in May 2012 that politics has become a game of money and a situation has come when only those with money power will win elections. He had advocated drastic changes in the administrative and political arena to make it clean.

There is a saying: "Politics makes strange bedfellows." The way politicians are changing parties it appears today's politics is bereft of any ideology and is only a question of survival. People are joining political parties to gain power. When they fail to get ticket in one party, they shift with the hope of getting ticket in another party. Power matters most and politicians view contesting elections as an economic investment and entrepreneurial activity. Investing in elections is an investment decision with low probability of success but high pay off if one wins.

Delivering the Rakesh Endowment Lecture, the "democracy paradox" on 28 April, 2024 in Chennai, former Orissa High

Court Chief Justice S. Muralidhar said: "Tyrants get elected through a democratic process. They then continue ruling over you making a complete mockery of democracy and the rule of law."

According to Devesh Kapur and Milan Vaishnav, the authors of "Costs of Democracy," the increasing costs of democracy are a source of concern, not simply because of the significance of the funds involved, but also due to the larger impacts money can have on political behaviour. For instance, money has a powerful "selection effect" on who stands for election.

Raising money from supporters also incentivises quid pro quo in policymaking. Rising election costs also exacerbate inequality. The result could well be a polity that is more favourable to the preferences of the wealthy and criminals. But perhaps most dangerously, even the perception of money and criminals "buying" elections can undermine citizens' confidence in the democratic process itself.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.

Inflation concerns

Sir, This refers to "Wholesale inflation at 13-month high," Orissa POST, May 15. The good news is that retail inflation has marginally eased for the second month in a row to 4.83 per cent in April. The fall was mainly driven by lower fuel prices. The bad news is that food inflation shot up to 8.70 per cent in April. This was pushed by a sharp price rise in a wide spectrum of food items. For the common man, the heaviest burden is the persistent rise in the price of vegetables and pulses at 27.8 per cent and 16.8 per cent, respectively. Food inflation, which hits the poor harder, has been at more than 8 per cent year-on-year since November 2023. The continuing heatwave is expected to hit vegetable supplies further, possibly pushing up prices in May too; and the high prices in cereals and pulses will likely continue till the next crop comes in. Food inflation continues to be a worry. Not only do food items account for almost half the basket that makes up the consumer price index, they also have a direct bearing on the living standards of people.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Strained ties

Sir, India-Nepal relationship has had its highs and lows. The tiny Himalayan country has always been wary about India's might. The Madhes agitation had strained bilateral relations resulting in Nepal's outreach to China. New Delhi's inability to keep-up the tempo of goodwill has irked Kathmandu. The recent decision of the Pushpa Kamal Dahal government to depict the controversial India-Nepal-China tri-junction on its currency notes has raised eyebrows in Indian diplomatic circles. It is widely felt that apart from traditional issues, Kathmandu's unhappiness with New Delhi over a few crucial projects not taking off, or not being maintained after being inked, could be among the few triggers. Both countries should display maturity and responsibility so that Beijing's negative impact does not cast a shadow on mutual friendship. The currency note issue should be resolved at the earliest for the sake of peace and stability in the region.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Mufti toils to revive PDP's fortunes

THE PDP DECIDED TO CONTEST THREE SEATS IN KASHMIR AND GAVE TWO JAMMU SEATS A MISS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, May 15: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President Mehbooba Mufti is fighting a tough battle for her political survival and the revival of her party in the valley.

The battle has become interesting since its traditional rival, National Conference, became its partner when the Gupkar alliance was established to fight for the restoration of J&K's special status after the abrogation of Article 370, and the formation of the INDIA bloc.

But, both the alliances have crumbled in the Union Territory due to electoral compulsion, and are now once again pitted against each other in Kashmir. The PDP decided to contest three seats in Kashmir and gave two Jammu seats a miss.

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti has been working hard to mobilise people in her favour. She has been vehemently campaigning for the restoration of the Assembly and the statehood status.



and political vacuum in Kashmir that has gripped the region for too long.

In an election rally in Budgam recently she said there has been a process of disempowerment after the abrogation of Article 370 which needs to be reversed. There is a need for elected representatives to advocate the region's issues fearlessly.

"With the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, everything is not over, since then efforts have been underway to snatch away the rights of the people and how to evict them from their lands... We are given electricity at the highest price," she said.

PDP's candidate for Srinagar Lok Sabha Constituency Waheed Parra said that elections will help to break the stifling silence

and political vacuum in Kashmir that has gripped the region for too long.

During her election rallies, Mehbooba Mufti targeted the BJP for the 370 abrogation move and for allegedly disempowering Kashmiris.

She, however, has not attacked the National Conference directly, emphasising that her fight was not against the party. Her only grudge is that she was not consulted by the National Conference leadership when the party announced its candidates.

"If stone pelting has stopped, why are our youths in jails and not released? If militancy has ended, why are the people being picked up, why are people sacked from government jobs on the basis of suspicion, why are there

curbs on getting passports, and why are youths of Kashmir denied NOC dues to political reasons," she asked.

Mehbooba Mufti herself is a candidate for the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency of Jammu and Kashmir which spans four districts and boasts of a diverse electorate of over 17 lakh voters.

The party is banking on its old slogans like healing touch and opening the cross LOC roads besides emphasising the party's role in alleviating the fear of violence and restoring a sense of security among the population.

Despite acknowledging grievances primarily for its alliance with the BJP that initially brought her father Mufti Sayeed to power as the Chief Minister followed by her becoming the chief minister after his death, Mehbooba is asserting that the PDP's legacy of governance, particularly during her father's tenure, remains unparalleled.

Mufti has sought to rekindle confidence in the PDP's ability to address the challenges facing the region.

But how does that stand any different from the stand of other regional parties, and how can the PDP reinvent itself and connect with the voters in the turbulent political waters of Kashmir is the party's biggest challenge.

Intellectuals write to CM seeking arrest of Prajwal

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, May 15: Demanding that the Chief Minister ensure the immediate arrest of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda's grandson Prajwal Revanna, 107 authors and thinkers from Karnataka have written an open letter to Siddaramaiah.

The letter lists 16 points and states that the "mass rape scandal is utterly shameful and has caused civil society to hang its head in shame. It is a criminal offense to sadiistically record and store about 2,900 videos and photos, threaten victims and kidnap..."

They have expressed concern over the politicisation of the alleged sex video scandal involving JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna that is downplaying the original crime of rape and its consequences.

"The irresponsible behaviour of political forces is downplaying the original crime and its consequences. Members of Prajwal Revanna's family, including his grandfather, father, mother, brother, uncle, and aunt, have held various positions such as prime minister, chief minister, and members of the state legislature. The scandal involving this family has regressed us



to a 19th-century feudal set-up that is against women. The scandal has revealed that Prajwal Revanna's family has carried out an autocratic rule under the guise of democracy," the letter charges.

"It is an insult to democracy that despite this scandal coming to light, the election for the Hassan Lok Sabha seat was not halted, and the accused was allowed to contest. Even after the scandal came to light, the accused was allowed to go scot free between April 22 and April 26. The failure of agencies to track his movements has raised questions about the safety of women in society,"

the letter states.

"It is even more shocking that the biggest scandal of this magnitude is being used for political mileage during elections by political parties and leaders," the letter mentions.

"The statements and counter-statements, caste-based remarks, and gender-insensitive comments by politicians, as well as reports projecting victims as criminals, have shattered society and peace of mind. This development is demeaning the honour of victims, who are further finding themselves in a difficult position and are hesitant to lodge complaints," the letter observes.

"The families of the victims who have been exposed are subjected to severe mental harassment. Family members and children of those families are unable to find solutions and are under great stress. Reports suggest that three to four victims have attempted suicide," the letter underlines.

"In this context, we demand the immediate arrest of Prajwal Revanna and the creation of a fearless atmosphere for lodging complaints. We also urge you, CM, to address the victims and provide them with strength and release video statements," the authors demand.

Strange advertisement on daily seeks marriage of dead people



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mangaluru (Karnataka), May 15: A recent newspaper advertisement seeking a groom for a woman who passed away three decades ago has become the talk of the town here in Dakshina Kannada district.

The unconventional advertisement, originating from a family in Puttur in Dakshina Kannada district, aims to arrange a marriage for their deceased daughter, believing that her unmarried status in the afterlife may be causing ongoing misfortunes.

Thirty years ago, tragedy struck the family when their infant daughter passed away. Since then, they have faced unexpected challenges. Seeking guidance from elders, they were told that their deceased daughter's unsettled spirit might be at the root of their troubles.

To bring peace to her soul, the family decided to arrange a marriage for her - a unique and poignant endeavour. To find a groom for somebody who died 30 years ago, the parents got an advertisement published in a widely read newspaper in the district.

The advertisement reads: "Seeking groom who passed 30 years ago for a bride (sic) who passed 30 years ago. Please call the number to arrange a Pretha Maduve (marriage of spirits)."

This unconventional practice underscores a longstanding tradition in Tulu Nadu - the region spread across three coastal districts of Karnataka and portion of neighbouring Kasargod district in Kerala where local dialect Tulu is spoken

.....

In this region, arranging marriages for deceased individuals holds deep emotional significance

Despite exhaustive efforts by relatives and friends, finding a suitable deceased groom of the same age and caste proved elusive, say the heartbroken parents.

This unconventional practice underscores a longstanding tradition in Tulu Nadu - the region spread across three coastal districts of Karnataka and portion of neighbouring Kasargod district in Kerala where local dialect Tulu is spoken.

In this region, arranging marriages for deceased individuals holds deep emotional significance.

According to Tuluva folklore experts, the departed remain connected to their families, sharing in their joys and sorrows. As a result, rituals like 'Vaikunta Samaradhane' and 'Pinda Pradana' are eschewed in favour of offerings of food and the arrangement of marriages for departed souls.

Army illuminates border village with solar lights

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mendhar/Jammu, May 15: Located just 600 meters from the Line of Control (LoC), the Dabbi village in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district comes alive after dusk, thanks to the army which has installed solar-powered lights to provide succour to the villagers.

