

NAVEEN GUARANTEE

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FREE ELECTRICITY




SUBSIDIZED INTEREST ON EDUCATION LOANS UP TO ₹10 LAKH

NUA O SCHOLARSHIP




AFFORDABLE TRANSPORT



VOTE FOR SANKHA TWICE

ONE VOTE FOR MP



ONE VOTE FOR MLA



leisure



RADCLIFFE EXCITED FOR HARRY POTTER SERIES

Actor Daniel Radcliffe says he is excited to watch the upcoming *Harry Potter* series. However, he refrained from sharing whether he would make a guest star or cameo appearance.

CAMILA'S MECHANISM TO COPE WITH PRESSURES OF FAME

Pop star Camila Cabello shared that embracing Buddhist philosophical ideas is her 'mechanism' to cope with the pressures of fame. The *Senorita* hitmaker tasted huge success as part of *Fifth Harmony* and as a solo artiste.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181

ARIES

You are deeply interested in the occult and the paranormal and today, you may indulge in something to do with it. So, you may buy a full colour 15x10 glossy on shamanic rites or the tantra! Ganesha suggests using such knowledge for peaceful ends.

TAURUS

Love is on the cards, says Ganesha. Your senses are likely to remain highly active today. Stay alert and avoid drifting into your own world at the cost of work. It is best for you to keep your eyes and ears open to avoid any misunderstanding with your near and dear ones, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI

You have been aching to arrange a family reunion or get-together at your house. Well, today is the perfect day to do it. And why just family? You are also likely to invite some of your close friends and important business associates over to your place.

CANCER

Today, it is quite possible that you have a presentiment of things that are about to happen. Scarily enough, the premonition may not be too far off the mark. All your senses, especially your sixth sense, are likely to remain highly active today.

LEO

To many, you will seem to have got your senses back after a long time. Reason? You will finally have a definite career plan in mind. Although, it's not really a big deal for you when your mind races and yearns to achieve in two warring directions, it may seem quite jarring and unreal to the mere mortals.

VIRGO

Leadership is your forte and you shall receive kudos for the manner in which you handle your team. Much awaited promotions will materialise and so will some extra cash in your wallet. Wisely enough, you didn't get all this by not effectively balancing home and work, says Ganesha. Don't slip on this tight-rope walk.

LIBRA

Ever heard of the phrase, 'To stick one's foot in one's mouth'? Well, today you might be doing exactly the same, albeit unwittingly. You are likely to invite trouble, especially if some of those heated discussions get out of hand. A legal dispute does not seem unlikely.

SCORPIO

Your rung in the social ladder just went higher today. But be wary of green-eyed monsters and ill words. Fight tooth and nail - if necessary - to protect your reputation, says Ganesha. But also learn to find your enemies' Achilles's heel and target it ferociously.

SAGITTARIUS

The day may pan out to be more challenging than you had anticipated. An independent free bird as you Archers are, you may find really irritating to find your hands tied up in unpleasant money matters. But, then that's a part of life; put in your best to overcome any situation you come across. Your efforts shall help you gain economic independence.

CAPRICORN

Your exuberance and self-confidence will become the talk of the day for those around you. But it's not for nothing that you will attract so much attention. You will derive pleasure in accomplishing herculean tasks today, and Ganesha says you will do justice to work too. At home, everything will go smooth and you will enjoy and share the peace in your life with your wife.

AQUARIUS

Team work and cooperation bring out the best in you, so you must make the most of a chance to work in a group. It could be brainstorming, or campaigning for an environmental cause or even playing beach ball!

PISCES

The workaholic in your bursts to the fore with a vengeance, and today will see you tackle pending projects with the zeal of a Holy Templar crusader. Your energy levels will be unflagging, and your enthusiasm to wipe your slate clean admirable.

Shruti takes a trip down memory lane

Mumbai: Actress Shruti Haasan revealed that the roof top of her Chennai house became her 'solo home', where she learned about life and herself.

Taking to her Instagram stories, Shruti shared a gamut of pictures from the place. In the first image, Shruti is sitting on the roof and smiling at the camera.

Describing it as her 'solo home', she captioned it: "I used to chill on this roof as an eighteen-year-old. This was my first solo home and I learned a lot about life and myself here."

She then shared another picture from the roof, where she said she started to dream for herself and wrote music.

"I started to dream for myself. I began writing music and thinking of going to music school, and I fell in love with life and myself for the very first time," she wrote.

In the last image,

she is seen standing on the roof and gazing into the sky.

It was in 2009 with Luck, that Shruti made her acting debut. In 2011, she made her Telugu debut with *Anaganaga O Dheerudu* and Tamil debut with *7aum Arivu*.

She has worked in films such as *Vedalam* and *Si3*, *Gabbar Is Back*, *Welcome Back*, *D-Day* and *Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire* to name a few.

IANS



Neha on paparazzi, their daily bread

Mumbai: The lead actress of the courtroom drama *Illegal*, Neha Sharma has opened up on the paparazzi culture, saying there are times when you don't want to be photographed, but she still poses because it's their daily bread.

Neha, who was last seen in the movie *Jogira Sara Ra Ra* shared: "The industry is speaking a lot about the pap culture and I feel they work very hard. Actually, when you meet them, you hear their stories and it's very interesting and fun to connect with them."

"There are times when you look your absolute worst and don't want to be photographed, but I give in and pose because they have put all that work for me. They have their family and it's a means for their 'rozi roti'," added Neha.

The third season of *Illegal* stars Piyush Mishra, Akshay Oberoi, Satyadeep Mishra, Neil Bhoopalam, Ira Dubey, and Zayn Marie Khan.

The series delves into the complexities of the legal industry, blending drama with themes of love, lust, trust and betrayal. *Illegal 3* will air on JioCinema from May 29.

IANS



Kriti shares her fangirl moment with Butler

Mumbai: Kriti Sanon has had a remarkable year at the box office till now. She has had two back-to-back releases which fared well at the box-office. And she also has a couple of exciting films in the kitty.

The actress is currently one of the biggest stars in the Hindi film industry and has a huge fan base. However, there was a moment when she fangirled over Hollywood star Gerard Butler at the London airport.

Talking to *Grazia India*, the Mimi actress spoke about her fan girl moment while traveling. In the interview, the actress

revealed that she was shooting for her first Telugu film with Mahesh Babu in London. The team was at London airport when the *Bhediya* actress saw Gerard Butler.

Talking about the encounter, Kriti quipped, "I saw Gerard Butler who was all by himself, taking a flight. He saw that we all were shooting and he came to us and he was like what film is this, what are you guys shooting and I was like 'oh my god'. Like he was traveling with nobody, no staff no one. And he was just so chilled and so humble. And he just like spoke to all of us."

On work front, after a successful run on the big screens with *Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya* and *Crew*, Kriti has a couple of projects in her kitty. The actress will be next seen in *Do Patti* alongside her *Dilwale* co-star Kajol after eight years.

AGENCIES

FUN post

PEANUTS



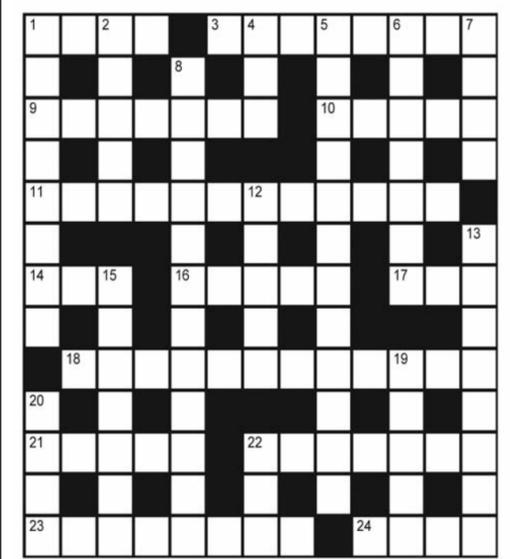
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



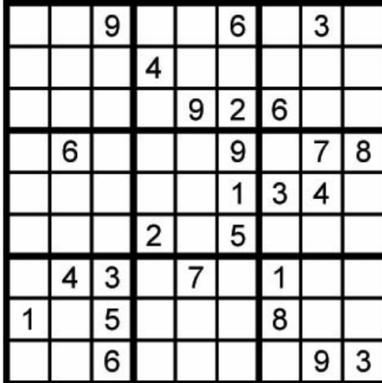
CROSSWORD



- Across
- 1 Poe's Amontillado holder
 - 3 Carnivore, e.g.
 - 9 Skeletal structure (3,4)
 - 10 Garden tool
 - 11 The flock
 - 14 Lettuce type
 - 16 Espresso order
 - 17 Imbibe
 - 18 Unrhetorical (6,2,4)
 - 21 Boredom
 - 22 Violent rotating windstorm
 - 23 Security interest
 - 24 Streetcar
 - 5 All fall down, maybe? (6,6)
 - 6 Frustrates
 - 7 Uncommon
 - 8 Deafening
 - 12 Bury
 - 13 Against the current
 - 15 Image copier
 - 19 French romance
 - 20 Start of an idea
 - 22 Sprocket
- Down
- 1 Turtle shell
 - 2 Judicious
 - 4 Fish eggs

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

HC scraps OBC status
The Calcutta High Court strikes down as illegal the OBC status of several classes in West Bengal granted since 2010

NATIONAL | P7

Historic move
Norway, Ireland and Spain announce that they will formally recognise the state of Palestine

INTERNATIONAL | P8

₹2.11L-cr dividend
The Reserve Bank of India will pay a record ₹2.1 lakh crore dividend to the government for the fiscal ended March 31

BUSINESS | P9

Sachin reigns supreme
Sachin Sarjerao Khilari claims men's shot put F46 category gold medal at the World Para Athletics Championship

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

UK GOES TO POLLS JULY 4

AGENCIES

London, May 22: Rishi Sunak, Britain's first Prime Minister of Indian heritage, Wednesday announced that the UK's general election will be held July 4, saying it is time for the country to choose its future.

In an address from the lectern on the steps of 10 Downing Street on a rainy London evening, Sunak confirmed a summer poll in six weeks' time and that the Parliament would soon be dissolved after he formally informed King Charles III of the election timeline. The announcement comes as the governing Conservative Party is forecast for a general election drubbing by most opinion polls, with the Opposition Labour Party holding a firm lead after a series of recent by-elections and local election victories.

The 44-year-old leader laid out his record dating back to his term as finance minister during the COVID lockdowns in his pitch to the British electorate, who will soon give their verdict at the ballot box.

"Earlier today, I spoke with His Majesty the King to request the dissolution of Parliament and the King has granted this request and we will have a general election on the fourth of July," said Sunak, as he was drenched in the pouring rain.



CROWD-PULLER: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik waves at the crowd ahead of his roadshow in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

HUGE DIFFERENCE

It seems the apprehensions about the actual number of votes cast during initial four phases of the ongoing general elections are coming true with the Congress party flagging a whopping difference of 1.7 crore votes between the EC's final turnout figures and the real-time data. This comes in the backdrop of a petition filed by poll watchdog ADR in the Supreme Court demanding the EC to upload an account of votes recorded at all polling stations 48 hours after the end of polling in each phase. The top court has scheduled the hearing on the petition May 24.

AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 22: The Congress Wednesday raised questions over the big difference between the real time voter turnout data and the final figures released by the Election Commission (EC), and said voters are worried over the "strange goings-on" in the poll body.

Congress leader and head of media and publicity department of the party Pawan Khera said the difference is around 1.7 crore votes, and termed it as "unprecedented".

"Voters are worried about the strange goings-on in the Election Commission through the four

phases of voting. First, the Election Commission takes 10-11 days to bring out the final figure of voting and then the difference between real time data and final figure turns out to be 1.7 crore votes. This is truly unprecedented," Khera said on X.

"Unanswered questions about the missing EVMs are also very worrying," he added.

AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "This difference of 1.07 crore overall translates into an increase of 28,000 in each LS seat. This is HUGE."

"The discrepancy is maximum in states where BJP is expected to lose seats heavily. What is happening?" Ramesh asked.

Even though the business end of India's mammoth seven-week long election comes closer, the EC has been facing public ire over not releasing the exact voter turnout numbers and instead supplying only the percentage of voter turnout.

It is pertinent to mention that the Supreme Court Friday issued notice to the EC on a plea by NGO Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) to upload account of votes recorded of all polling stations 48 hours after the polling ends for each phase in the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

A bench of Chief Justice of

TMC joins chorus

NEW DELHI: The Trinamool Congress Wednesday voiced concern over the Election Commission (EC) "not releasing" the actual numbers of voter turnout in the ongoing general elections, and questioned why the BJP is the only party that has not sought this information so far. In a post on X, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Saket Gokhale shared a copy of an application filed by him under the RTI Act May 1 and said he has not received any reply from the EC. Gokhale had asked the EC to furnish the details of the total number of electors, total number of voters, and total turnout for voting in the 102 Parliamentary constituencies that went to polls in the first two phases.

India DY Chandrachud, Justices JB Pardiwala and Sanjiv Khanna sought a response within a week from the EC on the application filed by ADR.

The poll body has only been releasing the voter turnout percentage in stark contrast to 2019 general elections, when it published data with actual total voters and gender-wise breakup with absolute numbers.

Other Opposition parties have also raised questions over the delay in release of final voter turnout. Lok Sabha polls are being held in seven phases and the results will be declared June 4.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I don't have documents, but I always carry a beautifully written 300-word essay on road safety with me

SRIMANDIR IN AD Fresh hurdle for Patra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission (EC) against BJP's Puri Parliamentary Constituency candidate Sambit Patra for using a photo of Srimandir in an advertisement issued by him in the local media.

In a petition to the Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar, the BJD highlighted that the full-page advertisement featuring Patra's picture with Srimandir in the background also had the BJP's lotus symbol.

The BJD also noted that Patra made an offensive comment Monday stating that Lord Jagannath is the devotee of Modi, which severely affected the sentiments of millions of Odias worldwide.

Although Patra later clarified that his remark was inadvertently made and expressed regret, the BJD argued that the advertisement violated the Model Code of Conduct for political

parties and candidates.

But the issue here is issuing a full-page advertisement with his photo and the temple in background along with party symbol. "We strongly object to it and consider this to be a violation of the poll code for political parties and candidates," the BJD said. The party demanded that immediate action be taken against Patra, with a formal notice issued and made public.

They also argued that since Patra's picture appeared in the advertisement, the expenditure should be accounted under his personal campaign expenses, not the party's. The BJD estimated the total cost of the advertisement at around ₹2.5 crore.

They also noted that expenses for the Prime Minister's roadshow in support of Patra have not been allocated to his campaign expenses account. The BJD urged the EC to ensure that all related expenses be appropriately recorded in Patra's expense account.

Neither BJP, nor Patra was available for comment.



Not everyone can gain your trust easily. We are here to change that.

AMRI is now manipalhospitals

LIFE'S ON

33 hospitals | 70+ years of healthcare legacy | 5,000+ Doctors
9,500+ beds | Serving 17 cities

Turbulence terror takeaway: Buckle up

CLEAR-AIR TURBULENCE CANNOT BE SEEN AND IS VIRTUALLY UNDETECTABLE WITH CURRENT TECHNOLOGY, MAKING IT ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT FOR PASSENGERS TO WEAR SEATBELTS WHENEVER SEATED

REUTERS

Chicago, May 22: Buckle up. That is the message from flight attendants and pilots following the severe turbulence encountered by a Singapore Airlines flight Tuesday that resulted in the death of one passenger and injured dozens of others.

The London-to-Singapore flight hit heavy turbulence over the Indian Ocean and descended 6,000 feet in about three minutes, before an emergency landing in Bangkok.

Weather forecasting service AccuWeather said satellite and lightning data showed "explosive thunderstorms" developing close to the flight path. Developing thunderstorms can leave pilots with little time to react, it said.

Airlines are required by law to switch on the seatbelt



sign during takeoff and landing, but carriers have their own procedures to deal with mid-air turbulence.

A witness on the Singapore Airlines flight said numerous people who were not in their seatbelt were thrown around the cabin when the plane dipped, many hitting their heads.

Goh Choon Phong said the plane encountered sudden, extreme turbulence.

Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA representing over 50,000 at 20 airlines, said initial reports seemed to indicate clear-air turbulence, considered to be the most dangerous type of turbulence.

Clear-air turbulence cannot be seen and is virtually undetectable with current technology, making it all the more important for passengers to wear seatbelts whenever seated, she said.

"It is a matter of life and death," Nelson said. The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), which represents more than 77,000 pilots at 41 US and Canadian airlines, echoed that message, saying the safest way for passengers to protect themselves is by making sure their seatbelts are always fastened.

Turbulence-related airline accidents are the most common type of accident, a 2021 study by the US National Transportation Safety Board said.

Most recently, in March, a Boeing 787 plane operated by LATAM Airlines dropped abruptly mid-flight, causing injuries to more than 50 people.

Security beefed up for polls



DEBADURLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Stepping up the security measures for Assembly and Lok Sabha polls scheduled for May 25 here, the Commissionerate Police Wednesday said that 12 CAPF personnel would be deployed in each of the 152 critical booths in the City.