The project was undertaken under operation 'Sadhbhavana' (goodwill) and was completed in a short period, an army official said.

Dabbi village in Balakote tehsil



of Mendhar sub-division is one of the worst affected villages by the cross-border shelling over the years and lacked street lights.

To improve the living conditions in Dabbi village, solar-powered lights were installed in areas frequented by locals to further augment the electrification process of their village,

the official said.

He said that the initiative of the Army to illuminate Dabbi village with solar lights to alleviate living conditions has resulted in 19 households and 129 villagers getting access to reliable street lights.

The residents now have uninterrupted lighting in the majority of the area including near the local masjid, a shrine, a school and a track leading to their animal 'dhoks' (sheds).

Moreover, the provision of lights has allowed for the es-

establishment of community spaces, fostering social cohesion, the official said.

He said the effort by the Army allows families to function efficiently at night. "This project under military civic action has yielded dividends to the people illuminating hope, paving the way for a brighter and more prosperous future for the village."

The villagers praised the army for the initiative and said the solar lights had not only illuminated their village but also lit up their lives.

'Centre should raise Pak army's atrocities on people of PoK at UN'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, May 15: BJP's Jammu and Kashmir unit chief Ravinder Raina Tuesday urged the Central government to raise at the United Nations the issue of atrocities by the Pakistan army on the people of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

He also urged the government to send rations to the suffering people of PoK.

It is very unfortunate that the people of Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir are subjected to exploitation and cruelty these days, Raina told reporters in Rajouri.

"We urge Foreign Minister Jaishankar ji to take up the matter with the United Nations to register the issue. The atrocities perpetrated by the Pakistan army cannot be tolerated. We stand with the people of PoJK, as they are our brothers and sisters. They are our citizens," Raina said.

Raina alleged that the Pakistan army has subjected the people of various areas of PoK to atrocities and torture.

He expressed concern over reports that the entire area of PoJK has been closed for the past five days and people belonging to the Pahari community have lost their lives in the firing by the Pakistan army.

"Our people in PoJK demanded ration but got bullets. This cannot be tolerated by us. We love our people there," he said.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. ELOP-T-01-2024

NAME OF WORK: MAINTENANCE OF CREW LOBBY & RUNNING ROOMS (BOTH JUNIOR & SENIOR RUNNING ROOMS) AT PALASA (PSA) INCLUDING PROVISION OF SUBSIDIZED MEALS THROUGH OUTSIDE AGENCY FOR A PERIOD OF 02 (TWO) YEARS

Advertised Value (₹) : 5,46,91,059.27, EMD (₹) : 4,23,500.00, Tender Document Cost (₹) : 11,800.00, Period of Completion : 730 Days.

Bidding Start Date : 17.05.2024, Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1700 Hrs. of 31.05.2024

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Complete details and Tender documents will be available at website <https://www.ireps.gov.in>

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (OP) / PR-118/P/24-25 Khurda Road

Format C-1 (for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgement dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011(Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **NARASINGHA MINZ, AT/PO- LAING, PS- RAJGANGPUR, DIST- SUNDARGARH, PIN- 770034**

Name of political party: **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2024 (ODISHA)**

*Name of Constituency: **13-RAJGANGPUR (ST) AC**

I NARASINGHA MINZ (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases			
Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)
1	Special Judge Vigilance Court Sundargarh	VGR-10/2019 Arising out of Sambalpur Vigilance Ps Case No. 33 of 2019	Pending Awaiting for Charge Sheet
Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s) U/s 13(2) read with Sec. 13(1) (a) of the P.C act and Sec. 409/34 IPC. (1) A public servant is said to commit the offence of criminal misconduct-(a) if he dishonestly or fraudulently misappropriates or otherwise converts for his own use any property entrusted to him or any property under his control as a public servant or allows any other person so to do; or(b) if he intentionally (2)Any public servant who commits criminal misconduct shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall be not less than one year but which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine. Punishment under Section 409 IPC. As per Section 409 of the IPC, if public servants, bankers, merchants, factors, attorneys, or agents commit a criminal breach of trust, they are punishable with the following: Life imprisonment, or Imprisonment of up to 10 years along with a fine. *34. Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention. - Where two or more persons, with a common intention to commit a criminal act, do any acts in furtherance of such common intention, each of them is liable for the criminal act done as if it were done by him alone." 1.			
(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences			
Sl. No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1	NIL	NIL	NIL

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

Format C-1 (For candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases
(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP(Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO AT. RAJKHAMAR, PO. PATNAGARH, DIST. BOLANGIR**

Name of political party: **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election: **2024 GENERAL ELECTION TO THE LOKSABHA**

*Name of Constituency: **10-BOLANGIR P.C.**

I SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents :

(A) Pending criminal cases			
Sl. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of Case(s)
1	Pending Investigation	PS Case No-29 Dt.21.02.2021 at Town Police Station, Sambalpur	Pending Investigation
Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s) Disaster Management Act 2005-56 Epidemic Diseases Act 1897-3, IPC 1860-143, IPC 1860-269, IPC 1860-270, IPC 1860-336, IPC 1860-353			
(B)Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences			
Sl. No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
NA	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE

*In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.

Water tanker drivers keep Silicon Valley going



Basavaraj, a water tanker driver, fills his truck with water from a borewell, before delivering it to customers in Bangalore

REUTERS

Bangalore, May 15: Basavaraj, a water tanker driver in India's tech hub Bangalore, has to leave home by 6.30am each day to collect enough water for his customers, who now depend on his services for a very basic need.

Residents of the southern city of 14 million people, capital of Karnataka

state and often called India's Silicon Valley, have been reeling due to water shortages amid unusually hot weather. The 22-year-old fills up his tanker at a man-made pool fed by four boreholes in the north of the city, then does rounds of four or five buildings whose residents are his regular customers. The pool's owner Nandish says he can supply fewer tankers now.

Around 40 tankers used to come here every day earlier but now only about 15-20 come as water from the bore wells has also reduced, he said.

Once dotted by lakes and forest cover, Bangalore has lost 79 per cent of its bodies of water and 88 per cent of its green cover over 40 years, while areas covered by concrete have increased 11-fold, according to the Indian Institute of Science.

With summer yet to reach its peak, water tanker dealers began charging some residents almost double the amount per tanker, forcing the state government to cap prices at 1,200 rupees per unit - triggering a brief strike by some water tank providers.

Daisy, 60, lives close to Basavaraj and next to a privately-owned borehole supplying water locally for free. The water is purified for drinking, and the waste water is drained out, but even that liquid is in demand now.

"We had to fight with the owner of the borewell to give us waste water," Daisy said. "We use it to wash dishes and clothes."



Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Amit Shah, accompanied by BJP's Cuttack LS candidate Bhartruhari Mahtab and Cuttack-Barabati Assembly candidate Purna Chandra Mohapatra, waves at the crowd during a roadshow in Cuttack, Wednesday

No dispute with Naveen, but how state's run by outside officer: Shah

Within six hours of the swearing-in of the BJP govt, all four gates of Srimandir will be opened for devotees, says Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, May 15: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday said while there is no dispute with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, he expressed concerns about the state's administration being led by an officer from outside the state. "We have no dispute with Naveen Babu, but the manner in which an officer from outside is running the state government in the name of Naveen Patnaik. I feel people of Odisha have a lot

of problem over this," Shah told a news channel during a road show here. "This is an issue of Odia pride, Odia prestige," Shah said while explaining the people's sentiment of being ruled by an officer from outside. Asked on the impact of Ram Mandir among the people of Odisha, Shah said, "There is anger among people here over attempt to obstruct consecration ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya." Earlier, while addressing a public meeting at Soroda in Ganjam district, Shah alleged that when the entire country was celebrating the Ram Mandir Utsav, the Naveen government adopted different methods to stop people from participating in the event. "I want to tell Naveen Babu

that those who obstruct the Sri Ram Utsav celebrations will never be forgiven by the people of Odisha," he said. On Lord Jagannath Temple issues, Shah said within six hours of the swearing-in ceremony of the BJP government, all the four gates of the Srimandir in Puri will be opened for devotees. This apart, he also assured people that the new BJP government would make public the report of the judicial commission set up to probe the missing keys of Ratna Bhandar. Shah also said the BJP has said in its manifesto that people duped by different ponzi companies will get back their money within one-and-a-half years. The people involved in the chit fund scam will be sent to jail, he said.

Lack of industry, migration main issues in Kendrapara LS segment



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, May 15: Lack of industries, unemployment and migration of skilled workforce are the main issues in Kendrapara Lok Sabha constituency in coastal Odisha from where BJP national vice president Baijayant Panda is contesting against BJD's Anshuman Mohanty. Kendrapara Parliamentary constituency has sent a galaxy of political heavyweights including late Biju Patnaik and former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray to the Lok Sabha in the past. This time, the fight is mainly between Panda and Mohanty with Sidharth Swarup Das of Congress also in the fray. Elections to the Kendrapara Lok Sabha constituency will be held June 1. This coastal region is primarily an agrarian belt with people largely dependent on farming for sustenance. The district, despite sending several political heavyweights to Lok Sabha and state Assembly, still does not figure in the industrial map though the Naveen Patnaik government in December last year had approved ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel's

proposal to set up a Rs 1,02,275 crore worth mega steel project at Mahakalapara block of Kendrapara district. Migration of skilled workforce is a common factor here as employment opportunities are few and far. The skilled plumbers from this region have made their presence felt across the globe. The plumbers are much sought-after for their workmanship and dexterity. Exodus of plumbers to overseas is a recurring phenomenon. Just like nurses from Kerala, Kendrapara plumbers are much in demand in Gulf countries for their professional approach to work. The region, home to Bhitarkanika National Park and Olive Ridley turtle habitat of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary, virgin beaches, is yet to be utilised for ecotourism-related economy. "I know for sure, there will be no visible change whoever wins. Kendrapara will remain the same as it was... Though there has been improvement in infrastructure in the form of roads, river bridges and rail lines, employment opportunities elude the youths here," rued an elderly voter from Kendrapara town,

Subhash Chandra Mohanty. Panda, an industrialist, was elected to Lok Sabha twice from the Kendrapara seat in 2009 and 2014 on BJD ticket. He was also a two-time BJD Rajya Sabha MP from 2000 to 2009. Panda was suspended from the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls on charges of anti-party activities and later he resigned from the party as well from Lok Sabha. Panda lost to BJD's Anubhav Mohanty by a margin of 1,81,483 votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Mohanty, a Congress deserter and former MLA, had joined the BJD days before the polls. The Congress candidate Das is a political greenhorn with zero experience in Vidhan Sabha or Lok Sabha election. The poll fight, according to observers, will be principally between BJP's Panda and BJD's Mohanty, son of veteran politician late Nalinikanta Mohanty who was expelled from BJD in 2000 by CM Naveen Patnaik. The Aul, Mahakalapara, Rajnagar, Kendrapara, Patkura, Kisannagar and Mahanga Assembly segments constitute the Kendrapara Lok Sabha constituency spread across Kendrapara district with parts in Cuttack district. Significantly, all the Assembly seats coming under the Parliamentary constituency were bagged by the BJD. The Parliamentary constituency is home to 17,91,112 voters including 42,181 first-time voters. It has 9,26,275 male and 8,64,837 female voters. Biju Patnaik had won the seat thrice successively in 1977, 1980 and 1984. Former Lok Sabha Speaker Rabi Ray had won consecutive elections from Kendrapara in 1989 and 1991.



BJD's Keonjhar Lok Sabha nominee Dhanuraja Siddhu, party's Ghashipura Assembly nominee Badri Narayan Patra and Anandapur Assembly nominee Abhimanyu Sethy attending an election meeting at Chhenapadi under Hatadihi block in Keonjhar district, Wednesday



BJD party workers joined Congress at a merger meeting in the presence of party's Banki Assembly nominee Debashish Patnaik and held at Ragadi panchayat of Dampara block in Cuttack district, Wednesday

People of Odisha want a change of govt in state: Birla

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balasure, May 15: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Wednesday claimed that BJP will come to power in Odisha as the people of the state want a change of government. Addressing a meeting here Birla claimed that the people of Odisha are fed up with the misrule of the present Biju Janata Dal government in the state and this time they are determined to go for a change. Lok Sabha and Assembly elections are being held simultaneously in Odisha. Strongly criticising the BJD rule in the state the senior BJP leader said, "People are gradually coming to realise that for the last 25 years, they are having a non-performing government which is contrary to their interest."



He also raised the issue of Odisha's Asmita (pride) and said the state's pride is now in danger. He said it is due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that India's economy has reached the 5th position from 11th rank. Not only that in Modiji's leadership, all-around development of our country has been possible, but India's image in world forum has risen manifold. Reminding people of benefits of double engine government, Birla said, "A government at the Centre as well as in the state by the same party will ensure a speedy development and also can function more efficiently as well as act in a more coordinated way to deliver people's need." BJP candidate for Balasure Lok Sabha constituency Pratap Sarangi was present in the meeting.

Massive crowd presence at Patnaik's rally at Rourkela

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, May 15: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who made a quick visit to the Steel City Wednesday, addressed a massive rally at the Sector-13 Melana Field. There was a presence of over 50,000 persons from different parts of the district who thronged here braving the scorching sun. The CM was found in a very jolly mood as he broke away from his traditional manner of speaking. Instead, much to the delight of the delirious crowd, the CM asked, "Do you love Naveen Patnaik?" This was enough for the crowd to break into a rapturous 'yes'. As Patnaik began asking a few questions such as "BSKY is good or bad?", the crowd went on answering in even louder affirmations each time. Then he continued to ask, "Mission Shakti Yojana, Mamata Yojana, LAccMI bus, 5T schools, KALIA, Madhubabu pension, Parikrama project at Puri are good or bad?" The crowd responded enthusiastically.

Then he went on to give a promise, which is considered by many as the masterstroke. "There will be no power bill from July. The first 100 units will be for free. Apana mane khsui ta (Are you all happy)," he asked. Tearing into the Opposition, he said, "The Opposition is lying and crying crocodile tears." Then he quickly concluded his speech with an appeal, "Vote for the Sankha Chinha (conch symbol), vote for Odisha's development." Soon 5T Chairman VK Pandian, who was holding the mouthpiece for the CM, started his address. "Our CM sir loves Sundargarh and loves hockey. For that he gave a world class hockey stadium in such a short time despite all the odds. Today, you have more than 20 astroturfs including ones in all the blocks for the development of the game. All these have given a new identity to Sundargarh," said Pandian. Then he warned the crowd not to make the mistake of elect-



ing the Opposition BJP again. "You have once made the mistake of electing the Opposition and saw how the development of Rourkela got stopped. Don't commit that blunder again, vote for BJD and vote for Sankha," he said. Then he went on to add, "CM sir has bigger plans for the city and don't miss the opportunity. Our leader is unlike others, he talks less and works more." He then took a dig at the Central government as he asked,

"Has the oil prices dropped? How the super-specialty hospital was handed over to a private party instead of to AIIMS?" Then he asked what the Opposition BJP, which has an MP from here, has done for Rourkela or Sundargarh. Finally, he assured the crowd, "Let me see how many of you do not have the BSKY card?" Instantly a good number of hands went up. Looking at the hands, he said, "Our CM sir will be sworn in June 9. The first file he will sign is regarding the power bill promise we have made. Then the second file he will sign is regarding BSKY for those 20% left out from the scheme." He urged the crowd, "Bless our CM sir and BJD and you will see, the speed of development will be doubled." The seven BJD MLA candidates including minister Sarada Nayak, for Rourkela and Archana Rekha Behera, for Raghunathpalli were present on the stage. Besides, Dilip Tirkey, the BJD MP candidate for Sundargarh was also present.



The Election Commission is a puppet and operates according to Modi's directions. Poll is being held for two-and-half months, have you (poll officials) ever realised the struggle of the common people
MAMATA BANERJEE | CM, WEST BENGAL

SC HEARD OVER 7.5L CASES VIA VC

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said Wednesday the Supreme Court has heard over 7,50,000 cases via video-conferencing and more than 1,50,000 cases were filed online as technology has re-negotiated the relationship between law and enforcement agencies, including the judiciary



of the day vote

This is not an election of a wave but of change. People are asking for a change and an alternative. Do not lose this opportunity as the atmosphere is in favour of the Congress. I am sure people will bring the INDIA bloc to power on June 4
SACHIN PILOT | SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER

Modi and the BJP have been talking about '400-paar', fortunately they are not speaking about '600-paar' as there is a constitutional limit on the strength of Lok Sabha at 543 seats
MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | PRESIDENT, CONGRESS

If the INDIA bloc comes to power, we will work for the progress of the country and end dictatorship. It does not matter whether I go to jail, what matters is that the Constitution should be saved and it's your responsibility
ARVIND KEJRIWAL | CM, NEW DELHI



A classic case of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds: Biden takes a critical tone in statements on Israel's conduct of the war (largely to quell a domestic backlash that threatens to undermine his re-election prospects) even as he arms Israel to continue the war.
BRAHMA CHELLANEY | @CHELLANEY

CITIZENSHIP UNDER CAA

'Dream-come-true' moment for many

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Bharat Kumar's protracted struggle to call India home after escaping religious persecution in Pakistan ended following an 11-year wait as he became one of the 14 people who were granted Indian nationality under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) Wednesday.

"It is a great feeling to be an Indian. It has given a new life to me," the 24-year-old told PTI minutes after he received the citizenship certificate from Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla at a special function held here.

Kumar said his family came to India to escape religious persecution in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

"When we came here, I was just 13 years old. We had to leave Pakistan as it was difficult to live there under constant fear," he said about the life of his early years.

In Delhi, Kumar's family lived in the Majnu Ka Tila area and engaged in small-time business. He said a total of five people got Indian citizenship in his locality on Wednesday even though over a hundred had applied for it.

"We were told that rest of the applicants will also get the citizenship in due course," he said, adding that getting Indian citizenship is a "dream come true" for him.

He said they were grateful to the government for ending their woes.

Seetal Das, who also lives in Majnu Ka Tila and sells mobile phone covers for a living, said his family of 19 too came from Sindh in Pakistan in 2013 and three of them got citizenship. "I am very happy. The government has fulfilled our desire. Now I can live a dignified life in India."

Asked about the ongoing Lok



Sabha elections, Kumar said he would miss exercising his franchise this time as time to include his name in the voters list is already over.

"I will definitely vote in next election as an Indian," he told PTI.

Yoshoda, who too came from Sindh in Pakistan and received the Indian citizenship, said she can now live a dignified life as an Indian.

Expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said that with her Indian nationality, the future of her family and children would be secured now. "My long wait for getting Indian citizenship is over now. I am really happy."

The first set of citizenship certificates under the CAA was issued Wednesday here to 14 people, nearly two months after rules under the contentious law were notified to grant Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from three neighbouring countries.

The union home secretary handed over the certificates to the 14 people after their applications were processed online through a designated portal.

The CAA was enacted in December 2019 for granting Indian nationality to persecuted Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist,

Parsi and Christian migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who came to India on or before December 31, 2014.

After the enactment, the CAA got the president's assent but the rules under which the Indian citizenship was granted were issued on March 11 this year after over a delay of four years.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah termed it a "historic day", saying the decades-long wait of those who faced religious persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan is over.

Dayal Das, a 47-year-old resident of Majnu Ka Tila, said, "Our kids' future is secure now as we have received the Indian citizenship certificate after struggling a lot to flee Pakistan."

He came to India from Hyderabad in Sindh, Pakistan, in 2013. We felt unsafe there and came to our country. Today, our struggle has paid off and we can call ourselves Indians. I am really thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for implementing CAA and giving us citizenship."

Das' two children -- Bharat and Yoshoda (25) -- have also been granted citizenship along with him.

"My children will have access to education and other facilities. After our other family members also get citizenship, we will visit the Ram temple in Ayodhya to offer prayers. It is due to the blessings of the almighty that we have got citizenship of our country," he said.