Addressing the media here, twin city police commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said two software applications - police patrolling and booth monitoring system (PPBMS) and vehicle tracking system (VTS) - would keep a strict vigil on the security situation in polling booths, and send timely updates to the control room. Besides, these applications would help supervising officers get immediate booth-level information and

reach booths through the shortest route, he added.

Alongside, 525 sensitive booths out of 1,132, which fall under five Assembly seats (Jayadev, Central, North, Ekamra and Jatni), would be webcasted during the polling, the top cop said.

Panda added that three DCP-rank officers, five additional DCP-rank officers, 35 inspectors, 293 SIs and 12 companies of CAPF would be deployed across polling booths in the City.

To prevent instances of poll violence, additional CAPFs would be deployed in cluster locations of four booths, said Panda, adding that 421 Sakhi booths would see exclusive deployment of women police personnel.

Elaborating more about the security arrangement, Panda said, "A total of 51 mobile parties have been constituted for im-

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mediate assistance. Each of the mobile parties would be supervised by one ACP. Besides, one additional DCP would supervise the security arrangement of one Assembly constituency. Moreover, five contingency units have been roped in for rescue, evacuation and hospitalisation of polling staff."

Panda added that one unified control room would function from Police Seva Bhavan under the supervision of additional DCP, and two adhoc control rooms will operate from BJB (Autonomous) College and Panchagaon village under Airfield police limits.

Baijayant richest among Phase III LS candidates

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, May 22: The BJP's Lok Sabha nominee from Kendrapara, Baijayant Panda, with declared assets of ₹148 crore is the richest candidate among those in the fray for the last phase of polling for six Lok Sabha seats in the state scheduled June 1.

As per a report published by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Odisha Election Watch, 20 (30 per cent) out of the total 66 candidates who have filed nominations for the six Lok Sabha constituencies going to the polls June 1 are millionaires.

In the affidavit submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI), Panda declared movable assets of ₹1,21,60,13,384 and immovable properties worth ₹26,48,65,324.

Sriram Pandey who is contesting from the Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat as an Independent candidate, is the second richest candidate. Pandey owns assets to the tune of ₹18 crore.

The report also claimed that the average assets per candidate of all the recognised political

parties and Independent candidates are around ₹3.83 crore. The average assets per candidate of the six BJP candidates in the fray for the fourth phase of polling stood at ₹27 crore.

The average assets per candidate of the six BJD nominees are ₹6 crore while the average assets per candidate of the five Indian National Congress candidates stood at ₹2 crore.

Bhanumati Das, who is contesting elections from the Jagatsinghpur parliamentary constituency as a candidate of Utkal Samaj, has revealed possessing only ₹1500.

Meanwhile, 15 (23 per cent) out of the 66 candidates in the fray have declared criminal cases against them with 10 of them facing serious criminal charges. One of the candidates has declared cases related to crime against women pending against him.

Polling for the six Lok Sabha constituencies of Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur will be held June 1. Voting for the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections is being held simultaneously in four phases from May 13 to June 1.

SC: National security of paramount importance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The Supreme Court Wednesday set aside a verdict of the Madras High Court which had granted bail to eight alleged PFI members and office bearers, saying national security is always of 'paramount importance' and any act aiding terrorist activity is liable to be restricted.

The eight accused -- Barakatullah, Idris, Mohamed Abuthahir, Khalid Mohammed, Syed Ishaq, Khaja Mohaideen, Yasar Arafath and Fayaz Ahmed -- were arrested September 22, 2022 and were in custody hardly for 1.5 years.

While setting aside the high court verdict, the top court said these eight accused shall forthwith surrender themselves before the NIA.

The apex court said it was satisfied with the chargesheet filed in the case and material and documents relied upon by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) that there were reasonable grounds for believing that the accusations against them were 'prima facie true'.

AMRI is now Manipal Hospitals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Manipal Hospitals Wednesday announced the successful brand integration of 400-bed AMRI Hospital in the City, which was acquired in September 2023.

Starting from May 22, the service excellence at these facilities will be aligned with Manipal Hospitals' standards, marking a significant milestone in healthcare transformation in East India, the Chief People Officer of Manipal Hospitals, Partha Das, said.

This integration signifies a new era of healthcare excellence in the region as Manipal Hospitals commits to upgrading the facility on par with facilities in the metro, he said. Saktimaya Mohapatra, Director of the Bhubaneswar branch of the Hospital, said that with the integration, Manipal Hospitals has put its footprint in Odisha.

"With Manipal's renowned service excellence now at the forefront, we are poised to set new benchmarks in patient care and satisfaction, furthering our mission of delivering compassionate and advanced healthcare solutions to the communities we serve," Mohapatra said.

The new management has planned to elevate the Bhubaneswar unit from a tertiary to a quaternary care hospital, provide comprehensive cancer care services and a fully operational liver transplant clinic, the Director informed.

Besides, a state-of-the-art second catheterization laboratory will also be set up within the hospital, he added.

Das expressed enthusiasm for this strategic integration, stating, "This integration represents a pivotal stride towards our objective to enhance healthcare delivery across East India."

Dr Sudhakar Kantipudi, Cluster Director, Bhubaneswar and Vijayawada, said, "I am delighted to witness the integration of AMRI unit into Manipal Hospitals, heralding a new era of healthcare excellence in Bhubaneswar. This strategic move underscores our unwavering commitment to revolu-



tionize the healthcare landscape in Odisha."

Manipal Hospitals has acquired an 84 per cent stake in AMRI Hospitals Ltd, bringing three hospitals in Kolkata and

one in Bhubaneswar under its administrative control.

The hospital also launched special media privilege card in which media personnel will get 25 per cent discount on outpa-

tient consultant, outpatient lab tests and diagnostic and health

checkups, and packages at all Manipal Hospitals across the country. The privilege card will be valid for two years.

We'll try strengthening patient-centric care: Das

With Manipal Hospitals setting its footprint, the Capital City of Odisha has added another facet to its rapidly growing healthcare ecosystem in eastern India. During an interview with Orissa POST, Partha Das, Chief People Officer of the healthcare major, shares his vision of extending a holistic patient-centric approach aimed at timely and effective service delivery. Excerpts...

■ **How did Manipal Hospitals decide to come to Bhubaneswar?**

■ Manipal has a strong presence in South (India), with Bangalore alone having 10 of our healthcare facilities. We also spread to North. East was the missing link. We've now got four hospitals in Kolkata (three AMRIs). We were keen to come over to Odisha in order to strengthen our eastern India operations. Also, there is a need for patients in Odisha for a good hospital. Not just in Bhubaneswar, people in all the districts are lacking good hospitals in their close vicinity.

■ **Bhubaneswar already has a number of good hospitals. How are you going to make your presence felt here?**

■ As values, we have medical excellence, ethical practices and patient-centric care. AMRI is already an established hospital with



good infrastructure and medics. We will try to strengthen the patient-centricity part. Moreover, we have collaborations across the country which we can leverage for optimizing our care services.

■ **What are your views on the healthcare schemes extended by the Central and state governments for the weaker and marginal sections? Are these going to add up to the overall healthcare ecosystem?**

■ As part of our CSR, we take up patients covered under both CGHS and BSKY

schemes. In fact, more than 25 per cent of patients at AMRI are covered under BSKY. The same will continue.

■ **There has been a surge in both cancer and cardiovascular patients in not just Odisha, but the eastern region as a whole. How are you planning to meet the challenges?**

■ We are planning to extend the present cancer care facility at AMRI by 100 beds which will be completed by 2025. We are also opening our second cath lab (catheterization laboratory) for cardiac care, soon. Moreover, with Manipal here, we are going to conduct more home visits, direct monitoring and surveillance of our patients. Screening camps will also be organised which will help us deal with emergency cases more promptly and effectively with handy patient data.

IMD predicts rain as Lopar forms over Bay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 22: A low-pressure area has formed in the Bay of Bengal (BoB) and under its influence northern Odisha districts are likely to receive rainfall, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Wednesday.

The low-pressure area in the BoB off north Tamil Nadu and south Andhra Pradesh coast is very likely to move north-east-

wards and will turn into a depression by May 24 morning, the IMD said. "Under the influence of the cyclonic circulation over Southwest BoB, a low-pressure area has formed over... BoB off north Tamil Nadu-south Andhra Pradesh coasts with associated cyclonic circulation..." a bulletin issued by the IMD said Wednesday.

The IMD has forecast heavy rainfall (7cm to 11cm) likely in isolated places of Balasore

district from May 24 and moderate rainfall in other northern Odisha districts. The IMD also cautioned fishermen not to venture into the sea May 23 and 24 as sea conditions are likely to be rough to very rough. The fishermen out at sea are advised to return to the shore by May 23, it said.

The IMD in its bulletin said squally weather with wind speed reaching 35-45 kmph gusting to 55 kmph is likely over south BoB

May 22. It would gradually increase to 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph over central and adjoining south BoB from May 23 morning.

The IMD further said that it would extend to adjoining areas of north BoB with increased wind speed of 50-60 kmph gusting to 70 kmph from May 24 morning and over northeast BoB and adjoining northwest and east central BoB from May 25 morning for subsequent 24 hours.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	38.7°C	37.0°C
Min Temp	27.6°C	27.0°C
Humidity	71%	75%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
PARTLY CLOUDY SKY

Babies with bilingual mothers have distinct brainwaves

Newborns of bilingual mothers were found to respond to a wider range of sound pitches, compared to those of mothers speaking one language, according to a new study from Spain.

Researchers said that babies in the wombs of bilingual mothers are expected to be exposed to an environment with a richer variety of sounds than those in the wombs of monolingual mothers.

The researchers found that while the brains of the babies of monolingual mothers had learned to respond in a heightened manner to the pitch of one language, those of the babies of bilingual mothers seem to have become sensitive to a wider range of pitches, without giving a heightened response to any one of them. The findings are published in the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*.

Studies have estimated the global bilingual population to be from 43 per cent to over 50

per cent, with bilingualism or multilingualism being the norm in many countries.

"Languages vary in the timing aspects of speech, such as rhythm and accentuation, but also pitch and phonetic information. This means that fetuses from bilingual mothers are expected to be immersed in a more complex acoustic environment than those from monolingual mothers," said co-corresponding author Carles Escera.

Escera is a professor at Sant Joan de Déu Barcelona Children's Hospital, from where the researchers recruited mothers of 131 one-to-three-day-old newborns for the study.

Responding to a questionnaire, 41 per cent of the mothers said they spoke exclusively Spanish or Catalan, which is related to Spanish and spoken in Catalonia in eastern Spain. The remaining were bilingual - most of them speaking Spanish and Catalan.

Other languages spoken by some of the bilingual mothers in-



cluded Arabic, English, German and Portuguese.

The researchers measured the babies' specific responses to four types of sounds lasting 0.25 seconds long. The sounds were of vowels used in both Spanish and Catalan.

"Here we show that exposure to monolingual or bilingual speech has different effects at

birth on 'neural encoding' of voice pitch and vowel sounds: that is, how information about these aspects of speech has been initially learned by the foetus," said co-first author Natàlia Gorina-Careta, a researcher at the University of Barcelona.

"At birth, newborns from bilingual mothers appear more sensitive to a wider range of acoustic

variation of speech, whereas newborns from monolingual mothers seem to be more selectively tuned to the single language they have been immersed in," said Gorina-Careta.

The findings stress the importance of exposure of foetuses to language for recognising speech sounds at birth, according to Escera.

2-yr RI for two in ₹11.2L fraud case

Bhubaneswar: A local court here recently sentenced two miscreants to two years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) on charges of duping ₹11.2 lakh from a woman through swapping ATM-cum-debit card. The duo has been identified as Manoj Kumar Sahu, 32, and Gobardhan Patra, 37. They are native of Ganjam district, said Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) Rajalakshmi Nayak, adding that the incident occurred in 2022 under Laxmisagar police station limits. The APP further said district and sessions court judge Suryanarayan Mohanty pronounced the judgment under Section 406 of IPC. The judge, in addition, slapped a penalty of ₹1,000 on the duo, failure to pay which entail 10 days of rigorous imprisonment (RI), she added.

Elaborating the incident, Suryanarayan said the accused waited near an ATM when the complainant arrived to withdraw the cash, December 30, 2022. During which, they tricked the woman to believe the ATM is not working and asked her to show the card. As the woman fell for the deceit and showed her card, the men took it and discreetly exchanged with a dummy card, and handed it to her.

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Tuberose farmers lament lack of marketing facilities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, May 22: Cultivation of tuberose (Rajani Gandha) flowers is a lucrative business. If marketed properly, it is a source of substantial earnings for farmers. However, lack of marketing facilities is having an adverse impact on tuberose farmers in Ganjam district, locals informed Wednesday. The effort and energy spent in producing tuberose flowers pales in comparison to the meagre amounts earned, they added.

Rajani Gandha flowers are mainly cultivated in Digapahandi and Hinjilicut blocks of Ganjam district. More than 100 acres of land are used for production of Rajani Gandha flowers, officials of the district Horticulture department informed. Farmers however, alleged that as the state government has not put up a proper marketing system in place, they have to incur heavy losses.

Ralabha village under Hinjilicut block is famous for its Rajani Gandha cultivation. In fact, the place has been nicknamed 'Rajani Gandha village'. Rajani Gandha cultivation in the village started after the 1999 Super Cyclone. A resident of the village Jhumar Dalai, along with some young farmers started tuberose cultivation. Now more than 107 families of the village are engaged in the cultivation of Rajani Gandha. Each of the families cultivates tuberose on lands measuring 0.4 acre to one acre. The daily



production ranges from 300-400kgs. Flowers are supplied to florists in this city, Aska, Sorada, Bhanjanagar, Bhubaneswar, Bhawanipatna, Puri and Nabarangpur.

"Tuberose flowers grown in Ralabha are in great demand in various parts of the state. The total income for all the families can be well over rupees one crore annually if the product is marketed properly," Kalu Charan Dalai, a young farmer informed.

The 'Krishi Vigyan Kendra' here is encouraging farmers of Ralabha village to take up cultivation of the

'Prajwal' variety of tuberose. It is a better product, officials said. "The new variety has two petals and hence weighs more. It is a better product for making garlands," opined chief and senior scientist of 'Krishi Vigyan Kendra', Dr Sujit Kumar Nath.

Scientists are also training the Rajani Gandha farmers of Ralabha village by regularly organising discussion sessions. Farmers are attending workshops on soil testing, use of organic manures, benefits of using bio-fertilisers and phospho bacteria on their farmlands for better yields. Farmers have also welcomed this move, officials informed.

Rajani Gandha farmers meanwhile informed that they get an annual financial assistance of ₹6,000 for cultivation of tuberose on 1.5 acres of land. They use the money to buy shoots and fertilisers, farmers said. However, they reiterated that absence of a proper marketing system is hurting them badly. They also lamented the lack of storage facilities. Farmers added that the government should address these issues.

When contacted, assistant director Subhash Chandra Panda of the district Horticulture department informed that recently the state government has fixed the selling price at ₹50 per kilogram for Rajani Gandha farmers. He said that the collector of Ganjam has welcomed the move and will soon implement the rate in the district.

Couple injured in freak accident



POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, May 22: A couple suffered serious injuries Wednesday after their bike was hit by a tractor near Chakachapar village under this police limits and district. The injured were identified as Sitakanta Tripathy and his wife Kaberi, residents of Bhagabati Sahi locality in this town.

Eye-witnesses said that Sitakanta and his wife were travelling to Sana Mosigaon village on their two-wheeler (No-OD 24-C-7447). The front wheel of a tractor coming from the opposite side broke off and the vehicle ramed into the bike flinging both the occupants on the road leaving them critically injured. Locals rushed to the spot and rushed the two to the district headquarters hospital here.

Later in the day, as the condition of Sitakanta deteriorated, he was shifted to a private nursing home in Visakhapatnam. The condition of his wife Kaberi is stable, doctors at the DHH here informed.

Illegal parking turns into nightmare for commuters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, May 22: Illegal parking of trucks and other heavy vehicles on Rimuli bypass on National Highway-520 in Keonjhar district has turned into a nightmare for other commuters. It has led to a spate of road mishaps in the recent past. Vehicles are parked illegally on a 30-kilometre stretch from

Rimuli to Rugudi leaving very little space for smaller vehicles to move. However, the district administration or the NHAI is yet to take any preventive measures, locals alleged.

The gruesome death of six persons including five members of a family in a road mishap on Rimuli bypass May 15 is a case in this point. The mishap occurred after the car they were travelling in got sandwiched between two trucks on NH-520.

Locals alleged that illegal parking of trucks was the main reason behind the accident. They pointed out that their lives are in danger because of this malady. They also stated that the deplorable

road conditions is another primary reason behind the frequent mishaps.

Despite the construction of a new parking bay at Angulia on the highway illegal parking continues unabated. The parking bay was completed more than two years back, but since then has remained non-operational. Had it opened for public use, parking issues would have been solved to a great extent, locals said.

Absence of street lights, CCTV cameras and speed-breakers are other reasons why the stretch has turned into a death trap, observed local resident Prasanna Kumar Behera. Others including Tankadhar Patra and Madhav Chandra Behera pointed out that the apathy of the NHAI in solving the issues is creating confusion.

The three alleged that NHAI collects tolls from commuters who travel from Keonjhar to Barbil at two counters, but does nothing to improve the condition of the road or prevent illegal parking. They along with a few others threatened long-term agitation if the NHAI does not take preventive measures to stop illegal parking and improve the deplorable road conditions found at various stretches of NH-520.

Elephant census begins in Nayagarh, Boudh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boudh, May 22: Elephant census started Wednesday across all ranges under the Nayagarh Mahanadi Wildlife and Boudh forest divisions. Officials are using different types of equipment including camera traps in all the elephant corridors in these two divisions for the census.

According to available information, 36 platforms (machans) have been constructed in the four ranges under the Nayagarh Mahanadi wildlife division. The ranges are Kushang, Chhamundia,

Banigochha (East), and Banigochha (West). Twenty two platforms have been constructed in Kushang and Chhamundia ranges while 14 each have come up in Banigochha east and west ranges. Three Forest department personnel have been deployed in each of the platforms, Mahanadi division range officer Sansar Barga informed.

Similarly, 45 platforms have been constructed across two ranges under the Boudh forest division. These include 18 platforms in Madhapur range and 27 in Purunakatak range. A total of 145 Forest department staff has been tasked to carry out the census.

Officials said that most of the platforms have been constructed close to water bodies as the animals usually visit those on a regular basis and it will be easy to do the headcount.

GAS CYLINDER THEFT RACKET BUSTED; 8 HELD

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, May 22: Eight persons were arrested here Wednesday by officials of the Sadar police station for their alleged involvement in the theft of gas cylinders. The thefts were reported from localities under three police stations in Mayurbhanj district. Police also seized 28 cylinders, a TATA pick-up van, an Indigo car and a number of mobile phones from their possessions.

The persons were identified as Shakti Ranjan Pani, 28 and Soumya Ranjan Pani, 25, both residents of Sauri village under Kuliya police limits, Ajaya Kumar Behera, 22, a resident of Titri village, Sipu Singh, 27 and Umashankar Naik, 25, both



from Balimundali village, Santu Chouhan, 36, staying in Pariakuli village, Nirmal Gochhayat of Tulasi Chaura area under Town police limits here and Raj Narayan Panigrahi, 50, a resident of Suthanga village under

Khantapada police limits in Balasore district.

As per the police report, a number of gas cylinders were allegedly stolen from Dhanapur godown under Shamakhunta block, January 25, 2024. Sharada Prasanna Mohanta, the owner of the godown had lodged a written complaint in this regard at Sadar police station. Acting on the complaint, police launched an investigation.

Police were tipped-off Wednesday about 10 gas cylinders being transported

in a pick-up van and car. Police tracked the vehicles down and arrested five persons travelling in the van and car. During interrogation, Shakti confessed that he had stolen gas cylinders from the godown and had sold those to Santu, Nirmal and Raj. Police nabbed Santu, Nirmal and Raj and seized 18 cylinders from the possession of the three.

Further investigation is on to ascertain the involvement of others in the racket, police said.

बँक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र
Bank of Maharashtra
एक महाराष्ट्र एक बैंक

BANK OF MAHARASHTRA
ZONAL OFFICE-BHUBANESWAR
First Floor, Door Sanchar Bhavan, Unit-IX,
Near Rupali Square, Bhubaneswar-751022
E-mail: dzmbbsr@mahabank.co.in

DEMAND NOTICE

We have to inform the below mentioned Borrower that the following credit facilities has been sanctioned to you by Bank of Maharashtra, Concerned Branches. That you have executed the necessary documents in favour of the Bank in consideration of the said credit facilities availed and also created charges and securities in favour of the Bank. In spite of our repeated Demands, you have not Paid the outstanding amount in your Account. Therefore, due to non-payment of installment/interest/Principal debt, the account(s) have been classified as NPA as per the RBI Guidelines. Demand Notice was issued by the authorized officer against the following Borrowers of Bank of Maharashtra, Concerned Branches but the same could not be Served on the below mentioned Parties which was sent by Regd.post A.D. The details are given below:

BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s)	Nature / Limit	Date of NPA / Date of Demand Notice / Outstanding	Details of Property Mortgaged
BHUBANESWAR BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. K. Prasantha Dash, Address: HIG 4/6, Omfed Square, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751016 / Co-Borrowers: 1) Mr. Manoj Kumar Dash, Address: House No.: 1411/ F, New Forest Park, Bhubaneswar-751009. 2) Mr. Sai Prasanna Dash, Address: HIG 4/6, Omfed Square, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar-751016.	Housing Loan (60373651621)/ ₹ 41,00,000/- Housing Loan (60161300718)/ ₹ 18,00,000/- Maha Super Car Loan (60315091767)/ ₹ 5,00,000/-	30.04.2024 / 13.05.2024 ₹ 50,28,259.09 as on 13.05.2024 + subsequent interest thereon	Equitable Mortgage of all those pieces and parcels of Land situated being and lying at Mouza: Patia in the Registration Dist.: Khurda, admeasuring 2178 sqft. and bearing CTS/Survey No./Plot No.: 433/2409, Khata No.: 474/3815, Bounded by-North: Plot No. 434, East: Plot No. 434, West: 20ft. Road, South: Amzad Ali, Name of Mortgagor: Mr. Kall Prasanna Structures Constructed or to be
BERHAMPUR BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. Umesh Chandra Madhi, S/o- Mr. Satyabajee Madhi, Address-1: At Mouza: Ambagada, Dwarika Nagar, Near Canal, 900 mts. from Main Road, 900 mts. from Rajarani Dream Home Apartment, Plot No.: 676/2495, Khata No.: 220/1515, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha-760001, Address-2: C/o- Satyabajee Madhi, Jaya Mangala Nagar, Gate Bazar, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam, PIN-760001, Co-Borrower: Mrs. Namita Kumari Behera, W/o- Mr. Umesh Chandra Madhi, Address: At Mouza: Ambagada, Dwarika Nagar, Near Canal, 900 mts. from Main Road, 900 mts. from Rajarani Dream Home Apartment, Plot No.: 676/2495, Khata No.: 220/1515, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha-760001.	HSG Mahasup PRI-U6Metro (6033541280)/ ₹ 20,00,000/-	30.04.2024 / 04.05.2024 ₹ 21,90,286.00 as on 04.05.2024 + subsequent interest thereon	All those pieces and parcels of Land situated being and lying at Mouza: Ambagada, Village: Dwarika Nagar, in the Registration Dist.: Ganjam, Sub Dist.: Berhampur, admeasuring Area: 871 sqft. and bearing CTS/Survey No./Plot No.: 676/2495, Khata No.: 220/1515, Owned by- Mrs. Namita Kumari Behera, Bounded by- East: Site of Bijayalaxmi Behera, West: Site of Subash Sethy/Vendors, North: Road, South: Site of Subash Sethy/Vendors.

Dash and Mr. Manoj Kumar Dash, together with the Buildings and Constructed there on and all the Fixtures, Fittings annexed thereon.

Hence in exercise of Powers conferred on the Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI) and without prejudice to the rights of the Bank, the Bank hereby Calls Upon you to repay the amount in Full mentioned above plus future interest and other charges thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of this notice, failing which in addition to and without prejudice to the other rights available to the Bank, the Bank shall be entitled to exercise and/or all the powers under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the aforesaid Act in respect of these securities/properties/enforceable under the Act, in which case you shall also be liable to further pay all costs, charges and expenses or other incidental charges. The Powers available under the Act inter alia include: a) To Take possession of the secured assets of the borrower including the right to transfer by way of lease, assignment or sale for realizing the secured assets. b) To Take over the management of the secured assets including the right to transfer by way of lease, assignment or sale and realize the secured assets. c) To Appoint any person (hereafter referred to as the manager) to manage the secured assets the possession of which has been taken over by the secured creditor. d) Require at any time by notice in writing to any person who has acquired any of the secured assets from the borrower and from whom any money is due or may become due to the borrower, to pay the bank, so much of the money as is sufficient to pay the secured debt. Please take a note that as per sec. 13 (13) of the Act, after receipt of this notice, you are restrained from disposing off or dealing with the above securities without our prior written consent. That attention is invited to the provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 22.05.2024, Place: Bhubaneswar Authorized Officer, Bank of Maharashtra

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. MCSW-CAMC-AJT-24-25-07
Name of Work: COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT OF AXLE JOURNAL TURNING & BURNISHING LATHE (AJTB LATHE) FOR 05 YEARS AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.
Advertised Value: ₹60,77,000/-, EMD: ₹1,21,500/-, Completion Period: 60 Months.
Bidding Start Date: 24.05.2024, Date & time of Tender Closing: 07.06.2024, 1500 hrs.
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-Tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website http://www.ireps.gov.in
Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (P), Carriage Repair Workshop, Mancheswar
PR-143/P/24-25

EAST COAST RAILWAY

(1) Tender No. 09-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25
Name of Work: OHE MODIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF GIRDERS OF MAJOR BRIDGES (BGM AND RBG) (BRIDGE NOS. 550 DN, 559 DN, 567 DN AND 567 UP) IN CUTTACK-KHURDA ROAD SECTION IN CONNECTION WITH MISSION-3000 MT. UNDER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Advertised Value: ₹13,45,311.93, EMD: ₹28,900/-
(2) Tender No. 10-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25
Name of Work: OHE MODIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH PROPOSED REPLACEMENT OF GIRDERS OF MAJOR BRIDGES (BGM) (BRIDGE NOS. 24CP DN, 62 CP UP AND 242 CP DN) IN CUTTACK-PARADEEP SECTION IN CONNECTION WITH MISSION-3000 MT. UNDER THE JURISDICTION KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Advertised Value: ₹9,83,858.65, EMD: ₹19,700/-
Period of Completion: 180 days (for both tenders).
Bidding Start Date: 24.05.2024 (for sl. no. 1) & 27.05.2024 (for sl. no. 2), Tender Closing date & time: 07.06.2024, 1300 hrs. (for sl. no. 1) & 10.06.2024, 1300 hrs. (for sl. no. 2)
Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.
Complete information including e-Tender documents of the above e-Tenders is available in website http://www.ireps.gov.in
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD) Khurda Road
PR-145/P/24-25

भारत का राजपत्र

REGD. NO. D.L.-33004/99
सौ.जी.-डी.एल.-अ-12042024-253676
CG-DL-E-12042024-253676
असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग II-खण्ड 3-उप-खण्ड (ii)
PART II-Section 3-Sub-section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY
सं. 1601] नई दिल्ली, बुधवार, अप्रैल-10, 2024/चैत्र 21, 1946
No. 1601] NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY, APRIL-10, 2024/CHAITRA 21, 1946
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
NOTIFICATION
New Delhi, the 10 April 2024
S.O. 1686 (E).- Whereas by the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway, S.O. 3645 Dated:14 August 2023 published in Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 3, Sub-section (ii) issued under sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highway Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government declared its intention to acquire the land specified in the Schedule annexed to the said notification for building (widening/four laning, etc.), maintenance, management and operation of NH16 in the stretch of land from Km. 98 to Km. 111 in the village(s) namely-Chingudipur-2/1, Dakshinabar-42 Taluk-Bhandaripokhari in the district of BHADRAK in the state of ODISHA. And whereas the substance of the said notification has been published in "Samaj" and "OrissaPost" both dated 12.12.2023; under sub-section (3) of section 3A of the said Act;
And whereas the Competent Authority has received objections filed under Section 3-C, considered and settled the same appropriately; And whereas, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Competent Authority has submitted its report to the Central Government;
Now, therefore, upon receipt of the said report of the Competent Authority and in exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-section (1) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that the land specified in the said Schedule should be acquired for the aforesaid purpose;
And further, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 3D of the said Act, the Central Government hereby declares that on publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, the land specified in the said Schedule shall vest absolutely in the Central Government, free from all encumbrances.
SCHEDULE
Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling NH16 in the stretch of land from Km. 98 to Km. 111 in the village(s) namely- Chingudipur-2/1, Dakshinabar-42 Taluk-Bhandaripokhari in the district of BHADRAK in the state of ODISHA.
District: Bhadrak
https://egazette.gov.in
Publication date, 10 April 2024
https://egazette.gov.in/WriteReaDData/2024/253676.pdf

भारत का राजपत्र

REGD. NO. D.L.-33004/99
सौ.जी.-डी.एल.-अ-04052024-254040
CG-DL-E-04052024-254040
असाधारण
EXTRAORDINARY
भाग II-खण्ड 3-उप-खण्ड (ii)
PART II-Section 3-Sub-section (ii)
प्राधिकार से प्रकाशित
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY
सं. 1806] नई दिल्ली, शुक्रवार, मई-3, 2024/वैशाख 13, 1946
No. 1806] NEW DELHI, FRIDAY, MAY-3, 2024/VAISAKHA 13, 1946
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS
NOTIFICATION
New Delhi, the 2nd May, 2024
S.O. 1898(E).- In exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 3A of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) (hereinafter referred to as the said Act), the Central Government, after being satisfied that for the public purpose, the land, the brief description of which is given in the Schedule below, is required for building, maintenance, management and operation of Newly proposed Six Lane Raipur-Visakhapatnam NH130CD economic corridor in the stretch of land from Km 239.650 to Km 366.500 in the district of KORAPUT in the state of ODISHA, hereby declares its intention to acquire such land.
Any person interested in the said land may, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette, object to the use of such land for the aforesaid purpose under sub-section(1) of section 3C of the said Act.
Every such objection shall be made to the Competent Authority, namely, Tahasildar cum Land Acquisition Officer, Pottangi in writing and shall set out the grounds thereof and the Competent Authority shall give the objector an opportunity of being heard, either in person or by a legal practitioner, and may, after hearing all such objections and after making such further enquiry, if any, as the Competent Authority thinks necessary, by order, either allow or disallow the objections.
Any order made by the Competent Authority under sub-section (2) of section 3C of the said Act shall be final.
The land plans and other details of the land to be acquired under their notification are available and can be inspected by the interested person at the aforesaid office of the Competent Authority.
SCHEDULE
Brief Description of the land to be acquired with or without structures falling within Newly proposed Six Lane Raipur-Visakhapatnam NH130CD economic corridor in the stretch of land from Km 239.650 to Km 366.500 in the district of KORAPUT in the state of ODISHA.
District: Koraput
https://egazette.gov.in
Publication date, 04.05.2024
https://egazette.gov.in/(S(lafw4xykr2101a1nuesjft))/
ViewPDF.aspx
https://bhoomirashi.gov.in/auth/revamp/showFileCA.cshtml?notification_id=67962&file_id=45153

UCO BANK

Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building,
2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar,
Bhubaneswar-751009, Tel: 0674-2620423

POSSESSION NOTICE
For Immovable Property

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the UCO Bank, Maitree Vihar Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Maitree Vihar Branch for an amount plus interest & expenses thereon.

MAITREE VIHAR BRANCH / Name and Address of the Borrower/Guarantor	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrower: Mrs. Madhusmita Priyadarshini Panda, At: Plot No.: 24, New Airport Road, Bhubaneswar-751001 / Guarantor: Mr. Pravakar Panda, S/o.: Gandharb Panda, At: Balisahi, Pattamundai, Kendrapara, Odisha-754215	₹24,76,770/- + further interest & other charges thereon	15.02.2024 21.05.2024	All that part & parcel of the property (Land & Building) Situated at House No.: C-27, Khatian No.: 240/849, Anand Nagar, Near Xavier University, Nijagada Kurki, Hairajapur, Pipili, Puri, Area of Land: 1200 sqft.. Standing in the name of Mrs. Madhusmita Priyadarshini Panda

Place : Bhubaneswar, Date: 22.05.2024
Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

UCO BANK

Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building,
2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar,
Bhubaneswar-751009, Tel: 0674-2620423

POSSESSION NOTICE
For Immovable Property

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the UCO Bank, Maitree Vihar Branch under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Guarantor to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Maitree Vihar Branch for an amount plus interest & expenses thereon.

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Place : Bhubaneswar, Date: 22.05.2024
Authorised Officer, UCO Bank



Whatever has courage can give courage to others just as the flame of the candle can light up another.

THE MOTHER



Detering Aggressors

At the signing ceremony of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April, 1949, then-US President Harry Truman remarked that if this "simple document" had existed in 1914 and 1939, "it would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to two world wars." The newly established alliance, he suggested, would ensure peace by deterring potential aggressors.

The success of this collective security strategy is reflected in the number of countries that have taken advantage of NATO's open-door policy. Since 1949, the alliance has expanded from 12 to 32 members, with Finland and Sweden being the most recent additions. Now, member countries must commit to admitting Ukraine.

Bringing Ukraine into NATO is important for several reasons. For starters, any doubt about the alliance's commitment to defend current or prospective members invites aggression. Russia is a case in point. The decision to shelve Ukraine and Georgia's membership aspirations during the 2008 Bucharest summit led to Russia's invasion of Georgia later that year. Similarly, turning a blind eye to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea resulted in the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Failing to defeat Russia in Ukraine would inevitably lead to more wars of aggression. But by admitting Ukraine, NATO could tip the balance decisively in its favour and dispel any doubt about the alliance's future, ensuring a lasting peace.