Das said that now he will apply for a voter card.

"It will be the first document that I will get. Then we will get other identity cards made. I will get to vote and I plan to exercise my franchise in the Delhi Assembly elections next year," he said.

PoK is part of India, we will take it: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Serampore, May 15: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Wednesday referred to protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and said "PoK is part of India and we will take it".

Addressing a rally in Serampore, Shah said while peace has returned to once trouble-torn Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir "now echoes with slogans of Azadi and protests."



"After the abrogation of Article 370 by the government in 2019 peace has returned to Kashmir. But now we witness protests in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Earlier slogans of Azadi were heard here, now the same slogans are heard in PoK. Earlier stones were pelted here, now stones are pelted in PoK," he said.

Hitting out at Congress leaders for not supporting the demand of taking over PoK, Shah said, "Congress leaders like Mani Shankar Aiyar say it should not be done as they have an atom bomb. But let me say this Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is part of India and we will take it."

Shah said the present Lok Sabha elections are about "choosing between corrupt leaders of INDI alliance and honest politician Narendra Modi, who despite being Chief Minister and then Prime Minister never had an allegation of single paisa against him."

"It's a fight between the 'Chinese guarantee' of the INDI

Alliance and the concrete promises of Modi Ji. It's a fight between infiltration and the guarantee of citizenship under the CAA. It's a fight between 'Vote for Vikas' and 'Vote for Jihad'. The choice is yours," he said.

Dubbing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as "Hirak Rani" in an apparent reference to the film "Hirak Rajar Deshe" by Oscar-awarded filmmaker Satyajit Ray, Shah said, "Satyajit Ray was a great artist and filmmaker. He made a movie - Hirak Rajar Deshe. It was quite a famous movie."

"But when Mamata ji came to power, Satyajit Ray was not there, otherwise, he would have made a movie named 'Hirak Rani', instead of 'Hirak Rajar Deshe'. Mamata Banerjee is the Hirak Rani," he said.

"Bengal is the land which gave us Vande Mataram and the national anthem Jana Gana Mana and played a key role in Bengal's freedom struggle. Both the communists and the TMC tried to end nationalism and patriotism in Bengal," he said.

Hitting out at the TMC over various scams, Shah said, "No one will be spared even if Mamata Banerjee tries to protect them."

Shah slammed Banerjee for opposing the CAA and "taking out rallies in support of infiltrators" to appease her vote bank.

"Mamata Banerjee is spreading lies and canards about CAA. Why is she against refugees obtaining citizenship? She is supporting infiltration in Bengal but opposes Hindu refugees getting citizenship. She is taking of supporting infiltrators and Mullahs," he said.

The Centre in March implemented the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, notifying the rules four years after the law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

ED nabs Jharkhand min Alamgir Alam



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, May 15: The Enforcement Directorate Wednesday arrested Congress leader and Jharkhand Rural Development Minister Alamgir Alam in a money laundering case, official sources said.

The 70-year-old was taken into custody at the agency's zonal office here under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after about six hours of interrogation on the second day of questioning, the sources said.

He was grilled by the federal agency Tuesday for over nine hours and his statement was also recorded.

The agency had last week arrested Alam's personal secretary and state administrative service officer Sanjeev Kumar Lal (52) and the latter's domestic help Jahangir Alam (42) following the seizure of more than ₹32 crore cash from a flat linked to them.

The money laundering investigation pertains to alleged irregularities and payment of "bribes" in the state rural development department.

While seeking the remand of the two arrested persons, the ED had informed a special PMLA court here that Lal collected "commission" on behalf of some influential people and that government officials from "top to bottom" in the rural department are involved in the alleged illegal cash payments nexus.

The total seizure of cash by the ED in this case has been recorded at around ₹36.75 crore as the agency seized about ₹3 crore from other locations including ₹10.05 lakh from Lal's place and ₹1.5 crore from a contractor's place.

Manipur violence accounted for 97% of displacements in South Asia in '23

IDMC report termed it highest number of displacements triggered by conflict and violence in India since 2018

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: Conflict and violence triggered 69,000 displacements in South Asia in 2023, with Manipur violence alone accounting for 67,000, according to a new report.

The report by the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) termed it the highest number of displacements triggered by conflict and violence in India since 2018.

On May 3, 2023, a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in Manipur's hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. The march led to ethnic clashes between the Meitei and the Kuki communities, ultimately claiming more than 200 lives.

The Manipur High Court had in March last year called for recommendations to be sent to the central government to recog-



nise the Meitei community as a "scheduled tribe," an official status designed to protect minorities from marginalisation.

The call was met with resistance from other local scheduled tribes, including the Kukis.

Land disputes were also an underlying driver of the tensions.

More than three-quarters of the movements took place within Manipur, but almost a fifth were to the neighbouring state of Mizoram and smaller numbers to Nagaland and Assam.

As the violence escalated, the central government imposed curfews, shut down the internet, and dispatched security forces.

NZ looking into Indian spice brands over contamination

REUTERS

Hyderabad, May 15: New Zealand's food safety regulator Wednesday said it is investigating possible contamination in spice products of top Indian brands MDH and Everest after they faced scrutiny in other countries.

The United States and Australia have been looking into contamination after Hong Kong last month suspended sales of three spice blends of MDH and one of Everest, saying they contained high levels of a cancer-causing pesticide, ethylene oxide. Singapore ordered a recall of the Everest spice mix.

"Ethylene oxide is a chemical known to cause cancer in humans, and its use for food sterilisation has been phased out in New Zealand and other countries. As MDH and Everest spices are also available in New Zealand, we are looking into this issue," said Jenny Bishop, the regulator's acting deputy director general.

SC junks plea for termination of over 27-week pregnancy

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday refused to entertain a plea of a 20-year-old unmarried woman seeking termination of her over 27-week pregnancy, saying the foetus in the womb also has a fundamental right to live. A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai passed the order while hearing the woman's plea challenging the Delhi High Court's May 3 order refusing to allow termination of her pregnancy. "We can't pass any order contrary to the statute," the bench, also comprising justices SVN Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta, told her counsel.

"The child in womb also has a fundamental right to live. What do you say about that?" the bench asked. The woman's counsel said the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act talks about the mother only. "It is made for mother," he said. The bench said the duration of pregnancy was over seven months now. "What about the right of the child to survive? How do you address that?" the bench asked. The counsel said the foetus is in the womb and till the child is delivered, it is the right of the mother. "The petitioner at this stage is under severe traumatic condition. She can't come outside also. She is taking classes for NEET exam. She is under highly traumatic condition. She can't face the society at this stage," he said. The lawyer argued that her mental and physical well-being should be considered. "Sorry," the bench said. In its May 3 order, the high court had noted that on April 25, the court had directed the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) to constitute a medical board to ascertain the condition of the foetus and the petitioner.

Controlling forest fires: SC slams Uttarakhand for 'lackadaisical' approach

New Delhi: Slamming the Uttarakhand government for its "lackadaisical" approach in controlling forest fires, the Supreme Court Wednesday directed the state's chief secretary to personally present himself before it May 17 to give explanation, including on utilisation of funds and vacancies in forest department. Terming it a "very sorry state of affairs", the apex court said the state was just trying to find some excuse or the other.

A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai directed that the staff and vehicles of the forest departments of states shall not be requisitioned for election purposes or any other purposes like the 'Char Dham Yatra'. "We are at pains to say that the approach of state of Uttarakhand in controlling the fires is, to say the least, lackadaisical. Though action plans have been prepared and finalised, no steps are being taken for implementation of the same," said the bench, also comprising Justices SVN Bhatti and Sandeep Mehta. The top court was hearing a plea on raging forest fires in Uttarakhand. The bench said when funds from the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) were available and also sanctioned by the central authority, it saw no reason as to why only ₹3.41 crore out of the ₹9.12 crore was utilised for forest related activity in Uttarakhand in 2023-24. The bench observed it also saw no reason as to why the balance amount was not utilised for forestry. "Another issue that needs to be addressed is with regard to huge vacancies in the forest department of the State of Uttarakhand," it said.



LAST 30 YEARS India accounts for a fifth of all heatwave deaths

INDIA WAS FOLLOWED BY CHINA AND RUSSIA, WITH EACH EXPERIENCING ROUGHLY 14% AND 8% OF THESE HEATWAVE-LINKED EXCESS DEATHS, RESPECTIVELY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: More than 1.53 lakh deaths a year were associated with heatwaves around the world, with over a fifth of these deaths - the greatest share - coming from India, according to new research looking at data over 30 years since 1990.

India was followed by China and Russia, with each experiencing roughly 14 per cent and

8 per cent of these heatwave-linked excess deaths, respectively.

The study, led by Monash University, Australia, found that heatwave-linked excess deaths accounted for about a third of all heat-related deaths and 1 per cent of total deaths globally.

Researchers also found that of the overall 1.53 lakh excess deaths occurring every summer, close to half came from Asia

and more than 30 per cent from Europe.

Further, the largest estimated death rates (deaths per population) were seen in regions with dry climates and lower-middle incomes. The findings are published in PLoS Medicine.

"During the warm seasons from 1990 to 2019, heatwave-related excess deaths accounted for 1,53,078 deaths per year, a total of 236 deaths per ten million residents or 1 per cent of global deaths," the authors wrote.

For the study, the researchers used data from the UK-based Multi-Country Multi-City (MCC) Collaborative Research Network that included daily deaths and



temperatures from 750 locations across 43 countries.

Comparing the decade up to 2019 with that up to 1999, the duration of heat waves each year was found to have extended from

13.4 to 13.7 days on average around the world, with average ambient temperature warming by 0.35 degrees Celsius every decade.

The researchers said that while previous studies have quantified excess deaths due to heatwaves locally, they have not compared these estimates across the globe over a prolonged duration.

"Heatwaves are associated with substantial mortality burden that varies spatiotemporally (with space and time) over the globe in the past 30 years," the authors wrote.

The findings show that government actions taken to enhance health sector adaptation

and resilience can have potential benefits, the authors said.