Moreover, appearing fearful of escalation or allowing its actions to be dictated by another power could push NATO into a death spiral. Giving in to threats would just lead to more threats and concessions. And if Ukraine falls, Estonia, Poland, Finland, or Taiwan will be next.

One of the basic tenets of NATO's Cold War strategy was that force must be met with even greater force. In 1946, the late American diplomat George Kennan summarised this strategic principle, explaining that while the Soviet Union was "impervious to the logic of reason," it was "highly sensitive" to the "logic of force." Whenever its aggression met strong resistance, it retreated.

The following decades vindicated Kennan. When Western powers showed they were determined to protect West Germany and South Korea during the Cold War, the Soviet Union backed down. Conversely, when the West hesitated, the Soviets attacked.

While US President Dwight Eisenhower's invocation of the United Nations Charter failed to deter the USSR from invading Hungary in 1956, his successor, John F. Kennedy, spared West Berlin from meeting the same fate. Similarly, the West's lackluster response to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

By refusing to set a clear timetable for Ukrainian accession, NATO is capitulating to Russia's demands, signaling to President Vladimir Putin that his dream of restoring the Russian empire is feasible and thus making World War III all but inevitable.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine exposed NATO's vulnerabilities. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz recently declared that Germany is willing to send 35,000 troops to defend "every square foot" of NATO territory. But that commitment, while significant, pales in significance when one considers that 500,000 Russian troops are currently fighting in Ukraine. Moreover, the European defense industry has proven unable to supply Ukraine with sufficient weapons and equipment.

Had Ukraine fallen in three days, as many "experts" predicted in early 2022, Russian forces would now be in Kazakhstan, Moldova, and possibly the Baltic states and Poland. Given that Ukraine has the only European army that is both motivated and battle-hardened enough to resist Russia, admitting Ukraine would undoubtedly bolster NATO's military capabilities.

While some might argue that such a move would force the Kremlin to respond, it is highly unlikely to use nuclear weapons. The USSR posed a much greater nuclear threat, yet the West did not surrender to Soviet blackmail. As German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer put it in 1961, while the nuclear threats "directed from time to time against one or other of the NATO partners" were dangerous, the "Soviet government must know that by any such blow, it would touch off a counter-blow by which it would be annihilated."

Was there truly zero probability of the USSR using nuclear weapons? Certainly not. But Western policymakers at the time understood that giving in to extortion would increase the likelihood of such an attack, not lessen it.

Lastly, the West must realise that Russia is already at war with NATO. The Kremlin is financing terrorism, engaging in disinformation campaigns, fueling domestic conflicts, meddling in the elections of democratic countries, and reportedly planning a sabotage campaign across Europe.

Unfortunately, Western democracies have been too slow to accept reality. While political leaders debated whether NATO "provoked" Putin and whether they should allow Putin to "save face," China and Russia have deepened their "no limits" military partnership and formed an "axis of upheaval" that is now threatening to undermine the US-led international order.

In 1988, then-US President Ronald Reagan explained that NATO is not about "today or tomorrow" but rather about "what Europe [will] look like in 15 years." While we cannot predict the future, two things are clear: If Ukraine falls, Europe could bleed for decades because Russia will not stop in Ukraine. Alternatively, with Ukraine as a member, the alliance could promote peace through deterrence, as it did during the Cold War.

The destinies of Ukraine, Europe, and NATO are inextricably linked. As French President Emmanuel Macron recently acknowledged, "Europe is mortal," and its demise may already be in sight. The acute threat posed by Russia's revanchist ambitions underscores the need for urgent action. NATO members must use the July summit in Washington to invite Ukraine to join the alliance.

-- Yuriy Gorodnichenko is Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley. Ilona Sologoub is Editor of VoxUkraine. ©Project Syndicate



Yuriy Gorodnichenko & Ilona Sologoub

By refusing to set a clear timetable for Ukrainian accession, NATO is capitulating to Russia's demands, signaling to President Vladimir Putin that his dream of restoring the Russian empire is feasible and thus making World War III all but inevitable

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

RIGHT TO CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Do we have the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment? This is one of the most obvious questions missing during the ongoing general elections in India. Election manifestos of political parties - national and regional - have no pledges to provide the right to a healthy environment for all Indians if voted to power on 4 June. At best, environmental well-being is a non-issue. Can Indian voters especially the newly registered voters and future voters afford such a lapse?

While we are just completing the hottest decade of the century, is there any prime-time debate in electronic media on provisions of the right to a healthy environment? The earth is experiencing multiple crises that reinforce each other: climate change, water scarcity, loss of biodiversity, pollution, pandemics, wars and conflict leading to widening poverty and inequality. Among all, climate change is the defining crisis of our generation. It is faster than we project, predict and prepare.

In a historic, bold, and transformational intervention between people and the planet, in July 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution on "the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right." Among 193 member countries, no one opposed this resolution while 161 voted for it, eight countries including India and Kyrgyzstan abstained from voting. It doesn't matter if the likes of India and Kyrgyzstan abstained as the highest court of India and the constitution of Kyrgyzstan have already spelt out the right to a healthy environment for their respective citizens. More than 85% of UN member countries have recognised the right to a healthy environment.

A healthy environment and human rights are interdependent and complementary to each other. Without one, the other is inadequate. Without a healthy environment, protecting, advocating and preserving various recognised human rights is incomplete and unattainable. But,



Though there is no consensus on what constitutes a healthy environment, the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment has been positioned formidably to re-evaluate the state's obligations towards its citizens

neither the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) nor any other UN human rights instruments like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both adopted in 1966 by UNGA, were not able to spell out the environmental rights. In 1995, the UN Commission of Human Rights refused to adopt "the right to a secure, healthy and ecologically sound environment."

Likewise, intergovernmental institutions like the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have maintained a stubborn reluctance to accept environmental rights as human rights in their respective institutional policy documents. In the draft Environmental and Social Framework (2023), the ADB despite recognising the human rights of indigenous people and restricting child labour in unhealthy working conditions, has distanced itself from acknowledging the 2022 UNGA resolution on the obligation to provide the right to a healthy environment.

Interestingly, in more than 50 years of UN environmental summit declarations none have successfully linked environmental rights to human rights. The UN had come close to pro-

nouncing the environmental rights in Principle 1 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration (first UN Conference on Human Environment) as the "fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being." In the 1992 Earth Summit, the Rio Declaration avoided mentioning any environmental rights due to developed countries.

Nevertheless, the gradual codification of environmental rights as substantive rights in the form of safe climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainable food and non-toxic environment has been emerging from regional treaties like the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), the American Convention on Human Rights (1988), the Arab Charter on Human Rights (2004), the ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights (2012). Simultaneously, explicit provisions of the right to a healthy environment in more than 100 national constitutions and judicial interventions and interpretations from more than 30 countries like in India in linking environmental issues to the rights to life and health have strengthened environmental rights.

Some of the recent judicial pronouncements related to pe-

titions on the right to a healthy environment and climate change have drawn substantial attention. In August 2023 in Montana, the US, the Court ruled in favour of young people that the state must protect the right to a healthy environment for present and future generations. The Supreme Court of India on 5 April, 2024, for the first time, recognised the right against the adverse impacts of climate change, saying it is intertwined with the right to life (Article 21) and equality (Article 14) that are Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India. In the same month, the European Court of Human Rights, an international court, ruled that Switzerland had violated the rights of a group of older Swiss women to 'family life' as the country has failed to comply with its duties to stop climate change. In March 2024, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found the Peruvian government responsible for violating the right to a healthy environment, among other rights, of residents of La Oroya, a town exposed to toxic pollution from a mine and smelter complex. There are nearly 40 such climate change litigations in various national and international courts. Further, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued new guidance in August 2023 that calls for governments to take action to protect boys and girls in the face of the deepening climate crisis.

Though there is no consensus on what constitutes a healthy environment, the right to a healthy, clean and sustainable environment has been positioned formidably to re-evaluate the state's obligations towards its citizens. The right to a healthy environment encourages the obligation of co-protection, co-conservation, co-preservation and co-management of the ecosystem by the government and citizens. At last, the people and the planet are linked with the umbilical cord.

The writer is an international adviser on climate change risk and trans-boundary rivers.

SPECTRUM DEVELOPMENT

Rural revival is the key

This parliamentary election has seen a lot of talk of guarantees and new offers are being pledged during campaigning, now in its sixth phase. Will the guarantees come to the aid of the common man? Will the economy be able to bear the burden of the guarantees? The GDP growth rates that have been announced by various institutions of around 7% in the current fiscal are no doubt encouraging, but this may not be an indicator of the prevailing situation. As India strides on the path of rapid economic growth, it grapples with a number of challenges. In this race towards the future, the government cannot afford to neglect a major section of the population, which too must be given its share of the so-called prosperity.

It is here that welfare measures assume significance, though it appears that political parties may be talking about these only for garnering votes. But going through the guarantees on the face of it, it appears these are justified, keeping in view the need to uplift the conditions of the economically weaker sections. Some analysts have said that

implementing these guarantees may result in fiscal profligacy, but these need to be overlooked from a broader perspective.

Recently, Finance Minister Sitharaman accused the Congress that it has made promises without calculating the cost of implementation. Accusing the UPA of 'fiscal short-sightedness', she asked its leader, Rahul Gandhi, to answer if the announcements made by him would translate into higher borrowings or higher taxes. Obviously, taxes would need to be increased. While the finance minister has kept the fiscal narrative, is she aware of the other side - direct and/or indirect subsidies given to corporate houses by her government in the past five years or so? What has been the result of such subsidies to the rich? Employment generation has been negligible. Governance may have improved to some extent, but the 'pro-rich policy' of the ruling dispensation is being seen to be coming in the way of grass-roots development.

Take the example of the issue of employment, which made a tangential entry into PM Modi's campaign speech. It seemed that

the PM was trying to defend the Opposition charge of the government's scant regard for generating employment. However, he sought to project employment merely as a corollary of government development projects, reeling off statistics on construction of roads, flyovers, railway tracks and factories and asking whether these initiatives would not have provided employment. It is believed that such infrastructure development does not result in permanent employment but provides contractual or informal employment where payments are rather poor.

While the public sector units are playing a key role, it is the private sector investment which has been lagging. Recall, former RBI Governor, Raghuram Rajan had observed: "I would love more Indians to have jobs outside agriculture, and manufacturing is certainly one important possibility. I have long been an advocate for enhancing domestic defence production wherever possible." He had expressed concerns about government policies regarding manufacturing as its labour-intensive sections have been 'ig-

nored' even while offering enormous subsidies to areas like chip manufacturing. Though the finance minister contested Rajan's observation, the fact remains that there is a need to think much more seriously on employment generation. Even if the number of days of rural employment scheme are not increased, adequate funds should be provided so that the beneficiaries are assured of full 100 days' work, which unfortunately is not the case.

Many economists, including Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee, have suggested starting a similar scheme for the urban poor and that it could be started for say 75 days or so. They could be engaged in waste management operations, promoting urban forestry, cleaning and maintaining parks and gardens. Modi's bid to emerge strong and make India's presence felt in the global arena is welcome, but serious efforts must be made to ensure majority of the population is not left behind. The marginalised and backward sections need to be integrated into the development process. Poll guarantees should not be election time mantras. INFA



Dhurjati Mukherjee

AS INDIA STRIDES ON THE PATH OF RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH, IT GRAPPLES WITH A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES

Severe turbulence

Sir, The severe turbulence on the London-Singapore flight, carrying 211 passengers claiming one life and injuring at least 70 others has sent shockwaves across the world. A dramatic drop from 36000 feet to 31000 feet in a matter of seconds led to serious laceration injuries among fliers and the flight interiors were reduced into shambles: almost unheard of in modern aviation history. A study has said that climate change across the globe has made air travel bumpy, and this trend may further augment because climate change is never static. Wind shear, which is nothing but change in wind speed and/or direction over a short distance in jet streams, is increased by warm air from carbon dioxide emissions causing turbulence. These changes are consistent with climate shift. A better turbulence forecasting system and the most important protection system for anticipated or ongoing turbulence -- strapping into one's seat-- cannot be emphasised enough.

Mockery of law

Sir, Two people were killed by a 17-year-old driving a Porsche in Pune, Maharashtra. The accused, Vedant Agrawal, is the son of one of Pune's wealthiest businessmen. He was granted bail within 15 hours and was merely asked to write a 300-word essay about his crime. This incident raises serious questions about the Indian justice system. Is this truly how justice is served in India? Innocent people are often declared guilty, yet in this case, a privileged spoiled brat seems to have escaped the consequences. The law which addresses hit-and-run cases appears to be disregarded when it involves wealthy individuals. The accused was underage, and the car lacked a registered number plate. If a minor can commit an adult crime, why can't he be punished as an adult? This case clearly illustrates that money can shield individuals from punishment. It is high time that judges who issue lenient verdicts be held publicly accountable. The judiciary needs urgent reforms to ensure that justice is served impartially, regardless of an individual's socioeconomic status.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Preetiyukta Mohakud, BHUBANESWAR

WISDOM CORNER

I don't want to have lived in vain like most people. I want to be useful or bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met. I want to go on living even after my death!

ANNE FRANK

I have learned silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am ungrateful to those teachers.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be.

ISAAC ASIMOV

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

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UTTARAKHAND REVENUE POLICE SYSTEM

HC orders abolition of century-old practice



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nainital, May 22: The Uttarakhand High Court has directed the state government to totally abolish the system of revenue police within a year and hand over areas under its jurisdiction to regular police. Uttarakhand is the only state in the country where the system of revenue police coexists alongside regular police. Revenue police, which is manned by revenue department officials, has limited powers with only remote rural areas of the hill state coming under its jurisdiction. A division bench of the high court comprising Chief Justice

Uttarakhand is the only state in the country where the system of revenue police coexists alongside regular police

Ritu Bahri and Justice Rakesh Kumar Thapliyal issued the order Tuesday while hearing a PIL seeking abolition of the system. The high court had ordered removal of the nearly a century-old practice of revenue police from the state also in 2018 while hearing a dowry death related case which was handled shoddily

by the revenue police. Again in 2022, a division bench of the high court comprising the then Chief Justice Vipin Sanghi and Justice RC Khulbe passed similar orders while hearing a PIL which alleged that the investigation into the murder of resort receptionist Ankita Bhandari would not have been delayed if it came directly to regular police rather than being handled initially by revenue police. The orders were passed in a PIL which said that had the government followed this order, there would not have been so much delay in the investigation of Ankita's murder. The state cabinet also passed a resolution in October 2022 for abolishing the revenue police system in a phased manner. In 2004, the Supreme Court, in the case of Navin Chandra vs State Government, had felt the need to abolish this system. The SC had observed that the revenue police are not given training like the regular police. Lack of basic facilities makes it difficult for the revenue police to review a crime, it had said. The top court had also observed that there should be a uniform system of policing in the state.



Devotees en route to Yamunotri during 'Char Dham Yatra' in Uttarakhand

PTI PHOTO

'Extreme poverty will be eradicated by 2025'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, May 22: As the Left government in Kerala marks its fourth year in office, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said Wednesday the government plans to develop a knowledge economy and eradicate extreme poverty in the state by November 2025. Listing out achievements of the Kerala government, Vijayan said in a statement that the consecutive Left governments have focused on developing basic infrastructure in the state. "This government is striving to transform Kerala into a knowledge economy, emphasising achievements in infrastructure development and the welfare sector. As part of it, we are addressing deficiencies and eliminating gaps in various areas. Kerala already has the lowest poverty rate in India, and we are now taking steps towards eradicating extreme poverty. By November 1, 2025, Kerala aims to become a state free of extreme poverty," Vijayan said.



The state witnessed a rise of ₹30,000 crore in tax revenues. In recent years, Kerala has managed to fund most of its expenditures through its own revenue sources. We have achieved this despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | CM, KERALA

for the recruitment in the state public sector undertakings," Vijayan said. Vijayan said the Left government has received various global accolades and recognition, but the Union government is choking the state through financial strangulation. He claimed that when the UDF government was in power in 2016, Kerala's own revenue constituted only 26 per cent of the state's total revenue, while under the LDF government, it has significantly increased to 73 per cent. "There has been a ₹30,000 crore increase in tax revenue. In recent years, Kerala has managed to fund most of its expenditures through its own revenue sources. We had achieved this despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," Vijayan added. Vijayan said the general education system in the state, which was in shambles during the UDF rule, was upgraded to international standards by the Left government.

Agitators demand 'termination' of nursing officer for molestation



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rishikesh, May 22: A day after a nursing officer of AIIMS-Rishikesh was arrested for allegedly molesting a female doctor, the protesting resident doctors demanded the 'termination' of his service Wednesday, the Medical superintendent Sanjiv Kumar Mittal said. The accused, Satish Kumar was suspended and arrested Tuesday. The resident doctors gathered outside the office of the Dean (Academics) and raised slogans. They demanded the nursing officer's immediate termination of service and said that mere suspension was not enough for the offence he had committed, Mittal said. They also demanded the sus-

pension of assistant nursing superintendent Sinoj who had put the nursing officer on duty, Mittal said. The accused, Satish Kumar, allegedly molested the doctor on the hospital premises Sunday evening and also sent an obscene SMS to her, Rishikesh Kotwali SHO Shankar Singh Bisht had said earlier. Emergency services and 90 per cent of the operation theatres at the hospital are operational but senior and junior doctors continue to be on strike since Tuesday, he said. A letter was written to the higher authorities for the nursing officer's dismissal and a notice was served to Sinoj asking him to explain within 72 hours, he added.

ICG rescues 13 crew from distressed fishing vessel

Kochi: The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said Wednesday that it successfully rescued 13 crew members along with their fishing vessel off the coast of Kerala, as sea water entered its engine compartment. A Defence PRO said the ICG, in a swift operation Tuesday, rescued the stranded Indian fishing boat and its crew 31 nautical miles off the Chavakkad coast. In a post on X, the PRO said that Coast Guard ship Abhinav undertook rigorous de-flooding onboard the fishing vessel and provided vital technical assistance despite challenging weather. The operation saved the lives of 13 crew members and ensured the safe entry of the fishing vessel into Munambam harbour here.

Kerala Guv returns ordinances on ward delimitation, citing MCC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, May 22: Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has returned the ordinances approved by the state Cabinet, which aimed to delimit the boundaries of wards in local bodies and increase their numbers, citing the enforcement of the election model code of conduct. Official sources said Wednesday the Governor, who received the ordinances Tuesday,



has sent them back to the state Chief Secretary. He clarified that the ordinances cannot be approved without the Election

Commission's consent, a source said. The ordinances, cleared by the state Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, sought to amend the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, and the Kerala Municipality Act, 1994 ahead of the local body elections scheduled in 2025. These amendments were intended to adjust ward boundaries and numbers in proportion to the population based on the 2011 census.

UTTARAKHAND FOREST DEPARTMENT

Endangered, vulnerable plant species conserved through in-situ, ex-situ

ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS, THE FOREST RESEARCH WING INITIALLY TOOK UP THE TASK OF PRESERVING 1,145 PLANT SPECIES IN THE YEAR 2020

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pithoragarh, May 22: Uttarakhand Forest Department (UFD) has conserved a total of 2,447 plant species through in-situ and ex-situ methods across all seven ranges of the state, officials said Wednesday. In-situ is the method of conserving the species, especially the wild and endangered species in their natural habitats and environment and ex-situ is the method in which a plant species is conserved outside its natural habitat. The information was mentioned in the 5th annual report of the research wing of UFD, which was released on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity.

"Our preservation programme is the biggest in Uttarakhand and one of the biggest in India and the world," head of the research wing and Chief Conservator of Forests Sanjeev Chaturvedi said. The programme began in 2020 and covers all groups of plant species in Uttarakhand, he said. The preserved species include 493 trees, 184 herbs, 168 shrubs, 46 bamboo species, 12 cane and 86 wild species, 107 types of grass, 191 ferns, 114 orchids, 88 palms, 20 cycads, 285 cacti and succulents, 50 acquific 28 insectivorous, 85 lichens, 107 bryophytes 14 algae and 15 air plants, Chaturvedi said. Of these species under preservation, 59 are endemic to the Uttarakhand region, he said. According to the report, the forest research wing initially took up the task of preserving 1,145 plant species when the wing was started in 2020. "The number of preserved plants has doubled over the past four years," Chaturvedi said. "Of these plant species under preservation, 109 are listed under threat category, 12 endangered category and 16 vulnerable category in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list," he said.

Mass fish death in Periyar sparks protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, May 22: Thousands of dead fish were found floating in the Periyar river, sparking protests from local farmers and residents here Wednesday. They claim that illegal discharge of chemical waste from nearby factories was to blame for the incident. Local fish farmers, particularly those involved in cage farming, reported significant losses amounting to several lakhs due to the mass fish deaths. The dead fish were found in large numbers in fish farms across panchayats such as Varapuzha, Kadamakkudy and Cheranalloor here since Tuesday. The widespread protests prompted the district administration to take action. District Collector N SK Umesh has ordered the state Pollution Control Board to urgently investigate the cause of the fish deaths, according to official sources. The government also formed



a special committee under the aegis of Fort Kochi Sub-Collector to study the developments and submit a report in this regard within a week, they said. Pollution Control Board officials have already collected samples of water and dead fish from the incident site and sent them to the laboratory of the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) here for a detailed examination.

As per the preliminary assumption by the board officials, fish might have died en masse due to a sudden and significant decrease in the oxygen level in the water. As it is an industrial area, the District Collector also entrusted the environmental engineer of the Pollution Control Board to re-



port whether the mass fish death had happened as a result of chemical effluents being discharged into the river. CCTV visuals should be examined, and stringent action should be taken against such establishments, if any, at the earliest, the Collector has said. State Industries Minister P Rajeeve said Wednesday that all

A committee has been formed to study the issues and submit a detailed report on it. The water samples were collected and sent to the KUFOS lab for examination

P RAJEEVE | MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES



cmv



Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik addressing an election meeting in the presence of 5T Chairman Kartik Pandian, Puri Lok Sabha candidate Arup Patnaik and Assembly nominee Sunil Mohanty at Talabania in Puri, Wednesday

BJP's Sambalpur Lok Sabha candidate Dharmendra Pradhan and party's Athamallik Assembly nominee Sanjeeb Sahoo and other party leaders attending party's Vijay Sankalp Samavesh at Barapadia under Kishorenagar block of Angul district, Wednesday

Women make up less than 10% of LS candidates: ADR

Of the 8,337 candidates analysed, only 797 are women, representing a mere 9.5 per cent of the total candidates contesting across the seven phases of the elections



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: Less than 10 per cent of the candidates contesting in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections are women, according to an analysis of data shared by the poll rights body Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

Of the 8,337 candidates analysed, only 797 are women, representing a mere 9.5 per cent of the total candidates contesting across the seven phases of the elections. This is the first election since the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill to reserve one-third of seats in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies for women, reviving a Bill pending for 27 years for want of consensus among parties. The Bill is yet to come into effect.

During the first phase of the elections, out of 1,618 candidates, only 135 were women.

This pattern continued in the subsequent phases, with women candidates remaining a small fraction of the total. Phase II saw 1,198 candidates

of which affidavits of 1,192 candidates were analysed and as many as 100 were women.

Phase III had 1,352 candidates, including 123 women and 244 with criminal cases.

In Phase IV, affidavits of 1,710 out of 1,717 candidates were analysed and 170 were women.

Phase V had the fewest candidates at 695, with 82 women, while in Phase VI, affidavits of 866 out of 869 candidates were analysed, and there were 92 women.

In Phase VII, there will be 904 candidates candidates, with only 95 women.

This significant gender imbalance has sparked criticism from political analysts and activists, who question why political parties are waiting for the women's reservation bill to be implemented instead of proactively issuing tickets to women.

Sushila Ramaswamy Professor at Delhi University's Jesus and Mary College, has emphasised that political parties should take concrete steps to promote women's candidacy.

"Political parties should have

been more proactive and fielded more women candidates," she said, highlighting the effectiveness of seat reservations for women within party structures, as seen in Britain's Labour Party.

With women constituting nearly half of India's electorate, their under-representation in the candidate pool raises broader questions about the barriers hindering women's full participation in the political sphere, Dr Iftekhar Ahmad Ansari, Associate Professor at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), said.

Beyond symbolic gestures and promises, he stressed the importance of structural reforms to ensure equal opportunities for women in politics, underscoring the critical role of party leadership in promoting gender diversity.

"Political parties must prioritise gender inclusion in candidate selection and provide adequate support to women aspirants," he emphasised.

The issue of women's political representation extends beyond numerical quotas to encompass systemic changes in party dynamics and electoral processes, noted Farhat Jahan, a retired faculty member at Abdullah Women's College at AMU.

Prof Mohammad Aftab Alam from Political Science department at AMU pointed out the challenges women often face in forming independent political opinions amidst societal influences.

"Even those elected are often relegated to symbolic roles," he said, highlighting broader issues of token representation.

Modi, Shah to visit Odisha for final push

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Odisha May 29, aiming to provide a final boost to BJP's electioneering efforts in the state, party sources said.

Modi's upcoming visit will include addresses at two election rallies in Balasore and Kendrapara Parliamentary constituencies, BJP's election in-charge for Odisha, Vijay Pal Singh Tomar said.

This will mark Modi's fourth visit to Odisha within a month, highlighting BJP's concerted efforts to strengthen its electoral prospects in the state.

Previously, the PM visited Odisha May 6, 10, and 19, during which he addressed seven election rallies and held two roadshows in Bhubaneswar and Puri.

Ahead of Modi's visit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah is



also scheduled to visit the state May 25, where he will address election rallies in Baripada, Chandbali, Korei, and Nimapara (Jagatsinghpur).

Meanwhile, a host of BJP's star campaigners have been lined up in the next few days to address a series of election meetings in

support of party candidates.

Union Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Giriraj Singh Wednesday held a roadshow in Sambalpur in support of party candidate and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Cine star Arun Govil also ad-

ressed election meetings at Champua, Telkoi, Dhenkanal and Jayadev Assembly constituencies.

BJP sources said party president JP Nadda will address a series of election meetings Thursday at Karanjia, Dhamnagar, Barchana and Erasama-Balikuda Assembly constituencies.

On the other hand, the ruling BJD has also intensified its campaign in the state with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his trusted man Kartik Pandian addressing a series of public meetings daily and holding roadshows in support of the party candidates.

Lok Sabha and Assembly polls are being conducted in four phases in the state. The first two rounds took place May 13 and 20, with two more phases scheduled for May 25 and June 1. Counting is set for June 4.

Those praising Pak should pack their bags: Yogi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaunpur (UP), May 22: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Wednesday said those who praise Pakistan should pack their bags by June 4 and stop being a burden on India, apparently referring to remarks by Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar that surfaced recently.

"They should seek refuge in Pakistan," he said, addressing a rally at the Government Inter College Mungarbadshahpur ground to seek votes for the BJP's Jaunpur Lok Sabha candidate Kripashankar Singh.

The BJP leader's remark alluded to an old video in which Aiyar was heard saying that India should give respect to Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it as it



also possesses an atom bomb. The clip sparked a row amid the ongoing election season.

Adityanath reiterated his 'Rambhakt versus Ramdrohi' tirade against the opposition.

"They say, 'Don't provoke Pakistan; it has atomic bombs'. Can a struggling country like Pakistan be a threat to a vast nation such as India which has the largest emerging economy? Ramdrohis engage in casteist and dynastic politics and also incite caste-based conflicts," he

claimed. Adityanath said the Congress has intentionally aligned with tainted, corrupt and dynastic parties, committing to causing chaos and disorder in the country.

"Under Modi's leadership, significant strides have been made in development and welfare for the poor in India's evolving landscape. Under Modi's leadership, India provides free rations to 80 crore people, while 23 crore people in Pakistan are suffering from hunger," he added.

The Jaunpur Lok Sabha will go to polls May 25.

Adityanath also alleged that the manifesto of the INDIA bloc proposed that if the Congress government assumes power, reservation benefits allocated for backward classes, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes will be extended to Muslims.

Naveen 'under captivity': Singh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, May 22: Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Giriraj Singh Wednesday alleged that Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is being held captive by a coterie, and that he plans to appoint Kartik Pandian as the next CM.

Singh made these allegations while participating in a roadshow to campaign for his Cabinet colleague Dharmendra Pradhan, who is the BJP candidate from Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat.

Accusing the state of being controlled by a mafia, Singh said, "He (Patnaik) comes, speaks for two minutes, and then leaves. He has been kidnapped and is being held captive."

Singh targeted Patnaik's close aide Pandian, claiming that Patnaik had previously said he would step down as CM once he turned 75.

"Naveen babu said 20-25 years ago that he would retire at 75. Now he is 77 and planning to make Pandian the next CM. I urge the people of Odisha to vote for BJP to preserve Odia Asmita and ensure that a native takes charge of the state," Singh said.

Speaking to reporters in Sambalpur, Singh alleged that BJD lacks leaders. "Naveen babu only has Pandian and Bobby (Pranab Prakash Das), while the BJP has numerous leaders campaigning for their candidates," he said.

Criticising the BJD government for halting Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in Sambalpur, Singh said, "If we can't celebrate Hanuman Jayanti here, where should we go? Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Malaysia?"

He promised that once the BJP government is established in Odisha, people will celebrate Hanuman Jayanti without fear. Singh also brought up Ratna Bhandari issue and accused the BJD government of mismanaging the affairs of Puri Srimandir.

He praised Pradhan as "Bikas Purush" and predicted that he would win the Sambalpur seat by over 1.5 lakh votes.

The BJD has not responded to Singh's statement.

EC tells BJP, Cong to stop campaign on divisive lines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The Election Commission (EC) Wednesday asked the BJP and the Congress to desist from campaigning along caste, community, language and religious lines, asserting that India's socio-cultural milieu cannot be made a casualty to elections.

Nearly a month after it issued notice to BJP president JP Nadda on opposition charge that Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a divisive speech in Rajasthan's



Banswara, the poll watchdog rejected his defence and asked him and his party's star campaigners to desist from campaigning on re-

ligious and communal lines.

It also asked the BJP to stop campaign speeches that may divide society.

Along with Nadda, the EC had issued a similar notice to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge asking him to respond to the complaints filed by the BJP against him and the main opposition party's senior leader Rahul Gandhi regarding their remarks.

The EC also rejected his defence and asked the Congress not to politicise defence forces

and make potentially divisive statements regarding socio-economic composition of the armed forces.

It also asked the Congress to ensure that its star campaigners and candidates do not make statements which give false impression that the Constitution may be abolished or sold.

The EC asked the presidents of the two national parties to issue formal notes to their star campaigners to correct their discourse, exercise care and maintain decorum.

Ramayan fame Arun Govil campaigns in Keonjhar



POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, May 22: BJP leader, star campaigner and Ramayan fame Arun Govil Wednesday hit the campaign trail by participating in 'Vijay Sankalp Samabesh' at Champua and Telkoi in this district and canvassed for party's Lok Sabha and Assembly nominees.

People in large numbers thronged the meeting venues to see the hugely popular Ramayan's main protagonist 'Ram'. Govil addressed the gatherings and sought votes for BJP's Keonjhar Lok Sabha nominee Ananta Nayak, Champua Assembly nominee Murali Manohar Sharma. Chhattisgarh Rajya Sabha MP Arun Dubey along with other leaders was present at the meeting. BJP state vice president Prakash Mallik coordinated the meeting.

Govil also addressed thousands of people present at the



Congress' national spokesperson and media cell chairman Pawan Kherra addresses a presser on the party's manifesto at the district Congress office in Bhadrak in the presence of party's Bhadrak Lok Sabha nominee Ananta Prasad Sethi, Assembly candidate Asit Patnaik and other party leaders

national



The BJP-led central government is framing policies for billionaires, and it has sold the nation's assets like airports and ports to industrialists. It also waived ₹16 lakh crore of several billionaires, but failed to provide any relief to farmers, who are committing suicides

PRİYANKA GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

NO LEAVE FOR RAJ DOCTORS AMID HEATWAVE

Rajasthan's health authorities cancelled the leave of all doctors and paramedical staff in government hospitals as temperatures soared in the state. They are instructed to ensure necessary arrangements for the prevention and treatment of heat stroke. After recording the highest day temperature of 47.2 °C in Pilani (Jhunjhunu), high night temperature too were recorded in the range of 27.7 °C (Bhilwara) to 34 °C (Jaisalmer)



of the day quote

The Congress and Nehru committed the sin of breaking the country. If (ex-PM) Nehru hadn't stopped the war (of 1947) and allowed it to continue for three more days, the entire Kashmir would have been a part of India today

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | SENIOR BJP LEADER

The BJP has taken money from pharmaceutical companies through electoral bonds, and therefore, prices of life-saving drugs have increased

ABHISHEK BANERJEE | TMC LEADER

Bengal has become a safe haven for infiltrators. Due to infiltration, the demography of the state is changing, which is impacting not only Bengal but the entire country

AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

SNIPPETS

Bomb threat email to North Block

New Delhi: A bomb threat has been received by the North Block, which houses the home ministry, according to an official of the Delhi Fire Service (DFS). The threat was received through an email, according to the official. The DFS official said a dog squad and bomb disposal and detection teams along with police and fire department personnel are conducting searches. The call to the DFS was made after an officer posted at the North Block received the bomb threat email, a police officer said. Searches are on and, as of now, nothing suspicious has been found, the officer said.

National security of paramount importance: SC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday set aside a verdict of the Madras High Court which had granted bail to eight alleged PFI members and office bearers, saying national security is always of "paramount importance" and any act aiding terrorist activity is liable to be restricted. The apex court said it was satisfied with the charge sheet filed in the case and material and documents relied upon by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) that there were reasonable grounds for believing that the accusations against them were "prima facie true".