They called for a "comprehensive approach" tackling not only immediate health risks during heatwaves but also implementing long-term strategies to minimise vulnerability and inequalities across communities.

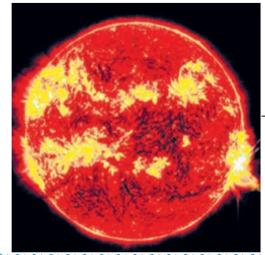
"The strategies include climate change mitigation policy, heat action plans (e.g., heat early warning system), urban planning and green structure, social support program, healthcare and public health services, education awareness, and community engagement and participation," the authors wrote.

international



We are in discussions with India to set up a small arms manufacturing unit. We are in touch with our Indian counterparts, there is so much we can take and learn from India

MASSIVE SOLAR FLARE
The sun produced its biggest flare in nearly two decades Tuesday, just days after severe solar storms pummeled Earth and created dazzling northern lights in unaccustomed places



of the day quote

They (US) have not done so in the past. So, if you look at the US' own attitude towards the port in Chabahar, the US has been appreciative of the fact that Chabahar has a larger relevance...we will work at it

We believe that international political actors should end the escalation of tensions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, end the threat of sanctions and end the violent interference in its internal affairs

Cross-border connectivity is being expanded to facilitate trade and transit. We need to further expand and improve this network

MORE CATASTROPHE LOOMS IN GAZA

Palestinians mark 76 years of dispossession

Palestinians across the Middle East mark their original 'catastrophe' with eyes on the war in Gaza

Hamas' October 7 attack into Israel. UN agencies say 550,000 people, nearly a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million people, have been newly displaced in just the last week, as Israeli forces have pushed into the southern city of Rafah, along the border with Egypt, and reinvaded parts of northern Gaza.



in recent history, obliterating entire neighbourhoods in Gaza and forcing some 80 per cent of the population to flee their homes. Gaza's Health Ministry says over 35,000 Palestinians have been killed, without distinguishing between civilians and combatants in its count. The UN says there is widespread hunger and that northern Gaza is in a "full-blown famine."

Jerusalem, May 15: Palestinians across the Middle East Wednesday are marking the anniversary of their mass expulsion from what is now Israel with protests and other events across the region at a time of mounting concern over the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

"We lived through the Nakba not just once, but several times," said Umm Shadi Sheikh Khalil, who was displaced from Gaza City and now lives in a tent in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah.

NO END TO WAR
The latest war began with Hamas' rampage across southern Israel, through some of the same areas where Palestinians fled from their villages 75 years earlier. Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people that day, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage.

Israel responded with one of the heaviest military onslaughts

Israel says its goal is to dismantle Hamas and return the estimated 100 hostages, and the remains of more than 30 others, still held by the group after it released most of the rest during a cease-fire last year.

Israeli troops pushed into Rafah last week. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has portrayed the city on Gaza's southern border with Egypt as Hamas' last stronghold, promising victory. But the militants have regrouped elsewhere in Gaza, even in some of the hardest-hit areas, raising the prospect of a prolonged insurgency.

The Nakba, Arabic for "catastrophe," refers to the 7,00,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what today is Israel before and during the war surrounding its creation in 1948.

The refugees and their descendants number some 6 million and live in built-up refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. In Gaza, they are the majority of the population, with most families having relocated from what is now central and southern Israel.

The refugee camps in Gaza have seen some of the heaviest fighting of the war. In other camps across the region, the fighting has revived painful memories from earlier rounds of violence in a decades-old conflict with no end in sight.

Israel rejects what the Palestinians say is their right

Slovak PM shot

Fico in life-threatening condition after assassination attempt

Handlova, May 15: Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico suffered life-threatening injuries when he was shot and wounded in an attempted assassination Wednesday, the government office said.



Fico, 59, was rushed to hospital in the central city of Handlova after holding a government meeting there, and was being transported by helicopter to the city of Banska Bystrica for urgent treatment, it said.

Such acts of violence have no place in our society and undermine democracy, our most precious common good. My thoughts are with PM Fico, his family
Hate and violence must not be allowed to take hold in our democracies and must be fought with the utmost determination!
News of the cowardly assassination attempt on Slovakian Prime Minister Fico shocks me deeply. Violence must have no place in European politics

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION
KARL NEHAMMER | CHANCELLOR, AUSTRIA
OLAF SCHOLZ | CHANCELLOR, GERMANY

A Reuters witness heard several shots fired after the meeting in Handlova northeast of the capital Bratislava. Police detained a man and security officials pushed someone into a car and drove off, the witness said.

of a tour of the country's regions after coming to power late last year.

changed political realities.

"An assassination (attempt) on Prime Minister Robert Fico was carried out today at the government's off-site meeting in Handlova," the government office said in a statement.

Fico became prime minister for the fourth time last year after shifting political gears to appeal to a changing electorate.

Following the shooting, Slovakia's biggest opposition party called off a planned protest against government public broadcaster reforms set for Wednesday evening.

"At the moment he is being transported by helicopter to Banska Bystrica, because it would take too long to Bratislava in view of the necessity of an acute intervention."

During a three-decade career, Fico has moved between the pro-European mainstream and nationalistic positions opposed to European Union and US policies. He has also shown a willingness to change course depending on public opinion or

Slovak President Zuzana Caputova wrote on X: "Utterly shocked by today's brutal attack on #Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico, which I condemn in strongest possible terms. I wish him lot of strength in this critical moment and early recovery."

Emergency Services said they had received information about a man being shot in Handlova shortly after 2:30 pm and sent an emergency helicopter to a 59-year old patient.

and business areas," he said.

year its new capital Nusantara, which will replace sinking and polluted Jakarta as the country's political centre.

Broadcaster TA3 reported four shots were fired, and that the leftist prime minister had been hit in the abdomen.

But "we've been thinking about moving", Pavich said, noting that the discussions were still hypothetical and the issue was "very complex".

The mammoth move has been controversial and extremely expensive, with an estimated price tag of \$32 billion-\$35 billion.

RETURN TO POWER
The Slovak government was meeting in Handlova, 190 km northeast of Bratislava, as part

"Personally I think it's a good choice, so we can separate the capital, the government areas,

Thailand is suffering the effects of climate change across a range

Russia is prepared to negotiate: Putin

Beijing, May 15: Russian President Vladimir Putin says his regime is prepared to negotiate over the conflict in Ukraine in an interview with Chinese media on the eve of visit to partner Beijing that has backed Moscow in its full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

"We are open to a dialogue on Ukraine, but such negotiations must take into account the interests of all countries involved in the conflict, including ours," Putin was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency Wednesday.

nificant border incursion since the full-scale invasion began, forcing almost 8,000 people to flee their homes.

Along with Moscow's efforts to build on its gains in the nearby Donetsk region, the 2-year-old war has entered a critical stage for Ukraine's depleted military that is awaiting new supplies of anti-aircraft missiles and artillery shells from the United States.

"We have never refused to negotiate," Putin was quoted as saying by Xinhua. "We are seeking a comprehensive, sustainable and just settlement of this conflict through peaceful means. We are open to a dialogue on Ukraine, but such negotiations must take into account the interests of all countries involved in the conflict, including ours."

The Russian leader's two-day trip starting Thursday comes as his country's forces have pressed an offensive in northeastern Ukraine's Kharkiv region that began last week in the most sig-



and business areas," he said. "Bangkok (would) still be the government capital, but move the business."

However, Pavich acknowledged that government efforts to tackle the growing problem of air pollution, particularly in Thailand's north, had yet to bear fruit.

Legislation focused on clean air passed this year and Pavich

CLIMATE CHANGE

Rising sea levels may force Thailand to move capital

PROJECTIONS CONSISTENTLY SHOW THAT LOW-LYING BANGKOK RISKS BEING INUNDATED BY THE OCEAN BEFORE THE END OF THE CENTURY

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Bangkok, May 15: Thailand may have to consider relocating its capital Bangkok because of rising sea levels, a senior official in the country's climate change office told AFP Wednesday.

"I think we are beyond the 1.5 (degrees Celsius) already," he told AFP, referring to the increase in global temperatures from pre-industrial levels. "Now we have to come back and think about adaptation. I imagine Bangkok will be under water already, if we stay in our (current) circumstance."



We have to save our nature, so we think that we will do any measure to protect our resources

PAVICH KESAVAWONG | DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT

Projections consistently show that low-lying Bangkok risks being inundated by the ocean before the end of the century.

Bangkok's city government is exploring measures that include building dikes, along the lines of those used in the Netherlands, he said.

and business areas," he said. "Bangkok (would) still be the government capital, but move the business."

Thailand is suffering the effects of climate change across a range

of sectors, from farmers struggling with heat and drought to tourism businesses affected by coral bleaching and pollution.

It has closed several national parks in response to recent coral bleaching and Pavich said further closures were possible.

However, Pavich acknowledged that government efforts to tackle the growing problem of air pollution, particularly in Thailand's north, had yet to bear fruit.

Legislation focused on clean air passed this year and Pavich

Wong sworn in as S'pore's new PM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, May 15: Economist Lawrence Wong was Wednesday sworn in as Singapore's fourth prime minister in a planned political transition for the island state.

Wong, 51, succeeded Lee Hsien Loong, 72, who relinquished his position after two decades; both belong to the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) that has been driving Singapore's economic progress for more than five decades.

Wong, who was the deputy prime minister, will be leading the fourth generation PAP politicians' government as the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister.

President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, 67, administered the oath to Wong, described by the local media as a low-key leadership transition.

Wong cited continuity, stability and the need to avoid disruptions as reasons for not making major changes at the minister (cabinet) level.

"With all other ministers holding on to their portfolios across the leadership transition from Lee Hsien Loong's government to Wong's, it also testifies to the consistency in Wong's decision-making," a Channel News Asia report said.

Among Indian PAP parliamentarians, Murali Pillai, 56, has been promoted as minister of state in the Ministry of Law and the Ministry of Transport. Pillai, a lawyer, will be sworn in on July 1, 2024.