Pune car crash: Accused teen's bail cancelled

Pune: Following an outcry, the Juvenile Justice Board here Wednesday cancelled the bail granted to a 17-year-old youth allegedly involved in a car accident and remanded him to an observation home till June 5. The board had granted bail to him Sunday hours after the accident in which two persons were killed, while also asking him to write a 300-word essay on road accidents, an order that drew an onslaught of criticism from various quarters. Police then approached the Board again, seeking a review of its order and permission to treat the teenager as an adult accused on the ground that the crime was of heinous nature. Police have registered a First Information Report against the minor, son of a real estate developer, under IPC sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 304 A (causing death by negligence), 279 (rash driving), 317 (causing hurt by an act which endangers human life), 338 (causing grievous hurt by an act endangering life or personal safety) and relevant sections of the Motor Vehicles Act.



Supporters during a public meeting of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda in support of party candidate from Sonapat constituency Satpal Brahmachari for Lok Sabha elections in Sonapat, Haryana

X POST OF THE DAY

My heart goes out to Ashwini & Anish's family!! Spoilt brats like Vendant Agarwal are roaming freely after writing an essay!! While the innocent lives can never come back!!

@JUSTAFIERCESOUL

SHORT TAKES

Man dies in police custody; cop booked

Deoria (UP): A man died in police custody here allegedly after being beaten by policemen, an officer said Wednesday. Angry villagers gathered at the police post and set a sub-inspector's motorcycle on fire. The incident happened in a village under the Barhaj Police Station jurisdiction and police have booked a sub-inspector and some other policemen for murder.

Brutal heat in large parts of India

New Delhi: The blistering heat sweeping across large swathes of India continued unabated Wednesday, with the mercury surging to 48 degrees Celsius in Rajasthan's Barmer. The Met department issued a red warning for Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and west Uttar Pradesh, emphasising a "very high likelihood" of heat illness and heatstroke in all ages.

ED summons IAS officer

Ranchi: The Enforcement Directorate has summoned Jharkhand-cadre IAS officer Manish Ranjan for questioning in a money laundering case in which it recently arrested state minister Alamgir Alam, official sources said. Ranjan, a former secretary of the rural development department and currently the secretary of land, road and building department has been asked to deposit before the federal agency at its zonal office here May 24.

Leopard dies

Palakkad (Kerala): A leopard found trapped in a barbed wire fence in a village on the forest fringe died hours after it was tranquilised and rescued by wildlife officials in Kerala's Palakkad district Wednesday. Wildlife officials said the animal seemed healthy and active even after it was tranquilised with a dart and shifted to a cage.

HC scraps OBC status of several classes in Bengal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, May 22: The Calcutta High Court Wednesday struck down the OBC status of several classes in West Bengal granted since 2010, finding such reservations to vacancies in services and posts in the state are illegal.

Passing judgment on petitions challenging the provisions of the Act, the court clarified that the services of citizens of the struck-down classes, who are already in service or have availed the benefit of reservation or have succeeded in any selection process of the state will not be affected by the order.

The number of enlisted persons under OBC in West Bengal after 2010 is likely to be above five lakhs, one of the lawyers representing the petitioners said. The court struck down several classes for reservation as Other Backward Classes (OBC) given under The West Bengal Backward Classes (Other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) (Reservation of Vacancies

in Services and Posts) Act, 2012. The bench directed that the state's executive orders classifying several other classes as OBCs from March 5, 2010, to May 11, 2012, were also quashed, in view of the illegality of the reports recommending such classification. The court said that the directions will be given prospective effect.

In the judgement, the division bench comprising justices Tapabrata Chakraborty and Rajasekhar Mantha clarified that the executive orders of the state government classifying 66 classes of OBC before 2010 were not interfered with, since these were not challenged in the petitions.

A clause in the 2012 Act allowing inclusion of classes for OBC reservation by the state government through notifica-

tion in the official gazette was also struck down.

Setting aside a provision in the Act of 2012 for distribution of percentage of reservation to the sub-classified classes, the court said, "sub-classified classes listed in two categories, namely OBC-A and OBC-B, are struck down from schedule 1 of the Act of 2012."

The bench said that the opinion and advice of the Backward Classes Commission is ordinarily binding on the state legislature under provisions of the West Bengal Backward Classes Act, 1993. The court directed the Backward Classes Welfare Department of the state, in consultation with the Commission, to place a report before the legislature with recommendations for inclusion of new classes or for exclusion of remaining classes in the state list of OBCs.

Concurring with the judgment penned by Justice Mantha, Justice Chakraborty observed, "The concept of equality of opportunity in public employment concerns an individual, whether that individual belongs to the general category or backward class."

He said, "The society at large has a stake in proper application of the yardsticks pertaining to reservation."

The OBC reservation quota introduced by the West Bengal government will continue. We had drafted the Bill after conducting a house-to-house survey, and it was passed by the cabinet and the Assembly

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

Top court refuses to entertain Soren's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: Jailed former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren Wednesday failed to get any relief from the Supreme Court which pulled him up for "suppressing material facts" in his plea against his arrest in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam.

A vacation bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma allowed Soren's counsel Kapil Sibal to withdraw the pleas for interim bail for Lok Sabha poll campaigning and against his arrest after the apex court indicated that it would dismiss them as Soren has not approached the court with clean hands.

The court pointed out that Soren did not apprise it of the April 4 order of the special PMLA court taking cognisance of the prosecution complaint, which is the Enforcement Directorate's



equivalent to a chargesheet, and also that his regular bail petition was filed April 15 and dismissed May 13.

Sibal claimed it was a "mistake" by him but he had no intention to mislead the court and his client Soren had no role in it.

Questioning Soren's conduct of not disclosing complete facts before the court, Justice Datta said that he should have informed the bench that he had already applied for bail before the special PMLA court in Ranchi and it had been dismissed.

Kejriwal demands 'fair probe' in Maliwal case



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: In his first reaction on AAP MP Swati Maliwal's alleged assault at his official residence, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Wednesday said he expects a fair investigation into the matter and justice should be served.

Maliwal has alleged she was "assaulted" by Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar when she went to meet the Chief Minister May 13. The police have registered a case and arrested Kumar in connection with it.

In an interview to PTI, the Chief Minister said the matter is currently "sub-judice" and his comment might affect the proceedings. "But I expect there will be a fair investigation. Justice should be served. There are two versions of the event. Police should investigate both versions fairly and justice should be done," Kejriwal said.

His aide Kumar is currently in five-day police custody in connection with the case.

Reacting to his comment, Maliwal said irony died a thousand deaths, adding that Kejriwal

has finally said that he wants free and fair investigation in the matter.

"After unleashing the entire army of leaders and volunteers at me, calling me a BJP agent, assassinating my character, leaking edited videos, victim shaming me, roaming around with the accused, letting him re enter the crime scene and tamper evidences and protesting in favour of the accused, the Chief Minister, in whose drawing room I was beaten up, has finally said that he wants free and fair investigation in the matter. Irony died a thousand deaths. I don't buy this one bit," she said in a post on X.

Earlier Wednesday, Maliwal alleged that there is a "lot of pressure" on everyone in the party to malign her.

"Yesterday I got a call from a big leader of the party. They told me how there is a lot of pressure on everyone, they have to say bad things against Swati, they have to break her by leaking her personal photos. It is being said that anyone who supports her will be expelled from the party," the Rajya Sabha member said in a post on X.

More than half of the mangroves at risk of collapse: IUCN

DEFORESTATION, DEVELOPMENT, POLLUTION AND DAM CONSTRUCTION POSE A SERIOUS THREAT TO MANGROVES, BUT THE RISK TO THESE ECOSYSTEMS IS INCREASING DUE TO SEA-LEVEL RISE AND THE INCREASED FREQUENCY OF SEVERE STORMS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: More than half of the world's mangrove ecosystems are at risk of collapse, with nearly one in five facing severe risk, according to the findings of the first global mangrove assessment.

Climate change threatens one-third (33%) of the mangrove ecosystems, according to the study done using the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Ecosystems - a global standard for measuring the health of ecosystems.

Deforestation, development, pollution and dam construction pose a serious threat to mangroves, but the risk to these ecosystems is increasing due to sea-level rise and the increased frequency of severe storms due

According to the assessment, without significant changes by 2050, climate change and sea level rise will result in the loss of

1.8 billion tonnes of carbon stored (16% of the total current carbon stored in mangroves)

protection for 2.1 million lives exposed to coastal flooding (14.5% of current lives exposed)

1.7 million days of fishing effort per year (14% of current fishing effort is supported by mangroves)

to climate change. "IUCN's Red List of Ecosystems is key to tracking



progress towards the goal of halting and reversing biodiversity loss, in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The first global assessment of mangrove ecosystems gives key guid-

ance that highlights the urgent need for coordinated conservation of mangroves - crucial habitats for millions in vulnerable communities worldwide. The assessment's findings will help us work together to restore the

mangrove forests that we have lost and protect the ones we still have," Grethel Aguilar, IUCN Director General, said.

This study classified the world's mangrove ecosystems in 36 different regions called provinces and assessed the threats and risk of collapse in each region.

"Mangrove ecosystems are exceptional in their ability to provide essential services to people, including coastal disaster risk reduction, carbon storage and sequestration, and support for fisheries. Their loss stands to be disastrous for nature and people across the globe. That is why this assessment is so important," Angela Andrade, Chair of IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, said.

One-third of the world's mangrove ecosystem provinces will

be severely affected by sea-level rise, with 25% of the global mangrove area predicted to be submerged in the next 50 years.

The Northwest Atlantic, North Indian Ocean, Red Sea, South China Sea, and Gulf of Aden coasts are expected to be particularly severely affected, it said.

Mangroves store around 11 billion tonnes of carbon, which is almost three times the amount of carbon stored by tropical forests of the same size.

The assessment finds that maintaining mangrove ecosystems across the globe will be key for mitigating the impacts of climate change, with healthy mangroves able to better cope with sea level rise and offering inland protection from the impacts of hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones.

international



I don't think we should respond to any fake news from Washington. The Americans can say whatever they want but our policy does not change from this

SERGEI RYABKOV | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

NEPALESE CLIMBER KAMI RITA CLIMBS MT EVEREST FOR 30TH TIME

Nepal's veteran summiteer Kami Rita Sherpa made history Wednesday by scaling Mt Everest for the 30th time, breaking his own record that he made 10 days ago for the highest number of ascents on the world's highest peak



of the day quote

Crossings from Egypt into Gaza have remained closed for two weeks, cutting off the primary pipeline for emergency health supplies into Gaza

Consumers are still living with far higher prices and how you take today's inflation data will depend on whether your glass is half full or half empty

Since countries in the Mountain region are disproportionately burdened by the impacts of global warming, the serious effects seen in the denizens of mountainous countries due to climate change needs to be urgently addressed

SHORT TAKES

Imran Khan hints at street agitation

Islamabad: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's founding chairman and jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan Wednesday hinted at launching a street agitation to protest what he called "political persecution" of his party workers and instructed his party's leadership and supporters to wait for his call. In a message to his party workers, Khan claimed that during the "past two darkest years in Pakistan's history, PTI's political persecution was carried on with complete impunity". The cricketer-turned-politician is currently imprisoned in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail as he serves several sentences in the Toshakana, un-Islamic marriage, and the cipher cases.

Three PIO students killed in accident

Washington: Three Indian-American students were killed and two others were injured in a fatal road accident as their speeding car flipped over in the US state of Georgia, according to the police. The deceased were identified as Sriya Avasarala, Anvi Sharma and Aryan Joshi were passengers in a single-vehicle crash last week on Westside Parkway in Alpharetta, according to local police. Based on evidence at the scene, it is believed that the driver lost control of their car which then came to rest upside down in the tree line.

Vietnam security chief becomes new Prez

Bangkok: Vietnam's top security official To Lam was confirmed Wednesday as the nation's new president. He oversaw police and intelligence operations over a period when rights groups say basic liberties have been systematically suppressed, and its secret service was accused of violating international law. Lam was confirmed by Vietnam's National Assembly after his predecessor resigned amid an ongoing anti-corruption campaign that has shaken the country's political establishment and business elites and has resulted in multiple top-level changes in government.

Tornado hits Iowa

Greenfield (Iowa): Multiple people were killed when a tornado tore through a small town in Iowa and left a wide swath of obliterated homes and crumpled cars, while the howling winds also twisted and toppled wind turbines. After devastating Greenfield, a town of 2,000, Tuesday the storms moved eastward to pummel parts of Illinois and Wisconsin, knocking out power to tens of thousands of customers in the two states.

Norway, Spain, Ireland to recognise Palestinian state

Barcelona, May 22: Spain, Ireland and Norway said Wednesday that they would recognise a Palestinian state May 28, a step toward a long-held Palestinian aspiration that came amid international outrage over the civilian death toll and humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip following Israel's offensive. The almost simultaneous decisions by two European Union countries, and Norway, may generate momentum for the recognition of a Palestinian state by other EU countries and could spur further steps at the United Nations, deepening Israel's isolation.



WHAT IS ISRAEL'S RESPONSE?

Israel reacted rapidly Wednesday by recalling its ambassadors to Ireland, Norway and Spain. The Israeli government slams talk of Palestinian independence as a "reward" for the Hamas October 7 attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people and led to the abduction of over 250 others. It rejects any move to legitimise the Palestinians internationally. Steps like the ones by the three European countries Wednesday will harden the Palestinian position and undermine the negotiating process, Israel says, insisting that all issues should be solved through negotiations. Israel often responds to foreign countries' decisions deemed as going against its interests by summoning those countries' ambassadors and also punishing the Palestinians through measures such as freezing tax transfers to the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority.

Jerusalem, and Egypt in control of Gaza. In the 1967 war, Israel seized all three territories, and decades of on-again, off-again peace talks have failed. The United States, Britain and other Western countries have backed the idea of an independent Palestinian state existing alongside Israel as a solution to the Middle East's most intractable conflict, but they insist Palestinian statehood should come as part of a negotiated settlement.

Russia captured village previously claimed by Ukraine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Kyiv, May 22: Russia said Wednesday that its forces had retaken Klishchiivka, one of a handful of villages on the eastern front that Ukraine claimed back in a 2023 counteroffensive. Russia's forces have in recent weeks made their biggest territorial gains in the war-battered east in the last 18 months as Ukraine waits for desperately-needed US and European weapon supplies.

Klishchiivka lies in the industrial Donetsk territory that the Kremlin claimed to have annexed in late 2022 even as its forces were struggling to gain ground there and at a great cost. The Ukrainian army has come under intense pressure in the past two weeks, fighting off a fresh ground offensive in the Kharkiv region and further stretching critically short supplies of soldiers and ammunition.

Units of the Southern grouping of troops liberated the village of Klishchiivka in the eastern Donetsk region, the Russian defence ministry said. Russian troops originally captured Klishchiivka in January 2023, but Ukraine clawed it back in September at the end of its mostly unsuccessful counter-offensive.

Ukraine did not immediately comment but President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned in an evening address Tuesday that the frontline was "extremely difficult." Russia's gains since launching its ground assault in Ukraine's northeast has forced Kyiv's already stretched army to rush in resources and troops from elsewhere. Russia Monday said it had captured the coveted Ukrainian stronghold of Bilogorivka, paving the way for it to fully control the eastern Lugansk region.

Missing B'desh MP found dead in Kolkata

Anwarul Azim Anar, a member of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's party, had come to Kolkata May 12



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, May 22: Veteran Bangladeshi MP Anwarul Azim Anar, who went missing in India, was found murdered in Kolkata and three people have been arrested, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan announced here Wednesday. "Awami League MP Anwarul Azim Anar, who went missing in India, was murdered at a Kolkata flat. It was a planned murder," he said.

Police recovered the dismembered body of Md Anwarul Azim Anar from New Town, Kolkata, India, Wednesday," Dhaka Tribune newspaper said. Bangladesh criminals are behind the death of the 56-year-old lawmaker from Jhenaidah-4 constituency, Dhaka Police's Detective Branch (DB) chief Harun Or Rashid said. "It is a brutal murder. We are investigating whether family or financial causes, or enmity with local miscreants led to his death. We are working closely with the Indian police and getting plenty of information," The Daily Star quoted Rashid as saying. A case has been filed with the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station Wednesday as the MP

had departed the country for India from the Sangsad Bhaban area, Rashid told reporters at the DB office here.

Khan said that Bangladesh Police have arrested three persons in connection with the murder of the lawmaker.

The three-time MP and president of the Kaliganj upazila unit of the ruling Awami League went to India May 12 on a personal visit to receive treatment. A general diary report about his disappearance was filed at Baranagar Police Station in North Kolkata May 18, the report said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of Azim, the portal said quoting the United News of Bangladesh news agency. "Jhenaidah is a bordering area known for its high crime rate. Azim was the local lawmaker there. The incident took place after went to India for treatment. According to what we currently know, he was killed there," the home minister said.

Bangladeshi criminals are behind the death of the 56-yr-old lawmaker from Jhenaidah-4 constituency, Dhaka Police's Detective Branch (DB) chief Harun Or Rashid said

SNIPPETS

Nijjar killing: 4 Indians appear before court

Ottawa: Four Indian nationals accused of killing Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar last year in Surrey were ordered by a Canadian court to have no contact with several people in the community, as they made their first joint appearance before it in the case that has severely strained ties between India and Canada. Three of the four suspects, Karan Brar (22), Kamalpreet Singh (22) and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh appeared in person for the first time in B.C. Provincial Court in Surrey. The fourth suspect, Amandeep Singh, 22 appeared by video link. Amandeep Singh remains in custody in Ontario where he was facing unrelated weapons offences before being arrested May 10 for Nijjar's killing.

Trump's aide urges sanction on ICC officials

Tel Aviv: Robert O'Brien, former national security adviser and top aide of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, has said that the US should slap sanctions on officials of International Criminal Court (ICC) officials who sought an arrest warrant for Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Robert O'Brien is in Israel along with John Rakolta, former US ambassador to the UAE, and Ed Mc Mullen, former ambassador of the US to Switzerland to seek a ground report.

First human case of 'bird flu' reported in Oz

Canberra: Australia has announced the first confirmed case of human bird flu in a child who is believed to have acquired it while in India some weeks ago, according to a media report Wednesday. The child is no longer unwell. "A child in Victoria has been confirmed as having the first case of bird flu in Australia. The child acquired the avian influenza A (H5N1) infection while in India, and was unwell in March this year," 9news.com.au said quoting state health officials.



Iranians follow trucks carrying coffins of the late President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions who were killed in a helicopter crash Sunday in a mountainous region of the country's northwest, during a funeral ceremony for them in Tehran, Iran. Iran's supreme leader presided over the funeral Wednesday for the country's late president, foreign minister and others killed in the helicopter crash, as tens of thousands later followed a procession of their caskets through the capital, Tehran

Climate change making flying more dangerous

AGENCIES

Singapore, May 22: Most of us have experienced turbulence while traveling: when your plane flies through clashing bodies of air moving at widely different speeds.

Severe turbulence can put even the most seasoned flier on edge and make five minutes seem like an eternity. Usually it results in nothing more than a bumpy ride, but in the worst cases it can cause damage, injury and - in the case of Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 May 21 - fatality.

The death of the 73-year-old British man on a Singapore Airlines flight has again raised concerns about how climate change is increasing instances of flight turbulence. Geoffrey Kitchen was among 211 passengers onboard the Boeing flight from London to Singapore when it plunged 6,000ft within minutes amid extreme weather. Kitchen was killed, while around 70 others were injured, after what passengers de-



Severe turbulence is caused by an erratic wind current occurring in cloudless regions of the sky at the cruising altitude of passenger jets

It is generated by wind shear, which is a change in the direction and velocity of winds that can displace aircraft abruptly from their intended path

scribed a "dramatic drop" with some people's heads slammed into the ceiling above their seats. As air safety officials started their investigation into what happened, attention has focused on the role of climate change with a growing number of studies indicating erratic air circulation patterns are being aggravated by the change in the earth's temperatures. It follows a number of other incidents including a Spicejet flight from Kolkata to Mumbai that was hit by severe turbulence in May 2022, injuring 14 passengers. In March 2019, a Turkish Airlines flight from Istanbul to New York was also buffeted by severe turbulence over Maine, injuring 30 people, including a flight attendant who suffered a broken leg. IS CLIMATE CHANGE CAUSING TURBULENCE TO INCREASE? Some scientists note that re-

Singapore Airlines Wednesday said it is fully cooperating with relevant authorities in the investigation into the London to Singapore flight which encountered severe turbulence

ports of turbulence encounters are on the rise. There are a number of possible explanations for that, but several researchers have pointed to potential climate impacts. Guinn, of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, explains that some predict climate change could alter the jet stream and up the wind shear, which would consequently drive up turbulence in the air. In a statement Tuesday, Paul Williams, a professor of atmospheric science at the University of Reading in England, said there was "strong

evidence that turbulence is increasing because of climate change".

Williams said his research team recently discovered that severe clear-air turbulence in the North Atlantic has increased by 55 per cent since 1979, for example.

The team's latest projections signal that severe turbulence in the jet streams could double or triple in the coming decades if global conditions continue as expected, he said.

In short, buckle up. Turbulence can be tricky to predict, but experts stress that the first line of defense in the air is keeping the seat belt fastened, whenever possible.

"Planes are generally built to withstand turbulence," Guinn said, noting that passengers not wearing their seat belts is a large source of injuries from in-flight turbulence. While no precaution is foolproof, wearing a seat belt greatly increases an individual's chances of avoiding serious injuries, he said in a statement.

India, China agree to use local currencies for imports: Maldives

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Male, May 22: The Maldives Wednesday said both India and China have agreed to cooperate in efforts to pay for imports in their respective countries' currency instead of the US dollar, which is likely to help Male save almost 50 per cent of the annual \$1.5 million imports bill from the two countries.

Maldives' Economic Development Minister Mohamed Saeed said he met with the Indian High Commissioner Munu Mahawar two weeks ago, who in turn, said that New Delhi would support and cooperate in arranging for the settlement of import payments in Indian Rupee.

Similarly, Saeed said, he received a letter from China's Commerce Ministry, two days ago, in which Beijing provided assurance it will cooperate in allowing the option to settle import payments in Yuan, the Chinese currency, as requested by President Mohamed Muizzu.

Annually, Maldives imports goods worth \$780 million and \$720 million from India and China respectively, the minister had said in April when he had first announced that the Maldives was discussing with India and China if the island nation can make payments for its imports from the country in Maldivian Rufiyaa.

International trade between two countries in local currency is a mutually beneficial mechanism as it helps in saving each other's foreign exchange reserves. Moreover, the move will mark a significant shift away from the dominant use of the US dollar in international transactions.

In July 2023, the Government of India declared that Maldives was among the 22 countries that were permitted by the Reserve Bank of India to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) as part of efforts to promote bilateral trade in local currencies.



of the day quote

While the 5G rollouts have stabilised in the country given the rapid rollout and expansion of last year, we do, however, expect 5G adoption in India to grow, given the strong data demand in the country and the digitalisation initiatives by enterprises

NITIN BANSAI
ERICSSON INDIA MANAGING DIRECTOR

As we witness sustained demand for our digital offerings and accelerate customer acquisitions, we remain steadfast in our mission to empower every Indian with safe, simple and rewarding digital banking services

ANUBRATA BISWAS
MD AND CEO OF AIRTEL PAYMENTS BANK

The TEV segment represents our key focus area, and with these exclusive models, we are now offering our discerning Indian customers two highly desirable vehicles from our global portfolio

SANTOSH IYER
MERCEDES-BENZ INDIA MD AND CEO

Q4 RESULTS CORNER

Power Grid net profit dips slightly

New Delhi: State-owned Power Grid Corporation on Wednesday reported a nearly four per cent dip in its consolidated net profit to ₹4,166.33 crore in the March 2024 quarter, mainly due to a marginal decline in income. The company reported a consolidated net profit of ₹4,322.87 crore in the quarter ended March 31, 2023, a BSE filing showed. Total income declined to ₹12,305.39 crore in the quarter as compared to ₹12,557.44 crore in the same period a year ago. For fiscal 2023-24, the consolidated net profit rose to ₹15,573.16 crore from ₹15,419.74 crore a year ago. Total income in the fiscal rose to ₹46,913.12 crore as against ₹46,605.64 crore in the year-ago period.

Petronet LNG net rises 20%

New Delhi: Petronet LNG Ltd -- India's largest liquefied natural gas importer -- Wednesday reported a 20 per cent rise in the March quarter net profit on the back of importing higher LNG volumes. For the entire 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024), Petronet reported highest-ever net profit of ₹3,536 crore on the back of a 22 per cent growth in volume throughput. The net profit reported in the March quarter was ₹738 crore as compared with ₹614 crore in the same period of the previous year, Petronet MD & CEO Akshay Kumar Singh told reporters. The profit was, however, lower than ₹1,191 crore earned in the preceding quarter.

Sun Pharma net profit at ₹2,654cr

New Delhi: Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd Wednesday reported a consolidated net profit of ₹2,654.58 crore in the fourth quarter ended on March 31, 2024. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,984.47 crore in the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated total revenue from operations in the fourth quarter was at ₹11,982.9 crore in the quarter under review. It was at ₹10,930.67 crore in the same quarter a year ago, it added. India formulation sales were at ₹3,707.8 crore while US formulation sales were at USD 476 million (around ₹3,964 crore) in the fourth quarter.



We don't want to add additional thermal power. We have got to really increase our renewables, so that's the focus

JOHN SLAVEN | VEDANTA ALUMINIUM CEO

ATTRITION RATES REMAIN HIGH: STUDY

Attrition rates continue to remain an area of concern among MBA graduates, especially among the entry-level jobs for top-tier campuses, a study said Wednesday. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP (Deloitte India) latest campus workforce trends 2024 study revealed that attrition remained a significant challenge, especially among MBA graduates.



Highest-ever: RBI nod for ₹2.11L-cr dividend to govt

THIS IS MORE THAN DOUBLE OF WHAT WAS BUDGETED EXPECTATION, HELPING SHORE UP REVENUE AHEAD OF A NEW GOVERNMENT TAKING OFFICE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 22: The Reserve Bank of India will pay a record ₹2.1 lakh crore dividend to the government for the fiscal ended March 31, more than double of what was budgeted expectation, helping shore up revenue ahead of a new government taking office.

The RBI board, at its 608th meeting Wednesday, approved the transfer of surplus, the central bank said in a statement.

The government had budgeted a receipt of ₹1.02 lakh crore as dividends from the RBI, public sector banks and financial institutions in the interim budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) presented in February this year.

The dividend or surplus transfer by the RBI to the Centre was ₹87,416 crore for the fiscal 2022-23. The previous high was ₹1.76 lakh crore in 2018-19.

"The Board...approved the transfer of ₹2,10,874 crore as surplus to the Central Government for the accounting year 2023-24," the RBI said in a statement.

The central government aims to contain the fiscal deficit or gap between expenditure and revenue to ₹17.34 lakh crore (5.1 per cent of the GDP) during the current financial year.

Experts opined that higher-than-budgeted dividend payout will provide headroom to the new government to enhance expenditure and better manage the fiscal deficit.

The results of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections will be declared June 4 and the new government will assume power shortly thereafter.

The RBI board also reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the growth outlook.

The Board discussed the working of the Reserve Bank during 2023-24 and approved its Annual Report and Financial Statements for the



last fiscal.

The RBI said that during accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22, owing to the prevailing macroeconomic conditions and the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board had decided to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) at 5.50 per cent of the Reserve Bank's balance sheet size to support growth and overall economic activity.

"With the revival in economic growth in FY 2022-23, the CRB was increased to 6.00 per cent. As the economy remains robust and resilient, the Board has decided to increase the CRB to 6.50 per cent for FY 2023-24," the cen-

tral bank added.

The transferable surplus for 2023-24, the RBI said, has been arrived at on the basis of the Economic Capital Framework (ECF) adopted by it in August 2019, as per recommendations of the Bimal Jalan-headed expert committee.

The committee had recommended that the risk provisioning under the CRB be maintained within a range of 6.5 to 5.5 per cent of the RBI's balance sheet.

Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said such a windfall will ease the fiscal deficit by 0.4 per cent in 2024-25.

"Higher interest rates both

on domestic and foreign securities, significantly high gross sale of forex, along with limited drag from liquidity operations compared to the previous year have probably led to such a whopping dividend. Positively, this comes with the contingency risk buffer being kept at the higher end of the statutory requirement," she said.

Scope for lower borrowing being announced in the upcoming Budget will now provide significant respite to the bond markets, Bhardwaj added.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Head Research and Outreach, Icmra Ltd said that the higher-than-budgeted RBI surplus transfer would help to boost the Centre's resource envelope in the current fiscal, allowing for enhanced expenditures or a sharper fiscal consolidation than what was pencilled into the Interim Budget for 2024-25.

"Increasing the funds available for capex would certainly boost the quality of the fiscal deficit. However, the additional spending may be difficult to be incurred within the 8-odd months left after the Final Budget is presented and approved by Parliament," Nayar said.

Hotel industry sees strong demand during Jan-Mar: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: India's hotel industry saw strong demand at both business and leisure destinations during the January-March period this year leading to an 11 per cent annual rise in revenue per available room, according to JLL.

In a statement Wednesday, real estate consultant JLL India said that the hospitality sector saw an increase in Average Daily Rate (ADR) of 8.5 per cent year-on-year, resulting in a revenue per available room (RevPAR) growth of 11.4 per cent.

Chennai recorded the strongest growth in RevPAR at 21.7 per cent in January-March.

"Major factors contributing to this growth included an increase in corporate travel, weddings, and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) demand," the consultant said.

During the first quarter of 2024, there was a robust demand for hotel rooms in both business and leisure destinations. The occupancy levels in key business markets were strong, averaging around 70 per cent, and supported by significant growth in average daily occupancy levels.

There were 90 branded hotel signings comprising 9,710 rooms during January-March 2024. Furthermore, 13 hotels signed were conversions of other hotels, accounting for 12 per cent of the inventory signed in Q1 2024.

"Branded hotel openings comprised 36 hotels with 2,316 keys, of which 75 per cent of the total number of keys were in Tier II and III cities, including Jaipur, Indore, Surat, and Ayodhya, to name a few," the consultant said.

India exports over 45,000 tonnes onion after lifting ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: India has exported more than 45,000 tonnes of onion since the ban on outbound shipments was lifted early this month, a top government official said Wednesday.

These exports provided relief to farmers after curbs were imposed to keep domestic supplies steady ahead of general elections. The world's biggest vegetable exporter banned exports of the bulb last December and then extended it in March, after a rise in prices triggered by sluggish production.

"Since the ban was lifted, more than 45,000 tonnes of onions have been exported, mostly to the Middle East and Bangladesh," Nidhi Khare, Secretary of the Consumer Affairs Ministry, told PTI. To keep onion prices affordable during the election period the government on May 4 lifted the ban but imposed a minimum export price (MEP) of USD 550 per tonne. Khare said the forecast of a good monsoon this year will ensure better sowing of kharif (summer) crops, including onion from June onwards.

Stock markets gain on buying in heavyweights



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, May 22: Benchmark Sensex advanced 267 points while Nifty closed higher for the fifth day in a row Wednesday amid buying in bluechips Reliance Industries and Infosys amid mixed cues from global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 267.75 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 74,221.06. During the day, it jumped 354.48 points or 0.47 per cent to 74,307.79.

Extending gains to the fifth day in a row, the NSE Nifty rose by 68.75 points or 0.31 per cent to finish at 22,597.80. FMCG and realty shares supported the up-

trend while banking and metal shares declined.

"Despite mixed global market sentiments ahead of the US Fed minutes, Indian markets exhibited a subtle positive trend. Investors are optimistic about stable Q4 earnings and easing election jitters that had previously increased volatility.

Interest in the FMCG sector has risen due to the potential for an early onset of monsoon. Nevertheless, markets may underperform in the short term as they wait for the election outcome, with FIIs staying on the sidelines," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Among the Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever, Reliance Industries, Infosys, Asian Paints, ITC and UltraTech Cement were the major gainers.

State Bank of India, JSW Steel, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel and Tata Motors were among the laggards

"Nifty ended a range-bound session in the positive. Nifty settled higher for the fifth consecutive session and recorded its longest winning streak since April 25," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.18 per cent while midcap index dipped 0.05 per cent.

Among the indices, realty jumped 1.41 per cent, FMCG by 1.26 per cent, IT by 0.63 per cent, utilities by 0.59 per cent, energy by 0.58 per cent and healthcare by 0.35 per cent.

Commodities, financial services, bankex and metal were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading lower. Wall Street ended in the green Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.84 per cent to USD 82.18 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,874.54 crore Tuesday, according to exchange data.

M-cap of BSE-listed firms hits \$5-trillion milestone



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, May 22: The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the historic USD 5-trillion mark for the first time at the close of trade Wednesday amid an optimistic trend in equities.

At the close of trade, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies stood at ₹4,15,94,033.72 crore (USD 5 trillion) -- its all-time high.

Investor wealth rose for the ninth straight trading session Wednesday. Investors gained ₹22.59 lakh crore Wednesday.

"Despite weak global cues, markets moved in a range and were positive for most part of the trading session aided by selective buying in IT, FMCG and realty stocks," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the USD 5-trillion milestone for the first time in intra-day trade Tuesday. At the close of trade, the total valuation of the exchange-listed companies stood at ₹4,14,62,306.56 crore (USD 4.97 trillion), the

BSE data showed.

The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the USD 4 trillion milestone for the first time ever on November 29 last year.

The m-cap of all listed companies on the BSE touched the USD 3 trillion mark May 24, 2021.

The total valuation of exchange-listed companies went past the USD 1 trillion level May 28, 2007.

The journey from USD 1 trillion to USD 1.5 trillion was covered in 2,566 days, or just over seven years June 6, 2014.

The m-cap of listed companies reached USD 2 trillion July 10, 2017 -- taking 1,130 days from the USD 1.5 trillion level. It took ten years for the exchange to reach from USD 1 trillion level to USD 2 trillion in market capitalisation.

From there, it took 1,255 days to go past the USD 2.5-trillion mark December 16, 2020.

So far this year, the BSE benchmark has climbed 1,980.8 points, or 2.74 per cent. It hit an all-time peak of 75,124.28 April 9 this year.