The other Indian origin ministers in the cabinet - Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, 63, remains the Foreign Minister; K Shanmugam, 65, as Minister of Law and Home Affairs, and Indraneel Rajah, 61, as Minister in the Prime Minister's Office.



A wildfire burns in northern Manitoba, Canada, as seen from a helicopter Tuesday

of the day quote

Generative AI is driving a foundational shift in the relationship between brands and their customers in India, marking this as the era for businesses to drive profitable growth while delivering new digital experiences

PRATIWA MOHAPATRA | ADOBE INDIA VP AND MD

Enterprises...are realising that the path to production for AI solutions is not easy and that building an AI-mature enterprise is a marathon, not a sprint

HARRICK VIN | TCS CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

The Indian economy has been resilient amongst the global major economies and on course to become the fourth largest in the world. Within the Indian real estate sector, the residential and commercial segments are poised to play pivotal roles

VIKAS OBEROI | OBEROI REALTY CMD

SHORT TAKES

Dutta new CBO of Bandhan Life

Kolkata: Bandhan Life announced the appointment of Indranil Dutta as Chief Business Officer (CBO) - Bancassurance. This appointment reflects Bandhan Life's strategic commitment to transforming into a leading multi-channel life insurance company with an expanded presence across product categories. Dutta brings 23 years of experience in insurance, banking, and sales to Bandhan Life, specializing in bancassurance. He played a pivotal role in developing Axis Bank's relationship with Max Life, which has grown into its largest distribution channel. Previously, he held key roles at Tata AIG Life Insurance, ABN AMRO Bank, and Citibank. Dutta's proven track record in relationship management, analytical acumen, and innovative sales strategies will be invaluable in scaling Bandhan Life and expanding its reach.

PFC Q4 profit jumps 23%

Mumbai: State-owned energy and infra lender Power Finance Corporation (PFC) Wednesday reported 23 per cent jump in March quarter consolidated net profit at ₹7,556 crore on core income growth. On standalone basis, profit grew to ₹4,549 crore from ₹3,695 crore. In 2023-24, consolidated net profit increased to ₹26,461 crore from the year-ago's ₹21,179 crore. Chairman and Managing Director Parminder Chopra told reporters that the company witnessed 14 per cent growth in the loan book in FY24, and will be aiming for a loan growth of 12-15 per cent in FY25. The company borrowed nearly ₹1 lakh crore in FY24 including about 18 per cent of foreign borrowings, which will go up to ₹1-1.25 lakh crore in FY25 with the loan growth, Chopra said, adding that PFC aspires to keep the overseas component limited between 15-20 per cent.

Berger Paints Q4 net grows 19%

New Delhi: Berger Paints India Ltd Wednesday reported a 19.68 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to ₹222.62 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹186.01 crore in the same quarter a year ago, Berger Paints India said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the quarter under review stood at ₹2,520.28 crore as against ₹2,443.63 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year.



India will be well-served if it has three operators... three private operators working

GOPAL VITTAL | BHARTI AIRTEL
MANAGING DIRECTOR

PHONEPE PARTNERS WITH LANKAPAY

PhonePe Wednesday announced a partnership with LankaPay to allow its users to pay using UPI across Sri Lanka. At an event to mark the collaboration, PhonePe said its app users travelling to Sri Lanka can make payments using UPI across LankaPay QR merchants. The transactions will be facilitated by the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and LankaPay National Payment Network.



Trade deficit at 4-month high of \$19.1bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: India's merchandise exports rose by 1 per cent to USD 34.99 billion in April even as the trade deficit widened to a four-month high of USD 19.1 billion during the month, according to government data.

Healthy growth in sectors such as electronics, chemicals, petroleum products and pharmaceuticals has helped register growth in exports despite global economic uncertainties.

Imports also increased by 10.25 per cent to USD 54.09 billion in the month under review from USD 49.06 billion in April 2023 due to a significant jump in gold imports. Imports of precious metals more than doubled to USD 3.11 billion in April this year. Crude oil imports rose 20.22 per cent to USD 16.5 billion.

Trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, in April 2023 stood at USD 14.44 billion. The previous high in the deficit was recorded in December 2023 at USD 19.8 billion.

In March 2024, the outbound shipments dipped to USD 41.68 billion from USD 41.96 billion a year ago.

Briefing media on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said the figures show that the new fiscal year started on a good note and hoped that it would continue.

He said that the data for the country's total exports in goods and services for 2023-24 has been revised to USD 778.21 billion,



which is the "highest" so far. Merchandise exports in the last fiscal aggregated at USD 437.1 billion, while services exports stood at USD 341.1 billion.

In merchandise exports, 13 of the 30 key sectors exhibited growth in April 2024 as compared to the same period last year. These include coffee, tobacco, spices, plastic and handicraft.

According to the commerce ministry data, released Wednesday, the estimated value of services exports for April is USD 29.57 billion compared to USD 25.78 billion in April 2023.

Imports of services are estimated to be increased to USD 16.97 billion during the month as compared to USD 13.96 billion in

April 2023.

Commenting on the data, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar said the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war coupled with various major geopolitical tensions including the Red Sea crisis and Israel-Hamas conflict has made the international trade scenario much tougher for Indian exporters.

"We hope that exports will start showing better growth numbers with improved demand in the European Union, UK, West Asia and the US, which has given boost to the order bookings by over 10 per cent," Kumar said.

He added that the need of the hour is to take steps on the liq-

uidity front with deeper interest subvention support and continuation of interest equalisation scheme.

Sanjeev Agrawal, President, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said India's exports increased significantly despite geopolitical headwinds.

"Further, recently India signed a monumental Long-Term Contract for the development of Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal, Chabahar. This port is expected to boost regional connectivity between India, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia thereby reducing cost of trade and enhancing exports to Central Asian countries," Agrawal said.

Unemployment rate dips to 6.7% in March quarter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas declined to 6.7 per cent in the January-March period from 6.8 per cent a year ago, according to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO).

Joblessness, or unemployment rate, is defined as the percentage of unemployed people in the labour force.

The unemployment rate in the March quarter of FY23 was 6.8 per cent, while it was 6.6 per cent in April-June as well as in the third quarter (July-September 2023) of the previous fiscal. It was 6.5 per cent in October-December 2023.

The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above in January-March 2024 was 6.7 per cent in urban areas, the 22nd Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed.

It also showed that the unemployment rate among females (aged 15 years and above) in urban areas declined to 8.5 per cent in January-March 2024 from 9.2 per cent in the same quarter a year ago.

It was 9.1 per cent in April-June 2023, 8.6 per cent in July-September 2023, and 8.6 per cent in October-December 2023.

Among males, the unemployment rate in urban areas rose to 6.1 per cent in January-March 2024 compared to 6

per cent in the year-ago period. It was 5.9 per cent in April-June 2023, 6 per cent in July-September 2023, and 5.8 per cent in October-December 2023.

Labour force participation rate in Current Weekly Status (CWS) in urban areas for people aged 15 years and above increased to 50.2 per cent in the January-March 2024, from 48.5 per cent in the same period a year ago.

It was 48.8 per cent in April-June 2023, 49.3 per cent in July-September 2023 and 49.2 per cent in October-December 2023.

Labour force refers to the part of the population, which supplies or offers to supply labour for pursuing economic activities for the production of goods and services and, therefore, includes both employed and unemployed persons.

The NSSO launched PLFS in April 2017.

On the basis of PLFS, a quarterly bulletin is brought out giving estimates of labour force indicators namely unemployment rate, worker population ratio (WPR), labour force participation rate (LFPR), distribution of workers by broad status in employment and industry of work in CWS.

The estimates of unemployed persons in CWS give an average picture of unemployment in a short span of seven days during the survey period.

Coal India, NMDC exploring lithium mines overseas: Govt



REUTERS

New Delhi, May 15: State-run miners Coal India and NMDC are exploring lithium mines in Chile and Australia, Secretary of Mines V.L. Kantha Rao said Wednesday.

The Indian mines ministry is also encouraging other state-owned companies, such as ONGC Videsh to scout for critical minerals overseas. Rao told reporters at the sidelines of an industry conference in New Delhi.

"We are looking at four state-owned companies to become active," he said.

Last June, NMDC's unit Legacy Iron Ore had signed a lithium exploration pact with Australia's Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd.

India will additionally take a delegation to Zambia in June, with executives from the Tata Group and Vedanta, the secretary said. The two governments will discuss the joint exploration of critical minerals such as lithium.

A separate delegation will

head to Congo, he added.

India is analysing whether an existing trade pact with Chile can be expanded to include critical minerals for government access, Rao said, as well as studying trade routes with Mongolia to explore copper and coal assets there.

"Mongolia has good coal, copper assets, and some of the companies have shown interest," he said, adding that a panel had been formed to study the trade routes.

The government is studying Bolivia as well for critical minerals and Argentina for more lithium blocks, he said.

Domestically, India is likely to conduct an auction for 10 offshore minerals blocks in two to three months and a fourth tranche of critical minerals auction of about 20 blocks by June-end, Rao said.

The government will also announce the auction results of the first tranche of critical minerals by June 15, he said.

Sensex snaps 3-day winning run

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 15: Snapping its three-day winning run, benchmark Sensex declined by 117 points in a volatile trade Wednesday due to selling in index heavyweight shares like HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and TCS.

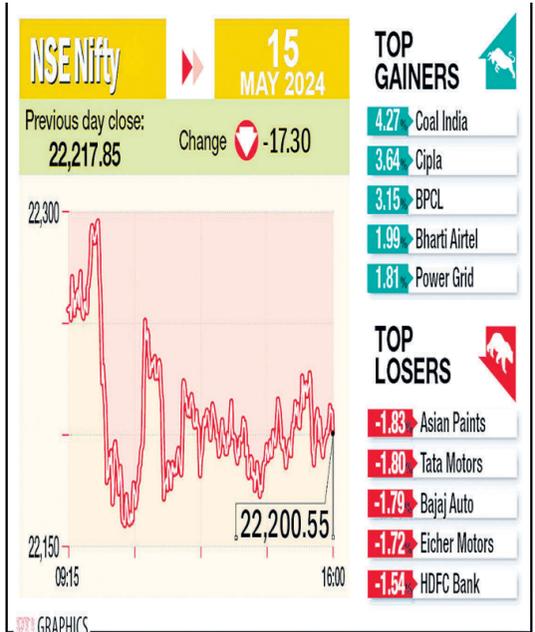
The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 117.58 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 72,987.03. During the day, it lost 281.95 points or 0.38 per cent to 72,822.66.

The broader Nifty dipped 17.30 points or 0.08 per cent to close at 22,200.55. The index oscillated between a high of 22,297.55 and a low of 22,151.75 in day trade.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Motors, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, JSW Steel, Hindustan Unilever, Nestle and Titan were the major laggards.

In contrast, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and HCL Technologies were among the major gainers.

"The market witnessed a sideways movement throughout the day as the emotions of investors were impacted by the election-led jitters. FIIs continued to remain in the selling mode; however, domestic investors were largely concentrated on stock-specific picks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit



Financial Services.

In the broader market, the smallcap gauge climbed 0.96 per cent and the midcap index went up by 0.60 per cent.

Among the indices, FMCG lost 0.75 per cent. Auto (0.31 per cent), bankex (0.17 per cent) and financial services (0.07 per cent) also declined.

Capital goods rallied 2.13 per cent, followed by utilities (1.27 per cent), realty (1.11 per cent), services (1.08 per cent) and energy (0.95 per cent).

"Following three days of rebound, the markets took a pause and closed nearly unchanged. Initially, there was an uptick, but pressure from certain heavy-

weights pushed the Nifty lower, leading to a range-bound movement until the end of the session," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

The wholesale inflation rose to a 13-month high of 1.26 per cent in April fuelled by rising prices of food articles, especially vegetables, amid expectations of RBI holding interest rates in the policy review next month.

"Nifty snapped a three-day winning streak Wednesday, giving up early gains and ending marginally in the red. Global equities headed for a fresh record after a tech-led rally in the US, amid optimism that Wednesday's key US inflation report won't weaken the case for Federal Reserve interest-rate cuts," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower. Markets in South Korea and Hong Kong were closed for a holiday.

European markets were trading mostly higher. Wall Street ended with gains Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent to USD 82.55 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹4,065.52 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Coal's share in power generation capacity drops below 50%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 15: The share of coal in India's total power generation capacity dipped below 50 percent in the first quarter of 2024, the first time since the 1960s.

The latest POWERup quarterly report from the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) showed that renewable energy accounted for 71.5 percent of the record 13,669 megawatts (MW) power generation capacity added by India in the first quarter (January-March) of this year.

Coal's share, including lignite, in India's total power generation capacity dropped below 50 percent for the first time since the 1960s.

The report noted that the renewable energy trend is well ahead of India's target of achieving 50 percent cumulative power generation capacity from non-fossil fuel-based sources by 2030.

The decline in coal's share of power generation capacity mirrors a global trend, with demand for coal in G7 countries hitting record lows in 2023, levels not seen since 1900.

To accelerate the transition, G7 countries pledged last month to phase out all unabated coal power generation by 2035, building on their commitment to halt all construction of new coal-fired power plants.

The term 'unabated' generally refers to the continued use of coal, oil, and gas without efforts to curtail emissions.

At the United Nations' COP28 climate change conference in December last year, world leaders reached a historic agreement to transition away from planet-warming fossil fuels and triple the global renewable energy capacity by 2030.

According to the report, a record 69 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy tenders were issued in India in the fiscal year



(FY) 2023-24, surpassing the central government's target of 50 GW per year.

"After a downturn from 2019 to 2022 due to supply-chain issues and global price spikes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic

and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the market has rebounded and gone from strength to strength," Vibhuti Garg, Director - South Asia, IEEFA, said.

India has risen to third place in the world's solar power gen-

eration rankings, trailing only China and the US, according to Ember's fifth annual Global Electricity Review of 80 countries.

Ranked ninth in 2015, India has now overtaken Japan, which, along with fellow G7 member Germany has a persistently high demand for coal.

Solar power generated a record 5.5 percent of global electricity in 2023, with India generating 5.8 percent of its electricity from solar last year.

Solar remained the world's fastest-growing electricity source for the 19th consecutive year in 2023, adding more than twice as much new electricity worldwide as coal.

India witnessed the world's fourth-largest increase in solar generation in 2023 (+18 terawatt hour or TWh), behind China (+156 TWh), the United States (+33 TWh), and Brazil (+22 TWh). Together, the top four solar growth countries accounted for

75 percent of growth in 2023.

Solar's contribution to electricity generation in India surged from 0.5 percent in 2015 to 5.8 percent in 2023.

According to the International Energy Agency's (IEA) 'Net Zero Emissions' scenario, solar would make up 22 percent of global electricity generation by 2030.

Given that electricity generation accounts for nearly half of India's annual carbon dioxide emissions (1.18 gigatonnes in 2023), accelerating the transition to cleaner generation sources is crucial for the country to meet both its developmental and climate goals. The IEA says tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency are essential to limit the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, a political target set in 2015 to prevent further worsening of climate impacts.

India is among the few countries aiming to triple renewable capacity by 2030.

Neeraj strikes gold at Kalinga

Curran, bowlers lead PBKS to win over RR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra won the gold medal in men's javelin throw event of the Federation Cup here, his spear shimmering through the balmy Wednesday evening sky after an unusually slow start in his first competitive outing on Indian soil in three years.

Having arrived in the city on the eve of his competition after finishing second in the Doha Diamond League, the 26-year-old superstar did not set the stage ablaze and was placed second after three rounds.

Chopra, however, took the lead in the fourth round with an effort of 82.27m and did not take the last two throws (fifth and sixth) as he was leading after DP Manu, who settled for silver, had finished his final round throw.

Chopra was representing Haryana. Manu of Karnataka came second with 82.06m effort, while Uttam Balasaheb Patil of Maharashtra was third with 78.39m.

Local man and Asian Games silver medallist Kishore Jena finished fifth with a disappointing 75.49m. Jena had qualified for the Paris Olympics when he threw 87.54m for the Asian Games silver medal in Hangzhou, China last year.

Meanwhile, SS Sneha of Karnataka became the fastest woman of the meet, winning the 100m gold with a time of 11.63 seconds. Giridhrani Ravi of Tamil Nadu (11.67) and Srabani Nanda (11.76) of Odisha were second and third respectively.

Gurinderv Singh of Punjab took the 100m dash gold with a time of 10.35 seconds. Odisha's Animesh Kujur, who won 200m



Kishore Jena in action during his event, Wednesday

Winning Olympic Games gold is more glorious than breaking the 90m barrier. I will certainly break that barrier (90m) but right now I'm mentally, physically and emotionally focused to make a big impression at the Paris Games

NEERAJ CHOPRA

Kishore Jena finished a disappointing fifth in javelin throw, while Animesh Kujur (men's 100m) and Srabani Nanda (women's 100m) bagged silver and bronze medals, respectively

the competition never rose to great heights.

National record holder Praveen Chitravel of Tamil Nadu won gold with a below-par jump of 16.79m, while reigning Commonwealth Games champion Eldhose Paul of Kerala was second with an effort of 16.59m.

Neeraj's participation turned the tournament into a high-profile domestic competition and

it was a huge morale booster for all the athletes present at the Kalinga Stadium with few of them posing for a photo with him after his event.

Chopra, whose best throw is 89.94m, which is the men's javelin national record in India, was seen having a chat with his coach after his fourth attempt, which was the best of the competition on the day.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Men
100m: Gurinderv Singh (Punjab) 10.35, Animesh Kujur (Odisha) 10.50, 3. Harjit Singh (Punjab) 10.56;

400m: Muhammed Ajmal (Kerala) 45.91, Santhosh Kumar T (TN) 46.48, Vikrant Panchal (Haryana) 46.62;

1500m: Mehedi Hassan (Assam) 3:42.82, Abhishek Singh Thakur (MP) 3:43.49, Yoonus Shah (UP) 3:44.25;

10000m: Mohan Saini (Goa) 30:41.65, Puneet Yadav (Haryana) 30:42.78, Ankit Deshwal (Haryana) 30:44.32;

Triple jump: Praveen Chitravel (TN) 16.79m, Eldhose Paul (Kerala) 16.59m, Mohammed Salahuddin (TN) 16.25m;

Javelin: Neeraj Chopra (Haryana) 82.27m, Manu DP (Karnataka) 82.06m, Uttam Patil (Maharashtra) 78.39m;

Women:
100m: Sneha SS (Karnataka) 11.63, Giridhrani Ravikumar (TN) 11.67, Srabani Nanda (Odisha) 11.76;

400m: MR Poovamma (Karnataka) 53.32, Summy (Haryana) 53.46, Vithya Ramraj (TN) 53.52;

1500m: Akshana (MP) 4:23.65, Nikita Sharma (HP) 4:25.05, Amandeep Kaur (Punjab) 4:28.10;

10000m: Soniya (Uttarakhand) 37:15.29, Pooja Yadav (UP) 37:17.44, Prajakta Godbole (Maharashtra) 37:27.34;

Hammer Throw: Harshita Sehrawat (Delhi) 59.10m, Tanya Chaudhary (UP) 56.51m, Manpreet Kaur (Punjab) 56.4m;

High jump: Abhinaya Shetty (Karnataka) 1.77m, Angel Devasia (Kerala) 1.74m, Most Ritu Akhtar (Bangladesh) 1.71m;

Heptathlon (after 7 events): Agasara Nandini (Telangana) 5460, Anamika KA (Ker) 4997, Deepika S (TN) 4817.



SAM CURRAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, May 15: Skipper Sam Curran played the lead act hitting a well-paced fifty and taking two wickets, as Punjab Kings consigned Rajasthan Royals to a five-wicket defeat in their IPL match here Wednesday.