Gold imports seen falling as record price prompts jewellery swaps

Lower imports by India, the world's second biggest consumer of the precious metal, could cap a rally that carried global prices to a record this week

REUTERS

Mumbai, May 22: India's gold imports in 2024 could fall by nearly a fifth from the previous year, as record high prices spur retail consumers to exchange old jewellery for new items, the head of an industry body told Reuters.

Lower imports by India, the world's second biggest consumer of the precious metal, could cap a rally that carried global prices to a record this week.

"Affordability is severely affected by the rapid price increase," said Prithviraj Kothari, president of the India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA). "Retail buyers prefer exchanging old jewellery for new."

Buyers save money as they only pay the jewellery making charges and tax when exchanging old ornaments for new ones, since they do not have to pay for the gold.

Preparing for his daughter's wedding, Vinayak Patil exchanged 50 grams of old jewellery for new ornaments this month as prices put new jewellery out of reach financially.

"After adding making charges and taxes, I needed 475,000 rupees to buy 50 grams of new gold jewellery, which I couldn't afford," he explained, referring to the equivalent of \$5,700.

"So, I decided to exchange old jewellery and pay just the making charges and taxes, which amounted to around 90,000 rupees," Patil said.

Old jewellery, also known as scrap supplies, is recycled, and used for jewellery making.

In the March quarter, scrap supplies jumped 10% from a year



ago to 38.3 tons, data from the World Gold Council showed.

Lower demand due to record prices and higher supplies of

scrap will cut imports by 20% from a year ago, said IBJA's

Kothari. India imported 744 metric tons of gold in 2023.

Domestic gold prices hit a record of 74,442 rupees for 10 grams this week, and have jumped 17% so far in 2024, after a rise of 15% in 2023.

"Rising gold prices are having a greater impact on jewellery demand compared to investment demand," said Amit Modak, chief executive of PN Gadgil and Sons, a jeweller based in the western city of Pune.

The share of exchanges in jewellery purchases has gone up to 60% from about 40% last year, Modak said.

Jewellery demand accounts for three-quarters of the total demand, while investment demand makes up the rest.

Investment demand was strong earlier this year, but now record prices are prompting some investors to liquidate holdings and book profits, said Ashok Jain, proprietor of Mumbai-based gold wholesaler Chenaji Narsinghji.

Rajasthan win 'Royal faceoff'

Samson & Co set up Qualifier 2 date with SRH as RCB's campaign yet again ends in agony

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, May 22: Rajasthan Royals ended Royal Challengers Bengaluru's roller coaster run in the Indian Premier League with a scrappy four-wicket win in the Eliminator here Wednesday. The 2008 winners Royals face Sunrisers Hyderabad in Chennai Friday for a place in the IPL final.

After their bowlers had done their part well to keep RCB to 172/8, RR batters stuttered in the middle overs to allow RCB back into the contest which remained hung in balance for the majority of the second half, but the 2008 winners eventually got home with an over to spare.

Chasing 173, Rajasthan ended with 174/6 as Rovman Powell (16 n o) provided the finishing touches in a tense finish. As he has done several times before this season, Riyan Parag (36) showcased deep resolve in an adverse situation to help Rajasthan stay alive in the tournament. It was Royals' first win after four losses and an abandoned game.

In a contest wherein fortunes swung from one side to another, RR remained ahead with impactful performances throughout even though Mohammed Siraj (2/33) raised late hopes for RCB with wickets of Parag and Hetmyer in the 18th over. With 13 needed off last two overs, Powell found two fours off Lockie Ferguson to seal the deal in favour of his side.

Earlier, it was Yashasvi Jaiswal (45 off 30 balls) who gave them the impetus at the top. Off to an unconvincing start with his ini-



Ravichandran Ashwin reacts after dismissing Glenn Maxwell during the match, Wednesday

tial runs coming off the outside edge, Jaiswal grew in confidence. At the other end, Tom Kohler-Cadmore (20) also hit a couple of fours against Siraj and while getting a lifeline from Glenn Maxwell, who spilled a sitter at deep square leg off Dayal.

With RR's acceleration rapidly shaving runs off the target, RCB needed a breakthrough and Ferguson provided the first success when he foxed Kohler-Cadmore with a slow yorker which crashed into the stumps.

The gradual progression of Jaiswal's innings saw the batter finding his rhythm, but the extreme heat sapped him out completely. In between the ninth and the 10th over, Jaiswal received on-field treatment and

got back up only to play a loose shot — an attempted ramp off Cameron Green but only gloved it to the 'keeper.

Soon after, Karn Sharma dealt a body blow by having Sanju Samson (17) stumped. With their tails up, RCB continued making inroads with Dhruv Jurel (8) being run out after a brilliant effort from Virat Kohli and Green.

RR were firmly under pressure heading into the 15th over when they chose to go after Green, who had been all over them with three tidy overs and a wicket up until then.

Earlier, Rajasthan Royals put forth a sharp bowling effort. Led by Trent Boult (1/16), who produced an opening spell of 3-0-6-1, RR bowlers kept taking wick-

ets at crucial stages to control the game.

The venerable Ravichandran Ashwin (2/19) left an indelible mark with wickets Green (27) and Maxwell (0) on consecutive deliveries while Avesh Khan (3/44) also chipped in. Rajasthan's bowling was adequately backed up by their fielders, particularly Rovman Powell, who took two stunning catches that clipped RCB's progress.

BRIEF SCORES

RCB 172/8 (Rajat Patidar 34, Virat Kohli 33, Mahipal Lomror 32; Avesh Khan 3/44, Ravichandran Ashwin 2/19) lost to RR 174/6 (Yashasvi Jaiswal 45, Riyan Parag 36, Shimron Hetmyer 26; Mohammed Siraj 2/33) by 4 wickets.

INDIA SURPASS BEST-EVER TALLY AT WORLD PARA ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIP

Sachin defends shot put gold

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kobe (Japan), May 22: India's Sachin Sarjearo Khilari defended his gold medal in the men's shot put F46 category with an Asian record at the World Para Athletics Championship as the country surpassed its best-ever haul in the global competition here Wednesday.

Dharambir claimed a bronze medal in the men's club throw F51 category to take India's tally to 12 medals (five gold, four silver and three bronze) and maintain their third spot in the standings behind China (18-16-14) and Brazil (17-8-5).

Sachin's gold earlier in the day bettered India's previous best tally of 10 (3 gold, 4 silver and 3 bronze) in the 2023 edition in Paris. Sachin heaved the iron ball to a distance of 16.30 metres, bettering his own Asian record of 16.21 metres set during the World Para Athletics Championship in Paris last year. His effort also earned him a place in Paris Paralympics.

The F46 category in para athletics events is for those with moderately affected movement in one or both arms or the absence of limbs. These athletes have to transmit power from hips and legs into the throw.

Sachin, who hails from Karagani village in Maharashtra's Sangli district, he suffered a mishap during his school days leading to disability in his left arm. The stocky 34-year-old lost his muscles from the elbow due to gangrene and despite multiple surgeries, his arm never recovered.

In the men's club throw F51 final, Dharambir gradually improved his throws and propelled



the club to a distance of 33.61 metres in his fifth and penultimate attempt to secure the bronze.

Zeljko Dimitrijevic of Serbia smashed the meet record with a throw of 34.20m to win the gold, while Mario Santana Hernandez of Mexico bagged the silver with a season's best effort of 33.62m.

The men's club throw F51 category is for para athletes with severe trunk and limb impairments. Competitors throw a club from a seated position, relying solely on their arm and shoulder strength. F51 classification is reserved for athletes with the most significant impairments in this category.

India had reaped a rich haul of five medals Tuesday to swell its tally to 10 (4 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze). China is currently leading the medals tally followed by Brazil. With three more days

still to go, India are in with a chance of winning a few more medals including gold and head coach Satyanarayan said he was quite optimistic.

Reigning Paralympics champion Sumit Antil had defended his F64 javelin throw world title Tuesday, while Thangavelu Mariyappan and Ekta Bhanu also grabbed gold medals in their respective events as India jumped to third place in the World Para Athletics Championships here. Antil sent his spear to a distance of 69.50m to stand on top of the podium.

The 25-year-old Haryana athlete thus continued his global domination in the F64 javelin event. He is the current world record holder also, courtesy his massive 73.29m throw while winning gold in the Para Asian Games in Hangzhou, China last year.

Sindhu sails into Rd 2 at Malaysia Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kuala Lumpur, May 22: Returning from a break, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu progressed to the women's singles second round with a straight-game win over Scotland's Kirsty Gilmour at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament here Wednesday.

World No.15 Sindhu, who had skipped the Uber Cup and Thailand Open, notched up a 21-17, 21-16 win over Gilmour, who is ranked 22nd, in the opening-round match that lasted 46 minutes. The fifth-seeded Indian, who last won a title in 2022 Singapore Open, will next face Korea's Sim Yu Jin.

In mixed doubles, B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy, World No.53, also advanced to the second round after outlasting Hong Kong qualifiers Lui Chun Wai and Fu Chi Yan 21-15, 12-21, 21-17 in 47 minutes. The husband-wife duo will have the task of taming the top seeds Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei of Malaysia next.

For Sindhu, it was her third win over Gilmour, a two-time medallist in the Commonwealth Games. The 28-year-old Sindhu was quick to open up a 7-1 lead but Gilmour managed to claw



back at 14-14 and 15-15. The Indian, however, dashed her hopes of a challenge as she grabbed six of the next eight points to take the first game.

After the change of sides, Sindhu was more ruthless as she didn't allow her opponent to make any comeback after once again gaining an early 3-0 lead. Sindhu was 11-6 at the break and kept moving ahead to grab eight match points. To her credit, Gilmour saved four match points before Sindhu sealed the match comfortably.

Compound eve archers in final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Yecheon (South Korea), May 22: World No.1 Indian women's compound team stormed into the final of the archery World Cup Stage II but the men's team will return empty-handed from the tournament after losing the bronze medal clash to Australia here Wednesday.

The trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur and Aditi Swami, that had clinched gold medal in World Cup Stage 1 in Shanghai leg last month, knocked out World No.4 USA 233-229 in the semifinal.

India will now clash with world number seven Turkey in the gold medal clash Saturday. Turkey had stunned top-seed and local favourites South Korea 234-233 in the other semifinal.

It was an overall easy sailing for the Indian women's team, which got a bye into the quarters after finishing second in the qualifying round. They eliminated Italy 236-234 in the last-eight.

The World No.1 men's team of Priyansh, Prathamesh Fuge and veteran Abhishek Verma, who had slipped to fourth in the qualifying round Tuesday, lost to lowly-ranked Australia 133-133 (10-10*) in a shoot-off.

The Aussies, who are world ranked 21st, took the Indian trio by surprise starting with a 59, dropping just one point. The Aussies team of Bailey Wildman,



Brandon Hawes and Jonathon Milne continued its fine run and overcame a one-point deficit after the second round to make it 233-all after the regulation four ended.

The two teams were 30-all in the ensuing shoot-off but the Aussies edged out the inconsistent Indians by shooting two Xs (arrows closer to centre) to secure the bronze medal.

Having started their campaign with an easy 235-212 win over lowly-ranked Vietnam, India overcame tough competition from Denmark and top seed USA, winning both the matches in shoot-off.

Meanwhile, the veteran duo of Tarundeep Rai and Deepika Kumari finished fourth and sixth in their respective quali-

fiers as recurve competition got underway.

The 2010 Asian Games silver medalist Rai shot 681 points for a sixth spot in rankings, while Dhiraj Bommadevara narrowly missed a top 10 finish on X (closer to centre) count after five archers shot 678 with the Indian finishing 11th.

The Army duo's solid finish ensured Indian recurve men's team No.2 seeding in their title defence. India and top-seeded South Korea will begin their campaign at the opposite ends of the draw.

Indian men's team shocked the world champions South Korea for the first time in a World Cup to take the gold in Stage 1 of the event in Shanghai last month.

Azam slammed for wiping sweat with US dollar note

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, May 22: Young Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Azam Khan has landed himself in controversy after he was seen wiping his eyebrows with a US dollar note on social media.

The video, also featuring Pakistan captain Babar Azam and some other players, has drawn a backlash with fans criticising Azam for his insensitivity, given the country's economic situation.

The video captures a light-hearted moment among the national players and Azam is seen holding US dollars while engaging in a casual chat with Babar, who is behind the camera along with other team members.

Babar laughingly asks Azam, "What happened Abba?", who responded: "Bohat garami hai (It is too hot here)," while wiping sweat with the dollar note leading to laughter from teammates.

"Apart from a rare few in Pakistan's sporting history, none have the charisma, impact and influence of any kind, nothing for a young kid to aspire to. The current lot is just hopeless," wrote a user on social media.

Another user emphasised the need for education, stating: "That's why we always keep saying basic education is a must, these people travel the world but don't learn the basic human val-



ues. Send them to school before you send them to an international platform."

One fan wrote that while Pakistani people were facing food shortage, Azam is sitting under a roof and mocking poor people.

According to a reliable source in the Pakistan Cricket Board, the video also didn't go down well with some top officials and the players have been told to avoid unnecessary social media posts since the PCB already has a full-fledged digital media department which keeps on uploading videos about the players.

Contrasting fortunes for India in FIH Pro League

MEN BEAT ARGENTINA IN SHOOTOUT, WHILE THE EVES HUMBLD BY SAME OPPOSITION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Antwerp (Belgium), May 22: It was a day of contrasting fortunes for Indian hockey teams against Argentina in the FIH Pro League as the men's side registered a 5-4 win in the shootout, while the women's team suffer a humiliating 0-5 defeat.

The men's team survived some anxious moments before defeating Argentina in the penalty shootout after the regulation time ended on 2-2 here, Wednesday. Mandeep Singh and Lalit Kumar Upadhyay scored two field goals for India, while Argentina found the net from penalty corners through Lucas Martinez (20th) and Tomas Domene (60th). In the shootout, skipper Harmanpreet Singh and Sukhjeet Singh scored twice each with Abhishek being the other scorer. The eves, on the other hand, suffered a humiliating defeat to

Argentina to begin their European leg of the Pro League campaign on a disappointing note. Julieta Jankunas (53rd, 59th minutes) struck a brace, while Agustina Gorzelany (13th), Valentina Raposo (24th) and Victoria Miranda (41st) were the other goal getters for the Argentines.

It was a keen contest between men's teams in the first half. While World No.6 India dominated the first quarter, the Los Leones, ranked a rung below, were the better side in the next 15 minutes.

The Indians started on a positive note with Sanjay getting the first shot at the goal in the fifth minute, but his reverse hit was saved by an alert Argentina goalkeeper Tomas Santiago. But India were not to be denied for long as six minutes later, Mandeep scored from a field effort after being fed by Rajkumar Pal.



Sunelita Toppo (L) looks on as Jyoti fights for the ball with Argentina's Lara Casas during the match in Antwerp, Wednesday

The Argentines came close seconds from the first quarter, hitting the post first and then from the rebound. Maico Casella scored, but by then, the hooter went up to keep India's lead intact. Argentina pushed hard and

slowly started to build pressure on the Indian defence in the second quarter. Argentina, in the process, got three quick penalty corners, the last of which was converted by Lucas Martinez from a rebound after Sreejesh

made a brilliant save to keep out Nicolas della Torre's fierce flick.

It was a neck-and-neck fight between the two sides after the change of ends with both India and Argentina managing a few circle entries but goals eluded them. India scored through Lalit, who pushed in Jarmanpreet Singh's pass.

Down by a goal, a desperate Argentina withdrew their goalkeeper for an extra field player in search of the equaliser. Their ploy worked as they exerted tremendous pressure on the Indian defence, which conceded two penalty corners seconds from the final hooter, and Sreejesh was beaten by a fierce flick from Domene to take the match into shootout.

The Indian women's and men's teams will take on hosts Belgium Thursday and Friday, respectively, in the European leg of the Pro League.

Playing Carlsen in his home turf not a challenge for Pragg

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Stavanger (Norway), May 22: Having beaten Magnus Carlsen several times in the last couple of years, young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa feels he will be under no pressure when he takes on the multiple-time world champion in his home turf during the Norway Chess tournament, which gets underway here May 27.

Pragg last beat the 33-year-old Carlsen in the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour, in Warsaw earlier this month.

"I don't think playing Magnus in his home turf is a challenge for me. Usually, it matters to the player playing in his home but it won't matter so much for me," said Praggnanandhaa, who will also have his sister R Vaishali playing the Norway Chess Women's Tournament for the first time.

The 11-day tournament will

see a very strong field including the likes of world champion Ding Liren and Hikaru Nakamura besides home favourite Carlsen. Reflecting on his contest with Carlsen at last year's FIDE World Cup where Praggnanandhaa gave the Norwegian a tough challenge, the Indian GM said the experience here would help him in future competitions.

"I always enjoy a good challenge. After the World Cup last year, this will be my first classical game with him. I am quite excited to play him and equally excited to play the others. No doubt the experience here will help me in future tournaments," said Praggnanandhaa in a Norway Chess release.

"I am very happy and excited to play in Norway Chess. The field is extremely strong. This is perhaps the strongest field I have played and I see this as an opportunity and a challenge to give my best," added the 18-year-old.