The target was a mere 145, but Kings made heavy weather of it on a sluggish track here but Curran (63 n o, 41b, 5x4, 3x6) had a calm head and skills to lift them to their fifth win of the season. PBKS made 145/5 in 18.5 overs. The Englishman received good support from Jitesh Sharma (22) as the pair added 63 runs in a fluent fifth wicket partnership.

For Royals, it was their fourth defeat on the trot, but they remained second on the table with 16 points with a qualification to the playoffs to boot with.

The Kings' chase began on a shaky note as they lost Prabhshimran Singh in the first over itself to Trent Boult. But bigger jolts were in store as an

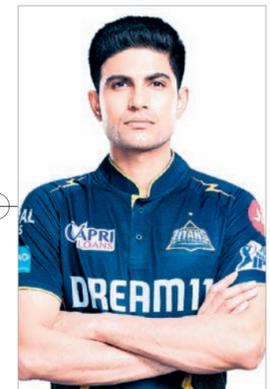
impressive Avesh Khan (2/28) scalped two wickets - Rilee Rossouw and Shashank Singh - in the fifth over.

Punjab gained some ground through the alliance between Curran and Jitesh. But the blossoming stand was snapped by Yuzvendra Chahal (2/31), leaving PBKS at 111/5 in the 16th over. However, Curran and Ashutosh Sharma (17 n o) knocked off the remaining runs without further drama.

Earlier, despite a well-tuned 48 (34b, 6x4) from local hero Riyan Parag, RR struggled against an array of accurate bowlers on a rather slow pitch, meandering to a sub-par 144/9. R Ashwin (28) and Parag tried to accelerate during their 50-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Brief scores: RR 144/9 (Riyan Parag 48, R Ashwin 28; Sam Curran 2/24, Rahul Chahar 2/26, Harshal Patel 2/28) lost to PBKS 145/5 (Sam Curran 63 n o; Avesh Khan 2/28, Yuzvendra Chahal 2/31) by 5 wickets.

Sunrisers look to secure playoff berth against GT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, May 15: Masters of their own fate right now despite being erratic, Sunrisers Hyderabad will hope their destructive batting line-up delivers when they take on Gujarat Titans in pursuit of a playoffs berth in the IPL here, Thursday.

Another win will be enough for Sunrisers to seal a playoff berth as they need only one point to ensure qualification. But the Pat Cummins-led side will also want to challenge for the top two spots, which is a possibility considering they have one more game after this match and a healthy net run rate of +0.406.

SRH have 14 points from 12 matches and can reach a maximum of 18 points, which may be enough to ensure a top-two finish if other results go their way.

Not only are the Sunrisers players well-rested ahead of the clash against GT as they got a week off, their morale will also be sky high after notching yet another record-breaking win against Lucknow Super Giants May 8.

SRH have made a habit of securing unbelievable victories throughout the season but they have also suffered sizeable defeats, including against GT (by 7 wickets) earlier in the competition.

The boom or bust approach by the batters has either done exceedingly well or has simply let the side down, including three times in the last five games, where SRH lost to RCB (by 35 runs), CSK (by 78 runs) and MI (by 7 wickets).

SRH are heavily dependent on the explosive starts provided by the opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma. They will also want to do a bet-

ter job at re-building their innings, especially while chasing.

On the other hand, the Titans, who have only five wins from 13 games and are on 11 points, are out of the reckoning and will look to end their forgettable campaign on a high.

With former skipper Hardik Pandya moving to Mumbai Indians this season, GT struggled to find a replacement for the all-rounder who was key to their title-winning run in 2022 and runners-up finish last year.

The absence of pacer Mohammed Shami, who was ruled out of the tournament due to injury, has also hurt them. GT's bowling hasn't been as effective this season, with inconsistent pacers and leaky spinners.

Their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders was a washout but the bowlers showed promise by taking three wickets in the first 3 overs against CSK. Mohit Sharma's variations and knuckle balls were particularly effective, and Rashid Khan's clever bowling was noticeable. They'll hope for an encore.

Their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders was a washout but the bowlers showed promise by taking three wickets in the first three overs against CSK. In the batting department, much will depend on skipper Shubman Gill and B Sai Sudharsan, who revelled in the role of an opener.

MATCHDAY
Indian Premier League
SRH vs GT
Time: 07:30 pm
Telecast: Star Sports Network
Stream: Jio Cinema

Medvedev out of Italian Open

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, May 15: The curse of the defending champion struck again for Daniil Medvedev. The second-seeded Medvedev has never successfully defended a title and he failed again Tuesday as he lost 1-6, 4-6 to American Tommy Paul to become the latest top player to crash out of the Italian Open.

The opener lasted just 28 minutes as the 14th-seeded Paul broke Medvedev on all three of his service games and then served out the set to love.

Medvedev improved slightly in the second set when he broke immediately but Paul broke straight back and never looked back, securing his spot in the quarterfinals when Medvedev sent a backhand long.

The second-seeded Medvedev followed 10-time champion Rafael Nadal and top-ranked Novak Djokovic with early exits in Rome. The only other players to have won the men's tournament at the Foro Italico in the past 19 years are Andy Murray and Alexander Zverev. The third-seeded Zverev, who won in 2017, eased past Nuno Borges 6-2, 7-5 and will face Taylor Fritz.

Fritz reached the men's quarterfinals for the first time after recovering from losing a lengthy second-set tiebreaker - during which he let slip match point - to see off Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-7(11-13), 6-1.

Alejandro Tabilo backed up his stunning third-round win



against Djokovic by edging Karen Khachanov 7-6(7-5), 7-6(12-10) to reach a Masters quarterfinal for the first time. He will face Zhang Zhizhen, who ousted Thiago Monteiro 7-6(7-4), 6-3.

Paul will play Hubert Hurkacz after the seventh seed - who eliminated Nadal in the second round - beat Sebastian Baez 5-7, 7-6(7-4), 6-4. The other quarterfinal pits Stefanos Tsitsipas against Nicolas Jarry.

In the women's tournament, top-ranked Iga Swiatek reached the final four when she swept aside former finalist Madison Keys 6-1, 6-3 with the same score she achieved against the American in the Madrid semi-finals two weeks ago.

Swiatek won the Madrid Open and is attempting to become the first player to win the "dirt double" since Serena Williams and Nadal both did so in 2013. The two-time champion will next face third-seeded Coco Gauff after the American beat Qinwen Zheng 7-6(7-4), 6-1.

Bopanna-Ebden bows out

The Indo-Australian pair of Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden bowed out of the Italian Open following a pre-quarterfinal loss to local hopes Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori here. The second seeds went down 2-6, 4-6 in a match that lasted one hour and 13 minutes, Tuesday.

Satwik-Chirag through, Meiraba stuns Prannoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangkok, May 15: Star Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty progressed to the men's doubles pre-quarterfinals but it was curtains for fifth seed HS Prannoy after being stunned by compatriot Meiraba Luwang Mainsam in the men's singles opening round of Thailand Open here Wednesday.

Top seeds Satwik and Chirag took just 34 minutes to get past the Malaysian pair of Nur Mohd Azriyan Ayub Azriyan and Tan Wee Kiong 21-13, 21-13 in the opening round. The Indian combination of Satwik and Chirag will play the Chinese pair of Xie Hao Nan and Zeng Wei Han in the next round.

But Prannoy failed to clear the

first hurdle, losing 19-21, 18-21 to Meiraba in a match lasting 55 minutes. Meiraba will take on Denmark's Mads Christophersen, who beat India's Kiran George 21-15, 13-21, 21-17.

In women's singles, Ashmita Chaliha came from behind to enter the second round of with a hard-fought 19-21, 21-15, 21-14 win over Ester Nurumi Tri Wardoyo of Indonesia. But a tough second round encounter awaits Ashmita as she will be up against top seed Han Yue of China.

Yue got the better of another Indian in Malvika Bansod, registering a comfortable 21-11, 21-10 win. Unnati Hooda also failed to cross the opening round as she squandered a game advantage to lose 21-14, 14-21, 9-21 against Lianne Tan of Belgium.



City on verge of 4th straight EPL title

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, May 15: Erling Haaland scored twice as Manchester City beat Tottenham 2-0 and moved to within one win of a record fourth-straight English Premier League title.

The three-time defending champions will go into the final round of games Sunday with a two-point lead over second-placed Arsenal. City host West Ham in their last league game of the season, while Arsenal are also at home against Everton.

Haaland fired City ahead in the 51st minute at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium when he converted Kevin De Bruyne's cross from close range. He struck his second from the penalty spot in the first minute of stoppage time after Pedro Porro had brought down Jeremy Doku.

Victory means City are in control of their own fate in the race



for the title, despite being pushed right to the wire by Arsenal. Guardiola is now within touching distance of a sixth league championship in seven seasons.

No other English team have managed to win four top flight titles in a row, while City are

also looking to secure back-to-back league and FA Cup doubles.

City's win also meant Aston Villa secured fourth place and qualification for next season's Champions League ahead of Tottenham in fifth.

Real rout Alaves

Madrid: Real Madrid presented their 36th Spanish league trophy to their fans at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, then followed up the celebrations with a 5-0 rout of Alaves that featured a pair of goals by Vinicius Junior and another by Jude Bellingham. Federico Valverde and Arda Guler also scored for Madrid, who were yet to play at the Bernabeu since clinching the league two rounds ago. The club celebrated the title Sunday through the streets of Madrid, but they couldn't go through their traditional celebration at the Bernabeu because of a concert at the stadium.



Abhishek storms into Elorda Cup semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Astana (Kazakhstan), May 15: India's Abhishek Yadav produced a dominating performance to enter the semi-finals of the Elorda Cup boxing tournament, beating Kazakhstan's Rakhat Seitzhan here Wednesday.

Abhishek looked in great touch throughout the bout as he outperformed the home favourite Seitzhan for a comprehensive 5-0 victory in the men's 67kg quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, Pawan Bartwal (54kg), Kavinder Singh Bisht (57kg) and two other Indians suffered losses in their respective quarterfinals. While Pawan went down fighting 1-4 against Kabbeshov Timur of Kazakhstan, Kavinder lost to Uzbekistan's Mirazbek Mirzahalilov with a knockout decision.